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**BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN HUMAN AND
NONHUMAN BEINGS IN THE POSTHUMAN UNIVERSE OF
*STAR WARS***

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OF *STAR WARS***

2025

COMMITMENT

I hereby declare that this thesis has been prepared in accordance with the academic and ethical principles of the Graduate School of Education at Manisa Celal Bayar University, Department of English Language and Literature. All information and literature used in the thesis have been properly cited, and the thesis is entirely my own work. I confirm that I have provided references for all quotations and have not utilized any artificial intelligence or software that violates academic and ethical principles during the preparation of this thesis.

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ÖZET

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İnsanlar, Rönesans döneminden sonra evrendeki en merkezi figürler olarak görülmeye başlanmıştır. Teknoloji, bilim ve sanattaki gelişmelerle birlikte, insanlık gitgide dünyayı ihtiyaçları ve isteklerine göre şekillendirebileceklerini ve yaşama hakim olabileceklerini fark etmişlerdir. İnsanlar inovasyonları ve bilgileri sayesinde her şeyi yapabilecek en güçlü ve eşsiz varlıklar olduklarını düşünmeye başlamışlardır. Tarihte bu harekete, insanları türler arasında en değerli ve önemli varlıklar olarak merkeze alan hümanizm denmektedir. Hümanizmin insan merkezci görüşü tüm insan dışı varlıklara karşı dışlayıcı bir yaklaşıma sebep olur. Fakat, 1950’lerden sonraki artan ekolojik farkındalıktan dolayı, insanlar doğadaki insan dışı varlıklara gittikçe daha fazla değer vermişlerdir. Ayrıca, o yıllardaki teknolojik gelişmeler robotlar ve siborglar gibi fütüristik kavramlarda ilgi artışına yol açmıştır. Bu bilim kurgu kavramları, hümanist akımdaki insanın geleneksel normları ve sınırlarına meydan okumuştur. İnsanlık algısındaki bu değişimler 1980’ler ve 1990’larda eleştirel bir teori olarak posthümanizmin ortaya çıkışını tetiklemiştir. Posthümanizm insanın dünyadaki merkeziliğini, failliğini, eşsizliğini ve klasik hümanizmin insan dışına karşı insan merkezci tutumunu eleştirmeyi amaçlamıştır. Bilim kurgu sinemasında bazı eserler halihazırda posthümanist bir bakış açısına sahipti. Bu örneklerden biri 1977’de George Lucas tarafından yaratılan *Star Wars* film serisidir. Bu serideki filmler, insan olmanın ne demek olduğunu sorgulayan posthümanist kavramlar, konular ve temalara sahiptir. *Star Wars* evreni uzaylılar, siborglar, klonlar ve droidler (*Star Wars* serisindeki robotlar) gibi pek çok insan dışı varlığı içerir. Hem insan hem de insan dışı varlıklar farklı özelliklerine rağmen birlikte yaşayabilir, birlikte gelişebilir ve iş birliği yapabilirler. Bu bakımdan, film serisi evrendeki varlıkların tüm çeşitlerine yönelik kucaklayıcı ve eşitlikçi bir tavrı savunmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu tez *Star Wars*’un insan ötesi evreninde insanlar ve uzaylılar ile insanlar ve makineler arasındaki sınırları

posthümanist bir bakış açısıyla seriden seçilen filmleri kullanarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Posthümanizm, *Star Wars*, İnsan, İnsan dışı, İnsan-merkezcilik

2025, 136 sayfa



ABSTRACT

M.Sc. Thesis

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Humans started to be seen as the most central figures in the universe after the Renaissance period. With the advancements in technology, science, and art, humanity gradually noticed that they could dominate life and shape the world according to their needs and desires. Humans began to think that they were the most unique and powerful beings that were capable of everything through their knowledge and innovations. This movement in history is called humanism, which brings humans to the center as the most valuable and significant beings among species. The anthropocentric view of humanism causes an exclusionary approach toward all nonhuman beings. Yet, due to the rising ecological awareness after the 1950s, people increasingly valued nonhuman living beings in nature. Additionally, the technological developments in those years led to the rise of interest in futuristic concepts such as robots and cyborgs. These science fiction concepts heavily challenged the traditional norms and boundaries of the human in the humanist movement. These alterations in the perception of humanity triggered the emergence of posthumanism as a critical theory in the 1980s and 1990s. Posthumanism aimed to criticize classical humanism's anthropocentric attitude toward the nonhuman and the human's centrality, agency, and uniqueness in the world. Some works already possessed a posthumanist point of view in science fiction cinema. One of these examples is the *Star Wars* film series created by George Lucas in 1977. The films in this series have posthumanist themes, topics and concepts that question what it means to be a human. The universe of *Star Wars* includes myriad nonhuman beings such as aliens, cyborgs, clones and droids (robots in the *Star Wars* series). Both human and nonhuman beings can co-exist, co-evolve and collaborate despite their different characteristics. In this regard, the film series advocates an egalitarian and embrative manner toward all types of entities in the universe. Therefore, this thesis aims to investigate the boundaries between humans and aliens, as well as humans and

machines, in the posthuman universe of *Star Wars* by using selected films from the series with a posthumanist stance.

Keywords: Posthumanism, *Star Wars*, Human, Nonhuman, Anthropocentrism

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The topic of this study is the boundaries between human and nonhuman beings within the universe of *Star Wars* in the context of posthumanist theory. Selected films of *Star Wars* will be used to examine the relationships, interactions, distinctions, dichotomies, similarities and differences between humans and nonhumans by undermining the traditional human norms and images that have existed for centuries.

The thesis will begin with a detailed explanation of the theoretical background of posthumanism and the historical background of *Star Wars*. After the background chapter, this study will start analyzing the selected films of *Star Wars* by focusing on the boundaries between humans and aliens. In the third chapter, deconstructing boundaries between humans and machines will be discussed. Lastly, in the fourth chapter, *Star Wars*'s posthuman universe will be examined to clarify some important points of posthumanism within the films in a broader scope.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Dr. Meryem AYAN for her constant support, motivation, kindness and encouragement. Thanks to her valuable feedback and recommendations, my thesis has taken shape to its final form. I am very grateful to her for accepting me as her thesis student toward the end of my study. Furthermore, I am deeply indebted to my previous supervisors Assoc. Prof. Dr. Murat GÖÇ BİLGİN who has given me so much information about my thesis topic and helped me to determine the content of the thesis, and Assist. Prof. Dr. Yasemin YAVAŞLAR ÖZAKINCI who has guided me about the format of the thesis in my writing process and provided me with precious feedback for the first part of this work.

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Murat DALKARA

Manisa, 2025

INDEX OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ANH</i>	<i>Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope</i>
<i>AotC</i>	<i>Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones</i>
<i>RotJ</i>	<i>Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi</i>
<i>RotS</i>	<i>Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith</i>
<i>TESB</i>	<i>Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back</i>
<i>TPM</i>	<i>Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace</i>



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INTRODUCTION

For centuries, human beings have been dominating life on earth and transforming it according to their needs and desires. All living and non-living beings have been used and even exploited to increase the life standard of human beings. Lots of beings have been produced or bred just for serving, feeding or entertaining human beings. Especially with the new ideas and perspectives of the Renaissance period, human beings have started to see themselves as not parts or mere species but as masters of the universe. The ones who have been scared of the obscurities of nature have started to control nature and nonhuman beings within it. Indeed, humans have dominated nonhumans with the help of science, technology and knowledge which have gained momentum after the Renaissance period. In Europe, instead of only believing in the teachings of the Church and accepting its truths, some people tried to focus on scientific facts, experiments and arts so that they could reach the fullest potential of humanity. Additionally, in this period, the idea of a perfect/ideal man was born. According to this idea, a perfect man should improve himself through learning and using his intellectual capacity as he already has all the power he needs to rule the world. After this period, the human-centered worldview (or it can be called humanism) has become a dominant ideology up to nowadays. Humans have turned themselves into separate entities that are different from other beings. They have also classified themselves as superior beings to nonhuman beings. Apart from animals and plants, robots, aliens, and clones have also been included under the general term 'nonhuman' in recent decades due to technological developments and the rising popularity of the science fiction genre. Analysis of the nonhuman and its relationship with the human has become popular in critical theory, especially in posthumanism. Therefore, the focus of this thesis has been the challenge to classical humanism through the examples of human and nonhuman beings in selected *Star Wars* films from a posthumanist point of view.

Towards the 21st century, the problematic sides of humanism have been criticized in many different ways, especially by using critical posthumanism. As the name indicates, the main criticism that posthumanism puts forward is against the classical humanist idea that emerged during the Renaissance era. Just like poststructuralism acknowledges and problematizes structuralism and postcolonialism

problematizes colonialism, posthumanism tries to acknowledge the humanist ideology that is still present, and it also problematizes the human-centered view derived from humanistic ideology. According to Pramod Nayar in his *Posthumanism* (2013) book in italics, critical posthumanism is defined as: “the *radical decentring of the traditional sovereign, coherent and autonomous human in order to demonstrate how the human is always already evolving with, constituted by and constitutive of multiple forms of life and machines*” (11). In this case, it can be stated that the aim of the posthumanist theory is to break the human-centered tradition due to the fact that human beings are not sovereign and autonomous beings that can evolve alone in their environment. They need the help of both animate and inanimate beings.

In addition to that, concerning the ideal human image, it is quite important to understand what comes to our minds when we think about the human. In traditional or classical humanistic thought “The human has traditionally been treated as male and universal. It is always treated in the singular (*the* human) and as a set of features or conditions: rationality, authority, autonomy and agency” (Nayar 15). According to this view, the human is just a universal ideal which most people look forward to achieving. Yet, it is so exclusive and limiting that many people die without even achieving it for a short time. The Italian polymath Leonardo da Vinci perfectly illustrates the classical humanistic idea with his famous drawing called *Vitruvian Man*. The drawing clearly demonstrates the human with “an ideal of bodily perfection which, in keeping with the classical dictum *mens sana in corpore sano*, doubles up as a set of mental, discursive and spiritual values” (Braidotti 13). The image of the ideal human body has left its mark on many people’s minds for centuries. Yet, this human ideal has changed in recent years thanks to civil rights and equality movements in the U.S. The universal human image started to be shaken and “the human, meaning the white, European, male did not get to persist unquestioned as the norm” (Österblom 36). Posthumanism and postmodernism also have a role in the change of human norms naturally.

Posthumanism is a critical theory which follows the traces of poststructuralist and postmodernist movements. The theory deconstructs and challenges anthropocentrism ideology by advocating a postanthropocentric view. Anthropocentrism is a notion in humanist thought and which traditionally privileges human life in the environment. It is a human-centered view and it sees human beings as the most important and developed beings in the world. For this reason,

anthropocentrism is all about human exceptionalism and it is quite hierarchical, marginalizing and unequal, especially for nonhuman beings. By implementing a deconstruction method on texts, posthumanism undermines the issues of the anthropocentric approach. Ağin writes about the aim of posthumanism in her article:

As a follow-up movement to poststructuralism, posthumanism aims at deconstructing the binary oppositions between the human and the nonhuman, nature and culture, and discourse and matter. With its insistent emphasis on the blurring boundaries between the human and the nonhuman, posthumanism is intrinsically disanthropocentric. (14)

This postanthropocentric view of posthumanism embraces all living and even nonliving beings in the universe. Today's world is still anthropocentric due to the fact that human beings dominate life almost all over the world by prioritizing themselves. In earth sciences, a new geological era is named *Anthropocene* "where humans have become the single most significant global force in determining the Earth's future" (Malone and Bazalek 96). Even though humans are not the only living species in the world, they are the only ones who determine the future of the Earth and the future of other living beings. In addition to that, the word *Homo sapiens* means basically human in Latin language. Yet, its meaning is a little bit problematic and anthropocentric "Homo sapiens, (Latin: 'wise man') the species to which all modern human beings belong" (Tattersall, np.). It can clearly be seen that man is associated with wisdom from the beginning. It inevitably distinguishes the human as the intelligent species among all others, and the "term *Homo sapiens* still privileges human beings since it attributes the quality of wisdom to humans, highlighting the likelihood of a separability between the human and the nonhuman others" (Ağin 14). This established meaning of humans naturally paved the way for hierarchical relationships between humans and nonhuman others.

It is important to point out that posthumanism breaks clear-cut definitions of human by advocating a fluid ground between human and nonhuman. One of its main aims is to provide "a progressive elimination and fluidization of the differences" among all species (Valera 483). The fluidity of posthumanist theory diminishes the boundaries or definitions of the human and the human's place in the universe. Therefore, it can be stated that "A complete posthumanism, thus, coincides with the annihilation of all the boundaries that make 'human' a human being" (Valera 483).

Humanist and anthropocentric thought have survived until now because of humans' focus on dichotomies, distinctions and differences. While defining and forming the other, human beings are also defining, labelling and forming their boundaries, bodies and minds. This definition process leads to a world of dichotomies. In this case, posthuman theory "basically challenges the dichotomous conceptualization of mind and body, animal and human, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, men and women, primitive and civilized" (Göç-Bilgin 203). These opposite sides and otherization problems have repressed humans as well even though this artificial and dichotomous system has been made by themselves.

Furthermore, humanism has brought subjectivity and otherness with itself inevitably. Concerning this, Braidotti states that:

Subjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour, whereas Otherness is defined as its negative and specular counterpart. In so far as difference spells inferiority, it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as 'others'. (15)

Thus, while the subject is defined as an active doer and former of the earth's future (and its inhabitants), the other (or the object) mostly becomes the passive, secondary and marginalized one. This otherization issue even occurs within the same species such as human beings. Braidotti writes about this issue by conveying that "We are all humans, but some of us are just more mortal than others. Because their history in Europe and elsewhere has been one of lethal exclusions and fatal disqualifications, these 'others' raise issues of power and exclusion" (15). In some fiction works, these others are sometimes turned into monsters or demonic animals so that people are afraid of them and do not exhibit the same evilness or faults as the monsters do.

Posthumanism is a very broad theory that includes many other disciplines. One of the most important of these disciplines is transhumanism. Transhumanism is different from posthumanism in some ways, especially in technological topics. Posthumanism generally focuses on "the elimination of differences: post-mankind lives in harmony with other living (and non-living) beings, establishing a sort of open system" (Valera 483). So, posthumanism's goal is to criticize the reification and otherization of both organic nonhuman beings (animals, plants, aliens etc.) and inorganic nonhuman beings (like robots or machines). Posthumanism tries to deny

anthropocentrism which appeared in the Renaissance Age and gained momentum in the Modern Age. Due to posthumanists' dissatisfaction with classical humanist ideology, they want to "return to a pre-Socratic or stoic period, to that time in which the research on man and nature was but one" (Valera 483). From the things that have been stated, it can be understood that posthumanism does not solely focus on the technological improvement of human beings or the robotization of them because it is a broader philosophy that involves all nonhuman beings whether animate or inanimate. Transhumanism is a similar philosophical and theoretical approach with regard to its radical approach towards cyborgs. It emphasizes the idea of improvement and enhancement of human beings through the integration of technological tools into human bodies. It mostly seeks to create the perfect human being with the help of technology so that human beings can transcend the limitations of their own organic bodies. In this sense, it can be stated that transhumanism is an idealistic and perfectionist movement and it is not as embracing as posthumanism. In Valera's article about posthumanism and transhumanism, it is written that "Contemporary transhumanists argue that human nature is an unsatisfactory 'work in progress' that should be modified through technological means where the instrumental benefits for individuals outweigh the technological risks" (482). Thus, transhumanism sees humans as uncompleted organisms that need to be enhanced to be able to reach their full potential. Transhumanism is about the transformation of humans to a new form where there are almost no boundaries or limitations for human capabilities. Wolfe describes transhumanism "as an *intensification* of humanism" (xv). In this case, transhumanism is just like a new version of humanism because of its characteristic of searching for the perfect and completed human being. In humanist thought, the ideal human was depicted with labels such as gender, sexuality, race, religion, age etc. But now in transhumanism, it is all about how can a human enhance himself/herself by using technological tools and transcend their human self by becoming a cyborg. In this thesis, even though I will discuss the differences, similarities and relationships between robots and humans, my focus will be the posthumanist theory.

Posthuman themes and issues can be seen in many works of art in popular culture. Because of the fact that technology and science are transforming people's lives every day, the demand for science fiction works has been increasing, especially in recent decades. Due to the U.S. dominance of space exploration and the popularity of

NASA, some works focused on space-themed stories. Space is a place which is mostly unknown to humanity and this characteristic of space makes it a perfect setting for futuristic fiction where humans can discover mysteries of the universe. In space, human turns into posthuman because he/she is not at the center anymore and he/she cannot rule the whole universe. So, space stories featuring different living beings (aliens, robots etc.) or places provide a slippery ground, and on this ground the distinction between human and nonhuman almost vanishes. In addition to that, space stories or other types of sci-fi (science fiction) works need great attention while forming the boundaries of their fictional universes. Certain sci-fi writers have managed to build their own universes with their own rules. These kinds of works have been made in great detail with lots of different places, substories and subcharacters. Even some of them have turned into very famous franchises in the history of popular culture. One of the most well-known and prominent works in sci-fi genre and popular culture is *Star Wars*.

Star Wars is a multimedia franchise beginning with a film trilogy created by George Lucas in 1977. It is “an epic space opera” (Reid 1) and still one of the most famous American franchises in the world. Even though *Star Wars* was originally released as a film in 1977, other types of its media, such as novels, TV Shows, video games, comic books and theme parks have been produced since then. *Star Wars* films were hugely successful in the box office numbers and they influenced lots of other films and other forms of media in popular culture.

The first *Star Wars* film trilogy started with *Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977), and followed by its sequels: *Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and *Episode VI: Return of the Jedi* (1983). This first trilogy was called the original trilogy. Then, in the late 20th and early 21st century, a new trilogy was released. This new trilogy was a prequel trilogy which tells the story before *Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977). The prequel trilogy began with *Episode I: The Phantom Menace* (1999), and followed by *Episode II: Attack of the Clones* (2002), and *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005). Lucas sold out all rights of the franchise to The Walt Disney Company for \$4.05 billion in 2012. Thenceforward, Disney operates the franchise and makes its own original content. Disney presented its own *Star Wars* films by making a sequel trilogy which narrates the events after the original trilogy. Sequel trilogy films by Disney were respectively *Episode VII: The Force Awakens* (2015), *Episode VIII: The Last Jedi*

(2017), and *Episode IX: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019). These nine films were entitled as “Skywalker Saga” since they were all about the Skywalker family and their legacy. Between the sequel trilogy films, Disney also produced and released two anthology films: *Rogue One* (2016) and *Solo* (2018). Except that, this franchise has lots of other TV Shows that were produced by Disney.

This thesis aims to focus on the original (*Episode IV, V and VI*) and prequel trilogies (*Episode I, II, III*) because the stories of these films were written by Lucas himself. Other *Star Wars* films do not belong to Lucas even though they are the products of the same universe created by Lucas. Original and prequel trilogies have cyborg protagonists (Anakin and Luke) who interact with a variety of humans and nonhumans in the galaxy of *Star Wars*. Chronologically from *Episode I* to *Episode VI*, the films show human Anakin’s transformation to an iconic cyborg as well. Therefore, these six films have a consistency between themselves, because the whole story centers around Anakin and Luke’s posthuman transitions. In addition to that, different theses written on posthumanism have not previously focused on the original and prequel *Star Wars* film series discussed in this study.

Furthermore, technology (which is associated with the future) and tradition (which is associated with the past) blend so well in the series of *Star Wars* which is both sci-fi and fantasy fiction. The film series involves not only science and technology, but also magic and other supernatural elements. On the one hand, there are droids, spaceships, and lightsabers but on the other hand, there is a mystical energy called the Force. The Force exists beyond the scientific and technological explanations, and it can influence almost everything like fate and time. Some individuals who are strong with the Force can achieve supernatural powers through proper training. There are two prominent orders in the galaxy; the Jedi and the Sith. Jedi Order is the light side of the Force and they use it for the good of the galaxy in a selfless way. Sith Order is the dark side of the Force and they use it just for their own sake to achieve absolute power. These orders make use of not only their ancient and mystical powers of the Force but also technological tools such as lightsabers and droids. There are not any species, racial, sexual or class exclusions in Jedi or Sith Orders which means that anyone with a strong connection to the Force can become a Jedi or Sith.

To clarify the context and place of the word *droid* in *Star Wars* universe, it would be better to look at the definition of the word. It is important to point out that robots are called droids in the *Star Wars* universe and the word droid comes from the term *android*. Android is defined in online *Cambridge Dictionary* as “a robot (= machine controlled by computer) that is made to look like a human” (“Android”, np.). In this sense, androids look like human beings in appearance. The fact that droid is a shortened form of the word android underlines similarities between human beings and droids. However, the word ‘droid’ in *Star Wars* encompasses all types of robots regardless of their physical resemblance to human beings such as R2-D2 and the buzz droids.

In addition to these, the galaxy in *Star Wars* involves tons of different alien species. Some planets have only one living species on their land but some other planets have quite diverse species populations. In the galaxy, all species and droids coexist together without experiencing any discrimination or oppression (except for several notorious species). Every species has its own culture, tradition and lifestyle. Interestingly, some species even have their own language. Thus, while interspecies communication between two species happens, a translator droid may be needed for clear communication. This variety of species of the galaxy creates a posthuman environment.

It is clear that posthumanist theory and *Star Wars* films concur on topics such as human-nonhuman boundaries and relationships, technology, species diversity and equality. *Star Wars* universe presents a posthuman environment due to its decentralization of human through the lack of the Earth, pure human societies or human domination over other species. The universe of this franchise demonstrates a rich and diverse species population. Tons of different races and species can cohabit in the same place without any discrimination or subordination problem in the galaxy. It is important to underline that the human species exists as just one of the thousands of other species in the galaxy. Humans are represented as not rulers of the universe but as a part of the gigantic galaxy. If it is assumed that *Star Wars* tells stories of a fictional future, it can be stated that the franchise envisions a posthuman environment where the distinction between human and nonhuman is blurred or even diminished. Humans live in harmony with aliens and droids. Some humans become cyborgs through technological integration into their bodies. Also, there are clone troopers who are

manufactured humans in the factories. In the Galactic Republic, every individual is called a citizen without any exclusion or labelling. This complicated and cosmopolitan atmosphere of the galaxy pushes human beings into the background a little bit and puts forward nonhuman beings in societies. In this way, nonhuman beings are presented as not just passive, secondary or trivialized but as important, active and effective beings.

Textual analysis of films is becoming more common each day in literature departments due to their rich storytelling techniques. In the 21st century, films are accepted as visual texts by many critics and many famous novels of the literary world have been successfully adapted into films. Especially, some films are quite appropriate to examine with critical theories just like novels, plays or poems. To exemplify, the *Star Wars* films have a very high literary value with their scripts, dialogues, character developments, visual narratives and soundtracks. Because of their rich archetypal and literary references, some people call the first six films ‘The Tragedy of Darth Vader’ because it tells a story of fall from grace. The films also have a mythical narrative style and Joseph Campbell’s famous narration structure the hero’s journey which can be clearly seen in the first films. These films also contain many thematic and thought-provoking philosophical elements found in sci-fi literary texts. Additionally, the films will be analyzed using posthumanism, a highly interdisciplinary critical theory which is applicable to various kinds of texts. For this reason, my thesis will be supported by film studies and cultural studies while implementing a discourse analysis of the films. I will examine language, visuals and sounds by focusing on the sociocultural context of the films.

It may be beneficial to provide brief summaries of the selected *Star Wars* films that will be analyzed in this thesis. The general summaries of the films have been provided in this part but for more detailed summaries of the films, please see Appendix A at the end of the thesis. Chronologically, the franchise begins with *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace (TPM)* which is also the first film of the prequel trilogy. The film is about the Trade Federation’s blockade and invasion of the Naboo planet with a droid army. A Sith Lord controls the senate of the Galactic Republic and the two Jedi (Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan) struggle to resolve the issue. They encounter a boy called Anakin who is the chosen one according to Qui-Gon. After two separate battles against the Federation, the Jedi and Naboo people take back the planet. The next film, *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones (AotC)*, narrates the events ten

years later. A galactic conflict occurs between a newly formed Separatist Alliance by Count Dooku and the Republic. Senator Padme is assassinated two times on Coruscant. Anakin who has become an apprentice of Jedi Master Obi-Wan, is ordered to protect Padme while Obi-Wan discovers a clone army made for the Republic on a far planet. Anakin falls in love with Padme. Later, Obi-Wan, Padme and Anakin are captured by the Separatists but saved by the Jedi and the clone army. Anakin secretly marries Padme in the end. The last film of the prequel trilogy is *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith (RotS)* which begins with a full-scale war between Separatists and the Republic. Anakin kills Count Dooku and saves the chancellor Palpatine with the help of Obi-Wan. Later, the Jedi (refers to singular and plural community at the same time) that try to end the war in the galaxy. Palpatine who is actually a Sith lord manipulates Anakin to turn him to the dark side. With the hope of saving his wife Padme from death, Anakin pledges himself to Palpatine, but he causes Padme's death. Palpatine destroys both the Jedi Order and the Republic by building his new Empire. Anakin's body is ruined by Obi-Wan and he barely stays alive with cybernetic augmentations. The film ends with the building of the Death Star.

The original trilogy of the *Star Wars* series begins with *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope (ANH)*. This film's story is set in a galaxy ruled by an evil Empire. The film focuses on the struggle of the Rebel Alliance to get rid of the Imperial forces commanded by Darth Vader. The secret plans of the Death Star which is a gigantic weapon capable of destroying planets reach Luke Skywalker by chance. He goes to help the Rebel leader, Leia with his master Obi-Wan. With the help of a human smuggler and a Wookiee, they manage to rescue Leia and plan to destroy the Death Star. By using the Force, Luke succeeds in terminating the Death Star in time. The next film, *Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back (TESB)*, narrates the story of the evil Empire's pursuit of the Rebel Alliance. After the Empire locates the Rebel base in Hoth planet, the Rebels evacuate the planet and Luke goes to a separate planet to be trained as a Jedi by Master Yoda. Luke's friends escape to the Cloud City but they are captured by Vader. Luke arrives in the city to save his friends by challenging Vader. He learns that Vader is his father after he loses his right hand. His hand is replaced by a prosthesis in the end. The last film of the original trilogy, *Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi (RotJ)*, tells the story of the second Death Star's and the Empire's destruction. After rescuing his friends on Tatooine, Luke returns to Dagobah to finish

his training but Master Yoda dies after saying there is another Skywalker. Later, Luke understands that Leia is his sister. He faces Vader willingly while his Rebel friends try to destroy the Death Star. Luke resists the dark side and is tortured by the emperor. Luke's father Vader cannot stand his son's suffering and kills the emperor. He also dies as a redeemed Jedi Anakin Skywalker. Many planets celebrate the demolition of the Death Star and the fall of the Empire.

In Chapter 1, backgrounds of the theory and works will be written to inform the reader before the analysis chapters. In this first chapter, posthumanism as a critical theory will be explored in a detailed fashion. The prominent terms such as cyborg, companion species, speciesism, human and nonhuman will be explained. Later, posthumanism's criticisms of humanism and anthropocentrism will be our focus by presenting the definitions of these terms. Also, it will be mentioned how humanism emerged in history and how it shaped the perception of the human. Together with that, the historical background of posthumanism and its appearance in the history of critical theory will be told elaborately. The relationship between posthumanism and sci-fi is also an important point of this chapter. After this part, several posthumanist contemporary films in Hollywood will be briefly examined as current examples. The other part of the chapter focuses on the historical background of the franchise, particularly the years of the first films. The chapter will explain the prominent historical events in the 1960s and '70s U.S. that made *Star Wars* a popular franchise. To enrich my discussion, other sci-fi films in the 1970s and '80s in Hollywood will be analyzed shortly in a posthumanist context. Lastly, the universe of *Star Wars* will be explained to clarify some important points.

In Chapter 2, posthumanist analysis will start with the boundaries between humans and aliens in selected *Star Wars* films. To begin with, the relationship between humans and aliens will be discussed with several character and community examples. How the interactions of humans with aliens develop is the essential topic of this section. Additionally, some distinct alien species such as Ewoks, Wookies, Geonosians and Kaminoans will also be examined with the concept of humanimal. In this part, the humanlike and animalistic characteristics of these alien communities are explained in a detailed fashion. After these parts, some significant humanoid characters who are Yoda, Chewbacca, Jar Jar and Watto will be focused by illustrating their humanlike

traits and their interaction with human characters. This chapter will aim to blur the lines between humans and aliens.

The human-machine boundaries in *Star Wars* will be analyzed in Chapter 3. This chapter starts with an examination of the relationship between humans and droids (robots). Some human and droid characters will be my focus in this chapter because these characters exhibit interesting interactions that challenge many conventional definitions and norms of humans and robots. Particularly, human characters such as Leia, Luke, Padme and Anakin possess an egalitarian approach toward their droid friends. In addition to that, human-machine bodies will also be explored in this chapter. Similar to that, some significant mechanized human and humanized robot characters will be investigated in a detailed way. Cyborgs, droids and clones will be the topic of this part. Lastly, the clone predicament in the series will be focused by questioning the human qualities of these beings.

