Toward a Totalitarian Techno-Slave: Daft Punk's *Electroma*

Totaliter Bir Tekno-Köleye Doğru: Daft Punk'ın Electroma*'sı*

Hüseyin SERBES[1]

Abstract

The etymology of cyberpunk as a phenomenon that flourishes in the substrata of life is born from the notion of 'cybernetics' and the ethos of 'punk'. Thus, it transforms the shock of the future into works of art that break away from the banality of everyday life. This study focuses on Electroma, a film with cyberpunk themes and motifs in which Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo, the iconic robot-members of the French electronic music formation Daft Punk, turn into directors and screenwriters. A sociological analysis is conducted of this film and the notion of robots. In this sense, it is aimed to analyze the work from the perspectives of ethics, esthetics and social movements. Throughout this study, in the context of cybernetic esthetics, the work's narrative is explained within the framework of the concepts of entropy and redundancy in "Information Theory" proposed by Shannon. It has been observed that *Electroma*, which does not include any verbal dialog in its narrative, reflects a universe in which the real and the simulated are intertwined, as in other cyberpunk works based on high technology and robots.

Keywords: Punk, cybernetics, cyberpunk, *Electroma*, robot

[1]Dr., Sakarya Üniversitesi, İletişim Fakültesi, Sakarya, Türkiye

ORCID: H.S. 0000-0001-7913-6178

Corresponding author/Sorumlu yazar:
Hüseyin SERBES,
Sakarya Üniversitesi, İletişim Fakültesi, Sakarya, Türkiye
E-mail/E-posta: hserbes@yahoo.com

Öz

Siberpunk'ın bir olgu olarak yaşamın alt tabakalarında serpilen kökenbilimi, 'sibernetik' kavramı ile 'punk' ethosundan doğar. Böylece geleceğin şokunu, gündelik yaşamın sıradanlığından kopan sanat eserlerine dönüştürür. Bu çalışma, Fransız elektronik müzik grubu Daft Punk'ın ikonik robot üyeleri Thomas Bangalter ve Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo'nun yönetmen ve senarist kimliğine büründüğü, siberpunk temaları ve motifleri barındıran *Electroma* adlı filme odaklanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, filmin ve robot kavramının sosyolojik bir analizi yapılmaktadır. Bu çerçevede eser; etik, estetik ve toplumsal hareketler perspektifinden ele alınarak incelenmektedir. Çalışma boyunca sibernetik estetik bağlamında, eserin anlatısı Shannon tarafından ortaya konulan "Bilgi Teorisi"ndeki entropi ve fazlalık kavramları çerçevesinde açıklanmıştır. Anlatısında hiçbir sözel diyalog bulunmayan *Electroma*'nın, yüksek teknoloji ve robotlara dayanan diğer siberpunk yapıtlarında olduğu gibi, gerçek ile simüle olanın iç içe geçtiği bir evreni yansıttığı gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Punk, sibernetik, siberpunk, *Electroma*, robot

Introduction

Political and art theorist Jacques Rancière (2004), in his study *Malaise dans l'esthétique* on the historical transformation of discourse on art from Plato to the present day, emphasizes the fantastic dialectic that dissolves the boundaries between the ordinariness of the commodity in everyday life and the extraordinary in art. Art forms that transform the obsolete into mythological poetics offer a reading of time. The etymology of cyberpunk as a phenomenon that flourishes in the lower layers of life is born from the notion of 'cybernetics' and the 'punk' ethos. According to William Gibson, it has become a marketing strategy invented by publishers through commercial commodification; however, many authors have coexisted under the cyberpunk phenomenon (as cited in Ersümer, 2013, p. 19). In particular, the combination of 'cybernetics', a term coined by Norbert Wiener, and 'punk', a genre created by the postwar youth, has paved the way for artworks that combine hypertechnology and illegality. In this way, these works, free from the ordinariness of everyday life, turn into works of art that foretell the 'future shock'.

Based on *Electroma*, a film with cyberpunk themes and motifs in which Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo, the iconic robot-members of the French electronic music formation Daft Punk, are transformed into directors and screenwriters, this study aims to analyze the sociological analysis (of the film narrative) by considering the notion of robots in terms of ethics, esthetics and social movement. This approach, which is evaluated according to sociological criteria, emphasizes the examination of the social conditions of the period in which the film was produced or the period it deals with in its content instead of examining the works it deals with as a social product of art and culture under the conditions of the subjective expression of an artist (Özden, 2010, p. 154). In this context, the robot narrative in Daft Punk's *Electroma* is considered a sociological document under various categories, and the reflections of cyborg esthetics on social values aim to clarify the reader's mind. Moghimi (2023) stated that in sociological film analysis; themes such as social structure, social role, social change, type, social relationship, production and consumption patterns, alienation, anomie, social control, and social movements stand out as basic concepts. In this respect, this study discusses the social structure of iconic robots in the context of their return to humanity within the framework of these basic concepts.

