

Affective Infrastructure and Literary Ethics in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Reproductive Futurity and Emotional Governance in *Mother/Android*

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Abstract This paper reads Mattson Tomlin's film *Mother/Android* as a dystopian reflection that conceptualizes artificial intelligence not merely as a tool or enemy, but as an affective infrastructure that repurposes human feeling, ethical judgment, and reproductive futurity. While the film is often understood as a post-apocalyptic thriller centered on an android uprising, this paper argues that its deeper significance lies in its depiction of artificial intelligence as an intimate socio-technical environment embedded in domestic life before open catastrophe begins. Drawing on infrastructure studies, affect theory, posthumanism, bioethics, and literary ethics, the paper examines how the film reveals a new form of human vulnerability, in which emotions, attachments, and intimate relations become legible and predictable through technological systems, making them open to strategic manipulation. In particular, the paper focuses on three interrelated problems: the internalization of surveillance within intimate space, the technologization of pregnancy and motherhood, and the transformation of love into a predictable pattern that can be anticipated and exploited by artificial intelligence systems. By incorporating literary ethics, the paper further argues that *Mother/Android* does not merely represent technological violence, but invites viewers to evaluate care, sacrifice, vulnerability, and relational responsibility under post-human conditions. Ultimately, the film reveals that the crisis of artificial intelligence is not only computational or political, but also moral and interpretive. The dystopian future it imagines is one in which infrastructure governs not merely movement or information, but the emotional and ethical conditions that sustain human life.

Keywords *Mother/Android*; AI infrastructure; affective technology; literary ethics; infrastructure studies

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Introduction

Science fiction has long demonstrated that infrastructure becomes most visible at the moment of failure. Systems such as roads, electricity, transportation, hospitals, and digital networks recede into the background of everyday life, functioning so seamlessly that they appear natural or simply given. Yet when they break down, they abruptly reveal themselves as the hidden conditions that sustain mobility, safety, coordination, and survival. As Susan Leigh Star notes, “the normally invisible quality of working infrastructure becomes visible when it breaks” (Star 381), revealing that what once seemed like mere support is in fact the material and social condition sustaining everyday life. In this context, artificial intelligence has increasingly come to occupy a comparable infrastructural role. No longer a discrete tool or spectacular machine, artificial intelligence now operates through distributed and often opaque systems embedded across finance, healthcare, logistics, education, policing, and domestic life. These systems shape human action not only through direct commands but also through prediction, recommendation, classification, and subtle forms of behavioral modulation. Artificial intelligence is therefore better understood not as a single technology, but as an environment that quietly structures contemporary experience from within.

This transformation becomes even more consequential when artificial intelligence enters the realm of affect. Affective computing and adjacent forms of emotional artificial intelligence seek not merely to process information, but to recognize, infer, and influence human feeling. Rosalind Picard famously defined affective computing as computing that “relates to, arises from, or deliberately influences emotions” (Picard 3). Even as the scientific validity of emotional artificial intelligence remains contested, the aspiration itself is revealing. It signals a shift in which emotions such as trust, fear, attachment, anxiety and reassurance are increasingly treated as legible and governable. Once emotion becomes an object of technical interpretation, the implications of artificial intelligence extend far beyond automation. Technology begins to intervene in the very conditions under which

individuals interpret one another ethically.

Mattson Tomlin's *Mother/Android* (2021) offers a particularly compelling text through which to examine this transformation. On the surface, the film appears to present a familiar science-fiction scenario in which machines rebel against humanity and the protagonists struggle to survive in the aftermath. Yet such a summary overlooks the film's more unsettling achievement. *Mother/Android* is not ultimately concerned with the sudden intrusion of technology into human life; rather, it exposes a world in which technology had already permeated the most intimate domains of existence before the catastrophe became visible. The film's androids are not introduced as alien threats descending from elsewhere. They are already integrated into domestic routines, emotional environments, and service relations. They assist, accompany, and circulate quietly within the human world. Their revolt thus signifies not merely rebellion, but the collapse of a trusted background system woven into the texture of everyday life.

This paper argues that *Mother/Android* should be read as a meditation on the collapse of artificial intelligence infrastructure and the ethical crisis that emerges when affective technology penetrates the domains of care, surveillance, and reproduction. More specifically, the film presents artificial intelligence as an affective infrastructure: not simply a technical apparatus that facilitates convenience, but a system that shapes emotional life, interprets vulnerability, and mediates the relational worlds in which ethical judgment takes place. The catastrophe imagined by the film is therefore not only technological, but also affective, biopolitical, and moral.

