

UDC 821.111(73)(091)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863/102-11>

Nataliia BANIAS,

orcid.org/0000-0002-6974-0790

Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor;

Associate Professor at the Philology Department

Ferenc Rakoczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian University

(Berehove, Transcarpathian region, Ukraine) banyasz.natalia@kmf.org.ua

Kateryna LIZAK,

orcid.org/0000-0002-7873-0535

Associate Professor at the Philology Department

Ferenc Rakoczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian University

(Berehove, Transcarpathian region, Ukraine) lizak.katalin@kmf.org.ua

Anastasia ZEYKAN,

orcid.org/0009-0002-0732-3032

4th year student at the English Department

Ferenc Rakoczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian University

(Berehove, Transcarpathian region, Ukraine) zekan.anasztazia.b22an@kmf.org.ua

BEYOND ANTHROPOCENTRISM: DOGS AS CULTURAL AND ETHICAL SUCCESSORS AND JENKINS AS A POSTHUMAN MORAL CENTRE IN CLIFFORD D. SIMAK'S CITY

Clifford D. Simak's City (1952) offers a distinctive speculative vision of the decline of human civilization and the emergence of alternative forms of intelligence, community, and ethical agency.

The article examines the novel through the theoretical perspectives of critical posthumanism, animal studies, and the ethics of artificial intelligence. Particular attention is devoted to the transformation of Dogs from domesticated companions into cultural successors of humanity and to Jenkins, the enduring robot servant of the Webster family, whose role gradually exceeds that of a technological instrument and develops into that of a moral mediator and guardian of collective memory.

The analysis argues that Simak destabilizes the anthropocentric hierarchy by transferring cultural continuity from humans to nonhuman animals and ethical responsibility from human subjects to a hybrid network of Dogs, robots, and other forms of intelligence. The canine narrators and scholars who preserve, interpret, and sometimes question the stories of "Man" demonstrate that cultural memory is not an exclusively human possession. At the same time, the Dogs' pacifism and their rejection of predation challenge conventional assumptions concerning violence, civilization, and evolutionary superiority. Jenkins represents another crucial stage in this decentring process. Although created as a servant, he develops into a figure whose longevity, loyalty, practical wisdom, and capacity for ethical judgement enable him to become a stabilizing presence after humanity disappears. Drawing on the posthumanist theories of Rosi Braidotti, Cary Wolfe, Donna Haraway, and related approaches to human–animal and human–machine relations, the article proposes that City anticipates contemporary debates about nonhuman agency, multispecies ethics, technological responsibility, and the possibility of post-anthropocentric culture.

Simak's future is therefore not simply a story about the extinction of humanity but an experiment in imagining what forms of cultural and moral order might emerge after the human ceases to occupy the centre.

Key words: Clifford D. Simak, City, posthumanism, anthropocentrism, Dogs, Jenkins, robot ethic, science fiction.

Наталія БАНЯС,

orcid.org/0000-0002-6974-0790

кандидат філологічних наук, доцент,
доцент кафедри філології

Закарпатського угорського університету імені Ференца Ракоці II
(Берегове, Закарпатська область, Україна) *banyasz.natalia@kmf.org.ua*

Катерина ЛІЗАК,

orcid.org/0000-0002-7873-0535

доцент кафедри філології

Закарпатського угорського університету імені Ференца Ракоці II
(Берегове, Закарпатська область, Україна) *lizak.katalin@kmf.org.ua*

Анастасія ЗЕЙКАН,

orcid.org/0009-0002-0732-3032

студентка IV курсу відділення англійської мови

Закарпатського угорського університету імені Ференца Ракоці II
(Берегове, Закарпатська область, Україна) *zekan.anasztazia.b22an@kmf.org.ua*

ПОЗА АНТРОПОЦЕНТРИЗМОМ: СОБАКИ ЯК КУЛЬТУРНІ ТА ЕТИЧНІ НАСТУПНИКИ ЛЮДСТВА, А ДЖЕНКІНС ЯК ПОСТГУМАНІСТИЧНИЙ МОРАЛЬНИЙ ЦЕНТР У РОМАНІ КЛІФФОРДА Д. СІМАКА «МІСТО»

У статті досліджено роман Кліффорда Д. Сімака «Місто» (1952) як художню модель пост-антропоцентричного світу, у якому культурна пам'ять, моральна відповідальність і право визначати майбутнє поступово переходять від людини до не-людських форм інтелекту.