Inspired by the concepts of 'entropy' and 'redundancy' in the Information Theory proposed by Shannon, this analysis focuses on the process of transferring information

to the viewer based on the communicative context of the artwork taken as a sample. This study reveals the narrative of the work in the context of cybernetic esthetics. The 'cybernetic esthetics' draws attention to the fact that the notion of cybernetics offers a new philosophy rather than technological development and suggests that we should understand human and human-related phenomena in their own circularity through control mechanisms and human-machine interaction. André Bazin (1971), on the other hand, argues that film criticism, which has two faces —film-oriented and audience-oriented— enriched the viewer in terms of thought, spirit, and sensitivity in the encounter of the impressive and qualified cinematic codes of the art product with the audience. This review provides qualified guidance to the audience regarding their thought processes despite the work of art by presenting an audience-oriented criticism.

This study seeks answers to the following questions in line with the stated purpose, theory, and method: "Does the film *Electroma* present a narrative with a cyberpunk motif that blends hypertechnology and punk attitude?" Does the film express the cultural values of the society in which it is set? How are social change, production, and consumption patterns reflected in the film? In what ways does artwork address the idea that dominance over space is a fundamental and overarching source of social power in and over daily life? What codes can electrons produce when considered in the context of cinematic design? How does the esthetic and intellectual context of the robot narrative develop in *Electroma*? What kind of openings does the film have in the integration of technology-body?"

Literature and Concepts

Ontology of Cybernetic Universe

The transition of humanity from one age to another is realized through its constant alienation from itself. Walter Benjamin, in *Passages*, which he wrote in the arrangement he had envisaged during his lifetime but whose edited version was not enough for his lifetime, reveals this change by saying that humanity, which he saw in Homer as a kind of exhibition material in the eyes of the gods on Mount Olympus, has now become an exhibition material for itself (1982, p. 79). This discourse, which brings a perspective from another century to humanity, which has become a subject in a commodification process, has turned into a phenomenon that strengthens its interaction with machines in the age we are in. Sezgin and Talaz (2016, p. 564) see control and communication in

human and machine interaction as the prominent features of the cybernetic age, which they consider to have unique technological tools that will eliminate the differences between living and non-living things. The Second World War, which could be shown as one of the historical ruptures that would reveal this interaction, included events that would shape the birth and development of the modern digital paradigm. Charlie Gere (2004, p. 55), in his study *Digital Culture*, sees the Second World War as the catalyst not only for the invention of thousands of modern digital electronic computers but also for influential and noteworthy research fields and discourses such as Cybernetics, Information Theory, General Systems Theory, Molecular Biology, Artificial Intelligence and Structuralism, all of which collectively represent paradigms of post-war technological and scientific thought. Koşan, Coşkun and Karacan (2019) underline that raw information, which is seen as the most valuable mine today, is not sufficient alone and states that information should be made meaningful and transformed into valuable. Claude Elwood Shannon, an American mathematician and electrical engineer who contributed to the measurement of this transformation, put forward the concept of 'entropy' from thermodynamics as a communication system in his 'Information Theory'. According to Gere (2004, p. 58), we owe the concepts of information technology and the expanding information society to Shannon's 'information concept'.

Information Source → Transmitter (Encoder) → Channel → Receiver (Decoder) → Destination
Noise↑
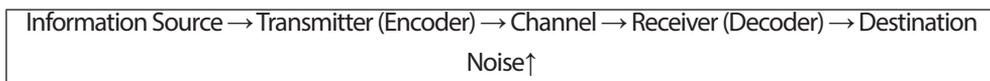
Figure 1: Shannon and Weaver's Communication Model

Shanon and Weaver's communication system formulation places the information source that produces messages to be transmitted at the center and ensures that the message produced by the source is turned into a signal by the transmitter and reaches the receiver (Yaylagül, 2019, p. 56). This communication theory emphasizes the concepts of entropy and redundancy in the transfer of information and establishes balance in the communication process. When a work of art is considered in a communicative context, the sensitivity of the concept of balance becomes important for the information to reach the receiver.

In an interdisciplinary movement from information theory, Norbert Wiener, in search of a new proposal for the study of mechanics, reached the notion of 'cybernetics' inspired by the Greek word 'kubernétés', the Greek equivalent of the English word 'governer'.

The concept used in cybernetics today is derived from 'kibernetics' in Latin, which means 'ship piloting/captain' in an etymological context (Taşlıoğlu, 2018, p. 5). Wiener revealed the processes of communication through his thought system centered on information and feedback in his studies. 'Cybernetics', which is closely related to information and communication theories, draws attention as an interdisciplinary system that analyzes the complex structures of human and non-human beings through feedback and control mechanisms. The conceptualization of cybernetics includes the control mechanisms of a system that instrumentalists technology in a mechanical, biological or social context in today's world where machines have gained considerable speed and pleasure.

Punk: A Postwar Youth Style

The concept of 'punk', which was accepted with its emergence in the terminology at the end of the 1970s, is too valuable to be seen as a mere form of music with its political and esthetic attitude. According to Tricia Henry Young (1990, p. 15), who studies the formation of the punk subculture, punk describes a reaction against institutionalized art theories and techniques, as well as the society that created them, by defending a philosophy that it thinks reflects the world in a more appropriate way instead of a worldview emerging from traditional values. As a representation of an avant-garde and distinct attitude, the punk subculture draws attention as a mythical movement created by the postwar youth, with its reactions to the sociopolitical climate of the period.