In the last chapter, Chapter 4, what makes the *Star Wars* universe posthuman will be discussed. This chapter will begin with the equality and diversity of beings from a posthumanist perspective. The concept of species cosmopolitanism will be exemplified with certain places and orders. Species, race and gender equality will also be mentioned by giving character examples from the films. Species representation in the Galactic Senate is another important point of this chapter. Furthermore, Donna Haraway's well-known terms companion species and significant otherness will be examined through several characters and communities. Additionally, complex web of lifestyles and languages in multispecies relations will be analyzed by focusing on diverse species in shared environments. Finally, the Force as a posthuman notion will be clarified through its interconnected, symbiotic and inclusive nature. This part involves myriad human, alien and droid examples so as to emphasize the posthuman quality of the series.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF POSTHUMANISM AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF *STAR WARS*

In this chapter, the theoretical background of posthumanist theory will be covered by mentioning the history of posthumanism and its relation with the humanist movement. Later, posthumanism's critique of anthropocentric thought, the relationship between posthumanism and science fiction genre, and the existence of posthumanist ideology in the contemporary films will be examined. The chapter will comprise numerous citations from many significant theorists who have shaped this critical theory for decades. In addition to that, the historical background of *Star Wars* will also be covered before transitioning to the analysis chapters of this thesis. To portray the atmosphere of the first films of the *Star Wars* franchise, important events in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in the United States will be mentioned (especially the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War) due to their historical importance for this thesis. After this historical background of the U.S., American science fiction cinema of the 1980s will be under focus while giving some examples of this genre in American cinema. Lastly, the fictional universe of *Star Wars* will be given to provide some important details of the universe with the aim of clarifying the posthuman framework of the franchise in a better fashion.

1.1. Posthumanism

In recent decades, posthumanism in critical theory has become one of the most important and influential theories of the 21st century. Just as feminism criticizes the inequality between men and women and Marxism criticizes the inequality of upper and lower classes, posthumanism criticizes the inequality between humans and nonhumans. Even though there is not a single and universal definition of this theory, a general definition of the word posthumanism can be made as follows: "Post-humanism or posthumanism (literally meaning 'after humanism' or 'beyond humanism') refers to any worldview, belief, or ideology that is critical of traditional humanism and associated theories about the superiority of humanity" (Kopnina 1-2). Indeed, posthumanism almost always deals with classical humanist ideology which is quite human-centered and universal. In humanism, the human is isolated from other forms

of life in nature and seen as an only organic entity. Posthumanist texts try to undermine this perception of the human to emphasize “the blurring of bodily borders, identities (gender, species, race) and even consciousness, in which isolating the ‘human’ from a human–machine assemblage, cadavers or another form of life is impossible” (Nayar 11). It is important to point out that the human in posthuman thought is decentered and seen as a part of the circle of life rather than an autonomous being that can dominate everything and depend on nothing to live comfortably. The human is not an independent living being in the ecosystem and is always dependent on instruments in his/her environment. Concerning this, Nayar defines the posthumanist theory as “the radical decentring of the traditional sovereign, coherent and autonomous human in order to demonstrate how the human is always already evolving with, constituted by and constitutive of multiple forms of life and machines” (11). The human concept here is not a traditional humanist one, but a reconceptualization of it by thinking beyond the limited and rigid human concept.

Another important topic in this critical theory is the debate over whether some beings are organic or inorganic. While this thesis is being written in 2024, humanity is entering a world where technologically modified bodies become increasingly normal with examples of prosthetic legs and arms or hairs. Even brain chips for brain-computer interfaces are being tested on some humans. So, it can be stated that our lives are getting closer to technological tools every day. Posthumanism also advocates that “[it] merely refers to an ontological condition in which many humans now, and increasingly will, live with chemically, surgically, technologically modified bodies and/or in close conjunction (networked) with machines and other organic forms (such as body parts from other life forms through xenotransplantation)” (Nayar 13). The hybridization of inorganic (e.g., machines) and organic (such as humans or animals) is one of the core elements in this theory. Not every living being can be “pure” and filled with “proper” qualities of his/her species. Thus, getting help from other tools through technological modification or organ transplantation is not a wrong way according to the posthuman philosophy.

Especially after the Second World War, the world entered the postmodern era which has been mostly about a disillusionment of the traditional and classical ideas like humanism. As Bodley writes “With the postmodern era, quite the backlash arose against the imperialist attitudes of traditional Western humanist thinking” (6).

Posthumanism was born in the postmodern tradition in the late 20th century, so it also criticized Western humanism and human exceptionalism. Therefore, it may be stated that posthumanism “rejects the view of the human as exceptional, separate from other life forms and usually dominant/dominating over these other forms” (Nayar 13). In this sense, the human is not a separate and isolated being from other forms of life and the master of all other beings. Rather, they are supplementary beings who can exist with other species together without harming or exploiting them. One of the most well-known posthuman philosophers, Rosi Braidotti, writes in her book that “posthuman theory contests the arrogance of anthropocentrism and the ‘exceptionalism’ of the Human as a transcendental category” (66). The theory then, challenges the concept of anthropocentrism and exceptionality of the human by its nature.

Human exceptionality is of course an artificial notion which has been constructed by humans. Posthumanism aims to break this notion as stated here “And in the process of exposing the myth of this human exceptionality, posthumanism deflects from the immediate realities of human domination of humans, a fact surprisingly watered down in its preoccupation with all things nonhuman” (Ahn 9). In fact, this human exceptionality is just an illusion made up by humans themselves although humans are still in need of natural resources, animals, plants and even machines to have a luxury life. Even though humans built big cities where they separate themselves from nature, they are building their structures by extracting various raw materials from nature. In a book about posthumanism, this issue is mentioned as thus: “Whatever our aspirations to species exceptionalism, ‘we’ have coevolved with the technicity of tools, share biological substance with nonhuman animals, and have always been radically dependent on the extraction of Earth’s natural resources” (Molloy et al. 10). Other than that, the exceptionality of humans is undermined due to the incorporation of difference between human and nonhuman DNA as it is mentioned here: “Critical posthumanism begins with the assumption that the human incorporates difference in the form of other DNA, species and forms of life, so that its uniqueness is a myth” (Nayar 13). In addition to that, unique aspects of the human evolve along with other living beings and they also evolve with humans to keep up with the changing environment. Thus, humans cannot be considered without nature, technology and the environment. Nayar indicates that posthumanism advocates the

unique human abilities, consciousness, and features which coevolve with other life forms, ecosystems and technology (14).

It is also necessary to emphasize the topic of subjectivity in the posthuman context. In the traditional humanist view, the human is accepted as the subject while all other beings (both animate and inanimate) are accepted as the object which exists only for the benefit of the human. Posthumanist thinkers criticize this point of view about subjectivity and try to establish a more embracing approach to life generally. Therefore, Nayar states in his book that:

Posthumanism as a philosophical approach involves a rethinking of the very idea of subjectivity because it sees human subjectivity as an assemblage, co-evolving with machines and animals. It also calls for a more inclusive definition of life, and a greater moral–ethical response, and responsibility, to non-human life forms in the age of species blurring and species mixing. (19)

In this case, posthumanism views subjectivity from the perspective of the human's coevolution together with nonhuman life forms and machines. It also changes the humanistic practices by pointing out heterogenic relations because of the fact that "Posthuman subjectivity reshapes the identity of humanistic practices, by stressing heteronomy and multi-faceted relationality, instead of autonomy and self-referential disciplinary purity" (Braidotti 145). Another important point about posthuman subjectivity is that the human as a subject is inevitably controlled and changed by the objects in his/her environment. The "autonomous" human cannot control his/her destiny totally with rationality and knowledge since he/she is influenced by other forces constantly and he/she has to adapt to his/her environment eventually. In an article entitled "Posthumanism", it is written that "Where humanism posited an autonomous, rational being in charge of its own actions and destiny – the knowing subject – posthumanism emphasizes how the subject is given over to and produced by other forces beyond its own control" (Ginn 2). Yet, there is a point that we must approach carefully and it is that posthumanism is not a misanthropic or antihumanist ideology. The human in this atmosphere is neither object nor subject, he/she is rather in between like all other beings. For this reason, posthumanism proposes ambiguity and "[It] cannot merely be antihumanist, but instead represents a radicalization and at the same time a 'relocation' of the human that transcends any dialectical historicization.

The human is thus neither the absolute subject of historicism nor is it merely its object” (Herbrechter 206).

Posthumanism is mostly associated with the post-stage (due to its name) or transcendence of human nature. Questions about human nature have been going on for centuries and there are still no clear answers for these questions. About this topic, Herbrechter writes that “A critical posthumanism will have to start mediating between the ‘abandonment or task eaufgaber’, on the one hand, and the ‘transcendence’ of human nature, on the other” (171). Human nature is not a fixed and stable one, and that is why it is not a practical or efficient approach to try ingrounding it to a certain place of norms. Rather, posthumanism supports the idea of transcending the boundaries and limitations of human nature which has been turned into a fixed and rigid construction created by humans. Thus, for posthumanist philosophers, to be able to reach other possibilities, humans need to transcend this fictional “human nature”. Additionally, the human exists in relation to other tools and items throughout his/her life. These items are generally technological ones which grant an easier and faster life. So, this perspective of posthumanism indicates that “The human is always a human-with-technology (and always has been)” (Ginn 2-3). Humans have invented tools and machines for thousands of years to improve life standards and they have always relied on technology and natural resources to do that.

This reliance on technology and natural beings demonstrates that the human species coevolved with other nonhuman beings and their environment. The resilience of the human species in the history of evolution is quite impressive. Wolfe calls humans as “human animals” by emphasizing that they are a part of evolutionary history, as explained:

It forces us to rethink our taken for granted modes of human experience, including the normal perceptual modes and affective states of *Homo sapiens* itself, by recontextualizing them in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of “bringing forth a world”—ways that are, since we ourselves are human animals, part of the evolutionary history and behavioral and psychological repertoire of the human itself. (xxv)

Thus, it may be said that the human species is just one species in the history of evolution, and we need to rethink the taken for granted notions about human experience to gain new perceptions about the human itself.

When we discuss human and nonhuman relationships in a posthuman context, we refer to not only organic nonhuman beings such as animals, plants or bacteria but also inorganic nonhuman beings such as machines or robots. The interesting part is that sometimes organic and inorganic elements can exist within the same organism. When a mechanic tool is integrated into an organic body, that body becomes a cyborg which is a hybrid entity of the organic and inorganic. One of the prominent feminist scholars who has written plenty of works about cyborgs is Donna J. Haraway. In her book *Manifestly Haraway* (2016), her definition of cyborg is that “A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (5). A cyborg naturally represents a hybridity of differences and it is both real and fictional, so it can be stated that it is an organism of dichotomous concepts. In contrast to humanism’s exclusionary view of the human among all beings, a cyborg consists of opposite pieces of material. Nayar explains Haraway’s critique of humanism by writing that “Haraway treats the human as a hybrid of machines and the organic body, thus marking an end to the idea of the sovereign human individual. Haraway proposes that the human evolved with the machine, and to separate the two as ‘origin’ and ‘prosthesis’ respectively was to negate the co-dependency of both” (36). Haraway here thinks that humans evolved not only with animals and plants but also with machines and classifying machines as separate things is just denying this coevolution process. From a classical humanist perspective, one could argue that the “normal” human body is the basis and origin of life, while technological organisms serve merely as subsidiary tools to “complete” or “fix” the human body, enabling a sense of perfection. However, another important point is that one may gradually lose their humanity with each augmentation they implement. Therefore, it is not an easy thing to define the cyborg because of its hybrid and fluid structure. Haraway also advocates a similar approach here since “The cyborg is a liminal creature, between the human and the machine, neither human nor machine, both human and machine” (Nayar 36).

Nayar later continues with Haraway’s cyborg feminism by pointing out the genderless characteristic of the cyborg culture. He indicates Haraway’s highlighting of

a postgender world where the cyborg destroys biological categories of gender and sex. She breaks down nature/culture and human/cyborg binaries (36-37). Haraway here has the idea that cyborgs may present us with a genderless world where sexual categories or boundaries can perish. Binaries and boundaries of humanism turn into a problematic situation because they cause inequality and hierarchy among all beings. Posthuman theory plays a crucial role here as “One of posthumanism’s key aims is to dissolve binary distinctions that characterize humanism, most notably culture/nature and self/world” (Ginn 1). These boundaries have existed for centuries in the humanist tradition and they need to be deconstructed owing to the fact that it is a necessity to acquire a posthuman environment in societies.

Furthermore, Haraway mentions cyborg authors and the Western myths by explaining that “In retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture. We have all been colonized by those origin myths, with their longing for fulfilment in apocalypse” (*Manifestly Haraway* 55). This choice of cyborg authors is quite expected because of the fact that central myths of Western culture were mostly humanist texts and Western people (and even some non-Westerns) usually have grown up while being exposed to these texts. Later Haraway talks about cyborg politics and its relation to language. She writes in her book that:

Cyborg politics are the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism. That is why cyborg politics insist on noise and advocate pollution, rejoicing in the illegitimate fusions of animal and machine. (*Manifestly Haraway* 57)

The cyborg is inevitably against wholeness and singularity because it consists of different pieces of organic and inorganic entities. It can even be deduced from this point that the cyborg is a grotesque figure like a zombie since it is both animate and inanimate. This characteristic of the cyborg may discomfort some people due to its similarity to the “real” human.

Another important concept in posthumanism is Haraway’s companion species. This concept is a demonstration of how humans and other species (especially dogs in her work *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* [2003]) interact, coevolve and cohabit in need of each other and both of them can live

more qualitatively by collaborating together. Nonhuman beings are significant others (the word other does not have a negative meaning here and it is not about marginalization or subordination of the nonhuman) and this means that dogs and other nonhuman beings are others but they are significant for humans and humans do not need to see these others as their opposition or inferior entities. Humans share the same environment, history and life with nonhumans and because of this, they have coevolved and coexisted together for ages. Nayar also explains Haraway's companion species as follows: "companion species': humanity co-evolves with other species, shares space with them, and hence ought to offer a different response to them" (38). In other words, humans should treat other species equally and respect them because they share the same environment and they need each other to live without problems. For this reason, in this concept, nonhuman beings are significant others for human beings and they need to be respected enough. Both humans and nonhumans are companion species to each other since "We are, constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh. Significantly other to each other, in specific difference, we signify in the flesh a nasty developmental infection called love" (Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway* 94-95). Haraway indicates that humans complete themselves by uniting with nonhumans and only in this way, they can be a whole. Moreover, she mentions the nature and culture dichotomy by implicating that they are also significant others for each other "The Companion Species Manifesto' is thus about the implosion of nature and culture in the relentlessly historically specific, joint lives of dogs and people, who are bonded in significant otherness" (*Manifestly Haraway* 108). If we look at culture as the place of humans and nature as the place of nonhumans (especially animals and plants), nature and culture may turn into a macro-level reflection of the human versus animal predicament.

Additionally, it is necessary to highlight that different labels such as race and gender also have an impact on the discrimination process. Taking into account all these explanations, companion species need to normalize these kinds of differences. Haraway mentions this topic in an article and writes that "Species reeks of race and sex; and where and when species meet, that heritage must be untied and better knots of companion species attempted within and across differences. Loosening the grip of analogies that issue in the collapse of all of man's others into each other, companion species must instead learn to live intersectionally" ("Encounters with Companion

Species” 101). If species want to be companions rather than binary oppositions, then they should learn to live in harmony together according to this idea. Moreover, this web-like framework of Haraway blurs various boundaries like wild/domestic since she proposes that human and nonhuman animals are world-sharing “partners” and they “make each other up” because they co-evolve (Ladino 130). Therefore, this may indicate that different species should treat each other like friends and they should see each other as “significant others” rather than merely as others in the basic meaning.

One of the most important topics in posthumanism is speciesism. Speciesism is another kind of racism in a broader sense. It is a discriminatory practice which privileges one species over another species just like racism privileges one race over other races. Thus, in this sense, speciesism posits humans as the superior species and it “positions the human as the dominant species that then controls, domesticates, oppresses, exploits, guards and pets non-human, animal species” (Nayar 131). Speciesism just like racism and even sexism works in a hierarchical and segregative system that benefits a certain group of beings. The dominant group represents the center while all other beings are pushed to the margin position as stated: “Speciesism is a form of racism in which some forms of life are consigned to the margins to be exploited, brutalized, ignored or eliminated” (Nayar 134). Thus, the otherization of species causes an unequal environment which hurts certain groups of beings considerably. In an article about animal philosophy and ethics, this issue is mentioned “In speciesism, belonging to a certain species is the basic criteria for moral consideration and provides the reason to discount members of other species” (Aigner 57). In this practice, some species are constantly reified and exploited by the dominant species. The problem of speciesism is highly criticized by posthumanist philosophers because this discriminatory system can be replaced by a more egalitarian one.

1.1.1. Critique of Humanism and Anthropocentrism

Posthumanist theory examines the human, their impacts on the environment, their relations with other species, and the human as a cultural construction in life. While doing these, the theory aims to subvert the human-centered point of view to reveal the value of nonhuman beings. Therefore, as mentioned before, it criticizes humanism ideology and anthropocentric practices in various works of art. The term *anthropocentrism* is defined in an article as follows “Etymologically derived from the Greek words *ανθρωπός* (anthropos, or human being) and *κέντρον* (kentron, or

center), the term ‘anthropocentrism’ is a worldview that privileges the aim of improving human welfare over other aspirations” (Kopnina 1). Along with anthropocentrism, it is also necessary to define humanism. In *Merriam-Webster* dictionary, it is defined as “devotion to human welfare” and “a doctrine, attitude, or way of life centered on human interests or values” (“Humanism”, np.). Anthropocentrism in this sense is a humanist thought that advocates superiority of the humans over other beings. That is, it is an approach which positions the human at the center of everything. In addition to that, “The terms ‘human chauvinism’ and ‘speciesism’ are closely related to anthropocentrism” (Kopnina 1). Humanism is a speciesist view by its nature due to its human versus nonhuman opposition. It also supports the idea of human exceptionalism which is another quality of speciesism.

Humanism as a movement emerged in the Renaissance Age when there was an idea of the human capacity to rule nature and to be the master of the world. In addition, the focus on human welfare became increasingly popular “Humanism, the cultural movement that gained prominence in the Renaissance, refers to the perceived duty to promote human welfare above other objectives” (Kopnina 1). This can be interpreted as human beings with an anthropocentric perspective during that period prioritizing their own interests and needs, mostly overlooking the welfare of other species. Furthermore, McMillan gives detailed information about the origin of the humanism movement by stating that “It was a historical movement that originated in fourteenth-century Italy, that developed for two centuries before eventually expanding across mainland Europe in the sixteenth century, being based on common ancient, medieval, and Byzantine sources, it laid the groundwork for western civilisation as we know it today” (27). The movement has immensely influenced the culture, tradition and worldview of the Western world with other values and ideas of the Renaissance period.

There were lots of works of art in the Renaissance Era that depicted the principles and points of view of humanism. One of the most famous of these works was Leonardo da Vinci’s *Vitruvian Man*. Da Vinci was a quite important Italian polymath of the Renaissance period and his drawing *Vitruvian Man* demonstrated the classical idea of man explicitly. Concerning this, Braidotti writes that:

the classical ideal of ‘Man’, formulated first by Protagoras as ‘the measure of all things’, later renewed in the Italian Renaissance as a universal model and represented in Leonardo da Vinci’s *Vitruvian Man* [...] That iconic image is the

emblem of Humanism as a doctrine that combines the biological, discursive and moral expansion of human capabilities into an idea of teleologically ordained, rational progress. (13)

“The measure of all things” is one of the basic notions of humanism and it puts the human to the status of master of the universe. Besides from that, the human here does not embrace all types of humans in the world. It refers to particularly European, white, male, Christian, young and heterosexual human in classical humanist thought. In this regard, the human is expected to have “a perfectly functional physical body, implicitly modelled upon ideals of white masculinity, normality, youth and health” (Braidotti 67-68). Obviously, a few people can achieve to possess all of these qualities and there will always be better ones in comparison. Thus, this ideal human image of humanist thought drives people to continually endeavour so that they may achieve the “perfect” human form. Later in her book, this troubled issue is mentioned by Braidotti as follows “Sexualized, racialized and naturalized differences, from being categorical boundary markers under Humanism, have become unhinged and act as the forces leading to the elaboration of alternative modes of transversal subjectivity, which extend not only beyond gender and race, but also beyond the human” (98). Humanism then, reinforces many categorical boundaries that go beyond the human since it may be impossible to possess all these qualities at the same time.

It can be clearly stated that one of the main aims of posthumanism is to deconstruct and destroy the centrality of human beings over other species since posthumanism strongly challenges the human as “the measure of all things”. Thus, posthumanism approaches this idea with scepticism as it is stated “Posthumanism is a collection of diverse ways of thinking that are highly sceptical about the centrality of the “human” in Western philosophy and politics” (Ginn 1). In posthumanist thought, there is no center at all, since all beings exist in a web-like structure and all things are interconnected. The theory does not support oppositional or rigidly defined concepts since everything can change and transform in time. In the posthumanist theory, there is no such thing as human with a big H and “critical posthumanism does not see the human as the centre of all things: it sees the human as an instantiation of a network of connections, exchanges, linkages and crossings with all forms of life” (Nayar 14). Thus, the human here does not represent the doer of everything but the agent in a bigger network or structure and he/she is only “the measure of some things” in short.

Concerning this topic, Ahn writes that “The human, though part of the vitality of life, is not the central figure of the universe but merely a part of the larger, intricately webbed environment that it can never dominate in entirety” (16).

In addition to that, humanism still exists in certain areas of life secretly or openly even today. The ideology has existed for hundreds of years and it took root, especially in Western culture, hence it is not easy to destroy it in several decades. It is challenged by some disciplines but “humanism has always displayed a remarkable resistance and adaptability” (Herbrechter 79). A significant number of works have been produced that are highly critical of humanism and its practices on the environment. This effort has slowed down the pace of the movement as Herbrechter mentions:

a critical posthumanism is aware that humanism as a grand narrative (to once again refer to Lyotard's expression) might have stalled but that it will continue to be available and that only persistent deconstruction will eventually change or undo humanism and prevent it from reinscribing itself in new forms within posthumanist and, in particular, transhumanist discourses. (52)

So, one can deduce that humanism as an ideology has always the potential to recur over and over especially when certain events happen in the future such as encountering aliens or enhanced artificial intelligence. In this case, posthumanist critics ought to continue deconstructing the humanist works and be wary of the direction transhumanist philosophy is taking.

Today, it is quite clear that we still live in an era of Anthropocene when human activities and influences on the environment can be seen in every corner of the world. Braidotti mentions this bio-genetic age by stating that “Posthuman theory is a generative tool to help us re-think the basic unit of reference for the human in the bio-genetic age known as ‘anthropocene’, the historical moment when the Human has become a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet” (5). Especially in the 20th and 21st centuries, human agency has changed the environment considerably due to the usage of technological and mechanical tools. In a posthuman thesis, the concepts of Anthropocene and anthropocentrism are explained as “ideas of the ‘anthropocene’ (the human-changed world), and ‘anthropocentrism’ (humans being at the centre of everything), which begins with even the earliest ideas” (McMillan 32-

33). It can be argued that the world has been transformed into something else today because of the highly influential human agency on the environment.

Another key notion in posthumanism is zoe by Rosi Braidotti. She defines zoe in her book as a “non-human, vital force of Life, which is what I have coded as zoe” (60). She thinks that in the posthuman theory, there should be a new definition of subjectivity. Later, she names nonhuman life as zoe to distinguish it from human life. In an article related to this topic, it is written that “In the human world, zoe, nonhuman life, is repressed, destroyed, and exploited on a large scale. Nevertheless, zoe finds their own way to disturb the human world, emerging unexpectedly from under furniture, from under floorboards” (Voet 4). Zoe here embraces all life forms that are nonhuman in nature and it constantly interrupts the anthropocentric life of the human. Indeed, humans cannot exist without zoe but in humanist thought, zoe is the inferior and subordinate side compared to humans. To be able to acquire a post-anthropocentric stance, Braidotti asserts that “Zoe-centred egalitarianism is, for me, the core of the post-anthropocentric turn: it is a materialist, secular, grounded and unsentimental response to the opportunistic trans-species commodification of Life that is the logic of advanced capitalism” (60). In contrast to the human-centered view, she recommends the zoe-centered perspective so that humans may have a chance to look at nonhuman life in a more egalitarian fashion. For this reason, embracing zoe is one of the key ways to dispose of anthropocentric practices in this world.

1.1.2. Background of Posthumanism

While discussing posthumanism, it is important to address the concept of humanism, particularly within the context of Western cultural history. Humanism transformed itself from the traditions of Greece and Rome to the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and Modernism. It inherently was affected by other ideologies and approaches in these eras. Gault mentions this characteristic of humanism as thus: “While the ancient humanism found from the pagan traditions of Greece and Rome was rediscovered and emulated in the Renaissance, the Enlightenment took ideas even further and fused them with ideas in empirical, rational sciences, and formed much of the basis of how western humanity has conceptualized itself since that time” (19). When humans and their ideas, goals, and lives changed, humanist ideology did not inherently remain in the same form. One of the main problems of humanism arises when the division between human and nature is introduced within its ideology. In The

Age of Enlightenment (17th and 18th centuries), humans started to isolate themselves from the natural environment by focusing on cultural construction, science, technology and art. Humans began to see nature as primitive, wild and controllable and because of that “Western Enlightenment thought enshrined a firm divide between humanity and the rest of nature” (Ginn 2). Until the 20th century, there was not a significant change in this worldview primarily. Yet, after the age of Modernism, the ideals of modernism (together with humanism) dwindled gradually. Especially in the post-war period, “Some of the complexities of Modernism began to splinter the movement, and the next chronological period, postmodernism (1950+) started to change in some radical ways, which eventually opened the doors to posthumanism” (Gault 22). Postmodernism aimed to break the many settled classical and Enlightenment notions of science, art, religion, reality, identity, language etc. Even though postmodernism denies to be defined, it is still necessary to give a general depiction of the theory as “a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning” (Aylesworth, np.). By questioning these very central and rooted concepts in human life, postmodernism naturally sets the ground for the appearance of posthumanism.

In this sense, it is quite clear that postmodernism influenced posthumanism considerably. Their goal of deconstruction and fragmentation methods is highlighted by Gault as follows: “If postmodernism saw the fracture of culture into disparate, deconstructed parts, then an important facet of posthumanism is the breakdown of the human self into fragmentary parts, some of which move beyond the loaded humanism that western culture has been carrying since at least the Enlightenment, and even back to the Renaissance” (24). Even if posthumanism is barely half a century year old, it challenges a movement which is hundreds of years old. Therefore, the consequences and influences of posthumanist ideology may not clearly be seen immediately.

Posthumanism did not emerge out of nowhere after the 1950s. With the effects of postmodernism and other critical theories, some concepts of posthumanism started to appear before the theory showed itself up. In American cinema, the first cyborg on screen was seen in the 1950s. In a book chapter called ‘At Home In and Beyond Our Skin: Posthuman Embodiment in Film and Television’ (2015), this event is explained like that “Perhaps the first on-screen cyborg can be found in *The Colossus of New York*

(1958), where the brain of an acclaimed scientist – severely injured in a car accident after winning a Nobel Peace Prize – is transplanted into a robotic body by his neurosurgeon father” (Krueger 172). It may have been quite interesting for the audience to see brain transplantation in the late 1950s since these topics were not even as common as today. Furthermore, there were some conferences about cybernetics which could be very close to the posthumanist discussions. Wolfe states that “posthumanism may be traced to the Macy conferences on cybernetics from 1946 to 1953 and the invention of systems theory” (xii). The emergence of new concepts and theories after the mid-20th century played an important role as a triggering element for the theory of posthumanism.

In the later years, the first theoretical use of the word posthumanism was made by Ihab Hassan in 1977. A literature theoretician in the U.S., Hassan wrote in his article that “We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism” (212). Humanism has changed many shapes in history and with the challenge and criticism of posthumanism, its classical and traditional values have been declining in importance day by day. Yet, it may still not be possible to assert that humanism totally transformed into posthumanism today. Posthumanism as a critical theory did not emerge until the 1990s, but in the 1960s, there were some signs that indicated the arrival of posthumanism. Wolfe mentions this point in his book:

The term ‘posthumanism’ itself seems to have worked its way into contemporary critical discourse in the humanities and social sciences during the mid-1990s, though its roots go back, in one genealogy, at least to the 1960s and pronouncements of the sort made famous by Foucault in the closing paragraph of *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*.
(xii)

In addition to these kinds of works, the 1960s and 1970s in the United States saw the emergence of the anti-humanist movement. This movement inevitably contributed to the development of posthumanism theory in the later years. Anti-humanism appeared with other anti-movements of those decades as stated “Throughout the 1960s and 1970s an activist brand of anti-Humanism was developed by the new social movements and the youth cultures of the day: feminism, de-colonization and anti-racism, anti-nuclear and pacifist movements” (Braidotti 16). Later in her book,

Braidotti continues to mention this movement by writing that “Anti-humanism emerged as the rallying cry of this generation of radical thinkers who later were to become world-famous as the ‘post-structuralist generation’” (23). Together with postmodernism, poststructuralism also contributed highly to the posthumanist ideology when it became a well-settled critical theory. The other post or anti movements helped to create a suitable atmosphere for the arrival of posthumanism. Toward the end of the 20th century, all these critical approaches developed simultaneously and therefore “Posthumanism is associated with the rise of poststructuralism through the latter half of the twentieth century, as well as struggles against hegemonic definitions of the human in feminist, postcolonial, anti-racist, and queer politics” (Ginn 1). As a result, posthumanism contains traces of most other critical theories developed after the 1960s.