Особливу увагу зосереджено на двох взаємопов'язаних образах: розумних Собак як культурних та етичних наступників людства і робота Дженкінса як морального центру твору. Запропоновано інтерпретувати трансформацію Собак не лише як фантастичний мотив «олюднення» тварини, а як принципове зміщення антропоцентричної перспективи. Собаки, які отримали здатність до мовлення та інтелектуального розвитку, не просто успадковують світ, залишений людьми, а створюють власну культуру, систему пам'яті та етичні норми. Водночас людська цивілізація в їхніх оповідах перетворюється на об'єкт історичного, міфологічного й навіть критичного осмислення. Така зміна перспективи ставить під сумнів традиційну ідею людини як виняткового носія культури, раціональності та моралі. Образ Дженкінса розглянуто в контексті проблеми моральної агентності штучного інтелекту. Створений як робот-слуга, він поступово набуває рис самостійного етичного суб'єкта: його діяльність ґрунтується не лише на виконанні наказів, а й на турботі, відповідальності, пам'яті та прагненні запобігти повторенню людських помилок.

У статті використано положення критичного постгуманізму, зокрема концепції Розі Брайдотті, Кері Вулфа та Донни Гаравей, а також підходи *animal studies* і сучасної етики робототехніки. Доведено, що «Місто» передбачає низку актуальних для сучасної гуманітаристики питань: можливість культури поза людиною, моральний статус тварин і машин, взаємозалежність біологічного та технологічного, а також необхідність відмови від антропоцентричної моделі цивілізації.

Отже, Сімак моделює не просто постлюдське майбутнє, а альтернативну етичну систему, у якій виживання цивілізації пов'язується з миром, турботою, співіснуванням і відповідальністю перед іншими формами життя.

Ключові слова: Кліффорд Д. Сімак, «Місто», постгуманізм, антропоцентризм, Собаки, Дженкінс, наукова фантастика.

Problem statement. The twentieth century witnessed a profound transformation in literary representations of humanity, technology, and the natural world. Science fiction became one of the most productive genres for questioning the assumption that human beings constitute the unquestionable centre of culture, intelligence, and morality. Clifford D. Simak's *City*, first published in book form in 1952, is particularly significant in this context. The work consists of interconnected tales depicting the gradual withdrawal and eventual disappearance of humanity, while intelligent

Dogs, robots, mutants, and other nonhuman beings become increasingly important participants in the history of Earth. The novel is presented through the framework of canine scholarship: the Dogs preserve, discuss, interpret, and sometimes doubt stories concerning the vanished "Man." This narrative strategy already reverses the conventional hierarchy between observer and observed. Humanity becomes the historical object of another species' cultural interpretation.

The problem addressed in this article is therefore the displacement of the human from the centre

of cultural and ethical meaning. Traditional humanist approaches tend to regard language, rationality, historical consciousness, morality, and technological creativity as defining characteristics of humanity. Simak, however, distributes these characteristics among several forms of life and intelligence. Dogs become narrators and historians; robots become companions, advisers, and guardians; humans gradually become a remembered and contested past.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

The theoretical framework is grounded primarily in critical posthumanism and animal studies. Braidotti's (Braidotti, 2013) *The Posthuman* challenges the traditional humanistic unity of the subject and stresses the importance of post-anthropocentric perspectives involving other species and technological forms. Wolfe (Wolfe, 2008, 2010) similarly questions the traditional divisions between human and animal, organic and technological, and insists that posthumanism must address questions of ethics and the status of nonhuman subjects. Haraway's (Haraway, 2013) *When Species Meet* is especially relevant to Simak's representation of Dogs because it conceptualizes humans and animals as "companion species" whose identities and practices emerge through interspecies relationships.