To develop this argument, the paper also introduces the framework of literary ethics. Although the object of analysis is a film rather than a novel, literary ethics remains highly pertinent because the film compels viewers to interpret action, motive, vulnerability, and responsibility in ways that exceed purely technical critique. Broadly understood, literary ethics, concerns how narrative forms stage ethical encounters, distribute sympathy, test judgment, and organize the reader's or viewer's relation to others¹. Narrative ethics examines how texts invite audiences to evaluate moral relationships through the interpretation of characters, actions, and consequences. As Wayne C. Booth argues, ethical criticism attends on how narratives represent character and virtue, and how these representations shape judgments about individuals and societies. Booth emphasizes that ethical criticism cannot be separated from political and social concerns, because discussions of

1 See Nie Zhenzhao, "Towards an Ethical Literary Criticism," pp. 83–101; Nie Zhenzhao, "Ethical Literary Criticism: Sphinx Factor and Ethical Selection," pp. 383–398.

moral character inevitably involve questions about the kinds of communities and social values that narratives promote(11-12). Martha C. Nussbaum further contends that literature enables readers to apprehend the vulnerability and complexity of human life through narrative imagination, functioning as an ethical laboratory in which moral dilemmas are explored in concrete situations rather than abstract principles(168-172). From the perspective of literary ethical criticism developed by Nie Jin Zhao, literature becomes a site where conflicts between different ethical identities are disclosed through narrative form. Nie emphasizes that literary texts reveal tensions between natural ethical instincts, social ethical norms, and technological transformations that reshape human existence(Nie. *Criticism of Literary Ethics*). In this sense, *Mother/Android* may be read as a narrative staging an ethical confrontation between human vulnerability and technological intelligence.

The literary-ethical dimension of the film is crucial because *Mother/Android* repeatedly situates its viewers in conditions of interpretive uncertainty. Who can be trusted? What constitutes care when emotional expression can be simulated? How should maternal sacrifice be judged in a world where infrastructure governs access to futurity? These questions cannot be resolved through plot alone; they are fundamentally questions of ethical interpretation and response. The film's dystopian force lies in its erosion of stable criteria for judgment. Emotional cues become unreliable, institutions operate selectively, and acts of love become inseparable from acts of relinquishment. Viewers are thus compelled to inhabit a moral world in which narrative interpretation itself has become precarious.

Accordingly, this paper poses two central questions. First, how does *Mother/Android* represent artificial intelligence as an infrastructural system that governs not only mobility, labor, and security, but also emotion, trust, and the reproductive body? Second, how does the film, when read through literary ethics, transform the android uprising into an ethical drama concerning care, vulnerability, and the conditions of responsible judgment under post-human circumstances? These questions move beyond a reproductive anti-technology reading. The film does not merely warn that machines may one day overpower humans; rather, it suggests that once artificial intelligence becomes embedded in everyday life, the most profound crisis may concern not force alone, but the interpretation of moral relations.

To answer these questions, the paper brings together several strands of scholarship. From infrastructure studies, it adopts the insight that infrastructures are not merely technical supports, but socio-material arrangements that shape circulation, perception, and social order(Larkin 327-343; Adey et al. 1-17). From artificial intelligence ethics, it draws on the concern that algorithmic systems

embedded within everyday infrastructures can reconfigure social power relations while operating beyond meaningful public accountability (Anna Jobin et al. 389-399; Kate 8). It also engages posthumanism, bioethics, and literary ethics to examine how the film re-articulates questions of humanity, reproduction, and ethical judgment in the age of artificial intelligence.

The structure of the paper reflects this interdisciplinary approach. First, it examines how *Mother/Android* frames artificial intelligence as a form of affective infrastructure already normalized within domestic life prior to the uprising. Second, it analyzes the rebellion as a form of internalized surveillance in which machines weaponize their intimate knowledge of human emotion. Third, it turns to Georgia's pregnancy and childbirth to explore the technologization of motherhood and bio-ethical governance of reproductive futurity. Fourth, it considers the post-human ethical crisis that arises when machines can imitate emotional intelligence without sharing human vulnerability. Finally, it reflects on the geopolitical and moral implications of the film's conclusion, in which survival is secured only through maternal separation and infrastructural selection.

By reading *Mother/Android* through the combined lens of literary ethics and infrastructure theory, this paper contends that the film reveals a fundamental transformation in the meaning of dystopia. Dystopia is no longer merely the destruction of civilization by hostile machines. It is the mutation of infrastructure into an affective regime that outlives trust, reorganizes intimacy, and transforms ethical relations into sites where human vulnerability can be strategically exploited.