In the late 20th century, Haraway’s cyborg theory increased the popularity of posthumanism significantly. Although Haraway never used the word posthumanism in her work, she argued the topics of it by questioning the human and the machine. She approached the cyborg figure from different perspectives, so “This figure of the cyborg proved enormously influential throughout the 1990s, not least because it shifted the debate about the inhuman, or the negative power of technology and time to constrain and inhabit human life, to analysis of how intelligent machines and new technologies of genetic modification” (Gane 432). The 1990s in the U.S. were the years of technological curiosity about robots, AI and space. This may be one of the reasons for the popularity of Haraway’s work. It is also important to mention that “With particular reference to the work of Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour, N. Katherine Hayles, John Law, Andrew Pickering and Nigel Thrift it can thus be said that a new paradigm of thought has been emerging which is characterized by its opposition to and its transcendence of humanism” (Herbrechter 48). Apart from Haraway, these other theorists made notable academic contributions to the development of posthumanism. Today, posthumanism has become a quite popular critical theory which is used a lot while countless technological, theoretical and philosophical developments occur constantly.

1.1.3. Posthumanism and Science Fiction

In the 20th and 21st centuries, the interest in science and technology has increased substantially with the scientific developments in the world. People began to

see that there may be significant improvements in the living standards of human beings and these improvements may happen through scientific progress. Thus, people wanted to imagine futuristic possibilities and concepts by speculating about science and technology. In time, science fiction became one of the most popular genres in fiction. It is defined in an online encyclopedia as follows “Science fiction, a form of fiction that deals principally with the impact of actual or imagined science upon society or individuals” (Sterling, np.). Sci-fi (shortened form of science fiction), is one of the genres of speculative fiction which is a much broader type of fiction. The sci-fi genre is a very wide genre and it involves various forms of narrative and topics within its scope. In a book chapter about science fiction aesthetics, Stockwell mentions this characteristic of the genre as follows:

You will find stories cast in the form of crime and detective puzzles, theological and philosophical explorations, ripping yarns, shoot-outs and battles, and meditative extrapolations; both pacy narrative drive and lyrical contemplation; characters that resonate as rich fictional people and characters that are everyman tokens and plot devices. (35)

This richness of sci-fi may be because of its popularity (a multitude of audiences/readers are open to new fictional experiments) and its imaginative quality.

Sci-fi makes the audience/reader question humanity’s place in the universe, its interaction with technological devices, the reliability of human consciousness, the ethical issues of technological developments and many other things related to future or futuristic concepts. So, it may be the best genre which makes the audience/reader question and criticize certain facts or possibilities of human nature. Moreover, it makes social criticism of some current events in societies by arguing problems in another reality predominantly. In this case, the genre resembles a critical theory that raises awareness of some inequality or exploitation issues of society. Concerning this, it is highlighted that “the genre of science fiction is not just any genre; it is the one that is closest to 'theory' and thus to his own way of thinking and writing” (Herbrechter 122-3). Sci-fi is a unique genre that creates a proper atmosphere to theorize prominent issues in various arts and sciences. It does not discuss some issues in a completely fictional universe without referring to any real event or person. Herbrechter mentions this connection between real and fictional in sci-fi in his book “Science fiction floats in a simulative space, in between realism and fictionality — a space, as we suggested

earlier, one might call ‘science faction’ [...] Science fiction is thus the most posthumanist of all genres because it usually deals with a definition of the human through science and technology and thus serves to explain ‘our technocultural condition’” (123). The genre envisions futuristic possibilities of already existing real entities and while doing that it demonstrates alternative realities of human existence enmeshed with technology. For this reason, sci-fi works have mostly posthumanist perspectives by turning upside down the concept of the human that we have known for centuries. Sci-fi commonly shows how humans can adapt to very unfamiliar environments and how they evolve in time. By doing that, it inevitably raises some ontological questions of the human. This indicates that “science fiction tries to achieve a ‘defamiliarization’ of an already posthumanized environment. It thus shakes the humanist value system to an extent where the ontology of the human becomes precarious and the subject of utopia as such” (Herbrechter 124). So, sci-fi works may break and deconstruct the traditional humanist images by using a posthumanist approach.

In the sci-fi genre, posthuman beings are portrayed in many different fashions. From time to time, posthuman beings (cyborgs, personified animals/plants, animalized humans, robots etc.) are represented as quite good beings or even heroes. Yet, they are sometimes represented as evil beings or even monsters and demons. Carrasco explains the portrayal of the posthuman and writes that “Frequently, science fiction portrays the posthuman as the object of cultural admiration or aberration, offering a dystopian reflection of the biogenetic structure of contemporary capitalism, impeding hence fruitful interactions between the human and the non-human” (173). These edge portrayals of the posthuman can fortify the binary oppositions between human and non-human hence the posthuman character becomes distant to the audience/reader. When this problem occurs, the audience/reader cannot identify themselves with the posthuman and the posthuman falls into the position of being unfamiliar again. Because of that, posthuman characters ought to be represented as “normal” and in a realistic manner.

Cyborgs and other forms of posthuman beings are quite popular in the sci-fi genre lately. The mixed structure of posthuman beings is getting more and more attention because “Contemporary science fiction is full of cyborgs—creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and

crafted (Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway* 6). Especially, the young adult generation is quite fond of posthuman themes and images in sci-fi film and literature as stated: “The boundaries between human and machine are more frequently challenged in young adult science fiction” (Ostry 233). The connection between sci-fi and posthumanism is getting stronger each day as there are new developments in the world of science and technology. Both sci-fi and posthumanism enrich each other since they focus on quite similar themes such as human identity, alternative reality, social impacts of technological advancements, artificial intelligence etc. Sci-fi works may be an inspiration source for posthumanist terms because of the fact that they experiment and imagine new ideas consistently.

1.1.4. Posthumanism in the Film Genre in Contemporary Times

The theory of posthumanism has been used considerably for analyzing films lately. There are numerous films that have posthumanist themes and topics in it. Reading the posthuman films with the key notions and terms is very efficient to be able to question classical humanist ideals. Particularly, most sci-fi films contribute to posthumanist theory to a degree. In the book *Screening the Posthuman* (2023), it is written that “we read film and theory in conjunction, filtering the film texts through the lens of key works in critical posthuman theory [...] we see contemporary posthuman cinema and critical posthuman theory as coeval responses to the same set of technological, ecological, and social phenomena” (Molloy et al. 13). Cinema enables the conveying of certain posthuman concepts and images in a visual way, imprinting them on the hundreds of millions of people’s minds; hence, it is one of the best mediums of art to portray posthuman concepts and images. Hauskeller points out that “especially in films that belong to the science fiction (SF) genre, we find literally the image of the human transformed into images of the posthuman. As a result, we learn to see ourselves differently” (4). In this sense, the posthumanist film seems like a mirror that shows us in a different form in an alternative reality. In addition to that, the representation of the posthuman on screen is quite different in each work. The hybrid portrayal of the human and nonhuman in cinema is explained “As a cinematic figure, the posthuman is typically represented as a hybrid between a human being and something nonhuman, the latter ranging from machines or digital technologies to plants, animals, monsters, and aliens” (Smelik 110). Mixing the human with the

nonhuman increases the chances of the audience's identification with these hybrid figures and normalizing the posthuman characters.

In the 21st century, especially some films captured very well the spirit of posthumanist ideology. One of those films is *Avatar* (2009) directed by James Cameron. It is an American sci-fi movie and the first film in the *Avatar* franchise. The film is set in 2154, during a time when Earth's natural resources are in a state of famine. Humans find a planet called Pandora and it is quite far away from the Earth. In Pandora, intelligent humanoid beings (Na'vi) live in touch with the natural environment. Throughout the film, Na'vi tries to protect their home planet from the invasion of humans with the help of several sensitive humans. The film begins with showing the Pandora planet and it does not show the Earth in any part of the film. The fact that there is another planet where living beings exist demonstrates that human beings are not the only living beings in the universe. In addition to that, the creation of avatars and making them remotely controlled bodies with human brains breaks the lines between human and nonhuman. Are human characters in their avatar bodies human or not? Their bodies are Na'vi bodies and that makes them nonhuman but their minds are human minds and that makes them human. They know both English and the Na'vi language (Jake learns it later) and this condition of knowing both a human and a nonhuman language consolidates their dualistic existence. While Jake is learning the Na'vi language, he learns the culture and the way of thinking of Na'vi folk as well.

Furthermore, nature in *Avatar* is not a separate environment from its inhabitants since Na'vi folk live in perfect harmony with nature. Na'vi form their culture to keep pace with their environment. They do not see themselves as the central beings in Pandora and they do not damage other living beings. They even establish a spiritual bond with nature with the help of trees. So, this folk transcends the limitations of dichotomies, boundaries and limits of humanist ideology and be one with nature. On the other hand, colonizer human beings (especially the security force) have quite anthropocentric views about Pandora and its inhabitants. They do not respect neither Na'vi folk nor other living beings in nature. Their only goal is to mine precious minerals and use them for their own benefit. They see Na'vi people as monsters who always kill and have no mercy. The transcendental ideas of the film are quite posthumanist due to the critique of anthropocentric views and the advocacy of ecocriticism.

Another important film about extraterrestrial life is *Arrival* (2016) which was directed by Denis Villeneuve. Just like *Avatar*, this movie also deals with extraterrestrial living beings and humans' relationship with them. One of the main characters, Louise Banks is a linguist who joins the U.S. Army and starts to research these alien beings together with a physicist Ian Donnelly. They try to communicate with two aliens whom they call "heptapods". After plenty of sessions with aliens, they interpret their writing and they translate it as "offer weapon". While studying the language of these aliens, Banks starts to see some visions which turn out to be her future. This happens because of the fact that she began to perceive time not in a linear but in a circular way just like the writing style of aliens. The aliens experience time differently from humans obviously. When Banks learns their language, she gains the ability to think like them which makes her a posthuman figure. Communication is one of the most important parts of life between beings. Banks manages to talk in the language of aliens and removes the language barrier by transcending her human limitations. On the other side, the translation "offer weapon" is interpreted as "use weapon" by China and this situation worsens the already hard-kept peace between humans and aliens. The arrival of aliens is a very tense event for all humanity. Yet, while Banks and Donnelly try to understand the aliens clearly and approach them carefully, other officers and some countries like China and Russia demonstrate a humanistic point of view by choosing violence rather than reconciliation.

Although none of the alien ships attack any place or person, humans show great prejudice and hostility towards aliens. They bomb aliens during a session for no reason. Even after this bombing incident, the aliens do not attack humans, they rather take a defensive position. The aliens here show a very embracing and egalitarian manner compared to humans since they do not see humans as others or monsters. Later in the film, we learn that "weapon" means the language of aliens. The ones who are able to learn this alien language achieve the ability to foresee the future and perceive time cyclically. When Banks is picked up by aliens and enters their craft, she contacts with the alien atmosphere and she sees the future clearly now. The aliens came to help humanity because 3000 years later, they will need the help of humans. Therefore, it turns out that they are not enemies but helpful beings. Then, Banks speaks with the Chinese General and convinces him not to attack and other countries decide to abandon the attack as well. After all these things, she writes a book named *The Universal*

Language. She represents the hybridity between humans and nonhumans by gaining an alien ability. She is now an in-between character, a bridge or a bond between humans and aliens.

Similar to these films, *Ex Machina* (2014), which was directed and written by Alex Garland, questions the differences and similarities between humans and nonhumans. Yet, different from the first two films, the nonhuman here is not an organic alien being, it is an intelligent robot in the form of a woman. The film begins with Caleb (one of the main characters) winning a holiday in the house of his boss. He is a clever programmer and his boss whose name is Nathan wants him to test a robot. The robot is called Ava and she has artificial intelligence. Ava has passed a Turing test which shows that she behaves almost like a human and it is quite hard to distinguish her from a human being. Even before the robot appears, the film substantially destroys the distinction between humans and robots. In the first encounter between Caleb and Ava, most of her parts are open and her machine parts can be seen. Only her face, hands and feet are covered with human skin. This is probably an intentional preference so that Caleb can always remember that she is a robot. Even in this circumstance, Caleb is attracted to her. Ava also warns Caleb about Nathan when the camera system turns off. In a later part, Nathan shows the brain of the robot and it seems like an oval sphere which contains a kind of intense liquid. Nathan calls it “wetware”. *Wetware* is a term which adds a biological quality to the brain. It is neither hardware nor software which exists in computers. Wetware contributes to these systems biologically just like the human’s central nervous system. Thus, by combining biological and mechanical parts, Nathan aims to create an advanced human powered by AI (Artificial Intelligence).

Moreover, Caleb questions why Nathan has granted a gender to Ava and he says that she could have been a box. Yet, Nathan’s goal here is to test Ava’s manipulating skills on and using her consciousness very well. In this process, he uses Caleb and he has designed Ava in accordance with Caleb’s sexual preferences. Ava pretends to love Caleb and wants to escape with him from the prison-like facility of Nathan. Even though, she does not have a female human body, mind and soul, Caleb falls in love with her which means that Ava manages to pass the test. Later in the film, Kyoko (a servant robot who does not know English) takes out her skin and shows her robotic body to Caleb. Bewildered Caleb thinks about whether he is a “real” human or not and he cuts open his arm to control inside of his body. In this case, the film urges

us to question what it means to be human. This very central question of posthumanism shows itself up multiple times throughout the film. Also, the human's superiority over other beings is challenged extensively. In the end, Ava manages to go out of her room and together with Kyoto, they kill Nathan. She covers her whole body with artificial human skin to feel more human. She "completes" herself by dressing clothes and feeling nature by herself. It seems like she has the ability to feel and sense her environment just like a human. Yet, by ignoring Caleb and killing Nathan, she is depicted as an important threat to humanity. Therefore, the film focuses on the dangerous sides of robots and demonstrates them as advanced versions of human beings that can destroy humanity.

1.2. Historical Background of *Star Wars*

Star Wars is one of the most popular multimedia franchises in popular culture in the world. In the U.S. and many other countries, the franchise has a large number of fans that can be seen in the events of the franchise. *Star Wars* is beyond a film series in cinema. It has turned into a widely known entertainment brand. It also contributed to American cinema so much in many ways such as special effects, mythological narration, blending of genres and creating a cinematic universe. Guynes and Hassler-Forest mention this topic by stating that "Starting as a film that almost single-handedly transformed the American film industry, expanding into a merchandising and branding juggernaut, and resulting in one of the world's most profitable entertainment franchises, *Star Wars* has, over the past 40 years, redefined the popular media landscape" (11). The universe of the franchise is expanded in many mediums which makes *Star Wars* a kind of unending American mythology. Indeed, it is quite obvious that the franchise was born out of American culture and tradition and it also influences American popular culture, especially cinema. The iconic places, characters and events in the franchise are embedded in the subconscious of most American people. So, from 1977 to today, "Characters and concepts rooted in *Star Wars* have permeated the consciousness of American society, often serving as cultural metaphors and reference points for significant public policy discussions" (Castillo 333). It can be inferred that the franchise is a cultural phenomenon in the U.S. and due to its popularity, it has transformed into a commercial brand rather than a work of art lately. Regarding this, Vaidya conveys that "The *Star Wars* saga is not just a series of films but also an industry, a business, and a 'multi-million-dollar global franchise'" (83). For this

reason, there are always new works (novels, films, TV Shows, video games etc.) being released every year in the *Star Wars* universe. The franchise did not become a giant brand in the entertainment industry for no reason. There are lots of historical and cultural factors that triggered the popularity of the franchise.

1.2.1. United States in the 1960s and 1970s

To understand the historical atmosphere of the first *Star Wars* films, it is necessary to mention the years and places of their release. This is important because certain significant events in the U.S. during those years were an inspiration to the director, George Lucas. One of the most prominent and protested events of the 1960s and 70s in the U.S. was the Vietnam War which is defined in an online encyclopedia as follows “Vietnam War, (1954–75), a protracted conflict that pitted the communist government of North Vietnam and its allies in South Vietnam, known as the Viet Cong, against the government of South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States” (Spector, np.). This war was a major event of the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Soviet Union, China and some other communist members supported North Vietnam and the U.S., South Korea and other anti-communist members supported South Vietnam. This war was heavily protested in the U.S. and it even caused an anti-war movement. In a book about the history of the United States, it is written that:

When the United States fought in Vietnam, it was organized modern technology versus organized human beings, and the human beings won. In the course of that war, there developed in the United States the greatest antiwar movement the nation had ever experienced, a movement that played a critical part in bringing the war to an end. (Zinn 347)

Especially after the Second World War, people in the U.S. were tired of war and its destruction. Tens of thousands of American people died in this war which was happening in another continent. Therefore, many people wanted peace and tranquillity, and they saw the war as unnecessary.

The antiwar movement was heavily supported by a major movement in the U.S. which was called the civil rights movement. Zinn continues in a later part of his book by writing that “Some of the first signs of opposition in the United States to the Vietnam war came out of the civil rights movement-perhaps because the experience of

black people with the government led them to distrust any claim that it was fighting for freedom” (358). So, the civil rights movement and antiwar movement moved forward together to advocate peace, equality and freedom. The U.S. government already had the values such as justice, liberty and equality apparently but it did not put into practice these values. Therefore, these opponent movements heavily criticized the government’s laws and governing for years. Regarding this, Zinn states that “In the civil rights movement, black people disputed that claim of America's standing for ‘freedom and equality.’ The women’s movement had disputed that claim, too” (468). People thought that the country’s presidency was not intimate and the government was usually overlooking the problems of equality and freedom. The country was in need of social and cultural change and these movements triggered a transformation that people needed in the post-war era.

It would be essential to clarify the civil rights movement in detail since it is a very important movement of the 1960s. The movement is all about segregation, discrimination and oppression of some groups of people because of their race. In the movement, African Americans demanded to have equal rights with white people and aimed to dismantle white supremacy. African American people suffered from the slavery system in the U.S. for centuries and in 1865, slavery was abolished legally. After that date, having a slave was forbidden in the country. However, unequal treatment and discrimination of African Americans did not end immediately. Therefore, the civil rights movement was a struggle and reaction to destroy almost a century years old cultural and social segregation of African Americans. The movement is defined as follows “American civil rights movement, mass protest movement against racial segregation and discrimination in the southern United States that came to national prominence during the mid-1950s. This movement had its roots in the centuries-long efforts of enslaved Africans and their descendants to resist racial oppression and abolish the institution of slavery” (Carson, np.). It was a very influential movement on the cultural, social, political, and legal structures of the country.

Protesters of the movement did not use violence in this period because they wanted a peaceful change. Violence might have damaged the goal of equality and justice. Also, by demonstrating civil disobedience and non-violent methods of protest,

African Americans started to get the support of wider audiences. Concerning this issue, it is expressed that:

The American civil rights movement, 1954-1968, provides rich examples of political activism as an occupational reconstruction. This phase of the freedom struggle of African-Americans was distinguished by the successful use of non-violent mass protest by civil rights organisations to challenge racial discrimination in the southern states. (Frank and Muriithi 5)

In that case, it was an era of reconstruction and reforming of certain rights and liberties. The civil rights movement, antiwar movement and other counterculture movements have challenged and changed many traditional values, norms and points of view in American society. Therefore, it can be inferred that “the legacy of civil rights was to become vital to the development of the ’60s counterculture” (Gair 31). In the counterculture movement, various artists such as Wes Wilson and Allen Ginsberg produced works of art that contributed to the ideals of the counterculture movement. Regarding this, Gair writes that “By taking art into the streets, Wilson and Ginsberg encourage those seeing the broadside to take their own forms of antiwar and more general countercultural behaviour into those streets, and to imagine other ways to challenge or avoid identification with State aggression or oppression” (191). By demonstrating their art on the streets, they also challenged the traditional sense of art because streets are not “appropriate” places to exhibit art. The importance of street culture can be seen in this movement as well.

Before the civil rights movement, African Americans lived under quite harsh circumstances compared to White Americans or other privileged races. They were denied of accessing even basic rights and opportunities that many other groups of people can access. In an article about black progress, the writer explains this issue through stating that “Admittedly, African Americans were victimized by segregated public facilities, the lack of equal access to employment, education, housing, and other aspects of civic life, but these matters were the central focus of the Civil Rights Movement” (Walters 126). Thus, in the civil rights movement, African Americans together with other marginalized communities reacted to this unjust system for years to gain their rights and have a real life regardless of their skin colour. In addition to these, the 1960s and 70s were dynamic and revolutionary years, hence the country was troubled by these moving events. Hall describes this atmosphere of the U.S. as follows

“After a season of moral clarity, the country is beset by the Vietnam War, urban riots, and reaction against the excesses of the late 1960s and the 1970s, understood variously as student rebellion, black militancy, feminism, busing, affirmative action, or an overweening welfare state” (1234). All these counterculture movements deeply shaped the culture, tradition and lifestyle of American people and their influences can be felt even today.

It is important to highlight that the counterculture of the 1960s did not react only to racial discrimination. Feminist groups also joined this movement by criticizing the unjust treatment of women and the inequality between genders. In this sense, the '60s in the U.S. were the years of opposing many kinds of discrimination in society ignored by authorities. Counterculture as its name indicates is the counter of the already existing settled culture. It was the culture of the marginal and it reacted to the central culture. Marginalized and otherized people wanted to have a voice in American life and culture, and these people give inspiration to the critical theories of the time as well. Certain important critical theories such as postmodernism, postcolonialism and poststructuralism got strength from the counterculture of the 60s because of their critical and questioning point of view.

Additionally, the 1960s and 70s in the U.S. saw the rising interest in space exploration and space travel. It is necessary to mention that the '60s and '70s were the years of the Cold War between the U.S. (with the other Western block allies) and the Soviet Union (with the other Eastern block allies). It was not a real warfare between these countries, but it was rather a geopolitical tension with an effort to get ahead in certain areas of science, politics, sports, diplomacy etc. One of the most important competitions of the Cold War was the space race. Both the U.S. and Russia spent so much money on space-related projects at those times. Indeed, in 1969, the Apollo Program of the U.S. became a successful project which resulted in landing two astronauts on the Moon for the first time in human history. In an article about the space race, it is mentioned that “The space race reached its peak during the Cold War with both the US and USSR competing and establishing various programs to ensure space technology remained balanced toward them” (Devezas et al. 967). During this race, American people started to wonder about space, the Moon, Mars, Venus and other planets or stars. This excitement about space is pointed out by Devezas and others as follows “Very surely most coevals of the baby-boom generation, living as teenagers in

the 1960s, have imagined that at the dawn of the 21st century we would be witnessing a very lively space flight era, with manned space stations and human colonies on the Moon and even on Mars” (964). So, the space race also gave hope to people for the future of space exploration.

The space race was not just a scientific and technological competition between the Western and Eastern blocks, it was also a political and ideological race. Both sides wanted to show the world which side is better technologically and scientifically. In this way, the sides aimed to get more support from other countries in the political arena. Their other goal is to promote their ideological stance (like capitalism and communism) in each of their victories. In short, space exploration became a race of prestige and prowess between these countries which had a lasting impact on the 20th century political scene and international relations. These important historical events also triggered an increased interest in sci-fi works related to space. In the 1960s and after, especially space opera (a subgenre of sci-fi) gained great attention from the audiences. Prominent examples of this subgenre are the *Star Trek* TV series (1966-) and *Star Wars* films (1977).

1.2.2. Science Fiction Films in American Cinema of the 1970s and 1980s

American cinema in the 1970s and 80s was quite dynamic and rich in terms of innovation of new ideas in the industry. The historical events that have been mentioned in the previous section affected films as well. The Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, counterculture movements, environmentalism, the Cold War, the space race and critical theories like postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism shaped the cultural and social structure of the country profoundly. The film industry reflected these historical events, movements and ideologies in many films in those years inevitably. Particularly, sci-fi films focused on social criticism (by using utopia, dystopia, and postapocalyptic fiction), political matters, alternative futures, human nature and humanity’s place in the universe. These films dealt with these issues by using concepts of robots, aliens, cyborgs, time travel, genetic engineering, space exploration etc. Woronoff explains that sci-fi cinema “deals with events that usually take place at a far-off time and often far-off place; thus, it appeals to the human desire to understand and perhaps predict the future” (ix). This imagining of the future generally impressed people in those years while there were plenty of technological advancements going on in the world. Later, Woronoff underscores another point by

expressing that “Although science fiction cinema is often termed escapism, it is also an attempt to come to terms with a rapidly changing world” (ix). In fact, sci-fi mostly uses a setting which is quite unfamiliar to the real world in the current time but it still reflects the issues, problems, interests, fears or dreams of today. Therefore, the sci-fi genre is not about the future essentially, but it is about today and it explores the future versions of today’s issues by doing fictional experiments.

As mentioned before, the historical and cultural events of the 60s and 70s triggered an interest in the sci-fi genre in both literature and film. Before these years, sci-fi was regarded as a niche and geek genre ignored by mass audiences. In a book about sci-fi cinema, the popularity of sci-fi films is highlighted that “In contrast to earlier decades, traditional science fiction of the late 1960s and early ’70s reached unprecedented popularity on television and in film” (Sterling, np.). In those years, audiences enjoyed seeing similar versions of their dreams about the future on screen.

Sci-fi films of the 60s and 70s were not very colourful or vivacious ones due to the fact that political and social events of those years were quite serious and tense. Booker explains the tone of the sci-fi films in those years by writing that “However, with the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal hovering over American society like twin dark clouds, the sf films of the early 1970s were almost universally dark in tone” (44). In these periods the sci-fi films were generally representing monstrous aliens and unfriendly robots that try to harm humanity. In American cinema, such examples of sci-fi films include *Westworld* (1973) directed by Michael Crichton, *Alien* (1979) and *Blade Runner* (1982) both directed by Ridley Scott. These groundbreaking sci-fi films have shocked the audience with their presentation of monstrous aliens and robots that are pessimistic about the future of humankind lost in dark settings, tones, strange visual images and soundtracks. The alien character in *Alien* film represents a hunter figure and deadly creature with extraordinary adaptation skills. The other characters such as an android and a computer were illustrated as insensitive and threatening enemies of humanity due to some priorities in their programming. In *Blade Runner* and *Westworld*, robots were disturbingly presented as almost human-like characters. These films present what will happen to human beings if they lose control of the AI in the future. Thus, prejudice and fear of robots of the time are reflected in the films because robots will become the ultimate enemy of humanity rather than serving them. Consequently, the aliens and robots that were depicted as fearful enemies of humanity

in the U.S. film industry of the 1970s and 80s have been pictured as posthuman transformed friendly aliens and robots with a new sci-fi film series *Star Wars*.

Generally, in the 1970s and 80s, sci-fi films started to attract the attentions of film editors and became an interesting genre especially for the young generation. It is quite natural that the impactful events of the time also influenced sci-fi films since as stated above, the sci-fi genre has not totally an escapist stance. On the other hand, there were also other films at the end of the 1970s and 80s that got rid of the dark and dull tone. One of these films is mentioned as follows “This darkness was lifted with the release of *Star Wars* in 1977, providing rollicking feel-good entertainment with vaguely mythical undertones, while looking nostalgically back on the serials of the 1930s” (Booker 45). Indeed, *Star Wars* films were what audiences adored since it was more colourful and cheerful compared to other sci-fi films in those years. Moreover, *Star Wars* films were more escapist than other sci-fi films even though they reflected the issues of the time indirectly. In a book regarding the history of *Star Wars*, it is stated that “In addition to providing a ‘warm and fuzzy’ style of optimism that audiences were eager for once the Vietnam war and Watergate scandal ended, *Star Wars* also capitalised on the underground growth of science fiction and fantasy” (Kaminski 10). Therefore, it can be said that *Star Wars* films attracted so many sci-fi and fantasy fans and people who wanted to watch a vivacious and optimistic film set in the futuristic posthuman universe.

1.2.3. The *Star Wars* Universe

Different from the films that have been examined above, *Star Wars* films brought a quite different tone and colour to American cinema in the 1970s and 80s. The very optimistic and heroic narrative of the films excited and inspired many young people at those times. The franchise did not show a gloomy and dystopic science fiction environment to the audience, it rather showed a thrilling and adventurous atmosphere that can grasp the attention of both sci-fi fanboys and broader audiences. The first trilogy films also popularized the sci-fi genre because they were easy to understand and did not focus on a realistic scientific portrayal of the universe to a great extent. It also attracted many people’s attention due to its epic heroic narrative structure which was quite familiar to the audiences in those years. The franchise used many well-known classical themes and archetypes as stated:

Something about *Star Wars* appeals to the adults who grew up with it as well as the children experiencing the universe for the first time, a fact that seems strange considering that, for all intents and purposes, the tale of *Star Wars* is nothing new. The struggle between good and evil, the princess in need of rescue, the heroic main character, the rebellious and reluctant comrade, and the comedic “jester” character have been used in epic fiction since its inception. (Pianka 2)

Additionally, the franchise also focuses on the morality and spirituality of the characters by adding mystical powers. Vaidya explains this quality of the franchise through noting that “Both trilogies focus on the central themes of good vs evil, religion and morality” (81). Therefore, it can be expressed that these well-known narrative structures and themes in the universe of the franchise also contributed to its popularity.

As mentioned before, the franchise’s setting is a totally fictional galaxy where a multitude of different species (including human beings) live together in a highly technological era. Each species is quite distinctive and unique. Human beings are just one of the thousands of species in the galaxy. Some planets include only one indigenous species like Rodia while some planets have quite diverse populations of species like Coruscant. Alien beings are just normal citizens that do not threaten the existence of humanity. In fact, there is no Earth in *Star Wars* and there are few planets where human beings are the dominant living species such as Alderaan. There are also some planets where nonhuman beings are manufactured. For instance, on a planet called Geonosis, battle droids are manufactured in factories by the Separatists. Furthermore, the clones of the Republic are produced in Kamino. It can be told that the planets and other kinds of places in *Star Wars* have a variety of inhabitants from humanoid aliens to completely animal-like creatures.