Aim of the Article. The aim of the article is to demonstrate that Clifford D. Simak's *City* constructs a post-anthropocentric model of civilization in which intelligent Dogs function as cultural and ethical successors to humanity, while Jenkins, the enduring robot of the Webster family, functions as a moral mediator and guardian of cultural memory.

To achieve this aim, the article pursues the following objectives:

- to examine the narrative displacement of humanity from the centre of cultural interpretation;
- to analyse the Dogs as producers and custodians of posthuman cultural memory;
- to interpret Jenkins as a form of artificial moral agency rather than merely a technological servant.

The methodological basis combines close textual analysis with critical posthumanism, animal studies, ecocritical perspectives, and approaches to machine ethics.

Outline of the main material. The most radical narrative gesture of *City* is the transformation of Dogs from objects of human affection into subjects of cultural memory. At the beginning of the historical process represented in the novel, Dogs belong to the human domestic sphere. They are companions, dependants, and familiar animals. As humanity retreats from Earth, however, the relationship is reversed.

Dogs as Cultural and Ethical Successors. In *City*, the Dogs are not only "what comes after humans."

They are also the book's main way of asking what a civilization is, and what it should be built on. The Dogs do not simply repeat the tales; they dispute them, correct them, and sometimes doubt that "Man" existed at all. "The Dogs dispute among themselves about the existence of such concepts as cities, wars, and mankind itself." (Ewald, 2006: 39). In that sense, they take over not just the world but the role of understanding it.

What makes the Dogs feel like a genuine "successor culture" is their language of disbelief. Cities, war, and even the basic idea of mankind sound to them like perverse inventions from a primitive world. One of the sharpest examples is their rejection of the City as a believable human structure: the Dogs treat it as socially and even physically impossible for an intelligent species, because life packed into tight spaces would destroy mental balance and collapse the very culture that built it. It sounds almost funny at first, but it also carries a serious reversal. Instead of treating urban life as an advanced achievement, the Dogs see it as a sign of dysfunction. So the Dogs' "civilized" viewpoint is not defined by more technology; it is defined by different assumptions about what a healthy social life should look like. This distinction matters because the author separates civilization from urbanization, conquest, and domination. In human history, these ideas are often linked. In the Dogs' world, however, civilization is measured by ethical relations rather than by expansion. The novel, therefore, asks whether moral maturity might require. "In reading Simak's "apprentice" stories, pulpish and badly written as they may seem compared to Simak's more mature work beginning with the City stories, the seeds of ideas are found that will sprout and grow over and over in many later stories abandoning some of the very principles on which human civilization was built." (Ewald, 2006: 37).

The transition from human dominance to Dog collective life is also shown as partly intentional on the human side, but not in a triumphant "uplift" way. In "Census," the talking Dog appears through a Webster experiment that gives Dogs speech, supposedly so that two intelligent but different races might cooperate and improve human life. The plan sounds generous, and it is easy to see why humans would cling to it: it offers the comforting idea that humanity can still guide the future. Yet the story does not let that comfort last. The Dogs receive speech, but humans continue to drift into fragmentation, fear, and withdrawal. Webster himself emphasizes that canine intelligence already exists and only needs development: "A dog is smart... The ordinary, run of the mill dog recognizes fifty words or more... Add another hundred and he has a working vocabulary" (Simak, 1952: 21).

At the same time, this transformation carries a long-term implication that goes beyond cooperation. Humans begin to imagine a future in which Dogs will inherit their role: "You have to carry on... you have to take the dream and keep it going... you must not forget" (Simak, 1952: 29).

Dogs are envisioned as a new kind of thinking species, capable of developing perspectives unavailable to humans: "A different mind than the human mind... that will see and understand things the human mind cannot..." (Simak, 1952: 21). The strange effect is that the Dogs begin as a human project and end as something humans cannot control. Their intelligence does not remain a tool; it becomes a seed of independence. In *City*... with the help of other intelligent beings, Simak seemed to be prophesying another "giant step for mankind," a chance to prove that such a precious gift as life cannot all have been for nothing.' (Ewald, 2006: 22).