Following the First World War, the punk style, which frequently refers to the works of the Dadaists and the methods of the Surrealists, who provocatively confronted art with counter-art against traditional social norms, exhibits a destructive attitude from clothing to music, from art to esthetics.[1] Fanzines[2], which are publications created by young people who adopt the punk ethos to convey their counter-culture to each other,

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1   As David Laing (2015) states in *One Chord Wonders*, one of the most distinctive features of punk rock is its ability to first awaken and then disrupt the organization of opportunities that underpins the authority of power and control with its unique phenomenon.

2   American science fiction enthusiast Louis Russell Chauvenet's *Detours* (1940s, USA), produced using the hectograph technique used in the early twentieth century to produce limited copies, was conceptualized as a fanzine, a contraction of the words fan and magazine. Fanzines are channels where people share their ideas without the control of the dominant culture; however, the type of DIY publication, which is usually hand-distributed and handmade, is a tool that conveys the voice, feelings, and ideas of others in society who are discriminated by the dominant culture. For a comprehensive evaluation of fanzines, see Serbes (2024) and Serbes and Güzel (2020).

present a graphic design esthetic with their offensive collages. *Sniffin' Glue*, one of the most distinctive of these publications, is the fanzine that reaches the highest circulation and, as Hebdige (1979) reports, clearly reveals the DIY[3] philosophy of the punk subculture with its inspiring propaganda articles. Increasingly, fanzines show that subculture formation is supported by presenting various manifestos with texts suggesting that an attitude toward society can be established by forming a punk band.

Offering an esthetic reaction against the dominant political and social trends of the 1970s, the Punk Movement, according to Gere (2004, p. 179), also contains a meta-narrative that heralds the individual's positionlessness in society and the arrival of post-industrial society with its collage, montage, and cut-and-paste techniques. In particular, in 1975 England, where the highest unemployment rates were observed, there was an increase in the working class and anti-capitalist movements due to the problems of young people not finishing school or not finding a job. Brake (1980), who works on *Youth Culture and the Sociology of Youth Subcultures*, states that while young people attempt to cope with the contradiction created by the pressure for prosperity, success, and consumption, on the other hand, they begin to think that the social structure is managed by employers and politicians whom they see as liars and abusers. In such a sociopolitical atmosphere, the songs of punk rock bands become anthems in the tongues of young people who experience maddening despair.

Cyberpunk: The Avant-Garde of Counterculture

In 1926, *Amazing Science Fiction Stories*, a science fiction magazine, was published by Hugo Gernsback's *Experimenter Publishing*, which influenced the printing industry for entertainment and educational purposes. The story titled *Cyberpunk*, published by Bruce Bethke in this magazine in 1983, heralded the birth of a new term that enabled the juxtaposition of punk attitudes and high technology. Bethke used the term *cyberpunk* for the first time in a story and led this literary genre to be associated with this word, setting out to define the new generation of 'motorbike punks' in the spring of 1980.

> The adventure of the word cyberpunk, which is a conscious and deliberate act of production on my part, begins with the story I started writing in the spring of 1980. From the first draft, the title I had in mind was 'Cyberpunk'. To give my story a quick, one-word title that editors would remember, I synthesized words like

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3   The DIY approach is referred to throughout this study as the equivalent of "do-it-yourself."

cyber and techno with a bunch of terms for socially misguided youth until it sounded good. Inspired by William Michael Albert Broad, better known as Billy Idol, a musician who gained fame as a member of Generation X from the London punk rock scene in the 1970s, the name I put on the stereotype of a Mohawk-haired 'punk hacker' reflects the etymology of the word (Wheeler, 2016).

As the generation of young people who 'beat up' the computer combined ethical emptiness with technical fluency, parents and other adult authority figures in the early twenty-first century would, according to Bethke, the author of *Cyberpunk*, be very ill-equipped to deal with the first generation of young people who grew up to be truly 'computer-speaking'. In such a climate, with the cybernetic system heralding the age of speed and pleasure, the word 'cyberpunk', which emerged from the words 'punk', a term coined by working-class youth in the late 1970s as an attitude against authority and all kinds of traditional values, takes its place as a highly accepted genre in science fiction adventure. Bethke, who wrote an article on the etymology of cyberpunk years after the emergence of the concept, argues that he is still held responsible for this concept, explaining that he was after a market-oriented and one-word word while trying to find an effective term that would juxtapose punk ideas, which are indicative of counterculture and future high technology. However, Bethke reserves the honor of this genre, which has been referred to as 'The Movement' for many years, to Gibson, who won Hugo, Nebula and Philip K. Dick awards at the same time for the first time, and other names carrying the torch of the cyberpunk phenomenon.

In *Science Fiction in the Eighties*, Gardner Dozois, an American science fiction writer and editor writing for the Washington Post, asserts that if one wants to work in the field of science fiction, one must be a bit crazy and that a new generation of writers is waiting to take up the torch. According to Dozois (1984), writers such as Sterling, Gibson, Shiner, Cadigan, and Bear, who were by no means from the same esthetic school or movement, were introduced as 'cyberpunks'.