What is more, one of the most important elements in the universe of *Star Wars* is the Force. The Force is a very key element of the series, a kind of mystical energy that binds all living beings together and creates life, balance and harmony in the galaxy. It exists in all living beings even though most beings do not know how to use it actively. The term is defined as follows “A crucial element of the *Star Wars* film sequence, the “Force” is a somewhat enigmatic power drawn upon by the Jedi Knights of that sequence to help them battle against evil, though the Force also has a dark side that is drawn upon by the Sith order (including the iconic Darth Vader) within *Star*

Wars in the pursuit of evil” (Booker 127). The good versus evil theme in the franchise can be seen in its purest form in the Force. The Force has both light and dark sides but it never takes sides since the balance is established when these both sides are present equally. Force sensitive beings like the Jedi and the Sith can feel disturbances in the Force. Also, the Force is not affected by time and place since it exists everywhere and at every time.

In conclusion, the *Star Wars* universe is very rich in terms of its numerous alien beings, robots, planets, cultures, traditions and orders. The *Star Wars* series created by George Lucas is a kind of an American “myth for our times, fashioned out of bits and pieces of twentieth-century U.S. popular mythology” (Gordon 73). The *Star Wars* myth consists of countless works in many formats that are still being produced. The galaxy in the *Star Wars* universe is huge and even in the very remote corners, there are many different living beings who are not affected by the main events. For instance, the Outer Rim planets are generally less developed ones and because of their distance to the Core Worlds, they are not directly impacted by the events and changes that happen in the Core Worlds like Coruscant. Thus, the franchise has always the potential to produce new stories and even to narrate the same events from other perspectives as the same event may influence the other planets or systems in different ways.

CHAPTER TWO

BOUNDARIES BETWEEN HUMANS AND ALIENS

Posthuman films in American cinema challenge the clear-cut definitions, norms, and boundaries between humans and nonhumans. In U.S. popular culture, the *Star Wars* films serve as prominent examples of posthuman works in Hollywood. As stated above, the franchise demonstrates a quite rich universe filled with various aliens. *Star Wars* universe does not consist mostly of humans and it is not dominated by humans too. In this sense, the universe of *Star Wars* is quite different from our real universe where no intelligent alien species has been discovered yet. In addition, there is not any central planet that has life exclusively (Coruscant is not the central planet of the whole universe, but rather a galactic capital). Space exploration is not an important goal since most of the galaxy has already been known. What is more, there is no excitement about discovering aliens in the *Star Wars* universe like in today's real world. In fact, the term *alien* does not even exist in *Star Wars* literature because of the fact that every species can be alien to other species. While watching the franchise, all nonhuman organic sentient living beings may be referred to as aliens by the viewers. Yet, when viewed from the perspective of individuals in the galaxy, other species are likely perceived not as aliens but as different races. By removing the human world and expanding the narratives of humans to a galactic scope, Lucas manages to destroy the human-centered structure substantially.

In addition to that, aliens are sometimes represented as cute and good-hearted beings who can be loved by the audience. This goofy and appealing tone of aliens in *Star Wars* films was different from the other sci-fi films in the 1970s and 80s. Badmington expresses this difference of the films "On the one hand, contemporary western culture, which once sought to repel extraterrestrials, now seems to have fallen in love with all things alien. The other is now welcomed, embraced, celebrated" (151). Thus, the portrayal styles of aliens on screen generally determine how the audience perceives them. This kind of presentation of aliens on screen makes the audience identify themselves with certain alien characters since especially some aliens have quite similar cultures and behaviours to humans. Consequently, in this chapter, the

boundaries between humans and aliens will be analyzed scene by scene from a posthumanist perspective in *Star Wars* films.

2.1. Relationship Between Humans and Aliens

Nonhuman sentient living beings are usually associated with animals or animal-like figures by humans (especially if they communicate differently from humans). So, humans' imagining of aliens (who are not discovered in reality) may resemble animal-like portrayals. Due to the popular belief of aliens as non-humanoid beings, human characteristics, values and lifestyles are not related to alien beings in most science fiction films. Yet, one of the good examples that gives a different portrayal of aliens and their relationship with humans is the *Star Wars* saga.

In the first film of the franchise, *ANH*, nonhuman organic sentient beings (aliens) are first introduced on the famous desert planet Tatooine in the galaxy. At the beginning of this film, native alien species of Tatooine are called Jawa and they are shown in red clothes with hoods. They are short scavengers and generally depicted as little troublemakers since they often disintegrate machines and steal droids. Besides, they sometimes sell broken machines or droids to people and because of that, they are not trustworthy. After capturing two idle droids (R2-D2 and C-3PO) in the desert of Tatooine, they exhibit these droids along with others to sell them to a human family in the desert (*ANH* 17:12-19:40). Jawas speak in their own native language with Luke and Owen (Luke's uncle). It seems that both sides understand each other and treat each other properly. Yet, Jawas probably try to sell a broken droid and swindle these humans in this scene. On the other hand, these two humans here are well-mannered and they just want to buy two droids with their money so that they can use their help in the farm work. The first interaction between humans and nonhumans does not end smoothly due to Jawas's sneaky approach to these humans. In this sense, the representation of the first alien species gives the impression that aliens are unreliable, weird and even dangerous beings. Despite this negative representation of Jawas, they may still be perceived as cute and child-like beings because of their behaviour, dialect and height. Moreover, neither aliens nor humans otherize or humiliate each other while communicating and they see the other species as just a resident of the planet.

Apart from that, Luke's next interaction with an alien being does not end in a good way again. When he and his master Obi-Wan Kenobi go to a bar in Mos Eisley

(a city in Tatooine), Luke sits and drinks in a chair quietly. Then, an alien yells at Luke in an alien language for no reason and Luke ignores him. A friend of that alien says that they do not like him and attacks Luke even if Obi-Wan warns them carefully (*ANH* 46:28-47:19). Obi-Wan defends Luke with his lightsaber and cuts them. This alien is another troublemaker and dangerous one just like Jawas, but here the alien's appearance is not pretty or child-like. He rather resembles a wild animal that can hurt people with his big teeth. Not only his appearance but also his behaviour is threatening. This tense moment is softened with the bar music and with the introduction of Chewbacca immediately. Chewbacca as an alien is in the position of a friend of human beings here. He is both a friend of Obi-Wan and Han Solo because he sits at the same table with them (*AHN* 47:50-49:38). Chewbacca is a very important alien character in the *Star Wars* original trilogy and he will be analyzed in detail in a later part.

In the bar scene, the last part is Han Solo's encounter with Greedo, a Rodian alien being. He is a bounty hunter in Tatooine and he searches for Han. He threatens Han with a gun and he speaks in an alien language, but Han understands him quite well. He is a humanoid alien whose manners and movements are quite similar to a human being. Because of Han Solo's debt to a crime lord, Greedo tries to kill Han and wins his bounty reward from the crime lord. At the very moment, Han swiftly shoots him under the table (*ANH* 49:56-51:04). This scene is another representation of aliens as threatening and dangerous beings for humans. In addition to that, violence is normalized in the bar scenes as the bar community does not interfere with any fights or murder notwithstanding their witnessing. Right after this scene, Han goes to his ship and sees Jabba the Hutt (the crime lord of Tatooine) there. Jabba wants Han to pay his debt immediately but Han manages to gain more time to pay (*ANH* 52:40-54:10). Jabba's appearance may give the feeling of a menacing crime lord to the audience and he is the one who is responsible for Greedo's attack at the bar. With his bounty hunters, Jabba here is otherized and becomes an antagonist of Han as a nonhuman being. He is another character that creates a problem for humans in *ANH*. He becomes a much more evil character in a later film of the series.

Even though aliens are not presented as an ultimate enemy and monstrous beings whose aim is to destroy the human species just as in some 1970s and 80s sci-fi films, most aliens in the first film of the franchise are presented as dangerous and

bandit-like beings. This may be due to the fact that Tatooine is not a safe place where crime lords rule the planet. There are lots of different alien species living on the planet, especially in the city of Mos Eisley. In fact, in this multispecies environment, everybody can be dangerous and evil including humans (for instance Tuskar people are depicted as bandit-like sand people). Because of the fact that Tatooine is quite far from the central planets in the galaxy, it is a planet hard to inspect by the Empire or Republic constantly. It is not a very developed or civilized planet compared to the Core Worlds which are much closer to the capital city of Coruscant. It is also a planet filled with bounty hunters, crime lords, pirates and slaves. Therefore, Luke's and Han's interaction with aliens causes a problematic situation one after another (except for Chewbacca).

Even in these circumstances, this film manages to demonstrate a multispecies atmosphere where human and nonhuman species are treated as equal beings without any discrimination or privileges. One can deduce from that, this goofy and complex social structure of Tatooine removes many dualisms and binary oppositions among species (for both humans and aliens). Haraway arrays many problematic dualisms in her work "Chief among these troubling dualisms are self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, civilized/primitive, reality/appearance, whole/part, agent/resource, maker/made, active/passive, right/wrong, truth/illusion, total/partial, God/man" (*Manifestly Haraway* 59-60). By combining alien and human lives and making them interact with each other constantly, Lucas offers a posthuman relationship between humans and nonhumans. Both humans and aliens communicate, trade, spend time and have fun together.

A much more friendly relationship between human and alien species occurs in the *RotJ* in the forest moon of Endor. The native species of Endor is Ewoks. When the Empire occupies the planet to supply an energy shield for the safety of the uncompleted Death Star, it becomes impossible to destroy the Death Star without deactivating the shield. Because of this reason, Rebel Alliance sends a team to deactivate the shield generator in Endor while battling in space with their forces. This team consists of Leia, Luke, Han Solo, Chewbacca and two droids (R2-D2 and C-3PO). On the planet, Leia faints after falling from a speeder bike. An Ewok finds Leia and approaches her uneasily. The Ewok is afraid of Leia because he thinks that Leia can hurt him. He does not speak in English but their native language and Leia friendly approaches him by

offering food (*RotJ* 1:02:48-04:40). The Ewok here seems like an untamed animal-like alien being. After he eats the food that Leia gives him, he begins to trust her and sits beside her. After a while, Leia is attacked by an Empire stormtrooper and the Ewok saves her by distracting the stormtrooper (*RotJ* 1:04:48-05:59). At the end of this scene, they become friends and the Ewok takes Leia to his home. Therefore, it can be said that they get rid of the stormtroopers with interspecies cooperation. The Ewok here is depicted as a supporter of humans, not an enemy or evil being.

2.2. Aliens as Humanimals

In the *Star Wars* universe, especially some aliens stand in a place between humans and animals. These beings have characteristics of both humans and animals within a single body. They are animal-like beings who have also human behaviour, values, culture, tradition and lifestyle. These beings are self-aware, have advanced cognitive abilities and are capable of thinking abstract notions partly or totally. They also have characteristics such as having a nonhuman language, different organs from human beings, wildness and keeping in touch with nature. In this sense, these alien beings blur the distinction between humans and animals by possessing qualities of both species.

There are tons of humanoid alien species in the *Star Wars* franchise but it is not possible to examine all these species here. Therefore, only four outstanding humanoid aliens in the original and prequel trilogies will be our focus in this subchapter. These alien species are Ewoks, Wookies, Geonosians and Kaminoans. Due to the fact that these alien beings have qualities of both humans and animals, they can be called humanimals. In the history of fiction, there were lots of humanimal figures and concepts in mythology, folklore or fantasy fiction for thousands of years. With the technique of anthropomorphism, some writers attributed human characteristics, behaviours or emotions to nonhuman beings. Thus, humanimal is not a new notion that has appeared recently. It is perceived with different perspectives with the help of recent critical theories like posthumanism. Concerning this, it can be stated that “The humanimal, for example, aims to open up traditional (Western) conceptions of anthropomorphism that may foreclose other cultural meanings and understandings” (Pearson 13). So, this term has other cultural meanings that may reveal different interpretations of texts while analyzing the boundaries between humans and animals.

The older texts usually have humanimal concepts with the usage of anthropomorphism. For instance, many mythological texts attributed human characteristics to deities to be able to explain “supernatural” phenomena in nature. The humanimal figures in these texts mostly served religious and symbolic purposes of societies. On the other hand, sci-fi texts generally use humanimal concepts with the purpose of exploring hypothetical scenarios, criticizing contemporary issues or challenging the scientific boundaries between humans and animals. The humanimal concept makes the audience question the nature of morality, consciousness and identity in various ways. So, while humanimal figures in mythological texts are highly influenced by the culture, religion and traditions of ancient societies, sci-fi texts have these figures to depict speculative imaginations and questions about the future of humanity. *Star Wars* films offer both sci-fi and mythological humanimals by exploring distinct cultures, traditions, languages, norms and values of myriad alien beings in the galaxy.

One of the best examples of humanimal species in *Star Wars* films are Ewoks. Ewoks are tiny, primitive and furry alien species who are natives of Endor. Due to the fact that Endor is a forest moon, Ewoks live in a totally green habitat among numerous trees. The forest is generally associated with the importance of nature and natural resources. It is a home for various living beings and it is a fertile land for many living beings. The peaceful and harmonious life of Ewoks is disrupted by the invasion of the Empire and the building of the shield generator for the Death Star in *RotJ*. The first encounter between an Ewok and a human being has already been covered above, so it would be better to dive into Ewoks as an alien community. Solo, Luke, R2-D2 and C-3PO fall into a trap in the middle of the forest and they are surrounded by Ewoks (*RotJ* 1:09:02-10:29). Ewoks are presented as a native tribe who are furry, wild, primitive, threatening and uncivilized in the first place. C-3PO shows up and they start to worship him thinking that he is a God. Even though C-3PO understands them and can speak Ewokese, he states that “They’re using a very primitive dialect” (Kasdan and Lucas, *RotJ* 61). Their primitive characteristic is one of the first things that makes them seem like animals since in the nature/culture binary dichotomy, primitiveness is mostly associated with nature and nature is associated with animals rather than humans.

In addition to that, their lack of clothes and their furry bodies are other animal qualities of Ewoks since nakedness usually symbolizes animality and primitiveness in

traditional humanist thought. Civilized societies wear clothes and cover their skin. Besides, in *RotJ* the soundtrack of Ewoks evokes a natural, primitive and wild tribe community with their rudimental and indigenous instruments and whimsical melodies. After capturing the Rebel team, they hold a banquet in C-3PO's honour and they will eat Luke, Han and Chewbacca. This means that they can eat human meat which is a characteristic of some animals. In this scene, they seem to be wild animals that threaten humans. Furthermore, their physical appearance is quite different from a human being. Their height is quite short, almost half of an adult human. Their ears are upon their head while in humans, the ears are located on the sides of the head. They have three fingers while humans have five fingers. So, these differences in physical appearances put them into the category of animal-like species even though they are humanoid.

On the other side, Ewoks have some qualities which are very close to human qualities. First and foremost, the habitat of Ewoks looks manmade owing to its highly complex and detailed structure with roofs, bridges and stairs (*RotJ* 1:15:50-16:10). These village houses are kind of similar to the tree houses made by human beings in real life. Although these Ewoks are primitive alien species in Endor, they have their own architectural culture apparently. They also have advanced tools to cook their hunt as they tie Luke, Han and Chewbacca into a big cooking tool. Most animals cannot build such complex tools by using woods but this alien species can do it just like primitive humans. They also made wooden spears by forming woods with sharp tools which means that they have weapons (*RotJ* 1:09:30-10:25). Animals usually use their own organs (such as claws, teeth, beaks etc.) to defend or attack another living being. Yet, Ewoks manage to build weapons for themselves in their village. This means that they are intelligent enough to calculate and make such weapons. They do not use their organs while defending or attacking someone else like animals. It is also important to point out that Ewoks are bipedal alien species. They could have been quadrupedal just like a bear but their bipedal quality makes them a more humanoid species in the film. The bipedal nature of Ewoks greatly contributes to their tool-making abilities because of the fact that they have two free hands to make many tools to increase their life standards. Concerning bipedalism, it is written that "with the erection of human posture and the freeing of the hands for tasks other than walking, tool usage gained more room to deploy" (Eckel 60). When a human being is born, they cannot walk directly as a baby, so they crawl like a quadrupedal. In time, the baby's body develops

and they can walk on foot and after that, they can use different tools with free hands. Similar to this situation, Ewoks also take advantage of being a bipedal species which makes them humanlike here.

Another important detail in the Ewok society is language. Even though their appearance seems like animals, their language is quite complex and developed. Their dialect is primitive but they do not make similar sounds to communicate with each other. For instance, cats meow, dogs bark, and lions roar to communicate with other living beings. So, most animals utter similar sounds to express their feelings or thoughts. Different from these animals, Ewoks speak their own unique language in the film which is called Ewokese. Even though it does not sound as complex as a human language, it still has lots of different sounds and words in it. C-3PO as a protocol droid can translate every sentence of Ewoks into English in *RotJ*. With the help of C-3PO, humans can communicate with Ewoks in a proper way. Even if Endor is a quite far forest moon where only native species live, the Ewokese language exists within the language software of C-3PO. The ones who programmed the language information of C-3PO must have had the data of the Ewokese language so that he could speak and understand Ewokese. In short, Ewokese is a known language in a database of languages in the Galaxy which means that it is a defined and partially developed language.

Additionally, Ewoks also have a belief system because they believe that C-3PO is some kind of a God. Religious beliefs are visible only in the lives of human beings. Animals may have developed religious beliefs or even practices in an unknown way to humans, but the religious beliefs and practices of Ewoks are quite similar to human religions. Their worshipping style to C-3PO with their hands makes them quite humanoid living beings. In addition to that, when Luke uses the Force and makes C-3PO fly in front of Ewoks scares them quite much (*RotJ* 1:14:38-15:35). Ewoks are afraid of C-3PO's magic here and they believe that something bad will happen to them if they do not release their captives. The fear of God's wrath exists in almost every human religion and Ewoks also believe in a similar way here. Therefore, it can be stated that their belief system is another cultural value that makes them highly humanoid beings.

Similar to Ewoks, Wookiees are also furry humanoid alien beings who live in a place covered with trees. The homeworld of Wookiees is a forest planet called

Kashyyyk that is quite natural and unpolluted. The planet Kashyyyk is first shown in *RotS* toward the end of the Clone Wars. The Jedi Council, especially Master Yoda has good relations with Wookiees, so he wants to support them against the Separatist forces. Kashyyyk has lots of giant unique trees and there are wooden buildings on these trees just like Ewoks's houses in Endor moon (*RotS* 48:08-49:32). This scene clearly shows that Wookiees live in harmony with nature and they adapt themselves to the conditions of this planet without devastating or transforming nature. They manage to keep pace with the formation of trees and the geography of the planet. In this case, just like animals, this alien species embraces the rules of nature rather than trying to change its essential structure for their own purposes. There is no any distinct separation between culture and nature in Wookiee culture since their culture is already compatible with the environment in Kashyyyk.

In the *RotJ* and original trilogy films, Wookiees are demonstrated as fully furry alien beings who are native species of Kashyyyk. The physical appearance of Wookiees is the first thing that makes them look like nonhuman animal-like beings. Their size is much bigger and they are much taller than an average human being. Contrary to Ewoks's small size, their big size differentiates them from humans here. Also, their mouths and noses are quite different and unique. Even though their hands resemble the hands of a human, they are black and not very recognizable from their arms. Just like Ewoks, they wear almost no clothes or accessories. This feature brings them even closer to the animal species as nakedness is mostly associated with animality and primitiveness as mentioned above. In addition to that, it is necessary to point out that Wookiees are extremely furred, even more than Ewoks. Having a significant amount of fur on their body generally symbolizes animality, as human beings do not typically have such extensive hair on their bodies.

Another important issue about the animal side of Wookiees is their language. This alien species cannot speak English but they can learn and understand it. The problem here is that Wookiees cannot speak any other language except for their own language, Shyriiwook. Their language mostly comprises growlings, howls and grunt sounds. They also use their gestures while uttering these sounds. The fact that their language is not a spoken one separates them from human beings. Concerning this, it is stated that "Spoken language is also a dividing factor in this debate about man's relationship or dissimilarity to animals" (VanDeGrift 2). This species may sound like

bears without the ability to speak a human language. Yet, some human beings can understand Wookiees and can even communicate with them clearly. For instance, in *ANH*, Han speaks with his Wookiee friend Chewbacca many times to fly his ship (55:48-56:35). It seems that Han learnt Shyriwook language somehow and even though he cannot speak it as a human being, at least he understands his friend. This language barrier of Wookiees derives from their physical bodily differences and this situation is another quality that makes them animal-like beings.

Although there are many indicators of Wookiees' animalistic characteristics, they are quite humanoid beings that possess many human qualities clearly. Firstly, they can communicate with humans and even cooperate with them without a problem despite their language barrier. General Tarrful and Chewbacca are devising a war plan with the Jedi council which includes human and nonhuman living beings (*RotS* 48:12-49:32). They are very clever species that can make strategic plans like human beings. During the Clone Wars Era, they fought side by side with human clones concertedly. They are also quite open to using technological tools produced by the Republic which shows their high adaptability skills. While fighting with battle droids of the Separatist Alliance, they use various weapons, bombs and mechanic tools to destroy the enemy (*RotS* 49:35-50:16). They manage to destroy different types of war machines by using their intelligence and strength. Therefore, the war scene between Wookiees and Separatist battle droids in *RotS* clearly demonstrates that Wookiees have quite good relationships with both human and nonhuman alien species in the Republic and they can learn the ways of the Republic quickly.

Furthermore, Wookiee species are bipedal beings just like Ewoks. This characteristic of Wookiees enables them to succeed in making complicated tools and wares with their free hands. As is evident in *RotS*, Wookiees have quite complex and detailed architectural structures on trees (48:08-32). Their buildings seem like manmade because most animals cannot build such developed and complicated structures. This means that they are not only clever beings but also quite good at designing and constructing. Apart from that, their weapons are wooden crossbows which are made probably by themselves. Even though they get the help of the Republic Army, they still use their own unique weapons. So, they are also capable of producing advanced weapons to defend their homeworld. Their bipedal bodies are quite humanoid and this advantage helps them to create various developed buildings and

tools seemingly. Lastly, about Wookiees, it is important to underline that this species' decision-making and distinguishing good from bad can be seen when they help Master Yoda escape with a pod and keep him secret (*RotS* 1:25:48-26:29). They help Yoda and become faithful to the Republic even if all Jedi Knights are labelled as traitors by the fraud Palpatine. They are not a species that can be easily deceived which makes them more human rather than animal.

Apart from Wookies and Ewoks, Geonosian alien species are also important beings that stand in a place between humans and animals. They are a unique species who are insect-like beings on a planet called Geonosis. Geonosis is a hot desert planet like Tatooine. The appearance of Geonosians is quite different from human beings which means that they are not humanoid. They have wings and they can easily fly. Different from Ewoks and Wookiees, they do not have furs on their bodies due to their insect-like nature. Different from humans, they have three fingers on their hands and feet. Their face and head are also animalistic. Their eye, nose and mouth sizes are obviously in nonhuman size. Additionally, their head shape is not ovoid like human beings. So, in appearance, they are not even close to a human being because they rather seem like insects. Geonosian species are first introduced in *AotC* when Anakin and Padme are on a rescue mission for their friend Obi-Wan (1:37:36-38:15). Geonosians are shown as threatening, wild and primitive living beings just like animals. In the scene, they do not speak, they just attack and yell at these humans. It is already clear that Geonosians have made an alliance with the Separatist leader Count Dooku. Because of this, they are already in the position of the enemy in the scene. Moreover, directly attacking Anakin and Padme without asking anything indicates the instinctive and wild nature of Geonosians. This flying species is also demonstrated in a later part of the movie when Anakin, Padme and Obi-Wan's execution begins in an arena (*AotC* 1:44:16-46:16). In this scene, they are trying to kill these humans with wild beasts in a barbaric way. Additionally, their flying ability removes physical barriers like walls or height and gives them the opportunity to be more mobile beings than humans. Wings are animal organs that provide various ways to pass obstacles. Therefore, it can be stated that they are animal-like beings in many ways rather than humanoid beings.

Yet, Geonosians have myriad human characteristics as well. First of all, they can understand English and some human beings like Count Dooku can understand the Geonosian language. The Geonosian language does not include animal sounds such as

growling or howling but rather has a complex sound structure. A dialogue between a Geonosian and a human being happens when the Geonosian leader and Count Dooku speak about the Death Star plans (*AotC* 2:00:48-01:12). In this scene, the communication between them appears to be quite smooth. The advanced understanding skills of human beings make Geonosians compatible with human beings and their language and communication abilities bring them closer to the human position. What is more, their bipedal quality is another important detail that makes them humanlike alien beings. They can not only fly but also walk on foot just like humans. Likewise, their bipedalism enables them to build quite sophisticated and advanced tools just like Ewoks and Wookiees. Geonosis as a planet has a lot of technological buildings and factories. Their technological level shows that they are an advanced society. They even have the technology to produce battle droids for the Separatist Alliance. Their factory tools, machines and weapons are demonstrated when Anakin and Padme escape from Geonosians in *AotC* (1:37:55-39:11). In this scene, even C-3PO is shocked when he sees this factory. This indicates that Geonosians are an intellectually advanced alien species in the galaxy. From this point, it may be expressed that intelligence and technology are human-related notions that can be seen in Geonosians. Thus, Geonosians are humanlike alien beings in this context. They may not have a humanoid body, but their development level and structure of their habitat evoke human notions.

Lastly, it is important to analyze the Kaminoan species that are sentient alien beings. Their homeworld is Kamino which is an aquatic planet, totally filled with oceans. They are very tall beings with long necks. They have quite unique noses and ears, which are not easily visible. Also, they have big black eyes that do not even resemble human eyes. The appearance of their head and hands (with three fingers) reminds us of conventional alien images in American media. Their relations with humans are decent apparently because when Obi-Wan visits them they welcome him kindly. They keep Jango Fett in their facility to clone him as well. They can speak English quite fluently even if they live in an isolated planet. Even Obi-Wan hardly finds that place. It seems that they have access to lots of knowledge about other species, especially humans.

Due to the fact that it would be hard to live within oceans for a long time, Kaminoans have built a closed technological city above oceans. Their development

level is quite high with their highly technological city. They are not just good at building a city on oceans, but they are also good at medical, genetic engineering and cloning. Obi-Wan's friend tells him about Kaminoans "These Kaminoans keep up to themselves. They're cloners. Damn good ones too" (Lucas and Hales, *AotC* 34). This shows that they are the experts in cloning technology at that time. As alien beings, their intelligence makes them humanlike beings despite the fact that their physical appearance does not resemble humans in any way. Besides, concerning personhood, Kamino has a prime minister whose name is Lama Su. He is presented as an alien person with his own ideas, approaches and manners. His and his aide's (the other Kaminoan) kind and elegant approach toward humans indicates that they have a personality. For this reason, it can be said that aliens can have personalities too because "One does not require a special kind of body to qualify as a person. An extraterrestrial with a very different kind of body but with a mind known to be very similar to a human's would be deemed a person without much controversy" (Szybel 248). Their mental capacity is one of the characteristics that makes them humanlike in this regard. Moreover, they are quite independent and have free will since they serve the Republic for a price. They act according to their interests. Their production of the Clone Army saved many lives in the Republic as the Republic immediately needed an army for safety reasons in *AotC*. Therefore, it can be inferred that in the midst of the crisis between the Separatist Alliance and the Republic, the agency of the Kaminoans is truly effective in galactic history. They also have prepared the fall of the Republic by making the clones in their facility. As alien beings, they are notable in the Clone Wars period.

Consequently, these alien species stand in a place between humans and animals and they blur the distinction between human and animal beings. Their physical appearance, habitat, wildness, tool-making, building, intelligence, language and bipedalism make them both human and animal at the same time. In other words, they become humanimal beings. In a thesis entitled *Humanimal*, it is written that "Philosophical debate about what makes humans separate from animals has led to disagreement regarding that relationship. Where many see a clear separation, others see a clear connection" (VanDeGrift 1). From this viewpoint, one can argue that the boundary or line between humans and animals is not so certain because human and animal characteristics can be interchangeable and transform in time.

2.3. Humanoid Alien Characters and Their “Humanity”

Humanoid alien beings are everywhere in the *Star Wars* galaxy and there are tons of different humanoid alien species with unique characteristics. Aliens in the *Star Wars* universe may be quite different from humans in appearance and they may have completely unusual bodies compared to human beings. In spite of bodily and cultural differences of aliens, some alien species have a lot of human qualities in many aspects as mentioned above. Here, rather than alien species as societies, some alien characters and their humanity will be examined in detail.

One of the most important alien characters in *Star Wars* films is the Jedi Master Yoda. Yoda has a quite small body and his skin color is green. His organs and size may easily be proofs that affirm he is an alien being. Accordingly, this alien being appears as a small, green creature that is unfamiliar to human beings. Yet, if this alien being is being examined from a moral standpoint, it can be expressed that he has advanced moral judgements because he is the Grand Master of the Jedi Order in the prequel trilogy. He takes action with his judgements and he has a great role in the course of quite important events in the history of *Star Wars*. In this sense, Yoda can be viewed as a moral agent as explained here “A moral agent is a being who is able to make moral judgements about moral matters and is able to act on those judgements” (Nayar 152). Therefore, it can be stated that Yoda is an autonomous being because of his agency in the history of the galaxy. Morally, he represents not only the light side of the Force but also a mentor and wise old man archetypes.

Yoda is an 800-year-old character in the films due to the fact that species age differently in *Star Wars*. Because of his age, experience, and his connection to the Force he is a quite wise and powerful Jedi. In classical humanist thought, mind and body are seen as separate aspects of human beings and the strongest quality of human beings is accepted as their mind. Some nonhuman beings may have strong and huge bodies but human beings have always the advantage of a superior mind. Yoda here as a nonhuman alien being diminishes this mind and body distinction because his mind is so powerful that he can transcend his bodily limitations by using the Force. He lives more than any human being because of the slow ageing of his species. His body is quite small but it is much more long-lasting. Moreover, he possesses qualities such as intelligence and wisdom despite the fact that he is a nonhuman being. Concerning language and communication, Yoda can speak English and can communicate with

myriad species across the galaxy. He even uses inverted sentences which reinforces Yoda's wise and old Jedi image.