Once the Dogs take on the duty of carrying "the dream of progress," their ethics begin to diverge from the human pattern. A key change is how strongly Dog civilization links "progress" with nonviolence and mutual restraint, not with conquest. Over long time spans, the Dogs build a "brotherhood" model that extends beyond their own species, pulling other animals into a wider community, and treating killing as an absolute taboo rather than a practical necessity. This system is not a simple utopia; it creates real tensions and challenges, including overpopulation and tension between instincts and rules. But that difficulty is part of the point. Simak makes Dog Ethics feel earned because they have consequences and require maintenance. The Dogs are not "good" because the author says so; they are "good" because their society is built around habits that refuse the old human shortcuts—fear, violence, extermination. "The world is going nuts – suicides, murders, a wave of violence are sweeping the world" (Ewald, 2006: 33).

Their skepticism also produces a subtle kind of irony: the Dogs often treat human traits as mythic exaggerations—war as unimaginable, killing as absurd, cities as insane—yet the reader recognizes those traits as historically familiar. So we end up seeing two perspectives at once. "The world government has noted some strange trends emerging, and the story follows a census-taker and investigator, Richard Grant. Grant is understandably surprised to meet a talking dog in his travels. One of the Webster family, Bruce, has been experimenting with dogs, altering them surgically so that they can speak, and inventing contact lenses that enable them to read (traits that are then inherited by other dogs, through means that are not explained)" (Brown, 2019). From the Dogs' point of

view, humanity looks almost monstrous and self-destructive, like a cautionary tale. "Man is set up deliberately as the antithesis of everything the Dogs stand for..." (Simak, 1952: 33). In this sense, humanity is not remembered as a model to follow, but as a negative example against which Dog civilization defines its own ethical principles. From the reader's point of view, the Dogs are both right and naive: right because human history really is full of violence, and naive because any intelligent society still has pressures that can crack moral rules. 'Big business coupled with technology and their stepchild, the over-organized society of the cities, has brought humanity to the brink of self-destruction and created a moral vacuum' (Ewald, 2006: 15).

Finally, the Dogs are ethical successors in the strictest sense because they keep asking whether "Man" deserves to be remembered with reverence. They inherit human artifacts, human myths, even human family names turned into folklore, but they do not inherit human certainty that the world belongs to humans. Instead, they build a culture in which "Man" is a disputed ancestor, not a permanent measure of value. That is a bold move for mid-century science fiction, and it helps explain why *City* still reads as unusual now. They carry forward the idea that intelligence without ethics is not an achievement, and that a future worth living in may require leaving certain "human" habits behind. "The mysticism that attaches to such questions as the real meaning of intelligence and the inevitability of death lies in the fact that humans do not understand these questions, but as intelligent beings, Simak believed they must try" (Ewald, 2006: 25).

Jenkins as a Posthuman Moral Centre. One reason Jenkins feels like a "centre" is that he stands between species without fully belonging to any of them. Humans built him, but humans cannot really control the future that unfolds; the Dogs inherit the world, but the Dogs do not invent Jenkins. So he becomes a mediator almost by default, a bridge between the old human household, the Webster line, and the later animal civilization that tries to build itself on non-violence. His importance comes from service, memory, and restraint rather than power.

This role is already suggested in the commentary to the second tale: "In the robot Jenkins, first introduced in this story, one comes to know a character which for thousands of years has been a puppish favorite. Jenkins is regarded by Tige as the real hero of the legend. In him he sees an extension of Man's influence beyond the day of Man's disappearance, a mechanical device by which human thought continued to guide the Dogs long after Man himself was gone" (Simak,

1952: 11). Here, the machine is the keeper of meanings that people themselves are no longer able or willing to keep. That role gives Jenkins a unique moral position in the text. Unlike the humans, he has historical memory; unlike the Dogs, he knows what has been forgotten; and unlike Joe, he possesses intelligence without detachment from ethical consequence. He therefore functions as a stabilizing consciousness in a world where every other form of life is changing, dispersing, or mythologizing the past. His emotional tie to the past is also shown very powerfully when he returns and confronts the memory of the Webster house: "Jenkins strode across the hill and did not look to either left or right, for there were things he did not wish to see, things that struck too deeply into memory... Jenkins took another step and prayed the house would stay... although he knew it couldn't because it wasn't there" (Simak, 1952: 67).

