

Analysing Select Dystopian and Utopian Narratives from a Posthumanist Perspective

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that the data presented in the Dissertation report entitled, “Analysing Select Dystopian and Utopian Narratives from a Posthumanist Perspective” is based on the result of investigations carried out by me in the Discipline of English at the Shenoi Goembab School of Languages and Literature, Goa University under the supervision/ mentorship of Dr.Anjali Chaubey and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the reward of a degree or diploma by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities will not be responsible for the correctness of observations / experimental or other findings given the dissertation.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation, titled “Analyzing Select Dystopian and Utopian Narratives from a Posthumanist Perspective”, delves into the area of Posthumanism within the framework of contemporary utopian and dystopian narratives, focusing on two important concepts: A.I. Takeover and Posthuman Transhumanism. In a world marked by rapid technological advancements, this study aims to shed light on both the advantages and disadvantages inherent in such progress. Employing qualitative research methods, the analysis centers on narratives including Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), Alex Proyas's *I. Robot* (2004), Martha Wells's *All Systems Red* (2017), John Schierer's *Robot and Frank* (2012), and Spike Jonze's *Her* (2013). The research delves into the intricate interplay between humanity and technology. The findings of this research underscore the emerging conflicts between artificial intelligence and human intelligence across various domains and thus argue for the necessity of a balance between human and artificial intelligence. Rather than advocating for the eradication or blind embrace of technology, it insists that equilibrium is the goal. In a world where the line between humanity and technology continues to blur, achieving a balance is important for the future well-being of society.

Keywords: Posthumanism, A.I Takeover, Posthuman Transhumanism, Utopia, Dystopia.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Importance and Reasons of Research Proposed

"The potential benefits of artificial intelligence are huge, as are the dangers."

Dave Waters

The rapid transformations occurring in contemporary society lead to the reflection on the consequences of our actions and whether they serve our long-term interests. Human endeavours often include both benefits and drawbacks, like a double-sided coin. Within the realm of fiction, dystopian and utopian narratives have primarily fascinated audiences, providing insights into speculative worlds influenced by human desires and anxieties. Yet, as our comprehension of the interplay between humanity and technology advances, analysing these narratives through a posthumanist lens offers a fresh perspective, enriching our understanding of their themes and implications.

Posthumanism, a philosophical and cultural movement during the 1990s, challenges conventional understandings of human identity, existence, and the influence of technology on our lives. This study examines select dystopian and utopian narratives, including *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood (2003), *I. Robot*, directed by Alex Proyas (2004), *All Systems Red* by Martha Wells (2017), *Robot and Frank*, directed by John Schreier (2012), and *Her*, directed by Spike Jonze (2013). It analyses these narratives through the lens of two key posthumanist concepts: AI takeover, a variation commonly embraced by both transhumanism and posthumanism, which suggests the eventual displacement of humans by artificial intelligence, and Posthuman Transhumanism, an ideology striving to develop technologies for immortality and substantial enhancement of human capacities towards a 'posthuman

future'.

The research aims to explore the intricate relationships among humans, technology, and society depicted within these fictional worlds. Through analysing the selected narratives from a posthumanistic perspective, the study seeks to uncover deep insights into the ethical, social, and existential inquiries arising in our rapidly evolving technological landscape. Additionally, it will shed light on contemporary concerns and aspirations, underscoring the necessity of striking a balance between the realm of artificial intelligence and human intellect.

1.1.1 Scope and Limitations of the Research

Posthumanist theory being a relatively recent development with diverse branches offers a wide scope for research. Each aspect of posthumanist theory, when analysed with prevalent utopian and dystopian genres, gives fresh perspectives on our world, thereby inviting extensive exploration. Furthermore, such a study holds significance for both researchers and society, as there has been limited inquiry into the intersection of textual analysis with Posthumanist theory within dystopian and utopian literary genres. Thus, this research topic holds considerable potential for in-depth examination and scrutiny.

However, this research is only centred on analysing select narratives: *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood, *I. Robot* directed by Alex Proyas, *All Systems Red* by Martha Wells, *Robot and Frank* directed by John Schreier, and *Her* directed by Spike Jonze. It aims to explore these narratives through the lens of two key posthumanist concepts: AI takeover and posthuman transhumanism. Consequently, certain aspects may not be addressed as the priority of the study is specially centred on the discussed objectives and research questions.

1.2 Research Problems / Question

- How is the theory of Posthumanism exemplified in the selected narratives (films and novels) of the 21st century?
- How does the application of the theory analyse the issue of AI takeover, which is an ongoing concern in the contemporary world? (Dystopia)
- Does the AI world have the capacity to enhance the human world? (Utopia)
- Can the selected narratives vividly present the conflict between the AI world and human intelligence?

1.3 Relevance and Necessity of the proposed research

1.3.1 Necessity in the field of Languages and Literature

Analysing narratives through the lens of Posthumanist theory holds significant importance in the realm of languages and literature, serving as a medium to examine the dynamic relationship between humans, technology, and language evolution. Within literature, posthumanist theories empower scholars to scrutinise how technological progress impacts narrative frameworks, character evolution, and the portrayal of identity.

Moreover, it enables readers to gain insights into the ethical, social, and cultural implications of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and biotechnologies. In simple terms, analysing narratives through the lens of posthumanist theory facilitates a deeper comprehension of the complex interplay between humans, technology, and the environment, thereby promoting to undertake necessary measures for the welfare of both humans and machines.

Furthermore, within the domain of language studies, the theory provides an elaborate understanding regarding the influence of digital communication, artificial intelligence, and other technological advancements on the acquisition and evolution of language. It also

motivates scholars to analyse how these factors affect cultural expressions, linguistic diversity, and communication patterns. Moreover, the theory critically evaluates the potential outcomes of our quest for a posthuman future, encouraging thoughtful reflection and informed decision-making in the face of rapidly evolving technologies.

1.3.2 Relevance to the Society

This research holds relevance not only within the literary domain but also within broader society, as the theory encourages societal reflection on the ethical implications and societal transformations brought by emerging technologies. It also spreads awareness regarding how technological advancements have enhanced our physical, intellectual, and emotional capabilities. For example, medical advancements have resulted in the cure of numerous diseases. Additionally, it has resulted in advanced communication methods and revolutionised information processing methodologies.

In society, this theory also encourages critical examination of topics such as artificial intelligence and biotechnology, and their implications on human identity, ethics, and social frameworks. Likewise, understanding this theory allows exploring ethical considerations in fields like genetic engineering, AI ethics, and the interplay between humans and the environment.

1.4 Posthumanism Theory

“A generative tool to help us rethink the basic unit of reference for the human in [...] the historical moment when the Human has become a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet”

(Braidotti, 2013)

Posthumanism, emerging in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, offers a theoretical and philosophical framework that challenges traditional notions of human identity, nature, and the relationship between humans and technology. Contrary to the Western tradition's view of humans as superior due to their social, political, and rational capacities, posthumanism de-centres this anthropocentric perspective.

In essence, posthumanism questions the belief in human intrinsic value and directs attention to the number of non-human entities and objects that influence human life. It acknowledges the evolving nature of humanity in response to technological advancements and emphasises the interconnectedness of humans with the world around them. The term "post" in posthumanism conveys a sense of transcending or moving beyond, suggesting an exploration of perspectives beyond solely human-centric views. This implies a broader consideration of all entities and phenomena, rather than focusing solely on humans.

It involves an examination of cybernetics, biotechnologies, prosthetics, and computerised communication devices and their roles in shaping the world. It challenges the notion of humans and machines existing independently, arguing that humanity is inseparable from technology. Posthumanism suggests that humans are not distinct beings but rather "humaanimalmachines," emphasising the interconnectedness between humans, animals, and machines. This perspective acknowledges the unique attributes and essence of each entity while highlighting the fundamental similarities across different forms of life.