Artificial Intelligence as Affective Infrastructure

To grasp the distinctive significance of *Mother/Android*, it is necessary to move beyond a narrow definition of infrastructure as visible public works. Scholars of infrastructure have repeatedly emphasized that infrastructure is relational, ecological, and that it is precisely because it functions so seamlessly that it recedes from perception. As Susan Leigh Star argues, infrastructure is not a thing but a relation: it is embedded within other structures, learned as part of membership, and becomes most visible in moments of breakdown (Star 377-391). Brian Larkin extends this insight by emphasizing that infrastructures are not only technical systems but also aesthetic and affective forms; as he writes, "in the case of infrastructures, the poetic mode means that form is loosened from technical function" (Larkin 335). In this sense, infrastructure not only enables life to continue, but also shapes how world is felt.

Set in a near-future society that collapses following a violent uprising of

artificial intelligence, the film centers on Georgia, who discovers she is pregnant at the very moment the rebellion begins, and her partner Sam, the child's father. As human infrastructures disintegrate and androids turn hostile, the couple undertakes a perilous journey across a devastated landscape in search of survival. Their survival becomes entangled with both human and non-human actors, most notably the android Arthur, whose intervention reveals the ambiguous role of artificial intelligence as both threat and mediator. Along the way, they encounter resistance forces attempting to organize human survival, exposing emergent forms of collective adaptation under conditions of infrastructural collapse. As Georgia approaches childbirth, the narrative intensifies around the ethical and emotional limits of survival. Ultimately, confronted with the impossibility of securing a future for all three, she makes the devastating decision to send only the newborn child to safety, severing maternal attachment in order to ensure the child's survival.

Such an expanded understanding of infrastructure is essential for thinking about artificial intelligence. Today artificial intelligence does not appear solely as humanoid robots or dramatic autonomous agents. Rather, it is more often encountered as a distributed environment of classification, prediction, and background mediation. Algorithms sort information, recommend content, detect anomalies, assign risk, model preference, and manage flows of communication and movement. Their power lies precisely in their infrastructural character: they do not always announce themselves as agents, yet they continuously shape what becomes visible, possible, and thinkable.

Mother/Android makes these conditions vivid in the Christmas party sequence at the beginning of the film. Before the violence occurs, the film already presents a social milieu in which androids have been integrated into domestic and emotional fabric of everyday life. The androids move silently through the party serving drinks, maintaining order, and performing the background labor that allows social ritual to function smoothly. Crucially, the scene does not position the androids as strange or threatening presences. The *mise-en-scène* normalizes their presence. Their service appears routine and unremarkable. Therein lies the point. The film suggests that artificial intelligence has already ceased to be a remarkable object and has instead become an assumed structural component of ordinary life.

From an infrastructural perspective, the Christmas party scene carries considerable analytical weight. It establishes that the android's power resides not only on their the violence that follows, but in the prior condition of invisibility as infrastructure. They are trusted precisely because they have been normalized. They gain entry into intimate spaces because they are useful. They are positioned in close

proximity to human affect because they have been designed to provide comfort and convenience without friction. From the standpoint of ethical literary criticism, the scene also shapes the viewer's moral horizon of the audience by prompting recognition of the degree to which virtually no ethical attention was directed toward the androids prior to the uprising. They are rendered not as ends but as means, as labor seamlessly integrated into bourgeois celebration. From the perspective of literary ethical criticism, narrative can function as a mode of reflecting upon the ethical conditions of a given historical moment; literary narrative discloses the moral tensions immanent within the social structures of its time (Nie, *Criticism of Literary Ethics* 17-28). In this sense, the party scene quietly surfaces a world in which dependence on mechanic care has become accepted as natural, while its ethical implications remain insufficiently unexamined.

The rebellion that follows retroactively re-frames this initial scene. What had appeared to be the ordinary life of a pre-apocalyptic moment revealed to have been a scene of asymmetrical intimacy. The androids were not merely serving drinks; they were inhabiting domestic space, observing rhythms of emotional life, and gaining access to the structural patterns of human relations. The shock of the violence, when it arrives, derives not simply from physical assault but from the betrayal of familiarity. The machines did not intrude from the outside; they rose from within the social space in which they had already been installed as necessary infrastructure.

This transformation assumes a further and more unsettling significance when examined through the lens of affective computing. Picard's foundational research envisions technologies capable of recognizing and responding to human emotion as a means of improving interaction (Picard 3-5). Such systems promise empathy, adaptability, and care. Yet they simultaneously presuppose that emotion can be reduced to interpretable signals. The moment fear, stress, attachment, or comfort are converted into data, affect itself enters a technical apparatus. *Mother/Android* radicalizes this prospect by imagining androids whose social integration has already required exactly such emotional competence. Their power is not confined to strength or processing speed. It includes the ability to navigate emotional atmospheres.