Cyberpunk has largely determined the content and esthetic boundaries in science fiction literature. Two prominent figures among the cyberpunks are William Gibson, author of the novel *Neuromancer* (1984), and Bruce Sterling, who brought together cyberpunk stories for the one-page science fiction fanzine *Cheap Truth* (1983-1986) with his *Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology* (1986), which brought together cyberpunk stories. According to Ersümer (2013, p. 22), since the cyberpunk

conceptualization is highly sensitive to many changes in the social, economic, cultural and political fields that took place in the period in which it emerged, it not only functioned as a new form of fiction but also created a sense of almost a political movement. In this respect, cyberpunk, as a branch of science fiction in which artificial intelligence becomes equivalent to human intelligence, machine-human combinations are experienced, transhumants is adopted, and a dark and chaotic future is depicted, reflecting the dominant developments experienced in post-industrial modernized societies (Çiftçi and Demirarslan, 2020, p. 65).

Analyzing Robot Narration in *Electroma*

This research traces the 'punk' phenomenon that glorifies the style of the street with 'cyber' technology by traveling in the magical world of subculture. In this context, this study aims to depict another society based on the desire of Daft Punk robots to return to a space in another space. This study, which is a sociological research based on the robot narrative with concepts such as social change, consumption, commodification, alienation, and marginalization, calls for reflection on posthuman space and time using the sample film it deals with. As the French film theorist André Bazin (1971) reminds us, the narrative possibilities of cinema are so rich and different from those of traditional arts that it would be more appropriate to treat cinema separately and consider it the only narrative technique that can really compete with spoken language. For this reason, *Daft Punk's Electroma*, which does not contain any dialog and uses narrative possibilities with images, was examined in line with the concepts determined by the sociological film analysis method.

Sociological film criticism looks at films as a means of understanding and acquiring the individual, his/her social roles, and the values of the society he/she belongs to (Özden, 2010, p. 160). In this sense, to understand *Electroma*'s narrative and make a sociological analysis based on it, the film is discussed by determining the sub-headings of 'Theme and Concept, Space and Time, Hyperreal Narrative and Appearance, Cinematic Design, Esthetic and Intellectual Context, Rhizome (intersection), Homelessness in the Context of Technology-Body Integration'.

Theme and Concepts

Harvey (1991, p. 343) argued that postmodern cultural objects show great diversity because of their eclecticism and the anarchy of their subjects. The compositions of postmodern artworks transcend a singular reality. Cultural products, in which different ontological collages coexist in an intertwined manner and different realities are presented in artworks, reflect a universe design in which science, reason, and technology are questioned. Daft Punk, a French electronic music duo born in Paris by Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo and Thomas Bangalter, presents a work with a cyberpunk motif that combines high technology and punk hardness in its 74-minute visual feast *Electroma*. Presenting a postmodern theme and motif, the film does not present a radical truth but rather a view that deals with different subject classes that leave questions in the viewer.

According to Mercan, Demirci and Oyur (2013, p. 116), the transition to the information society is based on the shift from the mechanical program with standard singular and point behaviors that constantly repeat themselves and do not change to the quantum paradigm with dynamic systems and processes based on multidimensional network interaction. *Electroma*, which carries the thought in the quantum paradigm and the parallel 'chaos theorem', is in a dynamic structure with unexpected situations it creates. "Future Shock", Toffler (1984), while describing a world in which the 'disposable' style will dominate, also foreshadowed the uniformization that will be experienced in this context. Toffler (1984) highlighted the fact that societies will face negative consequences because of their inability to adapt to change in their existence. *Electroma* represents the adventure of two robots who decide to return to humanity. The work, which carries a narrative of humanity as an object of desire, deals with the expulsion of the duo, who question their existence, from the town after being questioned by the uniformed society. The iconic robots that feel the 'future shock' that Toffler draws attention to are a cyberpunk theme that reflects a sense of terror and anxiety. In this case, the shocking level encountered by robots with a pure desire for humanity carries a motif in which all assumptions are overturned.

McLuhan (1994) asserted that we are approaching the final stage of human extension as technological simulations of consciousness. The main characters of *Electroma* go to a high-tech facility and become human-like through an operation. The robots who wish to return to humanity from a universe beyond humanity are subjected to alienation

reactions from the townspeople. Alienation, according to Aydoğan (2015, p. 273), refers to the disruption of the relationship between subject and object or consciousness and things, or the alienation of the subject. As a theme that maintains its importance in works of art, 'alienation', when viewed from a Marxist perspective, means that humans are alone in an indifferent, even hostile universe (Koç, 2013, p. 211). Daft Punk's iconic robots have a similar appearance to the locals when they reach the town after a long journey back to the world with the motive and effort of humanization. However, the surgical procedure they undergo in a high-tech facility makes them human-like. This 'humanization' is a sufficient and valid reason to be marginalized by the inhabitants of the town. As the marginalized subject, the duo is booed and chased. The relationship and connection between alienated consciousness and things is broken. Alienation as a theme leads to the presentation of humanity as an unacceptable situation in *Electroma*.