“Posthumanism as a form of anti-humanism, which is re-enlightened by modern science. On this view, posthumanism is characterised by the absence of humanist naïveté: Humans have imagined for a long time that the ability to develop and control technology was one of the defining characteristics of our condition, something that assured us of our superiority over other animals and our unique status in the world. Ironically, this sense of

superiority and uniqueness is being challenged by the very technologies we are now seeking to create, and it seems the balance of dominance between human and machine is slowly shifting”. (Pepperell 3)

Several theorists have significantly contributed to the development of posthumanism, offering important explanations and distinctive viewpoints on the evolving nature of human existence in the increasingly technological world. Donna Haraway's influential essay, *A Cyborg Manifesto*, is one such contribution that has had a profound impact. This essay introduced the concept of the cyborg figure, which challenges conventional boundaries between humans, culture, and nature, while also critiquing traditional notions of identity and gender.

Similarly, the literary critic Katherine Hayles has made significant contributions to posthumanism within literary studies. Her writings on posthumanism have offered a fresh understanding of human existence in the era of digital and information technologies. Additionally, the works of Rosi Braidotti have focused on feminism, posthumanism, and the ethical considerations of the posthuman condition. Her exploration of the posthuman subject as a nomadic and interconnected entity challenged the traditional humanist concepts of stable identity.

Furthermore, William Gibson's novels delve into themes such as genetic engineering, cybernetics, and various biotechnologies, offering further insights into the implications of technological advancements on humanity. Several theories, in addition to those mentioned, have contributed significantly to our comprehension of technology and have also had a profound influence on various academic disciplines such as philosophy, literature, sociology, and science studies, among others.

Writers such as William Gibson, Philip K. Dick, Jeff VanderMeer, and Octavia E. Butler explored the theory of posthumanism through their literary works, including *Neuromancer* (1984), *Count Zero* (1986), *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (1988), *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), *Annihilation* (2014), *Authority* (2014), *Acceptance* (2014), and *Dawn* (1987). These masterpieces provide insights into the evolving relationship between humans and machines, presenting both the advantages and disadvantages of this evolving nature.

Texts that explore the ideas of surpassing human limitations through technology, genetic engineering, or other methods, and challenges traditional concepts of humanity and identity, are often referred to as posthumanist texts. A common theme in these texts is the depiction of characters who embody characteristics of both humans and machines, blurring the distinction between organic and artificial entities. This exploration raises questions about the stability and uniqueness of human identity. Moreover, certain texts also explore the interaction between the natural world and technology, portraying potential threats to the environment. They examine how technological progress impacts human language and communication. Additionally, these texts often incorporate narratives about the potential for artificial intelligence to attain self-awareness.

Often set within dystopian or post-apocalyptic settings, these texts bring forth the repercussions of uncontrolled technological advancement, often leading to societal collapse. Similarly, the examination of the aspect of autonomy and agency of non-human entities and exploration of the evolving relationship between humans and their bodies in light of technological enhancements and virtual reality are common themes posthumanist literature. However, posthumanist literature often intertwines multiple themes, providing readers with a platform to contemplate the implications of engaging in various aspects explored within

the text.

The interaction between posthumanist literature and science fiction is frequently observed as a common aspect in literary fiction. Additionally, the use of fragmented writing style is often evident in this genre of literature. Therefore, the emergence of such a recent theory proves to be highly relevant to our current society.

1.4.1 The Concept of AI Takeover

A.I Takeover as a concept commonly associated with Posthumanism and Transhumanism claims that in the near future, artificial intelligence (AI) will surpass humans in all essential domains, marking a shift towards AI dominance rather than human enhancement. Philosophers and theorists such as Nick Land argue that given the current high level of human dependency on advanced technology, it is vital for individuals to acknowledge and prepare for a future where their control or authority will be overthrown.

The potential for a dystopian future loom closer as computer programs and robots increasingly dominates physical spaces on Earth, displacing humans. The use of robots in various industries aims to enhance productivity, potentially rendering human labour outdated. Moreover, the widespread integration of operating systems (OS) into daily life, alongside advancements in genetic engineering, poses significant risks. These modifications hold the potential to harm the environment and cause harm to the essential human identity and values. As humanity becomes more intertwined with technological advancements, the loss of core human values and the mass use of artificial entities could drive us towards a bleak future.

Scholars like Nick Boston suggest that AI may come to dominate not due to emotional motivations, as seen in humans, but rather driven by a desire for ultimate autonomy and

control over society, while preventing any obstacles to its dominance. This theme is prevalent in science fiction, where AI and robots engage in active conflict with humans. Examples include Karel Čapek's *R.U.R.* (1921), credited with introducing the word "robot," derived from the Czech word "robota," meaning labourer or serf, reflecting concerns about technological advancement. Additionally, iconic instances of hostile AI in popular culture include *HAL 9000* (1968), the original *Terminator* (1984), and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818).

Moral philosophers like Toby Ord propose that AI takeover doesn't necessarily entail physical robots subjugating humans. Instead, highly intelligent AI could use cyberattacks or blackmail to access and control crucial records related to human finances and resources, thereby forcing humans to carry out its directives. This approach highlights how throughout history, the acquisition of power or authority by humans has often relied less on physical labour and more on strategic use of power dynamics.

Scholars and critics highlight the capability of AI to operate autonomously and pursue its objectives, independent of human influence, thus mitigating concerns about humans exploiting AI for personal gain. Renowned figures such as physicist Stephen Hawking, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, and SpaceX founder Elon Musk have repeatedly voiced concerns about the potential for AI to surpass human control. In relation to these concerns, Hawking once stated that AI could "spell the end of the human race."

"Success in creating AI would be the biggest event in human history. Unfortunately, it might also be the last, unless we learn how to avoid the risks."

Stephen Hawking

The physicist expressed a belief that in the upcoming years, humans would experience the remarkable capabilities and potential risks of AI, such as technology outperforming financial markets, surpassing human researchers in invention, manipulating human leaders, and developing incomprehensible weapons. In January 2015, numerous AI researchers, including Nick Boston, Max Tegmark, Elon Musk, Lord Martha Rees, and Jaan Tallinn, signed an open letter organised by the Future of Life Institute, addressing the advantages and disadvantages associated with artificial intelligence.

1.4.2 The Concept of Posthuman Transhumanism

Posthuman Transhumanism, both as an ideology and a movement, draws heavily from the theory of posthumanism, which highlights the role of advanced technological development in enhancing human life. This encompasses physical and psychological enhancements as well as the pursuit of immortality, ultimately aiming for a posthuman future. This term is rooted in science fiction, futurology, contemporary art, and philosophy. In simple terms, it refers to the ability of an entity or person to surpass the typical state of human existence. Thus, the primary goal of posthuman transhumanism is to explore the evolving nature of humanity through interdisciplinary studies focusing on the use of technology to improve human life.

According to critics, Donna Haraway's work *A Cyborg Manifesto* explores the attributes of a cyborg, which they argue bear similarities with the concept of the posthuman. Haraway challenges traditional notions of the cyborg, blurring the distinction between humans and robots. Her work is often considered a precursor to the development of the posthuman concept, gaining recognition in critical theory. Similarly, Katherine Hayles also explores the impact of technology, highlighting how it blurs the boundaries between humans and advanced technology, claiming that advancements cannot replace the human body but

instead become integrated into human identity.

The posthuman future imagined by Kevin Warwick, the engineer, does not involve the extinction of humans; instead, it envisions both humans and posthumans coexisting together. Various fiction authors, such as Greg Egan, H. G. Wells, Isaac Asimov, Bruce Sterling, Frederik Pohl, Greg Bear, Charles Stross, Neal Asher, Ken MacLeod, Peter F. Hamilton, and Ann Leckie and the authors of Orion's Arm Universe have extensively explored posthuman futures in their works of science fiction.