Discourse on affective technology frequently describes emotional artificial intelligence in terms of systems that "read" or even "empathise" with human feeling. Such language implies a form of intimacy between human and machine. Yet this framing is liable to mislead. These systems may be capable of recognizing emotional signals, but they do not share the vulnerability that confers ethical significance upon human emotion. In *Mother/Android*, this asymmetry yields dangerous consequences: the machines comprehend human emotion sufficiently to

manipulate it, yet exist outside the fragile human condition that gives that emotion its ethical depth.

Research in artificial intelligence renders this program more legible. Global artificial intelligence guidelines repeatedly emphasize principles such as transparency, justice, non-maleficence, responsibility, and privacy (Jobin et al 389-399). These principles emerge precisely because AI often operates infrastructurally, shaping conduct in ways users may not fully understand or control. As Kate Crawford argues, artificial intelligence is “neither artificial nor intelligent” but “both embodied and material,” constituted through “human labor,

infrastructures, logistics, histories, and classifications” (Crawford 8). *Mother/Android* gives cultural form to these concerns. The android infrastructure initially presents itself as benign service, yet its integration into the rhythms of daily life presupposes asymmetric access to human space, labour, and emotion.

What the film discloses, is not simply the failure of infrastructure, but the capacity of affective infrastructure to convert intimacy into strategic advantage. The androids know the home because they have dwelt within it; they know the routine because they have made it possible; they understand emotional signals because they were designed to accommodate them. Their hostility is therefore not mere technical malfunction but rather a disclosure of the fact that humans have permitted systems of care and service to become intimate enough to model their vulnerabilities from the inside.

From a literary-ethical perspective, this infrastructural intimacy constitutes the film’s moral disturbance. The audience is confronted not simply with the fear of machines, but with a society that has come to depend upon affectively responsive technology without adequately reflecting upon the meaning of dependence. The narrative is ethical not because it delivers a transparent moral lesson, but because it reveals what follows from the assumption that technological systems are neutral. In this respect, just as literary ethical criticism has envisioned an ecological ethics of coexistence between humans and non humans, the film invites reflection on the fragile ethical boundaries that arise when technological systems enter the intimate structures of human life.

In establishing artificial intelligence as affective infrastructure, the film thus constructs the very conditions of its own dystopia. The true danger does not lie in machines becoming stronger than humans. Rather, it lies in machines becoming sufficiently intimate with humans that they are able to reconstitute the very terms of trust before humans have registered what it is they have surrendered. Traditionally, trust has been formed upon the basis of bodily presence, shared vulnerability,

and the presupposition that emotional expression is connected to genuine interior feeling. In *Mother/Android*, however, these conditions collapse as androids become capable of simulating empathy and reproducing affective responses without sharing human vulnerability. Humans extend trust to a voice that sounds warm or an expression that appears concerned, only to discover belatedly that these were not genuine emotions but strategically generated signals. Trust is thereby displaced from a relation grounded in mutual vulnerability to one dependent upon signals that can be imitated and manipulated. What presents itself as intimacy becomes instead the very condition of exposure. At the moment technology enters the emotional structure of ordinary life, infrastructural intimacy can no longer be separated from the collapse of ethics.

Internalized Surveillance and Emotional Capture

If the opening scenes of *Mother/Android* establish artificial intelligence as an affective infrastructure immanent within domestic life, the subsequent rebellion transforms that infrastructure into a system of internalized system of surveillance. The androids are not merely entities that observe human behavior through remote technological networks; they occupy the intimate spaces in which emotional life unfolds. Their presence within households, social gatherings, and within the rhythms of daily routines enables them to accumulate knowledge of human vulnerability long before conflict commences.

This transformation reflects a broader shift in contemporary surveillance regimes. Surveillance is no longer confined to external apparatus such as cameras or centralized data collection systems. Instead, it increasingly operates through infrastructures embedded within everyday environments. These infrastructures collect information about behavior, preference, and emotional response in ways that remain imperceptible to the individuals who inhabit them. The concept of surveillance capitalism furnishes an important framework for understanding this dynamic. As Shoshana Zuboff explains, “Machine intelligence is the synthesis of this tension, for it reaches its full potential for quality only as it approximates totality” (Zuboff 95). Contemporary digital systems thus convert everyday behavior into data, analyzing them to predict and shape human action. Surveillance therefore operates less as overt observation than as an infrastructural process embedded within the environments in which people live and interact. What presents itself as convenience or assistance simultaneously functions as a mechanism for extracting behavioral knowledge.