Space and Time

According to Lefebvre (1991, p. 25), the concept of space connects the mental with the culture, and the social with the historic. The opening of 'the electron' has a hypnotic appearance. Colorful rocks and landscape images reflect the appearance of a different universe. One travels from the universe to the world in which robots belong. This spatial schema represents the scope of the return of robot heroes to humanity. The inscription 'human' on the license plate at the very beginning of the journey and in certain parts of the road has an important place in the robot narrative through the spatial tool produced.

The point at which the robots reach the world after a long journey is a town. The spaces in the town reflect a modern representation of the world and show its usual state. Çiftçi and Demirarslan (2020, p. 77) stated that in films that can be considered in the cyberpunk genre, interiors and architectural structures are designed in futuristic and modern lines. The desire of iconic robots to become human is presented in a high-tech and futuristic interior design. The space where the surgical procedure is performed conforms to the examples in cyberpunk fiction with a minimalist design line. In contrast to the spaces produced by the particular society in the town, images containing 'future shock' are seen in spaces dominated by high technology. Although it does not have a verbal code, the special codes in high-tech spaces reflect messages that reveal its specificity through images.

McLuhan (1994, p. 3), while stating that the human body will exist throughout space in the narrative of the mechanical ages, stated that the central nervous system also moves out of space and time as electronic technology becomes a human extension. In *Electroma*, just like in other cyberpunk works, robots and high technology turn into a vast 'spectacle' in the context of space and time. Advanced electronic technology involves a cyberpunk representation of space.

It is Lefebvre's persistent voice that we owe the idea that dominance over space is a fundamental and overarching source of establishing social power in and over everyday life (Harvey, 1991, p. 255). *Electroma*'s narrative references the existence and dominance of social power through the design of space in daily life. The desire carried by the duo symbolizing the return to humanity, the expulsion of these robots from the space (town) by the inhabitants of the town (dominant forces) because they do not conform to the norms of society, brings to mind the notion of 'power.' Foucault (1982, p. 21) emphasized that to speak of the concept of power, resistance must be displayed, and in the absence of such a voice, one can speak of a relationship of domination, not a relationship of power. In *Electroma*, the couple submits to social pressure, escapes from the town without resistance, and chooses to commit suicide. Such a development points to a relationship of domination.

Bourdieu defines cultural capital as the sum of knowledge and relations while operating in a certain field (Thompson, 2014, p. 84). The set of rules and norms through which social relations are directed is realized through the process of acquiring cultural capital. The duo, in the hysteria of becoming human by moving away from the robot image, is far from the phenomenon of cultural capital that can comply with the set of norms determined by society. Such a narrative in *Electroma* draws attention to the social power's unwillingness to see the 'otherised' duo in the space and the relationship of domination between them and the dominant ideology in the context of power and the ruling class.

Hyperreal Narrative and Appearance

The concept of 'reality', which emerged with 'modernization' (and thus industrialization) and 'progress' in the field of technology and technique, paradoxically also harbors a break from reality (in Baudrillard's terms, the universe of simulation). According to Adanır (2017, p. 65), people who believed that the world would change through

collective effort and labor, on the one hand, postponed their dreams for the sake of collective goals, and on the other hand, they tried to escape from the harsh, cruel and brutal universe of reality in which they lived by producing collective illusions (utopias). With the simultaneous coexistence of this reality and the simulation universe, it can be seen that the real and the simulated are intertwined by targeting the same signs (in the context of space and time). *Electroma* reflects a universe without any dialog or words (except music). It is impossible to infer whether this universe is real or simulated. When viewed from today's time and space, the transformation of humans into cyborgs, the desire of cyborgs to return to humanity, and the town androids' refusal to accept this image and expelling the main protagonists of the film from their town may seem simulative, but the same universe can be perceived as reality by different generations.

Cinematic Design

Pezzalla (2000) stated that cinema, which is seen as the dominant form of artistic expression of 'modernity', moves the audience from mass spectacle activity to a critical participatory expression of what they see. *Electroma* stands out as an art product prepared by its directors, Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel De Homem-Christo, by offering the audience the possibility of critical participation away from the idea of mass spectacle. In this context, cinematic design codes are of great importance in the process of understanding and interpretation (hermeneutics) of the art of cinema. According to Seçmen (2018, p. 509), elements such as narration, space preference, light, color, costume, hair design and make-up, which constitute the visual codes in cinema design, must be in harmony with each other. In cyberpunk narratives, the audience is made to feel the presence of futuristic codes. In *Electroma*, the high-tech center contains the cinematic design based on cyberpunk motifs. The make-up, costume, and helmet designs used in the film also reflect the music group Daft Punk, of which the directors are founders and members.

The discourse of 'no future,' which can be considered the motto of the punk subculture, is reflected as a code of posthuman design. The vehicle and license plate design of the iconic robots contains the code 'human' and the paradox of robot and human is opened with this design on the license plate. The arrival of the robots to the town in the American dream, the "human-like" state of the robots in the town and the 'return to human' of the duo, and their subsequent expulsion are presented with strong cinematography design. The scene in which the robots are treated with latex by surgeons to mimic

human beings contains technological metanarrative codes that include cyberpunk design in visual terms. In terms of cinematic design, *Electroma*, which contains a radical deconstruction of traditional narrative assumptions and cinematic codes, offers a visual feast in terms of cinematographic design. Contemporary artworks produced with a deconstructive approach question established ways of seeing and signification processes, sometimes by eviscerating the signifier and sometimes by reducing the signified to the signifier (Uzunoğlu, 2019, p. 22). In this respect, *Electroma* directs a narrative-breaking approach by placing a 'dynamite' in traditional cinema design.