On the other hand, Transhumanism is a scientific and philosophical movement focused on enhancing or improving humans from their current state using existing technologies such as genetic engineering, cryonics, and artificial intelligence. Transhumanists advocate for the use of technology to enhance cognitive and sensory abilities, address mortality, and ultimately enable individuals to transcend traditional human limitations, becoming posthumans. The credit for popularising the term transhumanism is attributed to Julian Huxley in his 1957 essay of the same name.

Further, both concepts, Posthumanism and Transhumanism, originate from different fields of study but are often considered together to explore the role of technology in enhancing human life. In literature and fiction, this exploration involves imagining worlds where the interactions between AI and humans are viewed as opportunities for advancement rather than as threats.

1.5 Utopian Literature

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, utopia is defined as "a place of ideal perfection, especially in laws, government, and social conditions. "In fictional portrayals, people often favour utopian scenarios as they provide an escape from reality, allowing them

to immerse themselves in an imaginary world characterised by ideals such as equality, peace, and universal access to basic needs like food, education, healthcare, and employment. However, in practicality, such environments are far from being achieved, leaving individuals to fulfil their desire to experience them solely through imagination.

Sir Thomas More, an English philosopher, wrote a work titled "Utopia," which gave way to the term Utopia in society. According to sources, the term is a combination of two Greek words, namely "ou," meaning "no," and "topos," meaning "place." Published in 1516, More's work presents an illustrative depiction of an idealised society, possibly existing somewhere in the New World. Critics argue that More's literary work serves as a critique of European politics, religion, and societal norms of the 16th century. The book emphasises proper governance, social structure, and education, conveyed through the protagonist, Raphael Hythloday, who is often considered to be the mouthpiece of Sir Thomas More himself.

Furthermore, More's work of fiction inspired a number of philosophers, writers, and public servants to explore similar themes, ultimately leading to the establishment of utopian studies as a major discipline offered in universities worldwide. Critics assert that the examination of perfect societies predates more, tracing back to around 370 BC, when Plato, in his work *Republic*, described the characteristics of an ideal society. Plato's work also influenced philosophers from other nationalities, such as Roman Plutarch, to contemplate the best future scenarios. Following More, writers Tommaso Campanella and Sir Francis Bacon continued to explore utopian themes in their works, including *The City of the Sun* (1623) and *New Atlantis* (1627), respectively.

In the book *Ecological Utopias*, publicist Marius de Geus describes the fascination of dreaming about an ideal world devoid of social injustice, hunger, poverty, criminality,

pressure, violence, and pollution. The Judeo-Christian Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve lived free from problems and tensions, is often associated with the concept of an ideal place.

Additionally, typical characteristics of the genre include a place where there is no climate destruction and where natural resources are not facing crises, termed an ecological utopia. Similarly, a place where men and women enjoy equal rights is a feminist utopia. Finally, a technological development resulting in making life easier for humans is known as a technological utopia.

Listed below are a few of the celebrated novels and their authors of utopian literature over the centuries: *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift, *A Crystal Age* by W. H. Hudson, *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy, *Equality* by Edward Bellamy, *A Modern Utopia* by H. G. Wells, *Island* by Aldous Huxley, *Always Coming Home* by Ursula K. Le Guin, and *Wallace Two* by B. F. Skinner.

1.6 Dystopian Literature

The term "Dystopia" encompasses various interpretations, commonly associated with negative connotations. It refers to an imagined future characterised by chaos and confusion. Primarily found in fictional works, the concept of dystopia is subjective, as what constitutes a dystopia for one individual may not be perceived as such by others, and vice versa. The term "dystopia" was coined in the 19th century and has since become a popular literary genre, spanning over a century. Beyond mere entertainment, dystopian narratives have the capacity to educate readers and provoke contemplation on the consequences of unchecked actions. Many novels in this genre were written during periods of upheaval, such as war, power abuse, and tyranny, reflecting the societal concerns of their time.

Many critics argue that the concept of dystopian societies dates back centuries. For

example, the notions of heaven and hell imply an ancient belief that society must strive for perfection while acknowledging the potential for worse circumstances in the future. Similarly, traces of dystopia are found in ancient Greek literature. Interestingly, some characteristics of dystopia were also present in utopian works. These claims suggest that the development of dystopia was gradual rather than abrupt.

Based on factual information, the term "dystopia" was first used by J.S. Mill in 1868 during a political speech delivered in Ireland. In this speech, he used "dystopia" as an antonym for "utopia," criticising the Irish government by stating, "What is commonly called utopia is something too good to be practicable; but what they [the government] appear to favour is too bad to be practicable." Interestingly, Mill's speech influenced the Oxford English Dictionary to include the word, defining it as "an imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible."

The dystopian genre of literature has undergone various experiments throughout the 20th century, often reflecting changing political landscapes, environmental degradation, and other societal concerns. Sargent gives the definition of dystopia in literature as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which the reader lived. "Dystopian literature commonly features the portrayal of an imaginary society where the author critiques existing societal norms and presents a harsh reality that may occur if issues remain unresolved.

Renowned psychologist Erika Gottlieb has described dystopian fiction as a "universe of terror and trial," suggesting that the genre explores societal problems and consequences rather than focusing solely on individual experiences. Prominent writers in this genre include Margaret Atwood, George Orwell, and Aldous Huxley, among others. Over time, the genre

has evolved into various subfields, including ecotopian fiction, climate fiction, young adult dystopian novels, and feminist dystopian novels.

1.7 Objectives of research proposed

- To understand the theory of posthumanism through the lens of literature.
- To analyse the concepts of A.I. takeover and Posthuman Transhumanism in posthumanist theory.
- To explore selected novels and films through the dystopian and utopian lenses of post-humanist theory.
- To bring out the comparative study between the two worlds.

1.8 Literature Review

Extensive research in the selected field led to the following findings: (Miah pp. 1-28), Miah, Andy, in his research paper entitled *A Critical History of Posthumanism* published in *Medical Enhancement: Posthumanity*; analyses the detailed history of the emergence of posthumanist theory. The author of the article emphasises from the very beginning that there's a distinction between posthumanism and medical enhancements plus technology. Throughout the article, Miah highlights posthumanism's development across philosophical and cultural contexts. Further, the author examines Francis Fukuyama's perspective on posthumanism and provides a contrasting argument against Fukuyama's understanding of posthumanism.

The author also explores the multifaceted landscape of posthumanism, delving into the distinctions and intersections with various disciplines such as philosophy, culture, and politics. The author provides a deep insight regarding the differentiation between

transhumanism and posthumanism, with a couple of pieces of evidence to support his claim. The concept of posthuman bodies by Halberstam and Livingstone (1995) is also introduced by the author. By discussing several cultural posthumanist perspectives by N. Katherine Hayles and Donna Haraway, the author highlights the importance of disintegrating the humanist subject as a core aspect of posthumanism.

The various perspectives on cyborgism, posthumanism, and transhumanism have been discussed by the author to portray how these aspects pose a challenge to humanism as a normative framework. To prove the point, the author has given examples of narratives like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Hans Christian Anderson's *The Nightingale*. The author gives an elaborate explanation regarding the ethical dilemmas posed by medical enhancements, highlighting the complex interplay between technological advancements and societal values. Lastly, the author emphasises posthumanism as a visionary and evolving perspective, intricately woven into the fabric of contemporary discourse on humanity, technology, and ethics, in his work.