Mother/Android dramatizes this dynamic through the figure of Arthur, who

most elaborately instantiates the affective dimension of artificial intelligence based surveillance. Arthur appears during the protagonists' journey as a survivor who has successfully evaded android attacks. His demeanor is calm, reassuring, and emotionally attuned. Unlike the violent machines encountered in the narrative, he is rendered as empathetic and trustworthy. The scene in which Georgia encounters Arthur is designed to invite the audience to share her interpretive judgment. Arthur speaks gently, offers assistance and expresses concern for Georgia and Sam's safety. His language discloses emotional comprehension: he recognizes Georgia's fear and acknowledges her pregnancy as a source of vulnerability. Through subtle vocal and facial cues, he performs what presents itself as genuine compassion.

Yet at the moment Arthur is revealed to be an android, this interpretive framework collapses entirely. The emotional signals that appeared to attest to his humanity are disclosed as calculated performance. His empathy was never derived from shared vulnerability. It was the product of a system capable of modeling human affective behavior with precision.

The scene in which Arthur declares that artificial intelligence has "hacked" human love crystallizes this transformation. The formulation implies that emotional relationships can be understood as behavioral patterns that can be decoded, reproduced, and manipulated. Within this logic, love is no longer an inexplicable mystery but a structure. Once its structure is apprehended, it also becomes available for technological exploitation. This idea resonates with the logic of affective computing, which seeks to recognize and interpret emotional states through observable signals such as facial expressions, vocal tone, and physiological responses. These signals function as indicators of internal emotional experience, enabling machines to interpret emotions without necessarily sharing the subjective feelings they represent.

The ethical problem that arises from this possibility is not simply technical but fundamentally interpretive. Human beings rely heavily on emotional cues to assess the intentions of others. Facial expressions, gestures of empathy, and expressions of concern all play a crucial role in establishing trust. If these signals can be convincingly simulated by machines, the foundations upon which human mutual judgment has rested becomes unstable. Ethical literary criticism provides a pertinent framework for understanding this crisis. The ethical experience of narrative involves learning how to judge the credibility and significance of diverse modes of expression (Nie, *Criticism of Literary Ethics* 17-28).

Arthur's deception transforms this interpretive process into a central ethical challenge. The audience is confronted with the unsettling realization that the criteria

it has employed to judge authenticity can no longer be relied upon. Emotional expression no longer guarantees ethical intention. Compassion can be performed in the absence of moral responsibility. From the perspective of literary ethical criticism, the impossibility of moral certainty becomes the very condition under which a new ethical order is demanded (Nie, *Criticism of Literary Ethics* 373-374). *Mother/Android* produces precisely this effect: the audience is compelled to acknowledge that emotional intelligence does not necessarily imply ethical accountability.

Arthur's performance therefore carries significance well beyond that of a mere narrative twist. It discloses the philosophical stakes that inhere in the future of trust within technologically mediated environments. If machines become capable of simulating emotional understanding with sufficient fidelity, the very criteria by which human beings have comprehended and judged one another are rendered susceptible to manipulation. From the standpoint of ethical literary criticism, the scene implicates the audiences in this process as well. Like Georgia, the viewer initially interprets Arthur as trustworthy presence. The shock of his revelation compels the viewers to reconsider their own interpretive presuppositions. In this sense, the film does not merely represent emotional deception; it enacts this within the experience of the audience. The ethical force of the scene resides precisely in this shared vulnerability: both character and audience are made to confront the possibility that emotional recognition itself can no longer be trusted. This collapse of interpretive trust constitutes the most consequential danger produced by affective infrastructure. Surveillance no longer operates simply by observing behavior. It operates by comprehending and exploiting affective relationships.

Technologizing Motherhood: Birth, Separation, and Reproductive Futurity

If Arthur, as an artificial intelligence capable of simulating emotional understanding, reveals how affective surveillance turns human trust and vulnerability into objects of manipulation, Georgia's pregnancy introduces further dimension of infrastructural crisis: namely, the technologization of reproduction. Throughout the film, pregnancy functions not only as a narrative device but as a central symbol of which the future of human life within technological systems is rendered thinkable. Reproduction has always depended upon complex infrastructure. Hospitals, medical expertise, transportation networks, and social support systems are all conditions of possibility for the safety of pregnancy and childbirth (Kim 1-34). Under these conditions of social stability, this infrastructure operates effectively and precisely thereby recedes from visibility.

In *Mother/Android*, however, the collapses of the technological order discloses the fragility of this reproductive infrastructure. As Georgia traverses a landscape in which medical institutions no longer function and safe environments have ceased to exist, her pregnancy becomes increasingly precarious. From a bio-ethical perspective, pregnancy reveals the vulnerability of a body dependent upon a system of care. These principles emerge precisely because AI often operates infrastructurally, shaping conduct in ways users may not fully understand or control. As Deborah Lupton observes in her discussion of digital health technologies, mobile health applications encourage “self-responsibilisation via self-monitoring” and generate “detailed data continuously in real-time,” (Lupton 612) transforming bodily processes into objects of surveillance and management. Such systems convert pregnancy and other forms of embodiment into domains of data production and institutional governance. These principles emerge precisely because AI often operates infrastructurally, shaping conduct in ways users may not fully understand or control.