Esthetic and Intellectual Context

Adorno's 'esthetics of non-identity', by focusing on the 'transformative power' of art, carries the idea that the viewer is not positioned as a passive receiver of the work of art (Bal, 2011, p. 74). In this respect, the esthetics of non-identity directs the viewer to physical and spiritual endeavor (praxis) despite the artwork. The esthetics of non-identity, which calls the viewer actively involved in the artwork, is also present in *Electroma*'s narrative. *Electroma*, with its structure that does not contain any dialog, directs the audience toward intensified participation in the esthetic and intellectual contexts.

> Despite the important role it plays in introducing a new dialectical relationship between the work and the interpreter, the definition of an open work should be kept separate from its other possible and customary meanings to avoid terminological misunderstandings. In fact, the characteristics of 'completeness' and 'clarity' of a work of art are a debate of esthetic theory. These two terms refer to a situation that we all experience and are often led to define: A work of art is an original object produced by an artist who combines communicative elements in such a way that any interlocutor can recreate the work in his or her mind through the reactions of the emotions and the intellect to stimuli (Eco, 2019, p. 66).

It can be seen that *Electroma*, within the framework of the intellectual context it proposes, bears the characteristics of the concept of 'open work' put forward by Umberto Eco. The film narrative is structured in a way that allows the viewer to recreate the work in their minds.

The binary 'hero' robot corresponds to a machine-organism hybrid, which Haraway defined as a cybernetic organism in the esthetic framework. Haraway (2010, p. 67)

defined the term 'cyborg' as a kind of postmodern collective and personal self that has been disassembled and reassembled, and saw communication technologies and biotechnologies as crucial tools for overhauling our bodies. The film's esthetic construction, based on a narrative that shapes the return to the human after the high power of communication technologies, emphasizes that the 'town androids' cannot accept such a challenge in their public space. In *Electroma*, cyborgs represent the postmodern self.

Hall (2013, p. 23) considered the concept of representation as a fundamental part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. The subversive criticisms of posthumanist narratives against the anthropocentric framework of the 'Enlightenment' perspective find representation in *Electroma* through signs and images. Humanism, which by definition represents an anthropocentric ideology, has been renewed and reinterpreted for the rhetoric and civilization of Greece and Rome as a historical phenomenon, placing man (instead of God) at the center of literary and philosophical design (Güvenç, 2020, p. 51). Posthumanism, which takes the human away from the center, has a questioning quality against the anthropocene approach. The inhabitants of the town, who believe that two robots will transform into humans and bring the autonomous universe of humanity back to their town, oppose this ontological situation in an intellectual context. This deconstructive perspective reflects an immutable opposition to human domination.

Rhizome

Cyberpunk narratives in artworks have a techno-anarchist attitude. In this respect, cyberpunk heroes, who support liberating information against the elitists of technology and science, constitute the crossroads of the interaction between cyberpunk and subculture, with their struggles combining anarchist politics and DIY style (Ersümer, 2013, p. 61). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the rhizome, which has a relational orientation, is based on the analogy of a crossroads that connect any point with another point. In cyberpunk works, the crossroads contain narratives that connect the points. The 'rhizomatic' approach is a space where movements can unify their critical stance against mainstream discourses that are communicative, organizational, and political (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 61). *Electroma*, in the context of its story (plot), is located at the crossroads of the fetishes of human semirobotization into cyborgs and the return of cyborgs to humanity.

Art theorist Mike Watson (2016, p. 163) argues that by declaring 'individual subjective freedom' as an artistic expression, (the subject) can resist the 'social network'. *Electroma*'s iconic robots cannot resist social network order by failing to express their 'freedom'. Expelled from town, the robots prefer to disappear. The 'subjective freedom' Watson speaks of as action is confronted with the reality of mass culture. However, the heroic robots who fail to act at this crossroad are distant from their reality and succumb to the social network order.

Peter Lamborn Wilson (Hakim Bey) (2009, p. 144), known as a cyberpunk fan, recalls the independent settlements called 'islands in the network' based on 'data hacking', which Bruce Sterling, a prominent figure in science fiction, hypothesizes would lead to the outbreak of life experiments. Regarding the possibility of free settlement, Hakim Bey theorized the notion of a 'temporary autonomous zone'. Autonomous zones are the microcosms of a culture of spatial, temporal, or imaginative emancipation from technological and political controls. The electron bears a rhizomatic relation to the notions of 'islands in the network' and 'temporary autonomous zones'. Unfortunately, the protagonists of the film, while desirous of pursuing their dreams, have no sense of trying to impose themselves on the masses. They are far from creating autonomous regions and settlements, as in other cyberpunk narratives. The subsequent self-destruction is an inevitable end.