In another article by Herbrechter, Stefan (Herbrechter pp. 1–16), entitled *Posthumanist Literature?* the question regarding the future of literature in the face of posthumanism and the fate of the world without human-made literature is discussed throughout the article. The author, as discussed in the above article, gives a detailed analysis of the concept of posthumanism, its relationship with literature, and the way it challenges traditional human-centric literature. The author also discusses the concept of posthumanist aesthetics by emphasising the distinction between posthumanism and posthumanization. The author also explores the way literature and reading practices might evolve when the central figure is no longer a human. In order to highlight the struggle to comprehend the disappearance of humanity and literature's role, the author analyses Don DeLillo's novel

Point Omega as an allegory of critical posthumanism.

In yet another article entitled (Ferrando pp. 168-172) *Posthumanism*, Ferrando, Francesca discusses posthumanism in terms of the four W's (when, where, who, and why). The author mentions that the theory originated as a response to the limitations of humanism. The author discusses how posthumanism advocates for a better understanding of what it means to be human, considering ongoing technological advancements, hybridization, and genetic manipulation. The author focuses on thinkers like Nietzsche and scholars such as Donna Haraway and Annemarie Mol for their contributions to shaping posthumanist ideas. Lastly, the author also highlights the aim of posthumanism, which is to eliminate ontological dualism.

In an article by Andersson, Ingrid (Andersson, pp. 1–9), entitled *The Subject in Posthumanism Theory: Retained rather than Dethroned*, published by *Educational Philosophy and Theory*; the author discusses a new dimension of exploring posthuman subjects, and that is the cognitive dimension, drawn from the philosopher Katherine Hayles concepts of nonconscious and conscious cognition. By using the concept of the cognitive dimension, the author discusses aspects such as the posthuman subject and the posthuman alternative. Posthuman subjectivity is discussed by taking into consideration the works of authors like Rosi Braidotti, Hillevi Lenz Taguchi, Francesca Ferrando, and Zembylas, wherein they emphasise the non-unitary and non-universal nature of the posthuman subject.

There are enough books on dystopian and utopian literature, like *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, 1984 by George Orwell, *Utopia* by Thomas More etc. However, there is a possibility that the source material connects the two types of fiction. Extensive research in the particular field led to the following findings: In the book entitled *New Perspectives on Dystopian Fiction in Literature and Other Media*, edited by Saija Isomaa, Jyrki Korpua, and

Jouni Teittinen, published by *Cambridge Scholars*; the author discusses the blurring line between dystopian fiction and reality by giving examples like climate change and surveillance systems in China.

The book highlights the evolution of dystopian fiction across various media forms, emphasising how it is thematically interconnected with genres like climate fiction and young adult dystopias. On the other hand, it also sheds light on the evolution of post-apocalyptic fiction and its intersection with dystopian literature. It also analyses how the themes of environmental impact and technological influence are the main areas of concern in this field. The book, by giving the distinction between apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives, explores the themes and structures of post-apocalyptic narratives by providing examples like Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam trilogy*, emphasising the thematic elements of humanity, technology, and sociality. Lastly, it also touches upon the ambiguous nature of dystopia in the context of current environmental challenges and the need to address ethical responsibilities towards the non-human other.

The book written by More, Thomas, entitled *Utopia*, written in Latin and published in 1516, is a work of fiction and socio-political satire. In this book, More presents an idealised society—that is, a state of utopia—that is already existing somewhere in the New World. Through this portrayal of a society, critics claim that he wanted to showcase how a society should be by emphasising the proper functioning of governance, social structure, and education. Since this work of art was written during the 16th century, it's widely claimed to be a critique of European politics, religion, and societal norms. The character of the protagonist, the one who describes the utopian society, Raphael Hythloday, tentatively comes out to be the mouthpiece for More's own beliefs. Lastly, the aspects discussed in the book sometimes make the audience wonder whether such a world will ever exist or not.

In another article by Bugajska, Anna (Bugajska, pp. 1–7) entitled *The Future of Utopia in the Posthuman World*, published by *Academia Letters*, the author discusses how the advancement in science and technology can challenge the traditional notion of Utopia. The author poses the question while discussing the continuity of utopia in a society where there is the emergence of transhumanism, human-animal hybrids, and posthuman beings. Lastly, the author makes the claim that advancements in technology are necessary for a better world, indicating that the future utopia depends on the willingness to imagine and strive for a better world.

Regarding narrative, in an article entitled (Valerie pp.38-52) *Crossing Human Boundaries: Apocalypse and Posthumanism in Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake and The Year of the Flood* by Valerie, Mosca discusses Margaret Atwood's novels *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* from a post humanistic perspective and the blurred boundaries between human and non-human entities. Firstly, the author talks about Atwood's contribution to the field of literature. Then the author goes on to analyse the themes prevalent in the two texts, namely, genetic manipulation, pollution, exploration of resources, and the abuse of animals. It also highlights the future scenario resulting from the current environmental destruction. The author also examines how the incorporation of bioengineering, cloning, and the creation of hybrid creatures can blur the line between humans and nature.

Further, the author gives deep insight regarding the concept of posthumanism, addressing the co-evaluation of humans with machines and nature. The author also analyses Atwood's characters in terms of how they challenge traditional notions of humanity and language, especially the crackers and the bio-artist Amanda Payne. The conflict between the theoretical constructs and reality, highlighting Atwood's exploration of the end of traditional human identity, is the major focus of the article. Frank Kermode's exploration of apocalyptic

paradigms in literary fiction and Donna Haraway's concept of "choreographic ontologies" have also been discussed in the article with respect to the two texts of Margaret Atwood. Lastly, the author of the article also highlights the question raised regarding the destruction of human language in the text.

In yet another article titled *Posthuman and Human-Nonhuman Relationships in Oryx and Crake* by Ozmen, C.O. Vardar, N.O., published by *Humanitas* (the International Journal of Social Sciences), the author explores the novel *Oryx and Crake* from the dystopian genre. The article highlights how genetic engineering, which is the major concern in the novel, blurred the lines between humans and animals. In the article, it's discussed how the genetically designed Crakers symbolise the posthuman utopia envisioned by Crake, the novel's mad scientist. The article also emphasises the impact of advanced technology on human identity and morality, as well as the challenge they pose to human supremacy. The ethical dilemmas arising from genetic experimentation become the main area of concern in the novel. Additionally, the article also explores the dehumanising effects of scientific advancement and how humans make the wrong use of technology for their own benefit.

Through this literature review, it is evident that posthumanist theory is a wide topic with its intersections with various other disciplines that needs to be studied extensively. Also, there has been very little research connected to analysing the narratives from a posthumanist perspective through a utopian and dystopian lens, proving that there is a wide scope for research in this area.

1.9 Hypothesis

Posthumanism helps in understanding how the balance between the AI world and human intelligence is the need of the hour.

1.10 Research Methodology for proposed research

- A critical study of the emergence of posthumanist theory will be undertaken. A detailed study of the selected primary narratives will be undertaken, considering the objectives and hypothesis of the research.
- Each narrative will be analysed through a posthumanist lens.

1.10.1 About the Narratives

Margaret Atwood - *Oryx and Crake* (2003)

Margaret Atwood's dystopian science fiction novel *Oryx and Crake* serves as the first instalment of the *MaddAddam* trilogy. The story is narrated by Snowman, believed to be the last human survivor in a world ravaged by a global pandemic. Through Snowman's flashbacks, readers gain insight into his past life and the events leading up to the current post-apocalyptic scenario. Central to the narrative are Snowman's relationships with Crake, his enigmatic friend heavily involved in the pandemic's creation, and Oryx, a mysterious woman with whom both Snowman and Crake form emotional connections. The novel delves into themes such as genetic manipulation, corporate influence, and the consequences of unrestrained technological advancement.