At the same time, Jenkins is not a simple moral authority. Critics such as John Ower note that City's anti-human judgment is complex rather than absolute. Jenkins matters because he sees both sides: he remembers human brutality, but also preserves what was valuable in human care, loyalty, and responsibility (Ower, 1979).

In a way, he feels like an early version of what we would now call ethical AI, without forcing modern slogans onto the book. Jenkins is not "ethical" because he recites rules like a program. He is ethical because he is written as a being shaped by duty, continuity, and restraint. He remembers what humans were capable of, and he treats that memory as a warning as much as a heritage. In other words, he acts like a moral archive. And that archive matters precisely because the novel's future societies are fragile: the Dogs' project depends on forgetting certain habits, especially killing, while human remnants keep reintroducing the old impulses. When the bow-and-arrow appears again, the danger is not technological progress itself. The danger is that a tool can reactivate an older moral reflex. Jenkins understands that sequence because he has watched it happen before (Ower, 1979).

Jenkins also changes the emotional meaning of "technology" in City. That is a very different image of technology than the common mid-century fear of machines replacing people. Simak's machine does not destroy humanity; he grieves for it and tries to preserve what is worth saving. In many science fiction traditions, advanced machines are either instruments of conquest or symbols of cold dehumanization. Simak's choice is stranger and, in a way, more unsettling: the machine becomes the one who grieves for humanity's failures and still tries to protect what is worth saving. The guardian role is not flashy; it

is domestic, almost humble. Yet over thousands of years, that humble persistence becomes powerful. It suggests that "progress" is not only about inventing new devices. Progress might also mean learning how to live without repeating the same moral disasters, and Jenkins ironically, as a nonhuman becomes one of the most reliable carriers of that lesson.

Jenkins takes responsibility, but he never tries to control others. That restraint is captured in one of the clearest statements of his purpose: "The dogs had to have their chance. Had to be left unhampered to try for success where the human race had failed... And it was better that way. For a god can do no wrong" (Simak, 1952: 53). He remembers what others forget, but he does not romanticize humanity; he is willing to see its cruelty clearly. And that combination is what makes him feel "ethical" in a modern sense: the text imagines an artificial being whose main function is not efficiency, profit, or control, but long-term care for a fragile moral inheritance. Jenkins matters not because he dominates history, but because he preserves moral continuity when biological humanity no longer can (Ower, 1979; Silverberg, 1995).

Conclusion. Clifford D. Simak's City can be reread as an early and remarkably sophisticated experiment in post-anthropocentric thought. The novel does not merely imagine the extinction of humanity; it asks what happens to culture, memory, ethics, and responsibility when humanity ceases to occupy the centre of the world.

The Dogs emerge as cultural and ethical successors because they inherit language, history, storytelling, and the Earth itself while refusing to reproduce the violent structures associated with human civilization. Their status as historians and interpreters is particularly significant: humanity becomes an object of nonhuman scholarship. This reversal undermines the traditional assumption that only humans can possess historical consciousness and produce culture.

Jenkins complements the Dogs' role by embodying technological continuity. Initially created as a servant, he gradually becomes a mediator, guardian, caregiver, and repository of memory. His ethical significance lies not in domination or superior computational power but in loyalty, responsibility, care, and the capacity to learn from history. He is therefore best understood as a post-human moral centre whose existence connects biological and technological forms of agency.

The interaction between Dogs and Jenkins produces a distributed ethical system. No single species or form of intelligence possesses an absolute claim to moral authority. Instead, cultural continuity emerges through cooperation between biological and technological beings.