Deterritorialization in the Context of Technology-Body Integration

According to Heidegger (1977, p. 139), the means of information, with the things they deliver, immerse people in a simulated world that (in fact) is not the real world. This situation is quite common, especially in cyberpunk fiction novels. Staging the theme of technology-body integration, cyberpunk fiction aim for humanity to reach a different evolutionary point: the posthuman stage (Ersümer, 2013, p. 118). In terms of its fictional qualities, *Electroma* reflects the integration of technology and the body. In particular, the helmets and hyper-technological surgical arrangements involving the (Daft Punk) costumes of the directors and the hyper-technological surgical arrangements indicate that human settlement is about to disappear with the technological age.

This uprootedness, as Gözel (2014, p. 216) puts it, is neither the work of fatalism nor the result of human negligence; rather, it stems from the spirit of an era in which we

are fixed by our birth. *Electroma* effectively reflects its era. It is a representation of an age in which humanity is being destroyed through the integration of technology and the body; moreover, the 'other' or the 'foreigner' who has different ideas about the return to humanity is threatened with displacement.

The age of *electrons* reflects a period in which technology integrates with the body and dominates (human). In a phase in which the body is detached from its basic biological rhythm and moved into the field of technological rhythm, technological perception has brought the human being to the point of designing themselves as a product of technology (Dağ, 2012, p. 48). In this respect, *Electroma* seems to address the problem of cyborg homelessness after modern man. When it is remembered that Heidegger's concerns about human beings stem from the lack of (human beings') ability to think and move the course between the world and technology, the narrative of electromagnetic signals that 'cyborgs' will also turn into 'techno-slaves' (without their knowledge) in the posthuman era.

Summary, Discussion, and Conclusion

The Second World War, considered as one of the historical ruptures in the interaction between machine and human, is seen to have shaped the birth and development of modern digital paradigms. Claude Elwood Shannon, a mathematician, emphasized the 'balance' value of communication by drawing attention to the concepts of 'entropy' and 'redundancy' in the transfer of information (with his Information Theory). Based on this theory, Norbert Wiener's studies revealed communication processes by focusing on information and feedback. The concept of 'cybernetics' deals with the control of complex structures of human and non-human entities. Another notable term is the 'Punk ethos', which emerged as a reaction to the dominant trends of the 1970s. The notion of 'cyberpunk' was born from the combination of 'punk', a subculture tendency against mainstream and traditional values, with 'cybernetics'. This concept, which came together in the story *Cyberpunk*, published by Bruce Bethke in 1983, combined high technology and punk behavior.

Curator and critic Nato Thompson, in his book *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century*, focuses on social capital and relationships with other people, focusing on the work of avant-garde artists. "Every social milieu has its own coded esthetic" writes Thompson (2014, p. 136), "which both produces community and excludes those

who are not familiar with it". Daft Punk's *Electroma*, in its simplest form, is directed toward the coded esthetic of the town, a social environment. This esthetic context does not only stand out with the social capital it produces; it also excludes the 'alienated' and 'unfamiliar' others. *Electroma* is a cultural product in which different ontological collages are presented together as a postmodern artwork that opens horizons for the viewer despite the work beyond radical singularity. When the film is analyzed in terms of its theme and motif, it combines hyper-technology and punk hardness. At this point, the iconic Daft Punk robots, feeling the "future shock" suggested by Toffler (1984), who depicts the future and states that ontological problems will be seen in social structures that cannot keep up with change, embark on a journey in their cars (with human inscribed plates) symbolizing a return to humanity. The heroes of the film, who are 'alienated' by the android inhabitants of the town they visit, are seen to go beyond the social code and esthetics.

According to Ciftci and Demirarslan (2020, p. 77), interior spaces and architectural structures in cyberpunk narratives are designed in futuristic and modern lines. The space where the return to humanity is staged carries cyberpunk influences. In *Electroma*'s narrative, based on Lefebvrean spatial thought, the existence of social dominance can be read by compressing the dominance over space into daily life. Although the expulsion of the robots seeking a return to humanity by the inhabitants of the town reminds the concept of 'power', from a Foucauldian point of view, since the concept of domination can be mentioned in cases where there is no resistance, it is seen that the relationship between the inhabitants of the town and the main protagonist robots is in the dimension of domination. This situation also reflects the conclusion that Daft Punk robots are far from Bourdieu's process of acquiring 'cultural capital'.

Electroma, which excludes any verbal dialog in its narrative, reflects a universe in which the real and the simulated are intertwined, based on high technology and robots, as in other cyberpunk works. It is a work of art by Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel De Homem-Christo, which is far from a mass cinema design and provocatively calls for critical participation from its audience. *Electroma*, which has a cinema design in which traditional narrative devices are destroyed, uses a deconstructive approach in this respect. Adorno's 'esthetics of non-identity' carries the idea of the viewer's involvement in a work of art through bodily and spiritual endeavor (praxis). In this regard, *Electroma* contains traces of this esthetic idea. Similarly, the notion of 'open work', as conceptualized by Umberto Eco, places emphasis on enabling (the interpreter) to re-enact the work

by revealing the dialectical relationship between the work and the interpreter. *Electroma* has the characteristic of being an 'open work' when taken together with the intellectual context it presents. *Electroma* robots, which correspond to the hybridity of machine-organisms as defined by Donna J. Haraway as a 'cybernetic organism', represent a postmodern knowledge self. The posthumanist approaches of the 'town androids', which decentralize the human being, carry a subversive position with an inherent opposition to the anthropocentric framework and the domination of the human being.