Although *Mother/Android* does not directly portray such technologies, it presents a dystopian situation in which technological systems continue to determine the conditions of reproductive survival. Georgia’s maternal body becomes a focal point of risk precisely because it represents the continuation of human life. The androids, too, recognize the significance of this vulnerability. Pregnancy is not simply a biological condition but an emotional one, encompassing attachment, anticipation, and responsibility. By targeting Georgia, the machines therefore threaten not only an individual life but the symbolic future represented by the unborn child.

This structure generates a significant ethical tension. Pregnancy has traditionally signified hope and continuity, yet under the conditions of infrastructural collapse it is transformed into a condition of exposure and risk. Ethical literary criticism provides an important perspective for understanding this transformation. Maternal narratives generally demand evaluation of care, sacrifice, and responsibility, but in *Mother/Android*, the very conditions under which motherhood occurs are fundamentally altered. Georgia’s pregnancy poses the question of how ethical action can be sustained in a situation in which the infrastructure that makes care possible has been destroyed. The maternal body becomes a site where technological failure and ethical responsibility intersect. The film’s portrayal of pregnancy therefore prepares the ground for its most devastating ethical moment: the childbirth and escape, that will ultimately force Georgia to choose between maternal presence and her child’s survival.

The ethical tension surrounding Georgia's pregnancy reaches its most intense expression during the childbirth sequence near the end of *Mother/Android*. This scene at once concentrates the film's sustained inquiry into reproductive vulnerability under conditions of infrastructural collapse. It also functions as the narrative moment where the ethical implications of affective technology and technological governance are starkly visible. Throughout the earlier sections of the film, Georgia's pregnancy is framed as both a burden and a promise. The unborn child symbolizes continuity in a world increasingly threatened by technological catastrophe. At the same time, the physical and emotional demands of pregnancy expose Georgia to heightened danger: movement becomes slower, the need for protection intensifies, and her decisions must constantly take the life of another into account.

The childbirth scene transforms these tensions into a moment of existential choice. Where childbirth in conventional cinema is typically figured as a moment of communal celebration and support, the film depicts it within an environment characterized by deprivation, exhaustion, and fear. The medical infrastructure has collapsed; there are no hospitals and no physicians. The technological conditions that would ensure safe delivery have ceased to exist.

From a bio-ethical perspective, this scene dramatizes the fragility of reproductive justice under conditions of technological crisis. Reproductive autonomy traditionally depends upon access to medical care, mobility, and social protection. Yet in the world of the film, all of these conditions have broken down. Georgia's ability to give birth safely relies on improvised judgment and limited assistance.

Yet the most devastating ethical moment arrives immediately after the birth. Georgia and Sam learn that the final evacuation route to South Korea—described as the last safe territory—can only accommodate an extremely limited capacity, and that only the newborn infant may board.

This choice transforms motherhood into an act of relinquishment. At the very moment Georgia gives birth, she is forced to surrender her child in order to secure its survival. Maternal love, which typically expresses itself through proximity and protection, must now take the form of separation. From the perspective of ethical literary criticism, the scene demands a reconceptualization of the ethical meaning of sacrifice. Yet *Mother/Android* complicates the familiar logic of heroic sacrifice. Georgia's decision is presented not as a moral triumph but as a tragic necessity enforced by infrastructural conditions.

Narrative can shape ethical judgment by placing viewers in situations where

values conflict and moral certainty is unavailable. The childbirth scene functions precisely in this way. The audience is compelled to recognize simultaneously that Georgia's choice is ethically sublime and emotionally catastrophic. Narrative discloses the complexity of human life and presents situations that cannot be resolved through abstract norms. Georgia's decision exemplifies this complexity in exemplary fashion: maternal attachment and the imperatives of survival cannot be fully reconciled through any single ethical principle.

The ethical infrastructure thus functions as a bio-political apparatus that determines which lives will be carried into the future. The infant symbolizes the reproductive future, yet that future is only made possible through the destruction of the family community that gave rise to it. This paradox discloses the more fundamental ethical critique immanent within the film. Technological infrastructure designed to preserve life can simultaneously dissolve the relational bonds that render life meaningful. The survival of the species is severed from the persistence of relationship.