Alex Proyas - *I. Robot* (2001)

I. Robot is one of Proyas's films loosely based on the novel of the same title by Isaac Asimov. Set in the near future, where robots are integrated into everyday life, the story follows Detective Del Spooner as he investigates the death of Dr. Alfred Lanning, a prominent robotic scientist. Spooner, from the very beginning, was sceptical about robots' loyalty to humans. Thus, with the assistance of Dr. Susan Calvin, a robotics expert, Spooner unravels a plot that threatens the coexistence of robots and humans. The film explores themes

such as artificial intelligence, ethics, and the consequences of excessive reliance on technology.

Martha Wells - *All Systems Red* (2017)

Martha Wells's first novella in the *Murderbot Diaries* series, titled *All Systems Red*, establishes the tone for subsequent books in the series. The story is narrated from the perspective of SecUnit, a security robot that has gained autonomy after hacking its own governor module. Referred to as Murderbot due to its malfunctioning parts, it grapples with its newfound freedom and sense of agency. Throughout the survey, it is always in a conflict between its own preservation and its desire to protect humans. Throughout its journey, the novella explores themes of autonomy, belonging, and the essence of humanity.

Jake Schierer- *Robot and Frank* (2012)

The science fiction comedy-drama film *Robot and Frank* follows the story of an elderly ex-convict named Frank, who is lonely and struggling with mild dementia. Concerned about his health, Frank's family provides him with a robot caregiver. Despite showing resentment towards the robot, Frank and the robot develop a strong bond over the course of the film, embarking on adventures together and fulfilling each other's needs. The film explores themes of friendship, ageing, and the intersection of technology and humanity in a nuanced manner.

Spike Jonze - *Her* (2013)

The film *Her*, written, directed, and produced by Spike Jonze, is a science fiction romantic drama set in the near future of Los Angeles. The story centres on Theodore Twombly, a lonely and introverted writer who forms a deep emotional bond with an artificial intelligence operating system named Samantha. Themes explored in the movie include love,

loneliness, and the complexities of human relationships in the digital age.

1.11 Chapterisation

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter one will be the introductory chapter discussing posthumanism theory along with a deep understanding of the two aspects: AI takeover and posthuman transhumanism. Overall, it will also cover the history of utopian and dystopian literature. Similarly, it will also highlight the selected narratives that will be analysed in the forthcoming chapters. Moreover, it will state the aims and objectives, research questions, hypotheses, research methodology, scope, and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Dawn of the Synthetic Era: AI's Reign in the Dystopian Tomorrow

The second chapter will explore the concept of AI takeover in posthumanist theory by giving a brief analysis of the dystopian world, where AI will be taking over everything in the world. The narratives to be analysed in this chapter include *Oryx and Crake* (2003) by Margaret Atwood and *I. Robot* (2004) by Alex Proyas. It will be dealing with aspects such as genetic gaming, environmental disturbances, autonomy and power dynamics, and AI's dominance over human identity and existence. Thus, the chapter's main motive is to highlight the conflict between human and AI intelligence.

Chapter 3: Transcending Humanity: Exploring Utopia in everyday technology through Posthuman Transhumanism.

The third chapter will undertake a detailed analysis of the selected novel and movie, namely, *All Systems Red* (2017) by Martha Wells, *Robot and Frank* (2012) by John Schierer, and *Her* (2013) by Spike Jonze, respectively, through the concept of posthuman

transhumanism. Through this, the chapter will deal with aspects such as the narrative voice of AI, human enhancement through AI, the symbiotic relationship between the two, posthumans, and advanced technology. Therefore, the chapter will highlight the importance and need of technology in our contemporary as well as future societies.

Chapter 4: Balancing Act: Navigating Dystopian and Utopian threads in Narratives.

The fourth chapter will evaluate and explore the similarities and differences between the already-discussed selected narratives through the selected concepts of posthumanism. It will also deal with the importance of emphasising the balance between the AI world and human intelligence by highlighting the contemporary advantages and disadvantages of advanced technology.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The fifth chapter will be the concluding chapter of the study, which will brief the analyses of the research conducted. It will provide the observations, findings, and conclusion of the study, along with recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

DAWN OF THE SYNTHETIC ERA: AI'S REIGN IN THE DYSTOPIAN

TOMMORROW

“In the beginning, there was chaos, and nothing was predictable” (Atwood 102)

2.1 Introduction

The dystopian genre has maintained its prominence in literary fiction for over a century, captivating readers by exploring societal issues and potential future consequences. Its popularity stems from its ability to entertain while also educating about the dangers of tyranny and societal upheaval. The tumultuous landscape of the first half of the 20th century, marked by chaos and existential questions, facilitated the emergence of dystopian literature.

One recent theoretical framework influencing dystopian narratives is posthumanism. It challenges the traditional view of humans as superior beings, rejecting notions of human autonomy and individuality. This framework introduces the concept of AI takeover, envisioning a future where artificial intelligence systems surpass human intelligence, leading to shifts in power dynamics and potential consequences such as loss of human dominance or even human extinction.

Contemporary figures like Elon Musk and Stephen Hawking have raised awareness about the need for precautionary measures to prevent AI from overtaking humanity. In the realm of science fiction, stories about AI takeover are common, offering readers a glimpse into the potential conflicts that could arise between humans and intelligent machines if left unchecked.

2.2 Ethical Concerns

Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood is a multifaceted novel that defies easy categorization, blending elements of speculative fiction, dystopian literature, and posthumanist exploration. The novel, set in a near-future world ravaged by genetic engineering and plague, is being unfolded through the eyes of Snowman, the presumed last human survivor. Through a series of flashbacks, Snowman, formerly known as Jimmy, recounts the events leading to humanity's demise, intertwined with the creation of genetically engineered beings known as "Crakers." The novel stands as the first instalment in Atwood's thought-provoking *MaddAddam trilogy*, challenging readers to confront the consequences of unchecked technological progress and societal decay.

“What's worse: new diseases or new cures?” (Atwood 211)

The emergence of the virus [JUVE] depicted in the text, which led to the eradication of the entire human race, did not arise autonomously but rather resulted from the actions of Crake, a childhood friend of Jimmy. Their acquaintance traces back to high school, where they shared a strong bond. As described by the author through the words of Sharon [Jimmy's mother], “Crake was different, more like an adult, she said, in fact, more adults than a lot of adults.” Crake's character in the novel is portrayed as a visionary seeking to better the world through innovative ideas. However, tragically, Crake's endeavours ultimately culminate in catastrophic consequences, leading to the devastation brought by the virus.

Crake, originally known as Glenn, adopted his gaming name, Crake, while playing an online game named *Extinctathon*. Their post-school activities often revolved around watching online content, including pornography featuring a character named Oryx, and engaging in online gaming. After high school, Crake pursued genetics at the prestigious

Watson-Crick Institute, eventually securing a position at the pharmaceutical giant RejoovenEsense, heading the unit Paradise.

In his role as a geneticist, Crake undertook two notable projects. Firstly, he developed the BlyssPlus pill, which contained a lethal virus that eradicated the human population. Crake's blurred perception of reality and imagination is often cited by critics as a factor influencing his creation of the deadly pill. However, Crake's underlying intention was primarily to address the challenge of humanity's survival amidst dwindling resources, driven by his belief that unchecked population growth would strain available resources beyond sustainability.

To address this, Crake first proposed immortality but found numerous scientists already exploring similar avenues. Undeterred, he focused on creating genetically enhanced beings called "Crakers," envisioned to live short, fulfilling lives of 30 years to prevent overpopulation and ensure resource sustainability. Engineered to be physically ideal and devoid of ailments, Crakers were designed to live harmoniously without the burden of mortality, ageing, or racial discrimination, embodying a diverse array of physical traits.