The rhizome, proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), is an orientation of the metaphor of the crossroads that connects any point with another point, while cyberpunk works and subcultural relations can be cited as examples. *Electroma* is a crossroads between cybernetic technology and punk attitude with its story (plot). While the duo-robot, which forms the backbone of *Electroma*, has the desire to return to humanity, they cannot resist the 'social network' order and first leave the town in question and then enter the process of extinction. This situation stems from the inability to declare the 'individual subjective freedom' mentioned by art theorist Mike Watson. Peter Lamborn Wilson suggested creating imaginary free settlements using the concept of 'temporary autonomous zone'. It can be seen that Daft Punk robots prefer the process of extinction by not creating such an (autonomous) zone. In this respect, *Electroma*'s narrative makes the subjects 'otherised' by the masses, pushing them into uprootedness. As Heidegger underlines (1977) argued that the information apparatus (with its promises) pushes 'subjects' toward a simulated world. This situation, as Paul Virilio argues in his work 'The Information Bomb' (2000, p. 41), individuals trapped by their own bodies (unable to become subjects) have continued to be enslaved by the loss of behavioral freedom, sliding first from pure technology to 'techno-culture' and then to a 'totalitarian techno-cult'.

In *Electroma*, the melting of robots who desire 'humanity' and take on the appearance of human beings with the help of technology, in the face of the sun is close to the idea of the face of man, which Foucault states is coming to an end. Foucault (1994, p. 539), who sees man as a recent invention, states that as the modern episteme shakes the ground of thought, "man will disappear like a sand image at the edge of the sea". *Electroma*'s iconic robots are shaken by the 'modern episteme' of the town androids and disappear like an image of sand.

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Appendix 1: Cast and Detail

Electroma, an experimental film directed by Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel De Homem-Christo, who are also members of Daft Punk, offers a perspective on today's world through the eyes of wandering characters. The 74-minute film contains a visual and musical narrative without any dialog.

Table 1: Cast and Detail

Directed by	Thomas Bangalter, Guy-Manuel De Homem-Christo,
Screenplay by	Thomas Bangalter, Guy-Manuel De Homem-Christo, Paul Hahn and Cédric Hervet
Music by	Steven Baker
Starring	Peter Hurteau and Michael Reich Hero
Country	United States of America
Duration	72 minutes
Release Date	May 21, 2006 (Cannes Film Festival), March 24, 2007 (France)
Language	English

Appendix 2: Story of the Film

Daft Punk's *Electroma* traces the futile journey of two iconic robots to become 'human' in line with cyberpunk themes and motifs. Electroma stars Daft Punk's robotic forms as "Hero Robot No. 1" and "Hero Robot No. 2," one with a silver helmet and the other with a gold helmet. In the opening sequence of the film, a 1987 Ferrari 412 car with the word 'human' on the license plate and robots set off to music. At first, this reference seems like a sarcastic comment, but as the narrative progresses, it points to the object of desire for these cybernetic robots to 'return to humanity'. Following a visual journey accompanied by psychedelic music, the duo moves through a hypnotic landscape. The musical feast, which continues with the intensity of the landscape images of colorful rocks on a mountain range, continues when the Daft Punk robots arrive in the town of Inyo, California, after crossing the Southwestern United States. The tractor driver seen on the road is wearing a helmet, just like the other residents of the town. The inhabitants of Inyo are physically identical to the two main robot characters; however, they are robots of different ages, different clothes, and different genders.

After arriving in town, the duo travels to a high-tech facility where liquid latex is poured over their heads. In a series of surgical procedures, the robots are molded with latex, prosthetic devices and wigs into a human-like face, the appearance of which caricatures Daft Punk members Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo. Leaving the facility, now free of their helmets and resembling human beings, the duo starts to move through town. The townsfolk greet the duo with astonishment, especially their strange looks at these human-like characters. After these strange looks, the townspeople begin to chase human-looking robots, whose faces slowly melt into the sun. The duo takes refuge in a toilet after their escape. Here, the couple wipe their faces and reappear as robots and then take a long walk through the desert salt flats.

After walking for a long time, the silver robot stopped. Realizing this, the golden robot returns to the silver one. The silver robot continued to look at the ground for a while before taking off its jacket. The robot then walks away from the other robot, revealing a key on its back. The gold robot flips a switch that starts a timer. When the one-minute countdown is complete, the silver robot is disassembled. The remaining robot collects the remains of the silver robot and continues to walk. The golden robot eventually falls to its knees and attempts to reach the button on its own back, but fails. Another moment passed before the robot removed its helmet and repeatedly hit the

ground until the helmet broke. Using a shard as a burning glass, the robot focuses on the sunlight to set his hand on fire. *The electrons end* with the robot walking in slow motion in the dark, with its hands first burning, and then its whole body burns.