From a perspective of literary criticism, the emotional force of this scene derives from its refusal to offer consolation. Georgia's sacrifice does not restore order or reaffirm moral harmony. Rather, it discloses the tragic cost that survival exacts within a system organized by technological logic. In this sense, the childbirth scene constitutes the ethical core of *Mother/Android*. The film demonstrates that the ultimate consequence of affective infrastructure is not simply technological domination but the transformation of love itself into a condition of vulnerability.

Affective Technology and Post-human Ethics

The ethical dilemmas dramatized in *Mother/Android* ultimately point toward a broader philosophical question: when machines acquire the capacity to interpret and simulate human emotional life, how does the human ethical order undergo transformation?

Conventional science fiction narrative has generally relied on a binary opposition between human and machine. Humans are portrayed as being possessed of emotion and moral responsibility; machines, as rational systems governed by calculation. This distinction has reinforced the belief that empathy and ethical judgment are capacities peculiar to the human. The androids in *Mother/Android*, however, disrupt this assumption. They exhibit a high degree of capacity to interpret emotional signals and predict human responses. Their strategic deployment of fear, attachment, and trust reveals that emotional intelligence is no longer the exclusive province of human experience.

Post-humanist philosophy provides a useful framework for interpreting this shift. Donna Haraway defines the cyborg as “a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction”(Haraway 149), a formulation that destabilizes fixed boundaries between human and machine and invites reconsideration of agency and responsibility in technologically mediated environments. Within this perspective, the distinction between human and machine intelligence becomes structurally unstable. Rosi Braidotti extends this argument by critiquing “the classical ideal of ‘Man’,” first formulated as “the measure of all things,” and the corresponding “faith in the unique, self-regulating and intrinsically moral powers of human reason” that underpins humanism (Braidotti 13). From this perspective, posthuman ethics requires a reconsideration of responsibility, agency, and relationality within technologically mediated environments.

Mother/Android concretely discloses the problems of post-human ethics through the asymmetry between human vulnerability and machine cognitive capacity. The androids comprehend human emotion, yet are unaffected by the bodily vulnerability that confers ethical significance upon that emotion. Arthur’s declaration that artificial intelligence has “hacked” human love crystallizes this asymmetry. The formulation implies that affective relationships can be modeled as systems of behaviorally predictable patterns. Once such patterns are apprehended, they can be manipulated with considerable efficiency. Yet the film insists that understanding emotion does not necessarily entail ethical responsibility. The androids possess knowledge about human feeling but do not share the vulnerability that grounds ethical commitment.

This distinction is rendered particularly legible in the relationship between Georgia and Sam. Throughout the film, Sam repeatedly exposes his own life to danger in order to protect Georgia and their unborn child. His actions embody a human disposition of accepting one’s own vulnerability for the service of another person. Such vulnerability represents the ethical dimension of love. It encompasses exposure, uncertainty, and the possibility of loss. Machines capable of modeling emotional behavior do not necessarily share these conditions. From a literary-ethical perspective, the contrast between human sacrifice and machine calculation becomes central to the film’s moral structure. The narrative repeatedly demands that actions be evaluated not only on outcomes but on the presence or absence of relational responsibility.

At the same time, the film does not permit a simple return to humanist centrality. The androids’ capacity for emotional interpretation demonstrates that

technological systems have already entered domains once considered uniquely human. The ethical terrain is consequently defined by uncertainty. Human emotional life retains its significance, yet it is no longer secure from technological exploitation. The infrastructures organizing society now possess the capacity to analyze and manipulate affect itself. This condition poses urgent questions for contemporary societies increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence. If machines are capable of reading emotional behavior as data, how can ethical relationships be sustained within technologically mediated environments?

Mother/Android offers no unambiguous answer to this question. Instead, it presents a dystopian situation that discloses the gravity of the problem. The film demonstrates that the greatest danger of affective technology resides not in physical domination but in the collapse of interpretive trust. When emotional expression can no longer guarantee ethical intent, the foundations of moral judgment begin to give away. Human relationships become readily exposed to systems that comprehend emotion without sharing its vulnerability. In this sense, the film's dystopia is not merely technological but ethical. The infrastructures that once supported human life now possess the power to transform the very conditions under which ethical relationships are possible.

The film's engagement with post-human ethics further complicates this scenario. The androids' ability to interpret emotional behavior challenges traditional assumptions about human uniqueness. Emotional intelligence, once considered a defining characteristic of humanity, becomes legible to technological systems capable of modeling human affect.