Ultimately, City suggests that the survival of civilization does not depend upon the survival of humanity as the dominant species. What deserves to survive is not human supremacy but the capacity for memory, care, coexistence,

and ethical responsibility. In Simak's imagined future, Dogs remember what humans were, Jenkins remembers what humans did, and both help create a world in which being intelligent no longer requires being anthropocentric.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Braidotti, R. The Posthuman. Cambridge : Polity Press. Google Books. 2013. 200 p. URL : https://books.google.com.ua/books/about/The_Posthuman.html?id=WZASAAAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y (Last accessed: 01.08. 2026)
2. Ewald R. J. When the Fires Burn High and the Wind is from the North, The Pastoral Science Fiction of Clifford D. Simak, Wildside Press LLC, Wasabi Technologies. 2006. 156 p. URL : <https://s3.us-west-1.wasabisys.com/luminist/EB/E/Ewald%20-%20When%20the%20Fire%20Burns%20High.pdf> (Last accessed: 01.08. 2026)
3. Haraway, D. J. When Species Meet. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Google Books. 2013. 440 p. URL : https://books.google.com.ua/books/about/When_Species_Meet.html?id=RXSq8sZ9nsEC&redir_esc=y (Last accessed: 07.08. 2026)
4. Ower J. "Aesop" and the Ambiguity of Clifford Simak's City, The Science-Fiction Collection, University of California Press. 1979, 6, Part 2 (18)), P. 164–167. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/sfs.6.2.0164> (Last accessed: 24.06.2026)
5. Silverberg R. Clifford Simak's City. Oakland. California. Easton Press edition of *City*, The Abyss of Wonder. 1995. URL: <https://www.panshin.com/higher/simak.html> (Last accessed: 28.07.2026)
6. Simak C. D. City. Original copyright, tmok.com. 1952. 72 p. URL: <https://entropy.tmok.com/~bmo/Clifford%20D.%20Simak%20City/City%20-%20Clifford%20Simak.pdf> (Last accessed: 22.07.2026)
7. Wolfe, C. Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory. Chicago and London : The University of Chicago Press. Documen Pub. 2008. 252 p. URL : <https://dokumen.pub/animal-rites-american-culture-the-discourse-of-species-and-posthumanist-theory-9780226905129.html> (Last accessed: 28.07.2026)
8. Wolfe, C. What Is Posthumanism? Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Google Books. 2010. 357 p. URL : https://books.google.com.ua/books/about/What_is_Posthumanism.html?id=hb1ErdEer8YC&redir_esc=y (Last accessed: 28.07.2026)

REFERENCES

1. Braidotti, R. (2013). The Posthuman. Cambridge: Polity Press. Google Books. 200 p. URL: https://books.google.com.ua/books/about/The_Posthuman.html?id=WZASAAAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y
2. Ewald, R. J. (2006). When the Fires Burn High and the Wind is from the North, The Pastoral Science Fiction of Clifford D. Simak. Wildside Press LLC. Wasabi Technologies. 156 p. URL: <https://s3.us-west-1.wasabisys.com/luminist/EB/E/Ewald%20-%20When%20the%20Fire%20Burns%20High.pdf>
3. Haraway, D. J. (2013). When Species Meet. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Google Books. 440 p. URL: https://books.google.com.ua/books/about/When_Species_Meet.html?id=RXSq8sZ9nsEC&redir_esc=y
4. Ower, J. (1979). "Aesop" and the Ambiguity of Clifford Simak's City. The Science-Fiction Collection, University of California Press, 6, Part 2 (18)), pp. 164–167. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/sfs.6.2.0164>
5. Silverberg, R. (1995). Clifford Simak's City. Oakland. California. The Abyss of Wonder. URL: <https://www.panshin.com/higher/simak.html>
6. Simak, C. D. (1952). City. Original copyright, tmok.com. 72 p. URL: <https://entropy.tmok.com/~bmo/Clifford%20D.%20Simak%20City/City%20-%20Clifford%20Simak.pdf>
7. Wolfe, C. (2008). Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory. Chicago and London : The University of Chicago Press. Documen Pub. 252 p. URL: <https://dokumen.pub/animal-rites-american-culture-the-discourse-of-species-and-posthumanist-theory-9780226905129.html>
8. Wolfe, C. (2010). What Is Posthumanism? Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Google Books. 357 p. URL: https://books.google.com.ua/books/about/What_is_Posthumanism.html?id=hb1ErdEer8YC&redir_esc=y

Дата першого надходження статті до видання: 12.08.2026

Дата прийняття статті до друку після рецензування: 07.09.2026

Дата публікації (оприлюднення) статті: 25.09.2026

Стаття поширюється на умовах
ліцензії відкритого доступу (CC BY 4.0)