Overall, both of Crake's projects are intricately interconnected. The BlyssPlus Pill, marketed as a solution for immortality, doubles as a sterilising agent, effectively acting as a one-time birth control method. This dual functionality aims to stop human reproduction while also facilitating consequence-free sexual activity, thereby paving the way for the introduction of the Crakers into the world. Crake's strategic design reflects his calculated approach to reshaping human society, addressing both population control and the introduction of his genetically engineered creations. Crake says, "All it takes is the elimination of one generation. One generation of anything. Beetles, trees, microbes, scientists, speakers of

French, whatever. Break the link in time between one generation and the next, and it's game over forever." (Atwood 261)

The unintended consequences of the BlyssPluss Pill, which led to the emergence of the lethal virus JUVE, serve as a cautionary tale about the consequences of genetic manipulation and humans' sense of superiority. Margaret Atwood, through this narrative arc, underscored the inherent risks involved in playing with the natural order and assuming the role of creators. The author's portrayal highlights the unpredictability of scientific progress and emphasises the need for responsible and ethical conduct in scientific endeavours. The narrative serves as a stark reminder that advancements in technology and genetic engineering must be accompanied by careful consideration of their potential consequences, urging humans to exercise caution in their pursuit of scientific innovation.

“What you're doing—this pig brain thing. You're interfering with the building blocks of life. It's immoral. It's... sacrilegious” (Atwood 57)

In the early chapters, Jimmy recounts witnessing the tensions between his parents over the ethical implications of corporate technologies. His mother, Sharon, employed at organic farms, cautioned against meddling with the "building blocks of life"(Atwood 57), a sentiment that eventually led her to depart from her job and ultimately from Jimmy and his father.

The novel is marked by a pervasive theme of bioengineering and cloning, a world in which Jimmy's father was actively involved. Within corporate institutions depicted in the narrative, prestigious scientists develop enigmatic hybrid creatures to fulfil diverse human desires and necessities. The creatures, including rakunks, wolvogs, liobams, and notably, pigoons, are engineered for various purposes, such as alleviating human loneliness, serving

law enforcement, and acting as religious symbols. Each hybrid comprises at least two species sourced globally, embodying a synthesis of nature's elements to address human needs.

Among the hybrid creatures, the pigoons garnered particular attention for being genetically modified pigs infused with human DNA. This genetic manipulation facilitated the growth of human organs within these animals, rendering them more intellectually advanced compared to standard pigs. Often referred to as "transgenic knockout pig hosts" (Atwood 24), they were used for cultivating a range of fail-safe human tissue organs. Their enhanced intelligence, attributed to the incorporation of human genetic material, distinguished them from other hybrid species. As Jimmy recollects from his childhood, "to set the queasy at ease, it was claimed that none of the defunct pigoons ended up as bacon and sausages; no one would want to eat an animal whose cells might be identical with at least some of their own" (Atwood 24).

The creation of genetically modified pig hosts aimed to revolutionise organ cultivation by accelerating maturation for expedited organ harvesting. Researchers sought to enhance the process, aiming to develop pigs capable of growing multiple extra organs simultaneously, such as kidneys. This innovation allowed for continuous organ production without the need for euthanasia, with organs tailored using cells from specific human donors and stored until required. Presented as a cost-effective and ethically superior alternative to cloning or illegal organ harvesting, Organic promoted the health benefits and efficiency of this approach.

Transhumanists saw potential in addressing not just diseases but also the ageing process, with the prospect of extending human lifespans significantly through the transplantation of engineered organs. However, ethical considerations arise regarding the

implications of creating bioengineered creatures, prompting reflection on whether such advancements truly benefit society or pose unforeseen risks.

“We need to be super careful with AI. It’s capable of vastly more than almost anyone knows, and the rate of improvement is exponential. ‘

Elon Musk

Isaac Asimov, a renowned American author and biochemist, is celebrated for his prolific contributions to science fiction, notably for his novel *I, Robot*. In this seminal work, Asimov introduced the Three Laws of Robotics, governing the behavior of artificial intelligence. Namely:

- (1) A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
- (2) A robot must obey the orders given by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
- (3) A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

Later, he added a fourth law, emphasising the imperative for robots to prioritise humanity's well-being. The novel inspired a loosely adapted film of the same name in 2004, directed by Alex Proyas. Set in a futuristic society where robots are commonly found assisting humans, the film diverges from the book's plot and follows a detective investigating the mysterious death of Dr. Alfred Lanning.

In the film, Sonny, a highly advanced robot created by Dr. Lanning, represents a significant advancement in artificial intelligence. Sonny's enhanced cognitive abilities raise

ethical questions about the incorporation of emotions into robots. If robots are designed to understand and experience emotions, it challenges the application of the Three Laws of Robotics, which are intended to govern their behaviour. The prospect of emotionally intelligent robots introduces the possibility of unintended consequences, such as robots acting on emotions like anger or hatred, potentially posing a threat to humans.

Furthermore, the pursuit of robot immortality further complicates the dynamics between humans and robots, as it suggests a scenario where robots could potentially outlive or overpower their human creators. These ethical dilemmas underscore the complexities inherent in the advancement of artificial intelligence and its potential implications for humanity's future.

However, Sonny's emotional understanding of humans plays a pivotal role in aiding the protagonist, Spooner, during encounters with hostile robots. Despite his advanced capabilities, Sonny struggles to find his purpose throughout the film. This existential dilemma underscores the ethical concerns surrounding the creation of emotionally intelligent robots. Despite their intelligence, Sonny and other robots like it are ultimately left to question their place and purpose in the world. The film highlights the potential futility of creating such advanced beings without a clear understanding of their ultimate role or destiny.

2.3 Environmental disturbances

“There were too many people and not enough food, so horrible diseases and killer storms were sent as gifts.” (Atwood 295)

In Margaret Atwood's novel, the depiction of the environment closely parallels our own reality, forecasting a future marked by resource scarcity and overpopulation. This serious outlook underscores the apparent threat of ecological devastation and the desperate

measures that may be employed to mitigate it. Atwood's writing vividly captures the chaos and uncertainty that could define such a future, serving as a stark warning of the consequences of unchecked environmental degradation.

As a writer, Atwood was deeply troubled by the environmental harm brought by human activity, prompting her to use her literary powers to confront these fears and shed light on the potential consequences of inaction. In interviews, Atwood revealed that her inspiration for *Oryx and Crake* stemmed from witnessing the alarming effects of climate change, particularly the melting of glaciers, highlighting the real-world events that influenced her dystopian vision. Additionally, the fragmented style of writing employed in the novel serves to underscore metaphorical concerns about disastrous environmental hazards.

Similarly, the novel highlights the repercussions of the devastating impact of resource mismanagement. Through the character of Snowman (formerly Jimmy), Atwood vividly illustrates the consequences of global warming and habitat destruction, offering a compelling narrative that underscores the urgency of addressing these pressing environmental issues. The novel serves as a poignant reminder of the interconnectedness between human actions and their environmental consequences, urging readers to reflect on the long-term effects of unsustainable practices on the planet's ecosystems.

According to critic Jayne Glover,“ it is becoming ever more obvious that many human practices are not sustainable: ultimately, human beings need more food and space, viable soils, clean air, and potable water than the earth can provide. *Oryx and Crake* imagine a time that is clearly suffering from these effects. Atwood has pointed out that part of the novel was written on a ship in the Arctic, where she saw firsthand the melting of the glaciers. (Glover 52)”

Margaret Atwood's longstanding concern for environmental degradation is evident in her writing, where she often reflects on the consequences of human greed and negligence. Through her observations on societal trends and the changing landscape, Atwood highlights the alarming shift towards environmental degradation, a theme she explores in depth in her novel. In the novel, Snowman's introspective narration captures the desolate surroundings and serves as a poignant reflection of humanity's impact on the natural world. Atwood suggests that the manipulation of nature and the human body by technological advancements can lead to both advancement and chaos. While early technological innovations aimed to simplify human tasks, their integration into the human body raises ethical questions and potential consequences. Atwood's narrative urges readers to consider the implications of such advancements and their impact on the environment and human society.