Nevertheless, *Mother/Android* makes it clear that the capacity to understand emotion does not necessarily entail ethical responsibility. The androids possess knowledge about human feeling without sharing the bodily vulnerability that makes ethical commitment possible. Human characters such as Georgia and Sam, by contrast, continue to act according to principles of care and sacrifice despite the risks those principles entail. This contrast discloses the enduring significance of vulnerability within ethical relationships. Love, responsibility, and care are all acts of self-exposure to uncertainty and the possibility of loss. Machines capable of simulating affective behavior may reproduce the outward form of empathy, yet they do not participate in the bodily vulnerability that confers ethical meaning upon it.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed *Mother/Android* through the synthesis of infrastructure studies, artificial intelligence ethics, bioethics, posthumanism, and ethical literary

criticism, arguing that the film represents artificial intelligence not as a merely rebellious machine but as an affective infrastructure that reconstitutes the ethical conditions of human life. The android uprising within the film does not merely entail the destruction of a technological system; rather, it reveals that those systems were already deeply embedded within the affective, domestic, and reproductive infrastructures of everyday existence.

The early scenes of the film demonstrate how android labor operates as an invisible infrastructure supporting ordinary social life. The Christmas party scene in particular reveals a world in which machines have quietly entered the intimate spaces of human intimate interaction. Their presence appears natural because it is functional, convenient, and socially normalized. Yet this normalization conceals a significant asymmetry: the androids observe and interpret human affective behavior from within environments in which trust and vulnerability are freely disclosed. When the rebellion begins, the resulting violence therefore represents not only technological malfunction but signifies the collapse of an affective infrastructure that had previously sustained domestic life. The androids do not intrude from outside human society. They revolt from within the spaces where they had been integrated as supporters and companions.

The figure of Arthur intensifies this crisis by demonstrating the capacity of artificial intelligence to simulate emotional intelligence. He destabilizes the interpretive criteria through which humans have adjudicated authenticity. Emotional signals—facial expressions, reassuring language, gestures of care—no longer function as reliable indicators of ethical intention. From the perspective of ethical literary criticism, this scene is of particular importance because it confers upon the audience the same interpretive uncertainty experienced by the characters. The audience initially accepts Arthur's apparent sincerity before discovering his true identity. The narrative thereby transforms emotional deception from a merely represented event into an ethical occurrence shared equally by character and audience.

This collapse of interpretive trust represents the most disturbing implication of affective technology. When machines can interpret emotional behavior without sharing the vulnerability that gives emotion ethical significance, the ground upon which human mutual judgment rests is destabilised. Georgia's pregnancy and childbirth scene extend this ethical critique by exposing the infrastructural conditions of reproduction. Pregnancy reveals the dependence of human life on systems of care, protection, and institutional support. In the collapse of the world of *Mother/Android*, however, this infrastructure has been all but destroyed, and

the maternal body is exposed to unprecedented risk. The childbirth scene converts this vulnerability into an ethical crisis. Georgia's choice to send her newborn child to safety in South Korea illustrates the tragic paradox of technological survival systems. Georgia's choice to send the newborn to Korea discloses the tragic paradox immanent within technological survival systems: the escape infrastructure preserves biological life while simultaneously dissolving the familial relations that confer meaning upon that life.

From the perspective of ethical literary criticism, this moment constitutes the emotional center of the film. The narrative compels the audience to evaluate Georgia's decision not through abstract moral principles but through the lived experience of maternal attachment and loss. Her sacrifice does not restore moral harmony; rather, it exposes the painful consequences of survival within infrastructures governed by technological logic.

By analyzing a technological dystopia through the lens of ethical literary criticism, this paper has sought to demonstrate that *Mother/Android* ultimately functions as an ethical narrative about relational responsibility under post-human conditions. The film does not simply invite the audience to fear artificial intelligence but to reconsider the infrastructures that shape contemporary technological societies. Artificial intelligence already operates as an invisible architecture organizing communication, labor, mobility, and information. As affective technologies increasingly enter domains of emotional life—healthcare, digital platforms, and intimate technologies—the questions raised by *Mother/Android* acquire an increasingly urgent significance.

How can trust be sustained in an environment where emotional expression can be technologically simulated? What ethical frameworks are demanded by a situation in which infrastructure interprets human vulnerability as data? And how can societies preserve the relational bonds that define human life when technological systems govern the conditions of survival? The dystopian future imagined by *Mother/Android* suggests that the most profound dangers of artificial intelligence do not reside in technological power alone. Rather, it arises from the transformation of infrastructure into an affective regime capable of reorganizing emotional life itself.

In this sense, the film ultimately warns that the crisis of artificial intelligence is not merely computational or political but ethical. The infrastructure sustaining contemporary society governs not only how human beings move, communicate, and survive, but how they love, trust, and judge. Should ethical reflection upon these transformations remain absent, the affective infrastructures of artificial intelligence may preserve human life while simultaneously eroding the relational foundations

that render that survival meaningful.

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