Yoda's size is quite small and he has a little chance to defeat bigger and stronger living beings (both human and nonhuman) with his physical strength. In Dagobah, Yoda says to Luke "Size matters not. Look at me. Judge me by my size, do you? Hm? Mmmm. And well you should not, for my ally is the Force" (Brackett and Kasdan, *TESB* 79). Thus, with the help of the Force, Yoda manages to do even the hardest things that normal human beings cannot do. Size matters a lot in natural life to survive in wild places, but Yoda's cleverness and his Force sensitivity are his real powers here. As the leader of the Jedi Order, he represents grandeur and greatness. His body appearance and size disrupt the dichotomy between greatness and littleness in humanist thought. In short, Yoda clearly demonstrates that among nonhuman beings, big-sized bodies are not always an indicator of power and there are lots of other valuable and significant qualities of nonhuman beings other than body size.

Another important humanoid alien character is Chewbacca. He has been mentioned above broadly as a wild Wookiee living being. Chewbacca is one of the most important characters in the Rebel Alliance and Galactic Republic due to his constant support to these sides. Even if he is wild and sometimes frightening, he can be friends with human beings such as Han Solo and Luke Skywalker. On this account, his depiction in *Star Wars* films is a companion rather than a predator animal in spite of his body appearance. He has well-developed moral values, the capacity to make moral choices and he is able to decide what is best for himself. This means that he can understand what is good/bad, beneficial/harmful or right/wrong etc. in a moral way and make judgements by himself. Just like Yoda, he is also a moral agent in this sense. He shapes his behaviour according to the moral norms and values of the societies in which he lives.

In addition to that, Chewbacca is an animal-like species with a variant body compared to a human and his inability to speak a human language. Yet, there are other important aspects that demonstrate the humanity of this character throughout the films. Despite his animalistic body, Chewbacca has a quite deep personality in his interaction with other beings. To begin with, it would be necessary to mention the term personality. All human beings are called persons while nonhuman beings are deprived of having this notion (except for some cute pets recently). Yet, children are not

accepted as actual persons by most people. Therefore, the definition and attribution of personality may not be as fixed and certain as many people think. In a book chapter “Animals as Persons” (2008), it is written that “If someone’s body lives on as something that merely breathes or circulates blood—in the sense of being maintained by a brain stem—such a body would not obviously be a person because it lacks personality. A corpse may also be said to be devoid of personality, implying that personality is essentially psychological in nature” (Szybel 246). According to this book chapter, personality is not about a bodily quality but it is rather about psychology. Later, the writer concludes this argument by stating that “Any entity that has personal experiences must be a person, since no non-personal thing logically could have personal experiences” (Szybel 247). So, personal experiences are unique experiences that make us persons according to this point of view. If we turn to the character Chewbacca, he has a strong personality and personal experiences in the films. He has humanlike emotions, approaches and behaviour. For instance, in *TESB*, he gets furious while trying to maintain Han’s ship and he growls at Han in anger (04:44-58). As an alien person, he behaves according to his distinct emotions and his repair approach to the ship is similar to that of a human repairman.

In addition to that, Chewbacca clearly demonstrates his love and worries for Solo, Luke, and even droids in the original trilogy. He is a moral agent who behaves independently, with his own logic and decisions. In a later part of *TESB*, he is imprisoned in Cloud City, where he finds his friend C-3PO in a dismantled condition in the prison (1:29:38-30:29). He feels sadness for his droid friend and he decides to repair him. When Solo is brought to the same prison after being tortured by Imperial stormtroopers, Chewbacca embraces him and lays him down gently (*TESB* 1:32:02-26). As it can be observed, Chewbacca is an autonomous humanoid alien who has a unique personality as an individual in these scenes. He is conscious of himself as a person and he plays a crucial role in the epic resistance of the Rebel Alliance against the Empire. For these reasons, he possesses lots of human qualities and he clearly erases the human and nonhuman binary.

Furthermore, one of the prominent humanoid alien characters in the *Star Wars* saga is Jar Jar Binks. He is a Gungan who lives on Naboo planet. His native habitat on the planet is an underwater city which is called Gungan City. The city is built within a big lake and the reason for escaping to this city is the conflict between Gungans and

human beings on Naboo. Jar Jar lives in this city but he is expelled from the city due to his extreme clumsiness. In the films, his portrayal functions mostly as a comedy element with his messing things up. Being clumsy is usually associated with useless farce characters, but Jar Jar plays an important role in the prequel trilogy as an alien being.

Firstly, he shows up when he is saved by Qui-Gon who is a human Jedi master in *TPM* (10:40-11:23). A human being sees this alien's life as worthy and helps him in this part. Moreover, Jar Jar can speak English but in a different accent of his own species. For instance, he says that "Ex-squeeze-me, but da moto grande safe place would be Otoh Gunga. Tis where I grew up... Tis safe city" (Lucas, *TPM* 13). His accent is strong and it shows his native quality because, in the Galactic Senate or other formal places, this accent is not the main and standard accent. Just like Yoda, he has the ability to speak a human language which demonstrates his "humanity". In addition to that, just like other humanoid aliens here, he has moral agency because he has the ability to decide between choices and take action with his judgements. Because of that, he has free will and he is an autonomous being who can make his own choices. In this sense, Jar Jar is an independent person. Concerning individuality and personhood, Nayar writes that "An individual who can take moral responsibility for her/his action is a moral agent and a person" (152). In the films, Jar Jar's presentation perfectly coincides with these concepts of moral agency and personhood.

Additionally, Jar Jar and Gungan species have religious beliefs that influence their lifestyle and decisions. When Qui-Gon saves Jar Jar's life, he tells Jar Jar to go away but he wants to stay with Qui-Gon and be a servant of him. And he adds that it is demanded by the Gods (*TPM* 11:05-10). In a later scene, Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan and Jar Jar enter the Gungan City and make an agreement with the Gungan leader to leave peacefully. At that moment, Qui-Gon tries to save Jar Jar. He says to the boss that "He owes me what you call a 'life debt' [...] Your Gods demand that his life belongs to me now" (Lucas, *TPM* 17). This alien species has a developed religious belief that is rooted in their life. Religions have been always seen in human communities, but here, an alien community has religious beliefs similar to human beings. Their religion also influences their moral agency because they act according to their beliefs. Apart from that, Jar Jar has a similar appearance to a sea creature, he can live in other places where human beings live such as the lands of Naboo and the senate building. He becomes a

politician as a Representative for Gungans in the Galactic Senate. Senator Padme relies on Jar Jar and she trusts him when she goes to Naboo for her safety. Jar Jar's status in the senate hybridizes his position between humans and animals. Politicians need to have capacities of logic and reasoning which indicates that Jar Jar has myriad human characteristics despite his bodily differences as an alien being.

Lastly, Watto is also worth examining as an alien being in the franchise. He is a Toydarian merchant who buys and sells junk on Tatooine. Toydarians have wings and have the ability to fly. Their physical appearance is not humanlike because of their elephant-like noses, three-fingered hands, skin type and webfeet. Watto is the only featured Toydarian character in the films. He is the owner of Anakin and his mother Shmi. Qui-Gon visits his shop to buy some ship parts. Firstly, he talks in his native language but he can also speak in English (*TPM* 30:23-59). He knows multiple languages which shows that he is as clever as a human being. He is also a challenging dealer who only cares about money. What is more, Qui-Gon tries to do a mind trick on Watto so as to convince him to make a deal. Yet, he is resistant to Jedi mind tricks probably because of his strong will. He says to Qui-Gon "What, you think you're some kind of Jedi, waving your hand around like that? I'm a Toydarian. Mind tricks don't work on me - only money. No money, no parts, no deal!" (Lucas, *TPM* 40). Although Qui-Gon is a mighty human Jedi master, he cannot easily deal with this persistent merchant.

Watto is also important to look at the slavery issue in the galaxy. Normally, slavery is forbidden in the Republic but the planet Tatooine is hard to constantly control for the Republic. Therefore, some beings can still practice slavery secretly. Slavery takes away the equality and liberty of individuals inevitably. Yet, the different point in this film about slavery is that it is practised by an alien who owns human slaves. From a humanist point of view, the alien would have been the slave of humans because the human is considered as the master and other species as slaves who live only to serve humans. The film's portrayal of humans as slaves turns the humanist understanding of the human upside down. Even if this condition does not provide a posthumanist environment, humans are decentered as slavery is not exclusive to a specific species. This also means that aliens may also be in powerful positions.

From these examples, the *Star Wars* films contain plenty of alien characters with humanlike traits. These beings have both animalistic side and humanistic side,

but they are neither humans nor animals. Their classification is hard to determine and this condition disturbs the very established definitions of human, animal and alien. Some alien beings in this universe share similar cultures, habits and qualities with humans. From this point of view, it can be stated that “many other species share supposedly exclusively human characteristics, including language, tool use, and consciousness” (Ginn 2). The character examples given above clearly prove that aliens are able to coevolve with humans and they can highly influence the lives of humans as they are influenced by them. Mutual interactions between humans and aliens transform both of these beings in many respects.



CHAPTER THREE

DECONSTRUCTING HUMAN-MACHINE BOUNDARIES

The *Star Wars* films dissolve traditional boundaries between humans and machines, questioning fixed definitions of humanity and technology. The universe of *Star Wars* features lots of different robots which constantly interact with humans and aliens. Robots in the franchise are called droids which is an abbreviation of android. Android is basically a humanoid robot that runs with a computer. In *Star Wars*, especially some droids resemble human beings quite a lot. They affect the course of events by helping humans and aliens considerably. Therefore, these artificial beings improve humans' quality of life in most cases. They sometimes also actively take action independently without any instruction. This interweaving between two different entities exhibits many similarities as Haraway states "Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert" (*Manifestly Haraway* 11). Thus, the closer humans and robots get to each other, the more their differences diminish. They have a mutually beneficial relationship because both of these beings try to improve the other constantly. Due to this, the boundaries between these different beings are intrinsically deconstructed in the *Star Wars* universe.

Furthermore, there are a lot of cyborg humans and aliens in the galaxy. Because of the highly developed technological era of the galaxy, mechanical integrations to organic bodies are very common when individuals lose a part of their body. In the franchise, the scenes of cutting arms and legs are prevalent, especially in lightsaber duels between the Jedi and Sith. For this reason, some organic characters transform into inorganic mechanical ones every time they install a mechanical tool to their organic bodies. These cyborg characters challenge the very definitions of the human and the machine throughout the films due to their in-between attribute. Additionally, the cloning technology appears in the prequels of the franchise and clones of human beings are another important point for breaking down the barriers between human and nonhuman. Shortly, in this chapter, barriers between humans and machines (droids) and the clone dilemma in the galaxy will be analyzed in *Star Wars* original and prequel trilogies.

3.1. Relationship Between Humans and Robots

Human beings are strictly separated from robotic or mechanic entities with their distinct and unique aspects in the traditional humanist idea. Robots are firstly non-organic beings that cannot breed, and have emotions or personalities. Secondly, they cannot think critically and just do what they are programmed to do. Thirdly, they do not have consciousness and self-awareness as developed as human consciousness. There are a lot of other differences between humans and robots that distinguish these two entities, such as physical abilities, moral considerations and lifespan, etc. However, there are also similarities that diminish the line between these beings. They both have problem-solving abilities to be able to overcome challenges and problems that they encounter. Both humans and robots can learn new things and improve their skills, knowledge and gain experience over time. In addition to that, there are some beings who are both human and robot: cyborgs. Clones are another example that challenges the boundaries of being a 'true' human. Various examples of these entities can be easily found in *Star Wars* films.

Humans and robots in the *Star Wars* universe interact in many different scenarios because they exist in common places mostly. Droids (robots) are represented as helpers and supporters of human and nonhuman living species in the galaxy. They are programmed and used in various tasks by their makers. In many sci-fi films, robots are presented as just a mechanic tool that has no emotion, personality, soul, consciousness etc. But in *Star Wars* robots gradually develop emotions, personality and consciousness after they have a certain amount of interaction and experiences with other beings.

The first interaction between a human being and a droid happens in *ANH* when Leia gives the secret plans of the Empire's Death Star to a droid whose name is R2-D2 (5:04-12). She hopes that the plans will be safe with R2-D2 and she trusts him because she records a message to Obi-Wan with R2-D2 in this scene. Her life and escape depend on this droid since there is nothing else that can save her. R2-D2 is quite aware of this situation and behaves accordingly. Thus, one can argue that the relationship between Leia and R2-D2 is a sincere friendship rather than a master-slave relationship. In a later part of the film, R2-D2 and his friend C-3PO are displayed for human beings (Luke and his uncle). In this scene, the droids are presented as servants who wait to be sold by Jawas. Yet, they do not have any complaints about their position

and they even want to serve these human beings. C-3PO praises his friend R2-D2 so that he can be sold with him as well (*ANH* 19:02-36). The artificial intelligence in this universe is quite enhanced but it is not a threat to human beings or other living species. Human beings are in the position of masters of these droids in this scene. However, Luke's relationship with R2-D2 and C-3PO is not an oppressive and cruel master-slave relationship. Luke sees these droids as his friends and he takes care of them a lot.

After bringing the droids to his home, Luke makes them take an oil bath, cleans them and fixes them with caution (*ANH* 19:40-20:40). He even states that they can call him just Luke rather than Sir Luke. By saying such things, he disempowers himself and breaks his authority over the droids. In addition to that, he calls them boys while cleaning R2-D2. Technically, they do not have gender and they are not human beings, yet addressing them by using the word 'boys' demonstrates Luke's warm-blooded and friendly manner to them. In a later part of the film, R2-D2 disappears in the evening and Luke worries for him. He and C-3PO look for R2-D2 in the morning and when they find him, Luke is relieved (*ANH* 27:46-28:32). This shows that Luke cares for these droids and protects them and he even gets into trouble when the Sand People attack them. Right after that, he and his saviour Obi-Wan find C-3PO in a dismantled condition and they carry him while C-3PO tells them they should leave him behind. They save the droid and Luke fixes him (*ANH* 32:05-48). For this reason, Luke's approach to the droids is embracing and respectful despite the fact that he could treat them as inferior slaves that have no importance at all. Consequently, the two Skywalker siblings (Luke and Leia) have a very sincere and egalitarian approach to droids and they destroy the master-slave binary opposition by treating the droids as friends rather than slaves.

In the next film, the connection between Luke and R2-D2 becomes stronger. When they land on Dagobah, Luke's ship is stuck in a swamp. The place seems dangerous and R2-D2 is caught by an underwater creature. Luke is so scared of losing R2-D2 and constantly screams for him in this part of the film (*TESB* 42:19-44:10). It can be clearly seen that Luke has developed a deep attachment to R2-D2 and regards him as a close friend rather than a machine tool. Indeed, Luke's reactions to R2-D2's troubled condition may indicate that he perceives R2-D2 as not mere technology. Regarding this, it is written that:

Robots embedded with sociable interaction features, such as familiar humanlike gestures or facial expressions in their designs, are likely to further encourage people to interact socially with those robots in a fundamentally unique way. For human users, interaction with robots is, in a sense, more as if one is interacting with an animal or another person rather than interacting with a technology. (De Graaf 592).

Therefore, one may argue that the interaction between Luke and R2-D2 puts R2-D2 into the position of a companion because their relationship is based on fellowship and there is not any hierarchical structure between them.

In *RotJ*, the friendly relationship between human beings and droids continues. When the Millennium Falcon team goes for a mission in Endor, they are trapped by a net of Ewoks in the forest, but R2-D2 saves them with his cutter tool (*RotJ* 1:09:12-26). Yet, right after that the team is captured by Ewoks and is tied to a place to be cooked. Because of Ewoks's belief of C-3PO being a God, C-3PO has the chance to save his friends. In spite of asking Ewoks to release his friends, C-3PO could not manage to force Ewoks to release the team. However, thanks to his cooperation with Luke, they succeed in frightening Ewoks and make them release everyone (*RotJ* 1:12:54-15:50). In this scene, Luke uses his Force power and C-3PO uses his ability to translate the Ewokese language to his friends so that they can understand what are Ewoks going to do. Thus, it can be inferred from that the team is saved from Ewoks with the collaboration of a droid and a human being in this scene. If they did not trust each other, they would even die in this scene.

R2-D2 and C-3PO droids have strong relationships with human beings in the prequel trilogy as well. In the first prequel film, R2-D2 manages to activate the deflector shield of Queen Amidala's spaceship while they are escaping the Trade Federation's blockade. Consequently, he saves the day as an astromech droid on the ship and becomes a heroic figure in that scene (*TPM* 24:58-25:38). The captain of the ship is quite surprised about R2-D2's success. Right after that, Queen Amidala (actually her decoy) and all other human beings appreciate R2-D2's brave success on the surface of the ship. Amidala's decoy says that "Thank you R2-D2. You have proven to be very loyal ... Padme! Clean this droid up as best you can. It deserves our gratitude..." (Lucas, *TPM* 32). Here, humans from Naboo thanks R2-D2 as if he is an individual. One can argue that R2-D2 has a type of personhood here because machines

or robots are not appreciated when they complete their task successfully. Yet, Naboo people put R2-D2 into the position of a human being and treat him very well in this scene. In fact, R2-D2 is programmed to do such things even though he is not appreciated by human beings for his brave works. It can be deduced that, humans in the ship correlate R2-D2 with bravery and heroism and they respect him for that.

In a later scene, Obi-Wan, Qui-Gon and Padme go to the house of Anakin Skywalker to take shelter since there is a sand storm at that time. Anakin shows his protocol droid C-3PO to Padme excitedly. The relationship between C-3PO and little Anakin was like that of a child and his toy. He says to Padme that he has made the droid to help his mother (*TPM* 36:69-38:05). It can be seen that C-3PO is not a completed robot and he could not develop a strong bond with Anakin because they did not spend enough time together and they have not common experiences. However, while Anakin is leaving his home and his mother, he says that C-3PO has been a great friend to him. He says to C-3PO “I am sorry, I wasn’t able to finish you, Threepio ... give you coverings and all ... I am gonna miss working on you. You’ve been a great pal” (Lucas, *TPM* 72). Therefore, Anakin interacts with C-3PO as a playmate project here.

The film *AotC* demonstrates that R2-D2 continues to have deep relationships with other human beings. After Senator Amidala (Padme) is attempted to assassinate, she is given two Jedi Knights (Obi-Wan and Anakin) for her protection. She still relies on R2-D2 in this dangerous situation while she is sleeping. She programmed R2-D2 to warn the Jedi if anything goes wrong in her room and R2-D2 controls the room when he senses something (*AotC* 13:02-48). Padme’s life is in danger but she trusts R2-D2 quite much. She sees R2-D2 as a dear friend just like how Anakin sees him. R2-D2 is depicted as a companion in the scene who guards and protects Padme even if poisonous creatures fall off the radar. In the middle of the film, Anakin and Padme arrive at the home of Anakin’s mother in Tatooine and they encounter C-3PO. They recognize each other and C-3PO says that he is quite pleased to see them again (*AotC* 1:11:33-12:15). Both the droid and humans react as if they see an old friend in this scene which shows their sincere relationship in the past. It is also necessary to mention that C-3PO’s body parts are now covered which makes him a “dressed” droid. This shows that C-3PO has been treated well by Anakin’s mother and her family. At the end of the film, Anakin and Padme marries secretly in Naboo. The only witnesses of

this marriage are R2-D2 and C-3PO. It can be said that Padme and Anakin trust these droids so much that they allow droids know about their secret marriage. Until the fall of the Republic, their marriage stays as a secret which shows that these droids did not tell anyone about this marriage. It is another detail that vivifies the fellowship bond between these humans and droids.

In the last film of the prequel trilogy, it can again be seen strong and friendly relationships between droids and human beings. Before Anakin goes to the Mustafar planet, he visits Padme and leaves quickly. Padme is worried about Anakin and she is afraid for him. At this very moment, C-3PO approaches and asks Padme that “Oh, my lady, is there anything I might do?” and she answers “No, thank you, Threepio” (Lucas, *RotS* 129). Right after that C-3PO states that he feels so helpless. C-3PO is presented as an assistant or helper of Padme because of his approach to her. It can be inferred that he knows the situation of Anakin is quite problematic and he feels sorry for Padme here. From the things that Anakin has said to Padme, C-3PO probably knows that he cannot do anything about that situation and that is why he says that he feels helpless. C-3PO interacts with Padme to help and ease her but the complicated conflict between the Jedi and the Republic is beyond his capacity. The only thing he can do is to stay with Padme in this scene.

Lots of different examples of the interactions and relationships between humans and droids demonstrate that humans can develop deep and sincere relationships with droids even though droids do have not true consciousness, emotion and soul. Human beings may see droids as their friends and they interact with them as if they are humans. There are numerous different types of droids in the galaxy. Some of these droids help humans and cooperate with them which offers diverse communities of animate and inanimate entities in certain places. One can argue that droids develop some kind of “emotions” after a certain level of experience with their users. Droids like R2-D2 and C-3PO exhibit “emotional” behaviours just like human beings. In this case, relationships between these droids and some human characters (mentioned above) diminish conventional perceptions of the human and machine binary.

3.1.1. Half-Human and Half-Machine Bodies

The relationship between humans and droids is highly complex. Yet, it is not just their relationship that blurs the distinction between human and machine. These two different entities may become enmeshed when their body parts are integrated into other organisms. For instance, when a human loses an arm or leg, a mechanical prosthesis can be attached in place of the lost limb. In this way, the individual can perform tasks independently. The person ‘completes’ the missing parts of their body with artificial tools. Therefore, it can be expressed that mechanic tools and prostheses that are integrated into a human body complicate the definitions of humans and robots. It makes us question the limits of being a human or a robot. Do we lose our humanity when our body gets mechanical augmentations? These kinds of questions are still going on today. The differences between robots or computers and human beings are diminishing as technology advances every day. In the book *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (1999), it is written that “In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals” (Hayles 3). These issues are among the most debated topics in posthumanist theory, certain branches of technology, and some sci-fi works.

Especially one of the most famous concepts in sci-fi is cyborg. The universe of *Star Wars* offers a rich representation of myriad cyborg beings that demolish the distinction between natural and artificial in a posthumanist context. Some characters in the franchise undergo medical operations to have cybernetic augmentations that can compensate for damaged or lost organs. These characters allow (willingly or unwillingly) their bodies to host foreign materials that are inorganic and inanimate machines. Therefore, it can be deduced from that they merge with the other to survive or to live in a better way. By standing at the intersection between human and machine, they possess a hybrid identity and they transcend the conventional categories of the human. The identity dilemma of these characters may confuse the audience about the definition of their identities. Do they see themselves as human beings that has mechanically modified bodies, or transformed robots after a point? It may be hard to interiorize the cybernetic organs on the body in the first place and this situation may cause an identity crisis on the character. So, cyborgization is not just a material

transformation but it is also a psychological transformation that can have some hardships for the individual. On the other hand, a cyborg body opens new opportunities for the crippled individual both physically and mentally. A cyborg may exceed the limits of both organic and artificial entities since it has both emotions, a soul, true consciousness and a more durable, faster, longer lifespan integrated with technological means.

One of the well-known character examples of this half-human and half-machine body is Darth Maul. In *TPM*, he is divided into two by young Obi-Wan's lightsaber and falls into a gap. Darth Maul is dead seemingly in this scene and he does not appear in the next films of the franchise either. Yet, in an animated television series called *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2008-2020), Maul reveals himself as an alive cyborg with cybernetic legs which seem like spider legs. Later, his lost lower body is replaced with two metal legs made by Nightsisters. After this enhancement, his appearance becomes more humanlike since he can move similarly to a healthy human being. His legs are presented as quite strong, fast and durable organs which help him in the fights against his opponents in the television series. Thus, it can be said that with the cybernetic enhancement that he gets, he turns into a formidable servant of the dark side who becomes a threat to many people in the galaxy. He adapts to his hard condition by having his legs augmented mechanically. Characters like Maul definitely portray the power of cyborgs, especially when they get used to their new mechanic prostheses. They have the advantages of both being an organic/natural being and a robotic being.

3.2. Mechanized Humans and Humanized Machines (Robots)

The strong and deep relationships have been covered in Episodes III. I. with different scenes throughout the films. The connections and various interactions between humans and robots (droids), these two different entities, can occur because there are some common values, manners, ideas, motions, and practices. If humans and robots had completely different lifestyles and customs, they could not communicate with each other properly. When the two different entities spend lots of time, they may resemble each other physically or mentally after a while. On the one hand, a human being may opt for cybernetic enhancements when they lose an organ and becomes a cyborg. The more a human being undergoes cybernetic augmentation, the more they turn into a robot. On the other hand, a robot can be programmed to demonstrate

realistic humanistic etiquette, manner, commonsense or sentimentality so that it can interact with human beings successfully. Because of this, some humans can become mechanized cyborgs while some robots can turn into humanized machines in time.

The reciprocal transformation of humans and robots can be obviously seen in *Star Wars* films. To begin with, certain human characters in the franchise turn into cyborgs because of the fact that they lose some of their organs in lightsaber duels. For instance, Luke Skywalker's hand is cut by his father Darth Vader during their duel in *TESB*. Indeed, it may sound ironic that Luke's hand is cut by a lightsaber which is a technological weapon and his lost hand is replaced with another technological tool which is a prosthetic mechanical hand. Moreover, this hand is attached to his severed hand by a robot (a medical droid). Thus, humans' constant dependence on technology is depicted very well in this film. These cybernetic and prosthetic additions to human bodies improve their quality of life.

Luke's prosthetic hand is important in many ways in the context of posthumanism. After all, he becomes a cyborg after that point. Luke's lost hand is enhanced with a cybernetic hand which is more durable and solid. He even uses this advantage of his robotic hand in *RotJ*. He is killing the mercenaries of Jabba the Hutt while his friends are trying to escape from the deadly plant Sarlacc in a pit. A mercenary shoots Luke's hand with his weapon, but he shoots the prosthetic metal hand in this scene (*RotJ* 36:08-16). He could immediately stand and kill that mercenary with his lightsaber because he did not feel pain. His mechanical hand is not an organic part of his natural body so there is not an organic neuron system in his hand probably. The lack of pain here gives an important advantage to Luke and he can easily get rid of his enemies.

Furthermore, the appearance of Luke's hand is the same with an organic human hand even though it consists of mechanical and artificial pieces (*TESB* 2:00:46-01:02). About this matter, one can assert that human beings may tend to choose organic organs at least in appearance when they have the opportunity. Luke's hand is totally artificial but its humanlike appearance possibly makes easy to adapt his new prosthesis hand. This detail in the film brings us to the theme of appearance versus reality. Human beings sometimes deceive other people by showing a fake or totally another appearance that they do not possess in reality. Yet, in this part of the film, Luke seems

to make this choice just because of his own comfort and not to lose his sense of humanity seemingly. He may also try to get used to his inorganic hand rapidly.

Another important issue is Luke's moral portrayal when he becomes a cyborg character in the original trilogy. In the very first film of the franchise, *ANH*, Luke is presented as a purely good boy in a farmer family. He is in white clothes in the first scene of the film (*ANH* 17:04-44). Colour symbolism is strong in the *Star Wars* franchise and the colour white on Luke here represents his purity and good-heartedness. He is also "completely" a human being in this scene without any cybernetic enhancements. All of his body is organic and natural. Yet, after he loses his hand in *The Empire Strikes Back*, he starts to wear black clothes in the next film, *Return of the Jedi*. In this last film of the original trilogy, Luke is tested to the limits by his father and the emperor to be able to turn him into the dark side. Therefore, in this film, Luke is quite close to the dark side of the Force and he resists the dark side and shows great resilience. In this case, when Luke becomes a cyborg, he comes close to the dark side which can be seen from his different choice of dress colour. It can be argued that a human's transformation into a cyborg may lead to moral corruption and draw them to the dark side. Yet, Luke manages to resist the temptation of the dark side in spite of his father's influence.

Just like Luke, Darth Vader (Anakin Skywalker) is another important cyborg character in the series. Anakin's moral portrayal is also changing gradually in the prequel trilogy and this change can be seen with black clothes of Anakin in *RotS*. In the first film of the prequel trilogy, *TPM*, Anakin is just a little boy and "completely" human without any cybernetic augmentations on his body. He wears white and grey clothes and he represents the innocence and wonder of a child. After he becomes a Jedi Padawan (which means learner), and duels with Count Dooku at the end of *AotC* film, he loses one of his arms. At the beginning of *RotS*, he is displayed with black clothes. A little bit later, his prosthetic arm is shown when he is in bed (*RotS* 30:48-31:12). This scene demonstrates that he becomes a cyborg by integrating a mechanical prosthesis into his organic body.

Different from Luke's prosthetic arm that looks like a real human arm, Anakin prefers to have an arm that looks like a golden prosthesis rather than a real human arm in appearance. This detail may be significant because Anakin wants to embrace his mechanical side directly which can be a foreshadowing here. Additionally, his colour

choice of gold symbolizes his lust for power and his greed since he falls into the dark side in this film. The colour gold is mostly associated with wealth and power and this scene openly gives a clue about Anakin's character transformation. Toward the end of the film, during his duel with Obi-Wan, Anakin loses his remaining arm and both legs. His remaining body is burned with flames and he barely stays alive. His organic body is almost destroyed when he joins the dark side. The more evil he becomes, the more he turns into a robot. Therefore, this film portrays Anakin's robotization as an ethical corruption sign. It can be stated that Anakin's gradual turning into a cyborg indicates losing his moral humanity and becoming a ruthless machine. He embraces not only his technological body but also the unknown opportunities of the dark side to save Padme. He exchanges the greater power for his humanity and morality. Regarding this, it is written that "Anakin's transformation into Darth Vader exhibits this idea as he abandons his human limitations and morality in pursuit of greater power through the dark side of the Force" (Avsar 18). Technology and the dark side of the Force serve common purposes through their exceeding and shaping the natural order of life.