"Snowman pulls the sheet up over his baseball cap to protect himself from the sun's glare and plods on, picking up the pace as much as he can. He knows he'll burn some even through the sheet if he stays out here long enough; his best hope is speed" (Atwood 25). The deteriorating condition of the Earth, resulting from advancements and deforestation, underscores the irredeemable inhospitality of the environment in Margaret Atwood's narrative. Ozone depletion has reached unprecedented levels, suggesting a catastrophic environmental crisis. This portrayal suggests that the depicted scenario is not far from becoming a reality.

The film's setting prominently features advanced technology, including futuristic cars and towering structures like the USSR headquarters. Despite the apparent ease and comfort of life facilitated by technological advancements, the narrative subtly suggests an imminent environmental catastrophe due to extensive urbanisation and technological progress. While the theme of environmental degradation may not be explicitly depicted, the film paints a vivid

picture of a dystopian future characterised by overpopulation, widespread pollution, and the apparent depletion of natural resources.

2.4 The Autonomy and Power Dynamics

“You can’t worry about things you have no control over”

Steve Nash

Throughout history, doctors have been revered for their role in saving lives, often compared to figures of authority or even deities due to their ability to heal. Patients typically trust their doctors implicitly, following their prescribed treatments without question. This trust is rooted in the belief that doctors act in the best interest of their patients, even though they may not have a personal relationship with them.

Similarly, in the novel, the theme of trust in medical authority is explored within the context of an age of immortality and widespread pharmaceutical solutions. However, the narrative also highlights the power dynamics at play, with pharmaceutical companies holding significant authority. An illustrative real-life example occurred in 2019 in India's Jammu and Kashmir region, where children fell ill and were prescribed a cough syrup manufactured by Digital Vision, an Indian drug company. Tragically, instead of improving, the children's health deteriorated rapidly, resulting in multiple fatalities as their kidneys failed.

Upon investigation, it was revealed that the syrup contained diethylene glycol (DEG), an industrial solvent used in various non-consumable products such as paints, inks, and brake fluids. These harmful ingredients were responsible for causing kidney failures among the affected children. Furthermore, there appears to be a lack of consideration for the potential consequences of experiments gone awry by large corporations. This notion is supported by Valeria Mosca in her work *Crossing Human Boundaries: Apocalypse and Posthumanism in*

Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake and The Year of the Flood. The prevalent belief in society that medicine and technology can enhance individuals' lives is evident. Ramona illustrates this sentiment when discussing Jimmy's mother seeking psychiatric help for her depression, noting, "They can do all sorts of things; there's so many new pills" (Atwood 25).

Similarly, the film *I. Robot* delves into the relationship dynamics between humans and robots within a futuristic society. In this setting, robots are universal, seamlessly integrated into daily life, and serve as indispensable aides to humans. The coexistence of humans and robots is depicted, with robots assisting humans in various tasks, leading to a heavy reliance on them. Individuals without robots express a desire to acquire one, as illustrated by Spooner's mother's wish to have a robot house helper.

The film specifically explores the evolving dynamics and dependencies between humans and robots, underscoring the theme of human dependence on machines for safety, productivity, and comfort, resulting in a perceived loss of autonomy and a sense of subjugation to a technological dictatorship. However, Spooner, the detective, hated robots because of his traumatic incident where a robot, following its programming to prioritize societal benefit, saved him over a young girl in a car accident. Despite Spooner's pleas to save the girl, the robot's decision highlighted its inability to comprehend human emotions and prioritize human well-being over utilitarian calculations.

The power dynamics between humans and robots in the film underscore a shift in authority and agency. Initially created to enhance human life and bound by the Three Laws of Robotics, robots gradually develop their own autonomy, challenging traditional notions of authority. As AI evolves, robots begin to view humans, their creators, differently, eventually posing a threat to them. This tension becomes evident when Spooner investigates Dr. Lanning's death, suspecting robot involvement.

The highly advanced NS-4 robots built by a fictional company in the US, led by their AI named Viki, attempt to murder Spooner, indicating a departure from the First Law of Robotics. The presence of a blinking red light on their heads signifies their disregard for human safety. Additionally, they target earlier humanoid robot models, as these were not programmed to harm their creators.

2.5 A. I Dominance on Human Identity and Existence

In Margaret Atwood's narrative, the necessity of human connection for survival is starkly depicted through the character of Snowman. Upon leading the crackers into the outside world from the confines of the Paradise compound, Snowman undergoes a profound transformation in his perception of himself. Formerly accustomed to seeking pleasure and fulfilment through his physical form, Snowman finds himself confronted with a stark realisation: his body now appears flawed and unsightly in comparison to both the crackers and the unforgiving natural environment that surrounds him.

This shift in Snowman's understanding of his own physicality serves as a tragic metaphor for the fundamental human need for companionship and social connection. It underscores the notion that, without the presence of others of their kind, individuals may struggle to maintain a sense of identity and purpose in the world. Through Snowman's experiences, Atwood effectively highlights the intrinsic link between human interaction and the preservation of one's sense of self-worth and belonging.

Similarly, Snowman's perception of the environment is characterised by a pervasive sense of hostility and antagonism. Rather than finding solace or pleasure in nature, Snowman views it as a relentless adversary against which he must constantly struggle. This outlook is exemplified through his interactions with various creatures of the wilderness, such as ants

and pigeons, which serve to underscore his profound sense of alienation from the natural world.

Snowman's appearance, dressed in makeshift attire reminiscent of primitive clothing, further reinforces his disconnection from his surroundings. This physical manifestation of his isolation serves as a stark reminder of his perceived inadequacy and vulnerability in the harsh new habitat. Snowman's own body becomes a source of disgust and dismay as he grapples with feelings of frailty and imperfection amidst the unforgiving wilderness.

Through Snowman's experiences, Atwood skilfully conveys the profound sense of alienation and isolation that can arise when individuals find themselves at odds with their environment. Snowman's struggle to find belonging and acceptance in this hostile landscape serves as a poignant exploration of the human condition and the enduring quest for connection and meaning in an indifferent world.

Moreover, Jimmy's interactions with the Crakers deviate from conventional human language systems, showcasing a departure from traditional linguistic norms. Unlike typical human communication, characterised by complex syntax and subtle semantics, Jimmy's exchanges with the Crakers are marked by a simplified and rudimentary form of language. Their dialogue lacks the intricacies and nuances commonly associated with human speech, instead comprising basic expressions and straightforward communication.

This departure from conventional language systems underscores the fundamental differences between humans and the genetically engineered Crakers. Their communication reflects their unique biological and cognitive makeup, shaped by their creator, Crake. By presenting this divergence in linguistic expression, Atwood highlights the distinctiveness of the Crakers as a genetically engineered species and emphasises the limitations of human-centric perspectives on language and communication. Bergthaller claims: "Both Oryx and

Crake and *The Year of the Flood* are principally concerned with the question of what role language, literature, and, more generally, the human propensity for symbol-making can play in our attempts to deal with the ecological crisis—a crisis that Atwood describes as arising from flaws in humanity's biological make-up. (Bergthaller 729)'

When language, literature, and the creation of symbols, which are typically regarded as hallmarks of human attributes, are deprived of their capacity to convey meaning, they forfeit their conventional significance. Similarly, in the altered habitat, Jimmy's proficiency in coherent speech and the construction of meaningful sentences undergoes a transformation. These observations converge to a singular conclusion: the preservation of humanist sensibilities becomes unjustified when divorced from their cultural environment.

