

ABSTRACT

Steven Spielberg's 2001 film AI: Artificial Intelligence, based on Brian Aldiss' short story "Supertoys Last All Summer Long," deals with important issues of reality and how artificial intelligence, known in the film as mechas, can have emotions and thoughts of their own, transcending the limitations imposed on them by their creators. Literary theories from postmodernist Jean Baudrillard to cyborg theorist Donna Haraway serve to illuminate and challenge Spielberg's vision of the future, as well as show how these issues relate to the world today.

The protagonist in AI, David, is a young mecha boy built with the ability to love its owner; in David's case, Monica, his "mother." David spends most of the film trying to become a real boy so Monica will love him as much as he loves her. The main issue of AI is whether or not David's feelings are authentic or merely a construct implemented by his creator, Professor Hobby.

Baudrillard's Simulations suggests not only are our feelings simulated, but also our conception of reality as well. Haraway's essay "A Cyborg Manifesto" argues that the confusion generated by the eroding boundaries between human and machine results in the rise of a cyborgian way of life. I make the case that David shares important similarities with cyborgs because of the humanity of his emotions and his need for love and acceptance from Monica. The possibility of an artificial creation with human feelings and desires raises questions about human interaction with mechas like David, challenging human conceptions of reciprocal love.