After Anakin turns into Darth Vader, his cyborg suit is fully coloured in black. The first scene of Vader shows himself at the beginning of *ANH* when he chases Princess Leia to retrieve the secret plans of the Death Star (4:32-48). In this scene, Vader passes by dead Rebel soldiers without speaking but only breathing. His breathing is quite iconic that makes him one of the most unique villains in the history of cinema. With his mechanical and metallic suit, he seems like a robotic dark lord. His breathing also sounds unnatural and robotic. Normally, robots do not breathe but Vader does here due to his cyborg quality. Vader's body consists of machines to a large extent as Obi-Wan says "He's more machine now than a man, twisted and evil" (Kasdan and Lucas, *RotJ* 37). The technological augments on his body transform Vader's natural breathing into an artificial one but he manages to survive in this way. Thus, he represents a true cyborg figure here which supports his in-between and hybrid features. He is neither a human being nor a robot but both of them. The dualisms between human and machine can exist within one organism in Vader's case because of the fact that "Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves" (Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway* 67). It can be said that Vader's special suit makes him transcend his human body limitations which serves his unending greed quite well.

In the way of becoming a Jedi Master, Anakin feels that something is wrong with him because he wants more even though he should not. He states his thoughts to Padme as follows: “Something’s happening... I’m not the Jedi I should be. I am one of the most powerful Jedi, but I’m not satisfied... I want more, and I know I shouldn’t” (Lucas, *RotS* 88). As a Jedi, he knows that he should be humble and selfless and that is why he worries about the future of himself and Padme. He wants more because he does not want to lose Padme in childbirth just as he has lost his mother to the Sand People on Tatooine. The Jedi Council does not promote him to the position of the Jedi Master. With Palpatine’s manipulation, he slowly begins to think that the council is an obstacle which prevents him from becoming the most powerful Jedi in the galaxy. In this case, Anakin displays humanist ideas by searching the ways of becoming a perfect and all-powerful human being that can control everything, even death. He needs the power of science and technology to break his bounds and this tempting science here is the dark side. On the other side, his organic body is another limitation on his way to reach his full potential. Thus, he feels a necessity to discover both the secret powers of the dark and unknown side of the Force and the potential of technological augmentations to live. He needs almost a God-like power to create life to save Padme. Regarding this, it can be expressed that:

Anakin's transformation can also be examined through the lens of the concept of a Prosthetic God. The idea of a Prosthetic God refers to the idea that technologically advanced beings or cyborgs, such as Darth Vader, possess a god-like power that allows them, once again, to transcend their human limitations and connect with the divine or transcendent. (Avsar 18)

He is a special person, so he needs a special body that can be capable of much more than a normal standard human body. From this point, it can be inferred that the cybernetic enhancement of Darth Vader parallels with the dark side of the Force because to become all powerful, he needs to master the other (the inorganic and the dark side). Ironically, with Anakin’s transmutation, he changes from an innocent slave boy into a dictator dark lord and the most powerful Jedi/Sith in the galaxy.

On the other hand, there are some inorganic robotic beings that show quite humane behaviours and manners. One of these beings is the famous droid R2-D2. R2-D2 is an astromech droid who has many utility tools and skills such as repairing starships or other droids and being a co-pilot. Even though R2-D2 is a completely

programmed robot whose body is full of a machine, he develops special bonds, especially with his masters in time. In the galaxy, droids are so important beings that they are the first characters shown in the franchise rather than humans or alien beings (*ANH* 2:33-39). Particularly R2-D2 here takes a great responsibility by escaping a close planet called Tatooine to be able to save the secret plans of the Death Star. After that, the audience watches the little adventure of R2-D2 with C-3PO in the deserts of Tatooine. It is important to mention that R2-D2 decides to go the other way where C-3PO finds it harder. Because of the disagreement, they go their separate ways (*ANH* 9:25-10:26). Here, R2-D2 demonstrates an opponent and stubborn manner to his friend C-3PO. As a droid, he is expected to cooperate and get on with other droids, but he objects to C-3PO's advice and behaves in a self-ordained fashion. This scene highlights the autonomy of R2-D2 and his independent decision-making capacity although he is just a robot. He is presented as an individual and a person in the scene.

At the end of *ANH*, the Death Star is destroyed by Luke but R2-D2 is heavily damaged. Luke and C-3PO worry for R2-D2 so much which gives the thought that R2-D2 is treated as a real person rather than a mere machine. The focus of all humans and C-3PO indicates his significance in the Rebel Alliance. In the next scene, Luke and Han are awarded with medals in front of the Rebel Alliance. In this award ceremony, R2-D2 and C-3PO stand next to Luke, Han and Chewbacca which demonstrates that as droids, they are also acknowledged as heroes of the Alliance. R2-D2 beeps with joy as if he has the emotion of happiness (*ANH* 1:59:41-2:00:12). These parts of the film present these droids as individuals and persons, not as dependent and mechanical tools that exist only to serve human beings.

In addition to that, both R2-D2 and C-3PO are programmed and identified as male droids in the franchise. Luke calls the droids boys in *ANH* while cleaning them "It looks like you boys have seen a lot of action" (Lucas 23). The attribution of gender to these droids is another quality that makes them humanlike beings. Technically, robots do not have a gender identity because they have no sexual organs and they cannot reproduce biologically. Yet, they are still given gender identities which consolidates the concept of gender as a construction. Just like the Human, gender is another artificial construction shaped by cultural norms in societies. Though there is no necessity to make gender attributions to these droids, human beings or other alien beings wanted to upload gender codes so as to make the droids more identifiable with

themselves. If they did not have any gender, they would still be functional because of their programmed priorities which is helping their owners. They develop a kind of autonomy and independence over time but their gender attribution still would not be a permanent label because their gender can be changed with just an update in their software. In this case, one can argue that their gender is a performative activity programmed by their makers. It is just a part of their software.

R2-D2 and C-3PO differ in some aspects, especially concerning their behavioural characteristics, physical appearance and communication. R2-D2's code of behaviour is more autonomous and independent compared to C-3PO. He mostly fulfils the commands and requests of human beings, but sometimes he takes his own initiative in certain conditions. For instance, in *ANH*, R2-D2 escapes from Luke's home in the evening with his own decision even though C-3PO warns him about not going anywhere. C-3PO says to Luke that "I told him not to go, but he's faulty, malfunctioning. Kept babbling about his mission" (Lucas, 30). This shows that he still wants to complete his mission given by Leia even if he is sold to another master now. C-3PO insults him with the words faulty and malfunctioning. If he was a human being, he could be called mad or obstinate. This unusual behaviour style of R2-D2 demonstrates his partial free will which makes him a humanlike being. The autonomy of the AI stands out as an intriguing theme in the R2-D2 example. In *AotC*, when Anakin and Padme go to Geonosis to help Obi-Wan, they leave the ship without asking for any help from their droids. However, after they have gone, R2-D2 follows them to help in this dangerous place, again ignoring C-3PO's advice. C-3PO criticizes his behaviour by saying "For a mechanic, you seem to do an excessive amount of thinking. I am programmed to understand humans! 'What does that mean?' Oh! That means I am in charge here! Where are you going now? You don't know what's out there" (Lucas and Hales, *AotC* 93). C-3PO may be right here from the perspective of a droid since they need to do what they are asked to do. Yet, by following his friends with his own decision, R2-D2 saves Padme's life in the factory and fixes C-3PO when his head is removed from his body. This shows us that R2-D2 has very improved autonomy and free will, and he can take action in the hardest situations of his friends. Thus, his independent behaviour makes him a humanized agent droid that can even change the course of events in the galactic history.

C-3PO is not as autonomous as R2-D2 at the behavioural level. He is more dependent and tends to behave according to his programming generally. Yet, his appearance is much more humanoid than R2-D2. His organs and body shape are quite similar to a human being. His body pieces like two eyes, a mouth, a nose-like pattern on his face and even detailed hands with five fingers are bringing him closer to humanity. R2-D2's body shape does not resemble a human body at all. However, C-3PO is designed by directly copying the appearance of the human body. Additionally, he can speak human language, English and millions of other languages fluently thanks to his big data of languages. A droid asks C-3PO how many languages he can speak and he answers "I am fluent six million forms of communication" (Kasdan and Lucas, *RotJ* 8). This means that he can be an excellent translator in international relations of many different societies. This level of knowledge and speciality in languages and relationships make him a humanized droid since languages are constructed and formed by humans and aliens in the galaxy. R2-D2 can understand human and alien languages, but unlike C-3PO, he is unable to speak a human or alien language. One of the primal programmings of C-3PO is etiquette that puts his communication skills into a flawless state. In this case, one can argue that he has dignity and ethics in his relationships with other beings. When R2-D2 meets the uncompleted C-3PO in Anakin's house, he mocks him by calling him "naked" as his body parts are showing (*TPM* 36:55-37:06). C-3PO's body does not consist of organic flesh and he does not have sexual organs. Yet, he still is ashamed of his nakedness due to his ethical programming in human-cyborg relations.

In addition to these character examples of humanized and mechanized beings, it can be also beneficial to mention General Grievous briefly in this part. Even though Grievous is neither a human nor a droid essentially, he is an important cyborg character in *RotS* film who blurs the distinctions between the human and machine. He is originally a Kaleesh alien being whose body is organic without any machines. In the film, his only organic parts are his eyes, brain and heart apparently. All other parts of his body are transformed into machines which makes him almost a droid rather than an organic alien living being. After all, he is the general of the Separatist Droid Army and he communicates with droids more than human beings. Another important point is that he is similar to Darth Vader as a cyborg being. He coughs many times in his scenes but his cough sounds unnatural and artificial. Like Vader's mechanical

breathing, he has also a mechanical cough due to his cyborg body (*RotS* 8:32-54). Under normal circumstances, a robot does not cough; however, Grievous is not totally a robot. He has a few pieces of organic organs in his body. His cybernetic augments turn his cough into a robotic one and blur the binary opposition between the natural and artificial. Herbrechter asserts that the cyborg is a 'trickster' or on the edge figure that escorts the dissociation of myriad boundaries of contemporary Western science including boundaries of human and animal, human and machine, and physical and nonphysical continuums (108). In consequence, with his physical appearance and behaviour, Grievous deconstructs many established boundaries of Western science in this film.

As an alien cyborg, Grievous stands somewhere between human, animal, and robot. His behaviour, intelligence and communication skills resemble a human being that is similar to an old general of an army. His four arms and two legs enable him to move like a reptile animal as well. His cybernetic and mechanical body makes him a tough robotic warrior who has strength and speed advantage in fights. He seems like a quite strong enemy who can hardly be defeated with his augmented body. Yet, his inner vital organs keep him alive and they are his weak side. He is killed by Obi-Wan by shooting his inner vital organs in *RotS* (1:06:35-07:40). He is a combination of many entities that go beyond any traditional definitions of human and nonhuman.

These given examples signify that some human beings may be mechanized through various cybernetic enhancements while some robots may be humanized by developing certain humanlike behaviours, emotions, and actions. These characters transcend their fixed definitions and characteristics. Therefore, there are no clear-cut lines between human and robot in the *Star Wars* universe since transformation between these beings is possible. Humans and droids constantly influence each other and embellish their lives.

3.3. The Clone Dilemma: Human or Robot?

Clones are other important beings that problematize what it means to be a human question. Clones are identical replications of biological organisms made by using various techniques in biotechnology. Human clones seem disturbingly like real human beings, but they are generally not accepted as humans. Therefore, it can be stated that "Clones disturb our sense of species self because, while they are derived

from humans – i.e., they replicate us – we find it difficult to perceive them as human” (Nayar 86). This fact demonstrates that appearance is not the only aspect of a being that determines its perception. The otherization of clones can be seen in many popular sci-fi works because of their unnatural “birth” in laboratories. Their artificiality and at the same time similarity to real humans is concerning for some people. Regarding this, it is stated that “This is why cloned beings are referred to in popular accounts as monstrous: these are not born through acceptable ‘natural’ processes and do not carry a reliable origin story” (Nayar 119). The issues of robots and cyborgs have been discussed above and their mechanical and inorganic qualities distinguish them a little bit from human beings. Yet, clones are much closer to real humans with their exact same appearance, biological bodies, behaviour, emotions, real consciousness etc. In this sense, clones are highly significant beings in the *Star Wars* franchise that are both humans and nonhumans.

Human clones in *Star Wars* are first introduced in *AotC*, on Kamino planet. When Obi-Wan goes there to discover the secrecy of the assassination of Padme, he learns that Kaminoans are building a clone army for the Republic. Later, the Kaminoan Prime Minister, Lama Su shows the clone units by explaining them “Clones can think creatively. You will find that they are immensely superior to droids” (Lucas and Hales, *AotC* 60). Creative thinking does not mostly exist on droids even if there are some exceptions like R2-D2 and other droids in other *Star Wars* works. The ability to think creatively makes these clones quite the same as natural human beings. Kaminoans also give close combat education to hone their creative skills in battle. Their creative thinking also means that they do not need programming to act, unlike droids. They have their imagination and a real consciousness to evaluate the situations that they experience.

In this scene, Obi-Wan asks about their growth acceleration and Lama Su answers by saying “Oh, yes, it is essential. Otherwise, a mature clone would take a lifetime to grow. Now we can do it half the time” (Lucas and Hales, *AotC* 60). By implementing growth acceleration on these clones, Kaminoans modify their genetic structures according to their purposes. Hence, these clones have artificial genetic material that distinguishes them from natural human beings. They are biological and animate but at the same time artificial living beings.

Later, Lama Su continues explaining the clones “We modified their genetic structure to make them less independent than the original host. As a result, they are totally obedient, taking any order without question” (Lucas and Hales, *AotC* 60). The obedience of the clones is made possible through genetic engineering that influences the decision-making processes in their brains. They can think creatively but only within the limitations of their orders. This obedient characteristic of clones makes their actions more efficient and swifter since they do not hesitate while carrying out their orders. Yet, this also means that when they are under the orders of an evil person, their actions will be probably evil as well. Due to this, their inability to criticize orders may cause ethical problems, especially when a tyrant commands the clones. In fact, this genetically modified obedient behaviour is a double-edged sword that can lead to terrible events. In addition, their full obedience makes them droid-like beings who cannot think and evaluate critically.

The clones are “produced” by Kaminoan experts for a certain purpose. They are produced and rented to the Republic for defence reasons seemingly. From the perspective of Kaminoans, they are the properties of Kamino, not individuals. Their life value is paid with money and they fall into the position of war machines rather than human beings. At the end of *AotC*, the power of the clone army is demonstrated with a focus on the war-related importance of the clones rather than their humanlike traits (2:14:02-40). They are presented as a mass that can end the war with war ironically. Therefore, it can be expressed that they are reified beings that can only carry out their certain missions just like programmed robots. They do not have real individual names, they are given numbers as they are acknowledged as units, not persons.

Their individual and unique identities are heavily overlooked because they do not just wear a uniform that unifies them, their whole body is a uniform. The problem is that they can take off their uniforms but they cannot take off their bodies. Their production is based on humanist ideals in this sense since Kaminoans believe that they produce their best versions of clones and they modify the whole biology of these clones in accordance with their ideal soldier concepts in their minds. Thus, every clone can almost be a perfect human in the army with their identical structure. In this case, they are almost flawless humans, but are flaws not natural traits of a human being? These questions make it hard to define the clones as humans or robots since they are both

natural and artificial beings as explained “The biotechnology of cloning is considered as a posthuman form collapsing the distinctions of natural and artificial, real and virtual” (Baldwin 20). They are obviously posthuman beings that go beyond the conventional limits of a “normal” human being.

In addition to that, the ultimate and secret reason for the clone production is not the defence of the Republic, but the destruction of it by deceiving the Jedi Order. The execution of Order 66 was a milestone in the galactic history. Until this order was given by the Supreme Chancellor Palpatine, the clones were serving the Jedi with loyalty. Jedi as the peacekeepers and the clones as the Army of the Republic, they successfully destroyed the Separatist Alliance, but right at that moment, the clones immediately started to kill all Jedi by declaring them as the traitors of the Republic. This shocking slaughter occurred due to the inhibitor chips implanted in the brains of all clone troopers. These biochips dictate some behavioural codes to its host such as being obedient to his superiors and executing the Order 66 directly without question. That is why the clones cannot resist their feelings when this order is given because the chip in their brain dictates them to implement the order. In *RotS*, while the clones are fighting side by side with the Jedi, they instantly begin to kill them without any hesitation (1:20:33-23:40). They do not have their own consent in these actions here because they are brainwashed with the effect of the chip.

In the last season of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* television series, a clone commander explains the Order 66 to the other clones “Under this directive, any and all Jedi leadership must be executed for treason against the Republic. Any soldier that does not comply with the order will also be executed for treason” (“Shattered” 12:10-21). In this part of the series, it can be seen that the agency of the clones is not independent and they are not fully autonomous beings since they just want to kill their so respected former Jedi friend Ahsoka Tano. Ahsoka sends a hologram message to the commander and says that “Rex. I think I know what’s happening. I saw your report on Fives. It isn’t your fault. You were programmed. Your mind was altered to do this when you were very young. I can help you” (“Shattered” 19:04-19). Even after her explanation, the commander tries to kill Ahsoka. The clones do not understand clearly that they are made to do this order. She says that they were programmed. Normally, computers or robots are the beings that are programmed. Yet, according to what she

says, the clones are organic living beings that could be programmed while they were being produced. So, this raises the obvious question: are they human or robot?

As a consequence, the clones are living beings who are quite close to a natural human being. They have intensely humanlike behaviour, emotions, dreams, communication, consciousness, intelligence etc. It is quite hard for someone to notice that they are human clones supposing that they have not seen the clones before in the galaxy. However, they are programmed and genetically modified organisms that cannot be totally autonomous with the chip in their head. Thus, they subvert the human image by blurring the opposition between natural and artificial.



CHAPTER FOUR

THE POSTHUMAN UNIVERSE OF *STAR WARS*

The *Star Wars* universe is heavily rich with various types of different alien species that inhabit in their homeworlds. There are so many systems, planets, moons, civilizations and communities in the galaxy. The galaxy is so big that it is hard to maintain control and stability in every corner. There are even unknown or unexplored places that are found later like Kamino. This highly gigantic and complex galaxy naturally hosts lots of extraterrestrial life forms including aliens and creatures. Aliens mostly have personhood, intelligence, subjectivity and true consciousness while creatures do not totally have these qualities and they are much closer to animals. In addition to these nonhuman living beings, there are also inanimate droids that can be seen almost everywhere throughout the galaxy. Droids are capable of many things that animate beings cannot do thanks to their artificial intelligence and mechanical tools. Droids are like bridges between humans and machines since they have not only humanlike qualities but also advanced knowledge and abilities to fix or modify other machines. In this case, nonhuman entities do not consist of just animate alien beings but inanimate droids as well. Furthermore, just like aliens, there are tons of different types of droids that have different characteristics. All these different kinds of humans, aliens and droids live together in certain places.

In these places, one species or individual may become a dominant one that can rule the other beings. Yet, these places still keep their heterogeneous communities with their diversity of species. Concerning the myriad species of the *Star Wars* universe, it can be clearly said that the heterogeneity of certain communities makes them posthuman communities due to their inclusive quality. Some human beings may inhabit in the homeland of these societies, but they are generally not presented as the most central living beings in these places. *Star Wars* films put emphasis on species variety, polyphony and multiculturalism, especially in international cities or planets. For this reason, one can state that there is not an anthropocentric environment which sees humans as superior species in every aspect to all other species. Seemingly, there are no problems of inequality between human and nonhuman species since nonhumans can do everything humans do without being discriminated. Nonhuman beings are not

seen as others in the galaxy, they are rather seen as living individuals who have the same rights with human beings. Therefore, the films exhibit a posthumanistic perspective toward nonhuman species. Shortly, the topics of equality and diversity between human and nonhuman beings, the concept of companion species and intermingled life and existence among all beings will be examined in the *Star Wars* films in this chapter.

4.1. Equality and Diversity Between All Types of Humans and Nonhumans

Equality among beings is one of the most important themes in the *Star Wars* franchise due to its sensitivity to democracy and liberty. The galaxy is ruled by the city planet Coruscant where all individuals of the galaxy are looked at as citizens of the Republic or Empire. There are not any different treatments to nonhuman beings that come from very far away planets. Especially in civilized places in the galaxy, all beings regardless of their species, race or gender are approached with respect and tolerance. In addition to that, there are not any dominant communities that have controlled the planets for a long time. The new ideas and projects are discussed in the Galactic Senate where lots of distinct species decide the future of the galaxy. Because of this egalitarian and inclusive environment, the *Star Wars* universe offers a diverse type of species that can live, communicate and exist together peacefully. That is, an equal environment provides diversity as well. It is also important to highlight that these ideals are not embraced by the dark side, the Empire or criminal syndicates so much.

In this sense, this universe envisages posthuman societies in a futuristic setting where human and nonhuman lives intersect with each other in a just atmosphere. Regarding this, Herbrechter states that critical posthumanism's task is to develop alternative, more egalitarian democratic and just models for a posthumanist society in the future (30). It can be seen that most societies in *Star Wars* are intrinsically posthuman because they interact with the other in one way or another.

One of the posthuman places that demonstrates the equal and diverse quality of the franchise is Jabba the Hutt's Palace. When R2-D2 and C-3PO enter the palace to deliver Luke's message to Jabba, lots of different alien beings are shown in *RotJ* (6:54-10:32). Jabba as an alien being, sits on the throne of this palace as a crime lord on Tatooine. Even Luke addresses him with respectful words in his message. He says that "Greetings, Exalted One. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Luke Skywalker,

Jedi Knight and friend to Captain Solo. I know that you are powerful, mighty Jabba, and that your anger with Solo must be equally powerful. I seek an audience with Your Greatness to bargain for Solo's life" (Kasdan and Lucas, *RotJ* 6-7). Apparently, respectability and power are beyond species origin here. Both humans and nonhumans can acquire such powerful positions within the power dynamics of this series. In fact, there is not any equality in these kinds of criminal empires because of their corrupted and selfish conduct, but at least it can be said that this criminal empire is ruled by a nonhuman being. This means that the palace is a diverse and non-anthropocentric place even though there is not much equality among beings. Any species can claim power if they have effective opportunities in this dangerous place.

4.1.1. Species Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism is another important notion that shapes the societal structures of the galaxy considerably. Cosmopolitanism is not limited to human cosmopolitanism here but it also includes nonhuman life forms. Species cosmopolitanism advocates not only the mutual respect of distinct human cultures and beliefs but also the cultures and beliefs of nonhuman species. For this reason, it is a broader term that puts forward a wider range of living beings such as animals, plants and even aliens in the context of sci-fi. It exceeds the limits of human diversity by underscoring the importance of the underrated nonhuman life. This notion rejects binary oppositions and distinctions between life forms and endorses the intersections and mixtures of different beings and their lives. Nayar defines the term by articulating that:

Species cosmopolitanism is the apotheosis of critical posthumanism because of its rejection of easy binaries, whether gender (male/female) or life form (animal/human, human/plant) or compositional elements (organic/inorganic). Species cosmopolitanism sees all species as always already nodes and intersections along a continuum, full of borrowed characteristics, genes and behaviour. (204)

Therefore, it can be clearly expressed that species cosmopolitanism destroys binaries not only within species but also between species.

This notion is highly apparent in the *Star Wars* universe with its diverse depiction of myriad species. To exemplify, the Jedi Order involves various nonhuman species even if it consists of human beings predominantly. The Jedi Order was first

shown to audiences as an institution in the film *TPM*. When Qui-Gon goes to the Jedi Temple to report, he interacts with the Jedi Council which has many alien beings (1:20:53-22:35). It can be seen that there are many aliens and humans with different genders and races in the hall. These Jedi possibly came from different planets when they were young and they were trained in the temple to become Jedi masters. The Jedi Order encompasses all different kinds of species regardless of their race, gender or wealth. Jedi only care about the connection to the Force before enlisting someone to the Jedi Temple. This characteristic of the Jedi community makes the Jedi Temple a species cosmopolitan place naturally. Everybody respects each other's ideas, points of view, cultures and traditions in this place. Therefore, this place is one of the examples where equality and diversity ideals can be seen quite clearly. After all, they are the peacemakers and protectors of the Republic.

In addition to that, the planet Coruscant is also really a cosmopolitan place where many different species can coexist without a problem. One of the important scenes that shows the cosmopolitan nature of the *Star Wars* universe is Anakin's meeting with Palpatine at the Galaxies Opera House. While Anakin runs to find Palpatine in the opera house, the film presents many aliens in the hallways and spectator pods (*RotS* 42:42-44:00). There are both human and alien viewers inside this place and they treat each other with respect and politeness. Distinct living beings can go to that place for entertainment because, in this scene, a demonstration is going on in the background. Also, Chancellor Palpatine is sitting with some aliens before Anakin arrives. It means that he has a good relationship with aliens as a human Chancellor. Thus, all species in this place demonstrate mutual respect and this enables an equal and diverse environment where the lines between human and nonhuman are quite blurred.

These kinds of places are not the only cosmopolitan places in the galaxy. *Star Wars* universe is filled with cosmopolitan places where humans and nonhumans spend time or work together. Species cosmopolitanism causes the mixture of cultures, beliefs and traditions of different species. All those aliens have probably a distinct and unique lifestyle in their homeworlds, but here they find a way to adapt themselves to Coruscant's complex lifestyle. In this way, they achieve to build posthuman communities.

4.1.2. Species, Race and Gender Equality

The principles of equality and diversity within the Galactic Republic and Rebel Alliance create an environment where none of beings in the galaxy are distinguished and treated differently because of their natural characteristics. With the multispecies quality of the *Star Wars* universe, it can be articulated that the protagonists in the films (Luke and Anakin) and their friends (with some exceptions) support democratic and egalitarian ideas in the galaxy. The characters on the good side in the films make a speciesless, raceless and genderless environment although it does not last for long. It is also necessary to mention that this kind of ideal environment does not spread to the whole galaxy. In some far places like Tatooine, there is still slavery and inequality among species. The Empire is already known for exploiting lots of native and isolated communities under quite harsh circumstances.

The equal and polyphonic environment of *Star Wars* can be seen in the meeting of the Rebel Alliance in *RotJ*. In this scene, Rebel Alliance members discuss their plan to attack the second Death Star of the Empire and determine their teams (48:32-51:35). They gather in a big hall on a spaceship where there are a lot of humans, aliens and droids. Firstly, the very varied atmosphere of species indicates that all these distinct beings unify for certain purposes: liberty and rebirth of the Republic. To be able to overthrow the tyrannic and oppressive regime of the Empire, many species should combine their forces as far as possible. The fact that living beings in this meeting involve alien species also demonstrates the posthumanist aspect of this community. Additionally, Lando borrows Han's ship and he has an alien co-pilot in the ship. All ships are commanded by Admiral Ackbar who is also an alien being (*RotJ* 1:27:09-48). So, the humans in the ships are not prioritized or dominant beings that disregard the other species. In this regard, they do not have a hierarchical relationship with the nonhuman. In a posthumanist thesis, it is written that "However, by rejecting human primacy and the hierarchy of beings that was constructed in humanism, the allegedly exceptional status of the human is thwarted, and the nonhuman is regarded as equal to the human" (Tümer 4). From this point of view, it can be argued that the humans in the Rebel Alliance do not have an exceptional or special place among other species and because of that they are decentered. Rebel Alliance intrinsically is a postanthropocentric movement that challenges the hierarchical and totalitarian system of the Empire.

Furthermore, the franchise has also black representation with several characters. Han's friend Lando is a black human who is the leader of the Cloud City. As a black person, he manages to become a leader of such a big and developed city which shows that there is no racism against black people in the city. In the previous film, *TESB*, he is presented as a traitor to his friend, but later on, he regrets his decision and tries to help Leia, Chewbacca and the droids for their escape. So, he has a well-written character development in the film that presents him as a traitor and liar first and then redeems him as a saver of Leia and Chewbacca. His character portrayal is not two dimensional but a multidimensional and realistic one. As a black person, he stands in an equal status with the white characters, neither superior nor inferior. In *RotJ*, he holds an important position again. In this film, Lando infiltrates into Jabba's Palace in costume and cooperates with Leia and Chewbacca to save Han. With the help of Luke, all members of the Rebel Alliance succeed in getting rid of Jabba. Lando's friendship bond with Han, Leia and Chewbacca is strengthened after these events. In a later part of the film, he is presented as a general in the Rebel Alliance and Han says to him that "You are the respectable one, remember" (Kasdan and Lucas, *RotJ* 41). Right at that scene, there is another black man who is sitting besides them. These scenes indicate that black people are seen as quite equal to whites and other races of people.

In addition to this race equality example in the original trilogy, another important example exists in the prequel trilogy. Master Mace Windu is a prominent racial representation as a character in prequels. He is a Jedi general in the Army of the Republic and plays a quite significant role in The Clone Wars. He is also a very influential figure in the Jedi Council who once became Master of the Council. In the prequel trilogy films, he is introduced as the wisest Jedi after Master Yoda in the Jedi Order. White human and alien characters respect him due to his position in the Jedi Council. Also, after Anakin informs him about Palpatine's true face, he gathers several Jedi to arrest the Sith Lord. This situation demonstrates that he has quite high authority on the council. As a Master Jedi, only he can withstand the power of Palpatine in a fight while other Jedi die fastly (*RotS* 1:11:09-13:26). He even beats Palpatine in a lightsaber duel. Only with the help of Anakin, he is killed by Palpatine (*RotS* 1:14:40-15:19). These scenes signify that he is one of the most important Jedi characters in the *Star Wars* franchise. As a black Jedi, his representation as a strong and wise Jedi Master consolidates racially rich societies of the galaxy.

There are also strong women representations and portrayals in the *Star Wars* universe that reveal the genderless structure of the galaxy. Princess Leia is one of the most significant examples that leads the Rebel Alliance as a woman. She is depicted as a very traditional damsel in distress figure who is saved by men in the first film (*ANH*). Yet, in the later two films, she is depicted as an independent and strong woman who becomes the leader General of the Rebels. Her empowerment changes her relation and position among people in the Alliance. When the Empire locates the Rebel base in Hoth, they start to evacuate the base. Leia gives orders to men pilots about their escape plan as a leader (*TESB* 23:55-24:29). So, she is not a victim princess who waits to be saved in this film. She actively contributes to the Alliance by developing strategies and finding ways to get rid of the enemy. While escaping from the imperial troopers, Leia manages to defend herself and her friends by shooting the troopers bravely (*TESB* 1:47:04-49:09). She is actively cooperating with Chewbacca, an alien here. In the next film, she makes a plan to save Han with Chewbacca and Lando, but Jabba detects her and makes her his slave. In the scene where her friends struggle to escape from the deadly Sarlacc pit, she strangles Jabba with her chains and becomes a free woman again (*RotJ* 33:59-36:48). In a later part of the film, she voluntarily joins the strike team to deactivate the shield generator which is a very dangerous mission. This is another brave and challenging act of her as a woman. When she goes to the moon Endor, she demonstrates lots of heroic deeds in the fight with stormtroopers. Her brave, active and leadership characteristics disrupt her traditional woman portrayal in *ANH* and clearly portray her as a strong, independent and important woman who highly contributes to the Rebel Alliance.

While Leia is a very significant woman character in the original trilogy, Padme is the other important woman character in the prequel trilogy. First of all, she is presented to the audience as the Queen of Naboo in *TPM* despite her very young age. Later in the film, she tells the senate that her homeworld is under invasion but she sees that the senate will take no action soon. She decides to go back to Naboo even if it is quite dangerous. So, she wants to be with her people knowing that she can be tortured to sign the treaty or even be killed. Yet, she returns to Naboo with a brilliant plan. Apart from human beings, Gungans are the other native species of the planet. The problem is that humans and Gungans have been on bad terms for a very long time because of the excluding actions of humans. As a Queen of Naboo, Padme bends the

knee in front of the Gungan leader and asks for their help to save the planet. The Gungan leader is pleased and accepts to unite their forces with human beings (*TPM* 1:36:09-38:00). As a woman, Padme is not just a brave queen but a great politician as well. She succeeds in destroying the feud between humans and aliens in Naboo just with her one speech. She respects the alien beings and relies on them with humility. Also, she makes a great plan to capture the Viceroy to win the war (*TPM* 1:39:02-40:23). Thus, it can be stated that she is also an intelligent woman who can devise strategic plans. In addition to these, in *AotC*, she decides to go to Geonosis with Anakin to save Obi-Wan which is a very threatening place. She manages to beat the creature that would kill her without a weapon. In *RotS*, she continues to work in the Galactic Senate as the senator of Naboo. These deeds of her show that, her representation as a strong, brave and intelligent woman greatly contributes to the diverse atmosphere of the *Star Wars* universe. She loves Anakin and later marries him, but she still manages to become an independent and free woman.

It can be seen from these scenes that species equality also brings race and gender equality with it. The postanthropocentric and egalitarian environments on the sides of the protagonists break the one dimensional and ideal human figure in humanist thought. It also diminishes the lines between humans and nonhumans. Although gender and racial representations are not so diverse and equal by today's standards, the recent *Star Wars* works give much more importance to equal gender and race portrayals.

4.1.3. Representation of Species in the Galactic Senate

The galaxy is ruled by the Galactic Senate on the planet Coruscant, with thousands of senators and a supreme chancellor. Most decisions are made by voting in the senate. Senators represent their home planets and the problems, demands or complaints of their nations. Indeed, senators also look out for the interests of their own people. In this way, a great number of nations have a chance to make their voice heard from very faraway places. Senators consist of many humans and aliens that come from various planets. This variety of species in the senate is another indicator of non-speciesist and posthuman societies of the *Star Wars* universe. About this topic, Avsar states that posthumanism wants us to envision a future where human relations and identity are restructured to mirror the web of all networks and beings in the world (4).

The complex structure of the senate that includes humans together with nonhumans exhibits alternative human identities and existences.

The Galactic Senate is shown only in the prequel trilogy, during the period when the Republic rules the galaxy. In *TPM*, Queen Padme goes to Coruscant to report the invasion of the Trade Federation and to ask for help immediately. It can be seen that the senate has a gigantic building to host all the senators of the galaxy (1:23:10-16). Due to the fact that numerous planets and moons exist in the galaxy, there are too many delegates that represent their home worlds. Within the senate building, a lot of flying pods are used to carry delegates. Queen Padme enters a pod with Palpatine, the senator of Naboo. Padme clearly explains the tragic situation of Naboo's invasion, but with the objection of other representatives and lack of proof, the Chancellor decides to defer the accusation to send a commission to Naboo for proof. He says to Padme, "Queen Amidala of the Naboo, will you defer to allow a commission to explore the validity of your accusations?" (Lucas, *TPM* 86). Even though, both the senator and queen of Naboo tell the invasion of Naboo by the Trade Federation and require urgent help, the senate cannot take action because of conflicts and corruption. In the scene, the senator from the Trade Federation is a nonhuman alien being. He denies the accusations made by Naboo humans, and he manages to defer the motion of Naboo people so that they can get more time. Another alien group supports their objection and with the influence of the bureaucrats, the chancellor cannot help them. The scene demonstrates that aliens have also a strong voice in the senate and they are treated as equally as humans without any segregation. Therefore, one can argue that nonhuman beings exist in every corner of the galaxy and they actively affect the administration of the Republic with their votes and ideas.

In the next film, *AotC*, Jar Jar Binks becomes a Representative of Gungans in the senate. In the absence of Padme, he proposes the senate to "give immediately emergency powers to the supreme chancellor" (Lucas and Hales 91). for the creation of a Republic Army to counter the Separatist forces. It is approved by the majority of the senate because of the threat of the Separatist droid army. By making this suggestion, Jar Jar caused the chancellor to be given quite significant and influential powers. Thus, as an alien, he has changed the course of events considerably in spite of the fact that this change will not end well. Other alien beings also approved this

authorization of the chancellor, which again shows that the senate has a quite multispecies and egalitarian structure.

Lastly, the senate is seen in *RotS* when a pivotal moment in the galactic history occurs. After the execution of the Order 66 and Anakin's falling into the dark side, Palpatine is ready to legally destroy the Republic and announce his new Empire in the senate. Next to him, a blue skinned alien being stands who is his vice chair. Palpatine labels all Jedi as traitors of the Republic and the senate. He announces that "In order to ensure our security and continuing stability, the Republic will be reorganized into the first Galactic Empire! For a safe and secure society" (Lucas, *RotS* 137). With this statement, Palpatine succeeds in eliminating both the Republic and the Jedi. Most of the senators applaud Palpatine's announcement even though this means that they will not be as free as in the Republic Era. Padme evaluates the situation by stating that "So this is how liberty dies. With thunderous applause..." (Lucas, *RotS* 137). Despite the corruption and chaos lately, the senate was still functioning liberally without any oppression. Palpatine manipulated the senate and the Jedi to prepare a situation that could be appropriate for him to become an emperor. Although he cannot completely get rid of the senate, he has become a dictatorial emperor who holds too much power for a long time. This kind of power naturally has decreased the importance and authority of the senate. The emperor has destroyed the liberty, multivocality and representation characteristics of the senate basically.

4.2. Companion Species

It is important to mention Donna Haraway's concept of companion species in the context of posthumanism. As the name explains, companion species is about interspecies companionship in mutually beneficial relationships. All species in the ecosystem are in need of each other to sustain the ecological balance of nature. To be able to successfully coevolve in a constantly changing environment, species need to cooperate and protect themselves. Thus, the dualisms between species are not sensible according to this concept. Companion species term aims to break the distinctions between nature and culture, human and nonhuman. Humans' focus on the nonhuman and their relationship with the nonhuman are essential aspects of the term. Regarding this, Haraway writes that "Better companion species relations needed to be formed all around, from the start, among the humans and the nonhumans" (*Manifestly Haraway*

170). In this sense, it can be said that the notion parallels posthumanist ideology in many ways.

The companion species notion subverts human exceptionalism and a human-centered approach to nonhuman beings. It challenges the idea that human beings are superior to other species because it is an inclusive term that embraces all beings in nature. It advocates that species are dependent on each other inevitably since each species is a part of a whole. In this case, it can be argued that species may have different qualities but there are others who are significant. They are significant because they contribute to the ecological balance of nature by performing tasks that humans cannot efficiently accomplish. So, nonhuman species also deserve certain rights and respect to be able to live properly. Also, the term *species* here is not limited to organic living beings but includes inorganic and mechanical robots as well.

4.2.1. Dependence of Species to Each Other

The *companion species* term exists in every corner of the *Star Wars* universe since humans interact and develop relationships with myriad nonhumans. For example, Jawas as a nonhuman alien species on Tatooine sell some droids to humans which means that they trade with humans by selling them efficient droids (*ANH* 17:00-19:38). Although, they are not reliable aliens when humans have money, they can buy many mechanical tools or droids from them. A better example of the companion species notion is the friendship between Han and Chewbacca. They have a highly strong connection to each other although they are different species. Chewbacca is Han's copilot in his ship which shows that he constantly cooperates with Han (*ANH* 55:48-56:59). In the later part of *ANH*, Chewbacca helps both Han and Luke on their mission to save the princess. As a Wookiee, he is so strong physically and uses his strength for his human companions. He even uses a blaster thanks to his adaptation skills to technological tools (1:14:02-15:10). At the end of the film, he stands with his human friends (Han, Luke and Leia) in the award ceremony (1:59:59-2:00:12). These scenes clearly underscore the fact that Chewbacca becomes a quite important companion to the Rebel Alliance which consists of mostly humans. This means that Han, Luke and Leia are dependent on Chewbacca in the film and Chewbacca also are dependent on his human friends.

In *TESB*, Chewbacca continues to be a fellow alien to human beings. In addition to him, another important alien character appears in this film. When Luke goes to Dagobah, he encounters Master Yoda whose species can be hardly found in the galaxy. Despite his old age, Yoda behaves like a child and annoys Luke. Yet, his motive is to test Luke's patience. What is more, he is presented as a bizarre little green creature whose body is completely different compared to humans. Even if he has many differences, he can get on with Luke because of his knowledge of English, and his great wisdom. He makes trouble for Luke when he first encounters him (*TESB* 48:00-50:05). Yoda just wants food but Luke does not care because he seeks a "great warrior". Yoda invites him to his home to cook something to eat. This shows us that he approaches Luke like a friend and sees him as a companion. He wants to help him in that odd place. After he takes Luke to his home to eat food, Luke still does not recognize him as an important individual. Yet, when he learns that the little green creature is a Jedi Master, his manners change (*ANH* 54:35-57:38). In later parts of the film, Yoda trains Luke and passes on his knowledge about the Force. Indeed, Luke is dependent on him to become a Jedi master because there are no other known Jedi masters in the galaxy. Their relation is a good instance of companion species concept which transcends the limits between species.

Other species like Ewoks in *RotJ* demonstrate the dependency between humans and aliens as well. Although the first interactions between Ewoks and the Rebels did not end very well, they all became friends with each other so that they could destroy the Imperial forces on Endor. Without the help of Ewoks who knows the forest best, the Rebels have little chance to defeat all troopers and deactivate the shield generator of the Death Star. While the Rebels are discussing how to enter the building of the shield generator, an Ewok suggests that they should need a backdoor strategy and he pulls most troopers toward himself (*RotJ* 1:27:54-30:02). Thanks to the Ewok, human Rebels could enter the building easily. These two different species (actually three when Chewbacca included) work together so as to make the challenge easier. After this scene, the Rebels are caught by other troopers, but Ewoks ambush the troopers and save the Rebels (*RotJ* 1:37:55-40:00). It can be seen that humans are not the central and all-powerful species that can do everything here. If Ewoks had not saved them, they could not have deactivated the shield generator and the Death Star could not have been destroyed. Ewoks have saved the day in these scenes with their brave and

strategic ambush. They even figure out how to pull down the enduring Imperial walkers (*RotJ* 1:45:40-47:50). Even though Ewoks are heavily primitive species, they adapt their tools for dealing with the challenging walkers. They even obtain one of the walkers with the help of Chewbacca. Thus, it can be deduced that all distinct species in that place need each other to survive against the cruel Empire forces.

Additionally, the relationship between Gungans and humans on Naboo also reveals the dependency between these two species. Even though these species have not been on good terms for a long time at the beginning of *TPM*, they still live on the same planet. According to the leader of Gungans, humans see themselves as superior beings who are intelligent. It seems that humans demonstrate an anthropocentric approach to these native aliens and that is why Gungans live in an isolated place now. Obi-Wan criticizes the leader's indifferent manner toward the common threat to Naboo by uttering that "You and the Naboo form a symbiont circle. What happens to one of you will affect the other. You must understand this" (Lucas, *TPM* 16). For this reason, the humans and Gungans on Naboo have a symbiotic relationship due to the common threat of the droid Army. In the later part of the film, Gungans must escape from their "hidden" lake city for their safety. This shows that the Gungan leader underestimates the enemy and refuses to unite with humans. Yet, the overdue peace between these two species occurs thanks to Padme as mentioned above. Both these species had to become one to destroy the enemy. After a harsh battle with the droid army, Gungans win the war with the help of Anakin and Naboo humans. Only with their co-working, they can win the war. At the end of the film, humans and Gungans of the Naboo celebrate their common victory and peace (*TPM* 02:03:15-04:32). They finally understand that they are companion beings and they rely on each other, especially during hard times.

4.2.2. Significant Otherness

Donna J. Haraway's *companion species* term is about significant otherness as she states: "So, in 'The Companion Species Manifesto,' I want to tell stories about relating in significant otherness, through which the partners come to be who we are in flesh and sign" (*Manifestly Haraway* 116). In this idea, the other is seen as a precious and important companion that is needed. The alien species that have been mentioned in the previous subchapter are significant others and there are many other alien beings that are significant others in the *Star Wars* universe. Yet, in this part, droids will be

our focus rather than aliens because this term encompasses inanimate and inorganic robots as well. In her work, Haraway generally refers to animals in our world when she explains companion species, but companion species are not limited to animals or living beings. Regarding this topic, Inokuchi articulates that Haraway thinks of myriad entities as companion species which includes tools and technologies except for animals and microbes (52). Therefore, not only aliens but also droids are companion species and significant others for human beings in the galaxy.

Even though several scenes exhibit discrimination against droids such as excluding droids from the bar (*ANH* 45:36-55) and casting out R2-D2 at the eating hall (which is made by a droid ironically) (*AotC* 34:54-35:16). In these short scenes, droids are not embraced by other beings clearly. Yet, both humans and aliens are highly dependent on droids almost in every part of life. Thus, droids are intrinsically significant others in the *Star Wars* universe. It is necessary to give some instances for this explanation here. In *ANH*, Han, Luke, Leia and Chewbacca are stuck in a garbage masher and it starts to crush the garbage along with them. They are about to die but R2-D2 and C-3PO hear them and deactivate the garbage masher at the last minute (1:23:15-25:00). It means that these droids have saved the lives of living beings. Furthermore, in *TESB*, Luke is frozen in the ice planet of Hoth and saved by Han. When the Rebels take Luke to their base, his condition is not good and he is treated by a medical droid (21:42-54). Medicine is one of the most vital and important fields in human life. The profession of doctor is given to a droid in this scene, indicating that these medical droids are significant entities capable of saving the lives of animate beings.

In addition to medical droids, some protocol droids that are capable of knowing numerous languages like C-3PO provide translation between languages. C-3PO becomes a quite useful droid, particularly in places where multiple distinct species exist. For instance, in *RotJ*, C-3PO serves as Jabba's translator because Jabba only speaks Huttese (14:35-16:40). In fact, C-3PO is appreciated only due to his translating abilities which reifies him. Still, in such a dangerous place, he manages to survive with his expertise in languages.

As a last example, it is worth examining the famous astromech droid R2-D2's warrior characteristics. At the beginning of *RotS*, R2-D2 fights with enemy droids one after another. Firstly, R2-D2 defeats a buzz droid on Anakin's spaceship by following

Obi-Wan's counsel bravely (6:35-7:08). Buzz droids are very small droids; nevertheless, they can heavily damage a ship when they are free. Later, while he is helping his friend by controlling the elevator, two battle droids detect him. He beats them by pouring petroleum and burning them (10:32-11:25). He finds innovative ways to destroy his enemies that are strong and dangerous. He helps them to locate the Chancellor and directs the elevator to ensure their safe way. When these things are considered, it can clearly be stated that R2-D2, C-3PO and medical droids are some significant others for the protagonists in these films.

4.3. Complex Web of Lifestyles and Languages in Multispecies Relations

Each society has a different type of life that is shaped by their cultures, beliefs, values, norms etc. Life has a complex web that includes myriad distinct beings and it is always changing. Sometimes, certain lives of different entities may intersect in particular places. It is a possibility that one way of life dominates the other ones which decreases cultural and societal variety. Instead of destroying alternative lives, it may be better to integrate them into the already existing ones. To do this, collaboration and unity are necessary in multispecies relations, hence "Co-constitutive companion species and coevolution are the rule, not the exception" (Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway* 124). All beings affect each other and are affected by each other. So, despite their different qualities, beings can experience similar or even the same experiences, particularly in shared environments.

A great number of different lifestyles can exist harmoniously in common places in *Star Wars*. Certain norms and values in multispecies societies construct a common way of life among different species. At the beginning of *RotJ*, the scenes in Jabba's palace sum up the life of the crime world on Tatooine (6:48-29:35). In these scenes, it can be seen that distinct alien beings and humans share the same space, spend time and have fun together with similar behaviours. The interaction between human and nonhuman beings consists of similar social structures. Otherwise, they could not communicate with each other properly. The crime world is intrinsically depicted as cruel, dangerous and wild in this place. Therefore, there are a lot of bounty hunters and smugglers in the palace that serve the crime lord Jabba. What brings all these different beings together is money or supplies here. All bounty hunters and smugglers work for Jabba for a price. This highly materialistic atmosphere causes some problems. For instance, a bounty hunter (Leia in disguise) can enter Jabba's palace even to threaten

him with a bomb (*RotJ* 14:35-16:54). This is a security problem which may happen many times. It is also important to highlight that some individuals like Boba Fett are not born in Tatooine. Their profession, choices and lifestyle bring them to Tatooine where they can do their job more freely. In this way, different species can develop similar types of lifestyles to adapt to their environment.

Concerning languages, English and Huttese are the most known languages on Tatooine. Yet, the multispecies places still may necessitate translator droids like C-3PO. Some alien beings cannot speak English owing to their different physical traits or their lack of opportunity to learn the language. Droids break the language barrier between different species which makes possible smooth communication. Proper communication is vital in this kind of place because when a person is misunderstood, he/she can be killed and left without punishment. Thus, droids carry out a substantial function because they can know millions of languages at an advanced level, unlike living beings in the galaxy.

Due to the fact that a strong and supervising government does not exist on Tatooine, illegal jobs are widespread. Tatooine exists in the Outer Rim Territories, which places it far from the capital planet Coruscant. Therefore, it is not a developed country with lots of skyscrapers or expensive technological tools. Many tools that come from Jawas are mostly stolen and used items. Because of the lack of governance, even in the Republic Era, slavery is still practised on this planet. So, one can argue that survival is quite hard on the planet since almost everyone demonstrates selfish manners. The Hutts control almost the entire planet which makes it quite hard to establish order and security. For this reason, lots of beings are morally corrupt and self-centered.

Another major example of common lifestyle and languages is the society of Coruscant. Different from Tatooine, Coruscant is a highly advanced and the most crowded planet in the universe. Many foreigners move to the planet or just visit this place for various reasons such as business, tourism, or education. Because of this, numerous distinct cultures mix which also blurs species boundaries. The planet's city life has a well-established order and rules that influence the lives of all beings. In spite of the distinct native traditions and lifestyles, all species need to adapt general norms, values and way of life on Coruscant to become a united community. For instance, when Obi-Wan and Anakin chase an assassin who has tried to kill Padme, Coruscant's

streets and a club are exhibited (*AotC* 20:55-24:05). It seems that various aliens coexist with humans smoothly. These aliens behave mostly like humans and they have quite similar lifestyles. Also, in a later part of the film, Obi-Wan goes to a cafe to see his alien friend (*AotC* 31:38-33:38). There are a lot of alien beings that spend time with their friends in the cafe. In these scenes, aliens speak English with Obi-Wan and Anakin because it is necessary to know the lingua franca language on such a cosmopolitan planet. Even though, humans are the majority species in Coruscant, many aliens live and visit this place as well. Apparently, both humans and nonhumans find a common lifestyle and language that suit most of the inhabitants. In this sense, this common ground presents us with a posthuman atmosphere.

4.4. The Force as a Posthuman Energy Field

The Force is one of the most important notions in the *Star Wars* universe without doubt. *May the Force be with you* is a heavily well-known and repeated phrase in the franchise. The Force is a mystical energy field that exists everywhere and binds all living beings in the universe. It is about the interconnectedness of all beings. It is similar to Haraway's perspective of existence "To be one is always to *become with many*" (*When Species Meet* 4). An individual only be completely one when they become with others. The word many here refers to both humans and nonhuman entities. Additionally, here she means that someone is constantly co-existing with others. So, it is an unending process. She also articulates the symbiotic relationship among all beings. According to this point of view, a person cannot live in a totally isolated way because they will eventually need others. Only by embracing others, one can achieve a state of wholeness. This view of Haraway can be easily related to the Force in *Star Wars* due to their shared philosophy on life.

Firstly, it would be better to look at the definition of the Force in the films. When Luke first hears the Force, Obi-Wan explains the word "The Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together" (Lucas, *ANH* 39). This underscores that without the Force, the Jedi and the Sith are nothing. They have lightsabers which are highly technological swords that can cut almost everything. Yet, the Jedi and the Sith actively use the Force in battle to do supernatural deeds and take advantage. As mentioned above, the Force is everywhere and surrounds all entities. By binding the galaxy together, it creates a universal cosmic energy field that affects everything. In

this regard, all beings in the galaxy are interdependent and everything is connected to each other like a cosmic web. The Force influences not only physical entities but also abstract concepts such as destiny and fortune. Pivotal changes in the galaxy can influence everyone's life like the fall of the Republic and the rise of the Empire. In these types of scenarios, it may be said that all beings have a common destiny because they co-exist in the same galaxy. It is quite hard to mention any kind of exceptionalism or superiority among species here since the Force penetrates all living beings regardless of their species, gender, race, class, age etc. For this reason, the Force intrinsically destroys all kinds of binaries between human and nonhuman beings by binding them. The Force also does not take sides, it is neutral. If beings want to live long, they have to mutually co-evolve with other beings and adapt to their environments. It constantly flows through living beings and transforms life as a whole. Without it, there would be no life.

One of the most important aspects of the Force is midi-chlorians which are first defined by Qui-Gon. He explains midi-chlorians to Anakin "Midi-chlorians are microscopic life-form that resides within all living cells. And we are symbionts with them. Life-forms living together for mutual advantage. Without the midi-chlorians, life could not exist and we would have no knowledge of the Force. They continually speak to us, telling us the will of the Force" (Lucas, *TPM* 94-95). From Qui-Gon's explanation of the Force, it can be inferred that midi-chlorians exist within all living beings regardless of their species. Thus, all living beings share a common life form inside their bodies and this unites them. Midi-chlorians in this universe naturally remove the otherization of nonhuman species and propose an interconnected and posthumanist philosophy because "A posthuman ethics for a non-unitary subject proposes an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism" (Braidotti 49-50). Due to this reason, midi-chlorians support the posthuman quality of the *Star Wars* series.

Furthermore, Force-sensitive beings like the Jedi and the Sith can feel an incident that happens in a faraway place. In *ANH*, the Empire uses the Death Star to terminate the Alderaan planet which is Leia's homeworld. The planet explodes in seconds, and Obi-Wan feels this terrible massacre immediately albeit he is in a different place at the moment. He explains the situation by uttering "I felt a great

disturbance in the Force... as if millions of voices suddenly cried out in terror and were suddenly silenced. I fear something terrible has happened” (Lucas, *ANH* 63). The Force is beyond time and space. It is a holistic structure that encompasses all living beings. Obi-Wan is a Jedi master who is strong with the Force and that is why he feels the massacre deeply in the scene. Another incident that clearly highlights the timeless and spaceless nature of the Force is Luke’s training scene with Yoda on Dagobah. Yoda tells Luke the subtleties of the Force while training him. He says that “Through the Force, things you will see. Other places. The future... The past. Old friends long gone” (Brackett and Kasdan, *TESB* 83). Right after these words of Yoda, Luke senses his friends will be in danger in a cloudy city in spite of the fact that they have not arrived there yet. Luke literally foresees the dangerous fate of his friends with the Force. Similar to Luke’s precognition in *TESB*, Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan also sense a disturbance in the Force when Darth Maul starts searching for them to kill the Queen of Naboo (*TPM* 28:53-29:02). Although they do not even know Maul or anything about the existence of the Sith yet, they feel that they can be in danger soon thanks to the Force. Thus, the Force gives them the ability to sense and see some things beyond time and space which makes them posthuman beings.

In addition to that, the Sith also sense alterations in the Force because when something happens, both the light side and the dark side of the Force are affected. In *TESB*, Darth Vader speaks with the emperor who is a Sith lord. The emperor says to Vader that “There is a great disturbance in the Force” and Vader agrees by saying “I have felt it” (Brackett and Kasdan, *TESB* 63). The emperor knows that Luke will be their enemy because the Force is strong with him. So, the Sith just like the Jedi have the ability to sense and predict many things through the Force. Moreover, Vader feels the presence of his old master Obi-Wan in the Death Star in *ANH*. He has been informed that the captured ship is completely empty, but he says “I sense something... a presence I’ve not felt since...” (Lucas, *ANH* 73). Even if he has not seen Obi-Wan for a long time, he still recognizes his familiar presence here. Vader also senses the presence of Luke in *RotJ* while Luke and his friends are entering the moon Endor (55:44-56:48). These examples clearly show that the Sith just like the Jedi possess supernatural powers through the Force such as precognition and feeling the presence of people they know.

Lastly, it is worth to look at the Force's transcendental function. The notion transcendental refers to the things that go beyond ordinary limits and it includes supernatural or extraordinary experiences that normal human beings cannot do. In *Star Wars*, the Force grants many extraordinary abilities that some consider unnatural. The Jedi and the Sith transcend their physical and mental limitations through the Force and they acquire skills such as telekinesis, precognition, and advanced physical strength. It can be argued that, just like technology, the Force provides opportunities to transcend the bodily limitations of a person and enables them to perform extraordinary deeds beyond natural constraints. For example, Darth Vader becomes a mighty Sith lord despite his perished body by means of his technological suit and his great connection to the Force. Also, the Jedi have the ability to become the Force ghosts after they die. They spiritually become immortal in this way because they do not actually die, they just transform into the Force and become literally one with the Force. Their physical body disappears when they die. This breaks the boundary between the physical and spiritual. It can be said that they become posthuman beings when they are unified with the universe. By breaking the lines between the spiritual and material realms, the Force as an impartial energy, destroys all other distinctions and dichotomies as well. The Force is one of the most important concepts that make the *Star Wars* universe posthuman. Consequently, the Force as a posthuman concept features inclusive, holistic, intermingled and unified structure of the galaxy in *Star Wars* films.

CONCLUSION

Humans generally define themselves by making comparisons to other entities in the universe. By looking at others, and differentiating themselves from other beings, they draw lines to determine what is a human being and what makes them human beings. In this definition process, humans often focus on differences between themselves and other species rather than similarities. The otherization and differentiation of nonhuman beings cause an artificial hierarchy in power relations with nonhumans inevitably. Therefore, problems such as discrimination, inequality or privilege of one species may appear in multispecies societies when boundaries between humans and nonhumans are diversified. The cultural construction of the human problematizes equal interspecies interactions since the human is positioned as the subject while all other species fall into the position of the object. The object is otherized and exploited for the benefit of the subject (the human). The subordination of the nonhuman creates a humanist environment where the human is accepted as the master of all things and a being that is capable of everything with advancement. Yet, the problem is this advancement has no end because of the fact that humanism seeks the perfect human eventually. While determining the perfect human image, it puts forward certain lines to form the values, norms and qualities of the human. In this process, it decenters all nonhuman beings since humanism only focuses on the improvement of the human independently. The intrinsic value of nonhuman beings is ignored in this anthropocentric ideology. Humans and nonhumans are seen as the opposites with distinct boundaries. In this sense, it can be better to demolish these boundaries while building a more fluid and flexible ground so that all beings may have a chance to have different definitions and portrayals equivalently. A newly developed critical theory, posthumanism, challenges these problematic issues of classical humanism. Some sci-fi films like *Star Wars* are quite appropriate to implement a posthumanist analysis with their rich topics and themes.

This study analyses the first six episodes of *Star Wars* films from a posthumanist perspective by focusing on the boundaries between human and nonhuman along with the posthuman atmosphere of the *Star Wars* universe. As a sci-fi space opera work which contains fantasy elements as well, *Star Wars* provides a totally fictional universe that includes myriad nonhuman beings and no political

correctness. These nonhuman beings have adapted themselves to live with humans by developing relationships and sharing common experiences. This postanthropocentric atmosphere intrinsically offers various discussion materials for the theory of posthumanism by deconstructing well-established norms of humans and nonhumans. As its name indicates, posthumanism is interested in an era after humanism. Post also refers to going beyond the limits of the human and imagine more queer societies which embrace egalitarian approaches toward the other. In the thesis, the nonhuman also includes robots and cyborgs because posthumanism deals with the lines between organic and inorganic as well. In addition, equal treatment of representation among companion species can form a universe without boundaries and barriers where nonhuman and human entities can exist. As seen in decentered posthumanist world where traditional understanding of man has been transformed into neutral human beings existing without distinguishing labels. About this issue of the theory, it is written that:

Posthumanism is not about a complete picture but a human that always becomes. It always changes. Posthumanism charges humanity with responsibility. He is no longer at the top of the food chain or the pyramid. Human is no longer man but human. It respects gender identities, ecology, other creatures and assumes a neutral position. (Nacar 7)

In this regard, posthumanism does not present a complete picture of human species because humanity is always in a changing process, therefore once man that was equal to human is no longer man but human. Thus, with the development of posthumanistic theory living and non-living beings started to assume neutral positions in the universe.

Posthumanist theory has an inclusive approach towards all kinds of beings by exploring human and nonhuman life. There are many historical elements that prepared the ground for the theory of posthumanism. The first cyborg in American cinema was seen in the 1950s, and *the cyborg* as a term was coined in 1960 by Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline (Dhandapani 96). The term *robot* emerged even before that. *Posthumanism* as a theoretical term was first used in 1977 and the theory started to become popular after the 1990s. It can be said that the emergence and development years of this theory overlap with the *Star Wars* original trilogy films in the early 1980s, and the prequel trilogy films in the early 2000s. The elements such as robots, cyborgs, aliens, artificial intelligence, genetic engineering etc. present intriguing questions

about human nature. In the 1980s and after, with the success of *Star Wars* films, people in the U.S. started to become interested in futuristic concepts and the sci-fi genre which indirectly contributed to the popularity of posthumanism in time.

The breaking of the boundaries between human and nonhuman involves extraterrestrial life forms (aliens) as well in the case of *Star Wars*. In this thesis, it has been mentioned that the interactions between humans and aliens destroy their taken for granted perceptions in humanist thought. Aliens were generally depicted as the enemies of humanity in a lot of Hollywood films until *Star Wars* that represent a Sci-fi utopian universe where human and nonhuman species and intensely intermingled social structure of the galaxy has surprised the audience of the 1980s. In the films, the word *alien* does not even exist because the galaxy has not a human-centered culture. Only the audience of the franchise calls nonhuman sentient living beings as aliens. Moreover, the typical relationship between humans and aliens highlights their intrinsic value as individuals in the universe. All species deserve respect and rights to live comfortably just like humans in this sense. The first film of the franchise generally depicts aliens as threatening and dangerous due to certain traits of the Tatooine planet. Yet, in later films, aliens are portrayed as friends of human beings. Particularly, the Rebel Alliance has numerous diverse aliens in their teams which shows the equal framework of the Rebels. Even though some aliens cannot speak human language, they understand each other with gestures and manners. Although many alien beings come from different planets where different cultures and traditions exist, they still have similar values and behaviours and lead their lives in a complex web of lifestyles and languages.

Besides boundaries between human and nonhuman, the humanimal quality of aliens in *Star Wars* has been examined showing that aliens of the galaxy have quite different bodies compared to humans. Some aliens have similar body parts to animals. For instance, Gungans are presented as semi-fish alien beings seemingly because of the fact that they can live in an underwater city. Geonosians are fly-like aliens who have wings on their backs and they can even fly. Although these physical qualities make them animal-like beings, they are bipedal and intelligent beings who have well-developed cultures, traditions and habitats. These alien societies also interact and cooperate with humans. Considering all of these, it can be stated that they possess both human and animal traits which makes them humanimals. This in-between

characteristic of aliens strongly blurs the boundaries between human and nonhuman. Furthermore, the films depict some significant alien characters who have lots of humanlike qualities. Characters like Yoda, Chewbacca, Jar Jar and Watto are aliens who have personality, subjectivity, identity and agency in the films. Each of these characters is presented as quite a unique person rather than an ordinary member of their species. Their different identities position them as independent subjects who can make decisions about their own lives. In this regard, they exhibit numerous humanlike behaviour and agency despite their nonhuman bodies.

Apart from the boundaries between humans and aliens, the boundaries between humans and machines have also been covered in an elaborated manner. Droids are indispensable artificial intelligent entities in the *Star Wars* universe. They are one of the most essential beings to create a sci-fi setting in this series. Humans and aliens constantly interact with droids and work together to solve problems. In this process, they develop a relationship between themselves inevitably. Although some humans treat droids as mere servants, characters like Luke, Leia, Anakin and Padme treat droids with respect and care as if they are real human individuals. They even become friends of R2-D2 and C-3PO droids in the films. They give important missions to these droids and they rely on them even in vital conditions. This signifies the fact that humans are so dependent on technology and robots to complete their works easily. Droids increase humans' quality of life considerably. Especially, in some fields such as communication, repair, calculation and medicine, droids have proven that they are more efficient beings than humans. Therefore, they have become an integral part of life. They are not depicted as only functional machines that implement the given instructions by humans. They actively influence the lives of humans in numerous ways.

This study also underscores the breaking of the lines between human and machine in one body. Some living beings may lose their organs and may not carry out certain deeds afterwards. In these scenarios, these people may prefer to get cybernetic augmentations in place of lost limbs. This process turns a living being into a cyborg. Cyborgs also have the advantages of being both humans and machines since they can also have true consciousness, soul and emotions while they have the advanced physical and mental abilities of a machine. In this case, their bodies become half-human and half-machine organisms which make them hybrid entities. Because of the fact that

cyborgs destroy many traditional and settled definitions of human and machine, it is quite hard to define them from a single perspective. They are neither humans nor robots, but both humans and robots, so they can be humanrobots, both living and nonliving beings.

In *Star Wars*, cyborg characters such as Luke, Anakin and General Grievous are efficient examples that show many complexities and transformations of their machinized bodies and identities. On the other hand, droid characters, R2-D2 and C-3PO have myriad humanlike qualities throughout the episodes. Their relationships and interactions with humans challenge the very established norms of robots even within the context of *Star Wars*. These droid characters develop highly sincere and friendly relationships with the main characters and have influenced their lives substantially. Additionally, clones are the other important beings that stand in a place between humans and robots. Even though their physical appearance, behaviour, intelligence, and communication traits reinforce their human position, their lack of free will, independence, autonomy and programmable minds bring them closer to robots. Thus, they become some kind of biological robots, whereas droids become humanized robots.

Additionally, the posthuman quality of the *Star Wars* universe has been discussed, first focusing on the notions of diversity and equality that have been investigated with various examples from the films. Even though the evil side (the Empire and the Separatist Alliance) do not prioritize these values in their life, the Republic and the Rebel Alliance give so much importance to equality and diversity among species. Humans and nonhumans can coexist without experiencing any kind of discrimination in these structures. In the Republic, every individual is accepted as a galactic citizen. This can openly be seen on Coruscant planet which has an intensely cosmopolitan environment. Many different species can integrate into the general life norms and values of this planet. Humans are presented as a part of a whole in these environments because they do not dictate their ways of life or they do not have privileged rights among other species. For this reason, one can deduce that concepts like equality, liberty or diversity are not limited to humans but apply to every being in the galaxy because there is no political correctness required in the Sci-Fi utopian universe of *Star Wars* galaxy. Concerning the diverse representation of humans, the films generally portray numerous humans with distinct identities. In the Rebel

Alliance, strong women representations such as Leia (except for *ANH* film) and black representation of Lando demonstrate a variety of humans in this equal association. In the Republic, another strong women representation of Padme, and the black representation of Mace Windu shows the egalitarian and inclusive atmosphere of *Star Wars* in the context of posthumanism.

Furthermore, this work has also explained the term *companion species*, coined by Haraway in her article “Encounters with Companion Species: Entangling Dogs, Baboons, Philosophers, and Biologists” (2006) and the intermingled life structure in *Star Wars*. The dependence between species is quite remarkable throughout the series. Especially in multispecies environments, human characters interact and collaborate with other species all the time. As a human, Luke is trained by Master Yoda and he has developed a strong relationship with Chewbacca. These and other alien characters become companions for him in his dangerous adventures. The same collaboration and companionship can be seen between the Ewoks and the Rebels because the Rebels defeat the Empire with the help of the Ewoks. Gungans and Naboo people have also cooperated to defeat the Droid Army of the Trade Federation. These instances clearly exhibit that nonhuman beings can be companions of human beings. Aliens are ‘significant others’ as used by Haraway in *Manifestly Haraway* (2016), priceless beings that help and save humans in many crises. Droids can also be included as significant others here due to their contribution to the victory over the enemy. Particularly, R2-D2 and C-3PO played really important roles in the history of the galaxy. In addition to these, the multispecies relations and complex existence of beings in the galaxy has been explored through locations such as Jabba’s Palace, bars, clubs or spaceports which reflect common values, norms, and lifestyles of various species. This common culture is also reflected in the English language because English provides a unified communication for numerous species, droids and clones. Another unifying structure in the galaxy is the Force. It binds all living beings together and offers an interconnected universe for all beings. It enables to transcend physical and spiritual boundaries but does not impose political correctness. This transcendental energy influences all beings without hierarchy which contributes to the posthuman quality of *Star Wars*.

It is also important to highlight that *Star Wars* may advocate a posthuman universe, but these kinds of posthumanist works should be made constantly to destroy

or transform the long-standing classical humanist ideology in media. Badington writes about the unending praising of the Man in his book “Posthumanism, I want to suggest, needs to be imagined otherwise, and needs above all to reconsider the untimely celebration of the absolute end of ‘Man’” (109). The idealization of Man (particularly white, male, rich, Anglo-Saxon, heterosexual etc.) has caused the appearance of many boundaries and binary oppositions not only within humans but also between humans and nonhumans. These boundaries and oppositions supported the anthropocentric view toward nonhuman beings and this condition has led to many problematic situations such as inequality and discrimination.

In conclusion, this thesis has explored the posthuman elements in the multispecies and technologically advanced atmosphere of the *Star Wars* universe with selected films of the franchise. *Star Wars* portrays a gigantic galaxy with a variety of alien species, droids, clones and cyborgs which are posthuman beings. Humans in such a rich galaxy are naturally decentered and have fallen to the position of a common living being rather than the owner of the universe. By pointing out many different examples from the *Star Wars* films, it has been investigated that these films envision a posthuman environment in a futuristic setting and speculate about humans’ relationship with the nonhuman, technology and environment. This study has tried to emphasize the alternative cultures, lifestyles and relationships of *Star Wars* in the context of posthumanism which diminishes the established boundaries of humans and nonhumans. It is quite easy to otherize and bestialize nonhuman beings with prejudiced approaches. What is needed is to try to understand nonhumans and integrate with them for a diverse and egalitarian life, unless they are a direct threat to human lives. Moreover, the analysis chapters of the study are based on characters, societies and places within the *Star Wars* universe. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the human-nonhuman boundaries and deconstruction of barriers, while Chapter 4 highlights the posthuman qualities of the galaxy in *Star Wars*. It is crucial to note that scope of the thesis is limited because it focuses on specific parts of posthumanism and *Star Wars*, but different *Star Wars* works may be discussed while implementing a posthumanist analysis, or pointing out different concepts and terms in posthumanism.

In sum, the posthuman universe of *Star Wars* contains plenty of distinct instances of nonhuman beings and it questions the place of humans among all beings. Thus, the *Star Wars* sci-fi films can further question the well-settled mentality about human and nonhuman beings from multifaceted perspectives in different disciplines with rich interpretations.

APPENDIX A: SUMMARIES OF THE STAR WARS FILMS

This appendix provides detailed plot summaries of the six *Star Wars* films analyzed in this thesis. Readers who are not familiar with the plots of the films or need a refresher can use these summaries as a guide. Each summary highlights key narrative events and characters relevant to the topics and themes in the thesis. To ensure a coherent understanding of the overarching narrative explored in this study, the following sections present a chronological summary of the films.

Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace (1999)

The Galactic Republic faces a political crisis as the Trade Federation, secretly manipulated by the Sith Lord Darth Sidious, imposes a blockade on the peaceful planet of Naboo. In response, Supreme Chancellor Valorum sends Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn and his apprentice, Obi-Wan Kenobi, to negotiate with the Trade Federation's leaders. However, the Federation, acting under Sidious's orders, attempts to assassinate the Jedi and launches an invasion of Naboo. Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan escape to the planet's surface, where they rescue Queen Padme Amidala and flee aboard her royal starship, seeking help from the Republic.

Their damaged ship is forced to land on the desert planet Tatooine for repairs. While searching for parts, Qui-Gon encounters a young slave named Anakin Skywalker, who demonstrates extraordinary piloting skills and a strong connection to the Force. Qui-Gon believes Anakin may be the prophesied Chosen One destined to bring balance to the Force. He arranges for Anakin's freedom by betting on a high-stakes podrace, which Anakin wins. The boy bids farewell to his mother, Shmi Skywalker, and joins Qui-Gon's journey. However, before departing, they are ambushed by a mysterious Sith warrior, Darth Maul, sent by Sidious. Qui-Gon briefly duels Maul but manages to escape with the others.

Arriving on Coruscant, Queen Amidala pleads with the Galactic Senate to take action against the invasion of Naboo. However, the senate is mired in bureaucracy, and Chancellor Valorum is unable to help. Manipulating the crisis, Senator Palpatine convinces Amidala to call for a vote of no confidence in Valorum, paving the way for Palpatine's rise to power. Meanwhile, Qui-Gon presents Anakin to the Jedi Council, led by Yoda and Mace Windu, hoping to have him trained as a Jedi. The Council, sensing fear and instability in Anakin, refuses, believing he is too old and dangerous to be trained.

Determined to save Naboo, Amidala returns to her home planet with the Jedi and allies herself with the native Gungan people. Together, they launch a two-pronged assault: the Gungans battle the droid army to distract the Trade Federation, while Amidala and her forces infiltrate the palace to capture Viceroy Nute Gunray. Meanwhile, Anakin, hiding in a starfighter, accidentally joins the space battle and destroys the Federation's control ship, disabling the droid army.

In the climax, Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan face Darth Maul in an intense duel. Maul kills Qui-Gon, but Obi-Wan, fueled by anger, defeats Maul by slicing him in half. With his dying breath, Qui-Gon asks Obi-Wan to train Anakin. The Jedi Council reluctantly grants Obi-Wan permission to train the boy as his apprentice.

The film ends with a celebration on Naboo, where peace is restored. Meanwhile, the Jedi ponder the return of the Sith, unaware that Senator Palpatine, now elected Supreme Chancellor, is secretly Darth Sidious, orchestrating events for his ultimate rise to power.

Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones (2002)

Ten years after the Battle of Naboo, the Galactic Republic is in turmoil as thousands of star systems threaten to secede under the leadership of Count Dooku, a former Jedi turned Sith Lord. In response, the Republic debates forming a Grand Army to counter the growing Separatist movement. Meanwhile, Senator Padme Amidala, now representing Naboo, survives an assassination attempt upon arriving on Coruscant for the senate vote. Chancellor Palpatine assigns Jedi Knight Obi-Wan Kenobi and his apprentice, Anakin Skywalker, to protect her.

After a second assassination attempt, the Jedi track the assailant, a bounty hunter named Zam Wesell, but she is killed by her employer, Jango Fett, before revealing any information. Obi-Wan investigates and discovers that Jango is hiding on Kamino, a remote ocean planet where the Kaminoans have secretly developed a massive clone army for the Republic, allegedly commissioned by the long-deceased Jedi Master Sifo-Dyas. Obi-Wan meets Jango Fett, who serves as the genetic template for the clones and is raising a son, Boba Fett, an unaltered clone of himself. Suspicious of Jango's involvement in the assassination attempt, Obi-Wan confronts him, leading to a chase and battle. Jango and Boba escape to the planet Geonosis, where Count Dooku is amassing a droid army for the Separatists.

Meanwhile, Anakin escorts Padme to Naboo, where they fall in love despite the Jedi Code forbidding attachments. Anakin experiences recurring nightmares about his mother, Shmi Skywalker, in danger. He and Padmé travel to Tatooine, where Anakin discovers that Shmi has been captured by Tusken Raiders. Finding her on the verge of death, he is overcome with rage and massacres the entire Tusken village, including women and children. Conflicted and grief-stricken, Anakin confesses his actions to Padme.

Obi-Wan tracks Jango Fett to Geonosis, where he discovers that Count Dooku is leading the Separatists and has allied with the Trade Federation and other factions. Obi-Wan is captured and interrogated by Dooku, who claims that Darth Sidious secretly controls the senate. Obi-Wan refuses to believe him. Meanwhile, Anakin and Padme attempt to rescue Obi-Wan but are also captured. They are sentenced to death in a gladiatorial arena, where they battle monstrous creatures.

Before they can be executed, Jedi Master Mace Windu arrives with a team of Jedi to rescue them, engaging in a large-scale battle with Dooku's droid army. The Jedi are soon overwhelmed, but Yoda arrives with the newly deployed clone army, leading to the first battle of the Clone Wars. Amidst the chaos, Dooku duels and defeats both Obi-Wan and Anakin, severing Anakin's right arm. Yoda arrives to fight Dooku, but Dooku escapes with the Death Star plans, retreating to Coruscant to meet Darth Sidious.

The film ends with the Republic celebrating its new clone army, unaware that Palpatine, as Darth Sidious, has orchestrated the war. Meanwhile, Anakin, now with a mechanical arm, secretly marries Padme on Naboo, setting the stage for the galaxy's descent into war and his eventual fall to the dark side.

Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith (2005)

Three years into the Clone Wars, the galaxy is engulfed in conflict between the Galactic Republic and the Separatist Alliance. Chancellor Palpatine has been taken hostage by Separatist leaders Count Dooku and General Grievous. Jedi Knights Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi lead a daring mission to rescue him, infiltrating General Grievous's flagship. After a fierce lightsaber duel, Anakin kills Count Dooku at Palpatine's urging, despite Jedi teachings against executing defenseless enemies. They escape with Palpatine as Obi-Wan is knocked unconscious, but Grievous flees, prolonging the war.

Returning to Coruscant, Anakin reunites with his secret wife, Padme Amidala, who reveals she is pregnant. Though overjoyed, Anakin begins having nightmares of her dying in childbirth. Seeking a way to prevent her fate, he grows frustrated with the Jedi Council, which denies him the rank of Jedi Master despite appointing him to serve as their spy on Palpatine. Meanwhile, Palpatine manipulates Anakin by praising his power and revealing knowledge of the dark side, suggesting that Sith abilities could prevent death.

Obi-Wan is sent to track down General Grievous on the planet Utapau, where he ultimately defeats and kills the cyborg leader. Meanwhile, Palpatine fully reveals himself as Darth Sidious, the Dark Lord of the Sith, and tempts Anakin with the promise of saving Padme. Conflicted, Anakin informs Jedi Master Mace Windu of Palpatine's true identity. Windu and three other Jedi confront Palpatine, but the Sith Lord kills the Jedi and engages Windu in a duel. Just as Windu gains the upper hand, Anakin intervenes, severing Windu's hand. Palpatine seizes the opportunity and unleashes a blast of Sith lightning, killing Windu.

Anakin, now fully under Palpatine's influence, pledges himself to the Sith and is renamed Darth Vader. Palpatine issues Order 66, commanding clone troopers across the galaxy to turn on their Jedi commanders, leading to the near-total annihilation of the Jedi Order. Anakin marches on the Jedi Temple, massacring Jedi—including younglings. He then travels to Mustafar, where he slaughters the Separatist leaders to secure Palpatine's rise to power.

Obi-Wan and Yoda survive the purge, returning to the ruins of the Jedi Temple and discovering Anakin's betrayal. Padme, horrified by what she learns, travels to Mustafar, hoping to reason with Anakin. Obi-Wan secretly follows her. When she confronts Anakin, he declares his vision of ruling the galaxy with her. When she refuses, Anakin accuses her of betraying him. Enraged, he Force-chokes her into unconsciousness before engaging in a climactic duel with Obi-Wan.

After an intense battle on Mustafar's volcanic terrain, Obi-Wan defeats Anakin, severing his limbs. Anakin, now left to burn on the lava banks, screams in agony as Obi-Wan sorrowfully leaves him. Meanwhile, Yoda confronts Emperor Palpatine in the senate chamber but is ultimately forced to flee.

Palpatine finds the mutilated Anakin and rescues him, reconstructing him into a cybernetic being—Darth Vader. Meanwhile, Padme gives birth to twins, Luke and Leia, before dying, her last words expressing belief in Anakin's goodness. The twins are separated for safety: Leia is adopted by Senator Bail Organa, while Obi-Wan takes Luke to Tatooine to be raised by Anakin's stepfamily, the Lars.

The film ends with Palpatine and Vader overseeing the construction of the Death Star, while Obi-Wan goes into exile, setting the stage for the original trilogy.

Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope (1977)

The Galactic Empire, under the rule of Emperor Palpatine and his enforcer Darth Vader, maintains oppressive control over the galaxy. The Rebel Alliance, a group of freedom fighters, has stolen secret plans for the Death Star, a massive space station capable of destroying entire planets. Princess Leia Organa, a leader in the Rebellion, hides the plans inside the astromech droid R2-D2 before being captured by Darth Vader. Leia sends R2-D2 and the protocol droid C-3PO to the desert planet Tatooine to find Jedi Master Obi-Wan Kenobi.

On Tatooine, the droids are captured by Jawas and sold to young farm boy Luke Skywalker. While cleaning R2-D2, Luke accidentally activates part of Leia's holographic message pleading for Obi-Wan's help. The next day, Luke encounters an old hermit known as Ben Kenobi, who reveals that he is actually Obi-Wan Kenobi, a former Jedi Knight. Obi-Wan tells Luke about the Force, an energy field that binds the galaxy together, and gives him his father's lightsaber, explaining that his father, Anakin Skywalker, was a Jedi who was betrayed and murdered by Darth Vader.

When Luke returns home, he finds that Imperial stormtroopers have killed his aunt and uncle while searching for the droids. Devastated, Luke decides to join Obi-Wan in aiding the Rebellion. They travel to the spaceport of Mos Eisley, where they hire smuggler Han Solo and his Wookiee co-pilot Chewbacca to take them to Alderaan aboard their ship, the *Millennium Falcon*. Meanwhile, on the Death Star, Grand Moff Tarkin demonstrates the station's power by destroying Alderaan. When the *Falcon* arrives, they find Alderaan gone and are pulled into the Death Star's tractor beam.

Hiding aboard the ship, the group infiltrates the Death Star. While Obi-Wan sets out to disable the tractor beam, Luke, Han, and Chewbacca rescue Princess Leia from her cell. They escape through the station, battling stormtroopers. Meanwhile, Obi-Wan confronts Darth Vader in a lightsaber duel. As Luke watches, Vader strikes down Obi-Wan, whose body mysteriously vanishes. Devastated, Luke and the others flee aboard the *Falcon*, pursued by TIE fighters.

They reach the Rebel base on Yavin 4, where the stolen Death Star plans reveal a critical weakness: a small exhaust port leading to the station's reactor. The Rebels plan an attack using X-wing fighters to exploit this flaw. Luke joins the assault, while Han initially leaves with his reward. The battle proves difficult, and Rebel pilots are killed as they attempt to reach the target. Just as Darth Vader closes in on Luke, Han and Chewbacca return in the *Falcon*, disabling Vader's ship. Guided by the voice of Obi-Wan, Luke turns off his targeting computer and uses the Force to fire a perfect shot, destroying the Death Star.

With the Empire temporarily defeated, Luke, Han, and Chewbacca return to the Rebel base, where Princess Leia awards them medals in a ceremony honoring their bravery. The film ends with the Rebels celebrating their victory, setting the stage for the ongoing struggle against the Empire.

Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back (1980)

Following the destruction of the Death Star, the Galactic Empire intensifies its efforts to crush the Rebel Alliance. The Rebels establish a secret base on the icy planet of Hoth, but Darth Vader, obsessed with finding Luke Skywalker, sends probe droids across the galaxy. One of these droids locates the base, prompting an Imperial assault.

Before the attack, Luke is captured by a wampa, but he escapes using his lightsaber. In the freezing wilderness, he has a vision of Obi-Wan Kenobi, who instructs him to seek out Jedi Master Yoda on the planet Dagobah. Luke is rescued by Han Solo, just as he collapses from the cold.

Shortly after, the Empire launches a full-scale attack, forcing the Rebels to evacuate. Han, Leia, Chewbacca, and C-3PO flee aboard the Millennium Falcon, but their ship's hyperdrive malfunctions, preventing them from escaping to hyperspace. Pursued by Imperial forces, Han evades capture by hiding in an asteroid field and later escaping by attaching the Falcon to a Star Destroyer. Seeking refuge, Han takes the group to Cloud City, a mining colony on Bespin, ruled by his old friend, Lando Calrissian. Unbeknownst to them, Vader has arrived first and forces Lando to betray them.

Meanwhile, Luke travels to Dagobah, where he meets Yoda, a wise but reclusive Jedi Master. Yoda is initially reluctant to train Luke, believing him too impatient and reckless. However, he eventually agrees, putting Luke through rigorous training to master the Force. During a meditation session, Luke has a vision of Han and Leia in danger. Ignoring Yoda and Obi-Wan's warnings, he abandons his training and rushes to Bespin to save his friends.

On Cloud City, Vader uses Han Solo as bait to lure Luke into a trap. To test a carbon-freezing chamber, Vader freezes Han in carbonite, leaving him in a state of suspended animation. The frozen Han is handed over to Boba Fett, a bounty hunter working for Jabba the Hutt. Lando, regretting his betrayal, helps Leia, Chewbacca, and the droids escape, but they are unable to rescue Han in time.

Luke arrives at Cloud City and confronts Vader in a fierce lightsaber duel. Though he fights bravely, Luke is ultimately overpowered. In a devastating moment, Vader severs Luke's right hand and corners him. As Luke dangles over a reactor shaft, Vader reveals the shocking truth: he is Luke's father, Anakin Skywalker. Refusing to join the dark side, Luke chooses to fall rather than surrender. He plunges into a ventilation shaft and is eventually rescued by Leia and Lando aboard the Falcon.

The film ends with the heroes regrouping. Luke receives a cybernetic hand, while Lando and Chewbacca set out to rescue Han from Jabba the Hutt. As the Empire grows stronger, the Rebels prepare for their next battle, setting the stage for the final confrontation between Luke and Vader.

Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi (1983)

The Rebel Alliance prepares for its final confrontation with the Galactic Empire as Emperor Palpatine oversees the construction of a second, more powerful Death Star in orbit around the forest moon of Endor. Meanwhile, Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa, Lando Calrissian, and Chewbacca launch a mission to rescue Han Solo, who remains frozen in carbonite and held captive by Jabba the Hutt on Tatooine.

Disguised as a bounty hunter, Leia infiltrates Jabba's palace and frees Han but is captured. Luke soon arrives, offering Jabba a chance to surrender, but the crime lord refuses and throws him into a pit to fight a rancor. Luke defeats the beast, angering Jabba, who sentences him, Han, and Chewbacca to death in the Great Pit of Carkoon, where they will be fed to the Sarlacc. However, with help from R2-D2 and Lando,

Luke retrieves his lightsaber and launches a counterattack. Leia strangles Jabba with her chains, and the group escapes as Luke destroys Jabba's sail barge.

After the rescue, Luke returns to Dagobah to complete his Jedi training, but finds Yoda dying. Yoda confirms that Vader is Luke's father and warns him that he must confront Vader again to fully become a Jedi. Before passing away, Yoda reveals that "there is another Skywalker." The spirit of Obi-Wan Kenobi appears to Luke and explains that Leia is his twin sister. Meanwhile, the Rebel Alliance learns from Bothan spies that Emperor Palpatine is personally overseeing the final stages of the Death Star's construction. The Rebels plan an attack to destroy the battle station before it becomes operational.

Han leads a strike team, including Leia, Luke, and Chewbacca, to disable the Death Star's shield generator on Endor. Upon arrival, they encounter the Ewoks, small but resourceful natives of the forest moon. After proving their good intentions, the Rebels form an alliance with the Ewoks, who agree to help them fight the Empire. That night, Luke tells Leia about their familial connection and his need to face Vader. He surrenders to the Imperials, hoping to turn his father back to the light side.

Vader takes Luke to Emperor Palpatine aboard the Death Star. Palpatine tempts Luke with the dark side, showing him the Rebel fleet's impending destruction. Meanwhile, Han's team is captured by Imperials, but the Ewoks launch an attack, allowing them to disable the shield generator. With the shield down, Lando, piloting the Millennium Falcon, leads the Rebel fleet into battle against the Death Star.

Inside the Emperor's throne room, Luke battles Vader in a fierce duel. When Vader threatens Leia, Luke attacks in rage, overpowering his father and severing his hand. Palpatine urges Luke to kill Vader and take his place, but Luke refuses, declaring himself a Jedi. Enraged, Palpatine unleashes Force lightning on Luke, nearly killing him. Seeing his son in agony, Vader redeems himself, turning against Palpatine and throwing him into the Death Star's reactor shaft. Mortally wounded, Anakin Skywalker dies in Luke's arms but finds peace as he returns to the light.

With the Death Star's core destabilizing, Lando and the Rebel fleet escape just before the station explodes. On Endor, the Rebels and Ewoks celebrate their victory. Luke cremates his father's body, and later sees the spirits of Yoda, Obi-Wan, and Anakin smiling at him, symbolizing the redemption of his father and the restoration of balance to the Force.

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