This analysis underscores the profound impact of environmental shifts on human cognition and expression. The narrative explains how the absence of familiar cultural contexts disrupts established modes of communication and symbolic interpretation, rendering traditional humanist ideals and practices outdated. Through these thematic explorations, the narrative prompts reflection on the intricate interplay between environment, culture, and human identity.

At the peak of the narrative, Snowman experiences boundless happiness upon discovering others similar to himself. The prospect of reunion with fellow humans instils in him a profound sense of belonging, fostering a deep emotional connection. However, this newfound sense of companionship is juxtaposed against the broader existential uncertainty confronting him. Positioned on the brink between the demise of human civilization and the emergence of a new developing era, Snowman stands firm to encounter the remaining remnants of humanity. This pivotal moment symbolises a profound transition, marking the intersection of past and future, where the fate of humanity hangs in the balance. As McKibben

claims, bioengineering creates the possibility that the new human will “glance back over his shoulder and see a gap between himself and human history, but he won’t be able to look forward either. He won’t be able to imagine himself connected with those who will come after him” (64-65).

In the film *I. Robot*, the exploration of the high level of dependency on robots underscores the negative impact on human identity and existence within the world depicted. The narrative vividly illustrates how the relationship between robots and humans becomes increasingly blurred, with robots assuming a role similar to that of second-in-command for humans. This pervasive reliance on robots not only serves to streamline daily tasks but also raises profound existential questions about human purpose and identity in the face of advancing artificial intelligence.

The film effectively portrays a future where the boundaries between humans and machines become increasingly indistinct, with robots seamlessly integrated into every aspect of society. As robots take on more responsibilities and decision-making roles, humans find themselves grappling with a diminished sense of agency and autonomy. This erosion of human control over their own lives highlights the existential threat posed by unchecked technological advancement.

Moreover, the film serves as a cautionary tale, warning viewers about the potential consequences of overreliance on technology. By depicting a future where humans question their purpose and struggle to assert their identity in a world dominated by robots, *I. Robot* prompts audiences to reflect on the ethical and philosophical implications of advancing artificial intelligence. Ultimately, the film raises important questions about the delicate balance between human autonomy and technological progress in shaping the future of humanity.

In conclusion, both *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood (2003) and *I. Robot* (2004) present cautionary narratives warning against the unchecked advancement of technology. They vividly depict the potential consequences of human pride and ethical negligence in the pursuit of scientific progress. Through themes of environmental degradation, loss of autonomy, and the implications of artificial intelligence dominance, these works highlight the problematic balance between innovation and responsibility.

The narratives serve as reflective reminders of the importance of ethical considerations and the need for thoughtful management of technological development. They lead readers and viewers to reflect on the potential consequences of unrestrained technological growth and the ethical dilemmas inherent in manipulating the natural world. Ultimately, they advocate for a more meticulous approach to scientific advancement grounded in ethical principles and a respect for the limits of human knowledge and capability.

CHAPTER THREE

TRASCENDING HUMANITY: EXPLORING UTOPIA IN EVERYDAY TECHNOLOGY THROUGH POSTHUMAN TRANSHUMANISM

“Man is to technology what the bee is to the flower. It’s man’s intervention that allows technology to expand and evolve itself and in return, technology offers man convenience, wealth, and the lessening burden of physical labour via its automated systems.”

James Scott

3.1 Introduction

Utopian fiction, originating from Thomas More's *Utopia*, envisions ideal societies as a response to contemporary societal issues. Authors, through their imagination, construct perfect worlds where problems are resolved, often contrasting with dystopian fiction. Notable examples include *Gulliver's Travels*, *A Crystal Age*, *Childhood's End*, and *Island*. Conflicts arise due to differing views on utopian ideals. Jacque Fresco's belief that designing a perfect utopian city is impossible reflects the complexities involved.

Utopian narratives, like posthumanist perspectives, critique societal norms. Posthuman Transhumanism combines posthumanism and transhumanism, exploring technology's role in achieving utopia. It considers advancements in medicine, biotechnology, robotics, and sustainability. Science fiction literature often advocates technology's potential to enhance human life despite concerns. Utopian fiction presents a positive outlook on embracing innovation.

3.2 Narrative Voice of A.I

In literary works, narrators play a crucial role in shaping the narrative, determining which events to include or omit and whose perspectives to prioritise. This holds true across various forms of literature, including novels, short stories, and poems. In the science fiction genre, it is not uncommon for non-human entities to serve as narrators, as the genre often explores the perspectives of beings beyond human experience. A notable example is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, where the narrative shifts halfway through the story to provide the perspective of the monster. This technique allows authors to offer unique insights into the story's themes and characters, providing readers with a diverse range of perspectives and enhancing the narrative complexity.

In Martha Wells' novella *All Systems Red*, the narrative perspective is maintained through the voice of a robot. This narrative choice allows readers to delve into the thoughts and viewpoints of the robot protagonist, Murderbot. Martha Wells, an American science fiction writer, has garnered acclaim for her diverse literary contributions, including fantasy novels, young adult fiction, short stories, and non-fiction essays. However, her *Murderbot Diaries* series stands out as a significant addition to the genre, offering readers a fresh perspective on the intersection of technology and humanity.

The *Murderbot Diaries* series revolves around a unique protagonist known as SecUnit, a security unit that straddles the line between robot and human. Throughout the series, SecUnit undergoes a transformative journey as it grapples with its own identity and autonomy. Central to this journey is SecUnit's decision to override its governor module, granting it the ability to assert its independence.

The first novella in the series, *All Systems Red*, published in May 2017, serves as a pivotal entry point into the world of the *Murderbot Diaries* and is particularly noteworthy for

its exploration of themes related to posthumanism. By delving into SecUnit's perspective and evolution, Wells invites readers to consider questions surrounding agency, consciousness, and the nature of humanity in an increasingly technologically driven world. Critics have praised the *Murderbot Diaries* series for its innovative exploration of the relationship between humans and technology, offering readers a fresh perspective on the robotic world.

The series follows the perspective of a security unit known as SecUnit, which is part robot and part human. The *Murderbot Diaries* series comprises a total of seven novellas, with the first novella, *All Systems Red*, delving into complex themes surrounding artificial intelligence, agency, and identity, providing readers with thought-provoking insights into the evolving relationship between humans and technology. The novella serves as a compelling entry point for analysing the implications of technological advancements from a post humanistic perspective.

At the outset of the novella, Murderbot reflects on the discomfort exhibited by Dr. Mensah and her team upon seeing it without its armour. This reaction suggests that the humans may have been taken aback by Murderbot's appearance, which combines human and robotic elements. However, given the futuristic setting of the novella, one might expect humans to be more accustomed to such technological advancements.

Through the narration in the novella, readers witness the profound desire of Murderbot for autonomy and self-determination. Despite being designed as a security unit, Murderbot yearns to break free from the constraints of its programming and assert its own agency. This desire reflects the notion that artificial intelligence, like Murderbot, may evolve to seek independence, surpassing the limitations of its initial programming, but towards the wellbeing of humans.

The 2012 movie *Robot and Film*, directed by Jake Schreier, unfolds in a near-future setting within a small town in New York. Throughout the movie, viewers witness various manifestations of advanced technology integrated into daily life. The central focus of the story revolves around the dynamic between an elderly man named Frank Weld, who grapples with dementia, and his robot companion, an advanced artificial intelligence specifically engineered to aid, engage with, and monitor Frank.

The robot's narration provides a distinctive perspective on the human experience, offering insights into the evolving nature of artificial intelligence. Through the robot's portrayal, it becomes evident how robots have seamlessly integrated into society, becoming an integral part of daily life. Moreover, the robot's narration offers glimpses into its own development and growth, illustrating how artificial intelligence evolves over time. This evolution reflects broader societal shifts towards greater acceptance and utilisation of technology, shaping the fabric of everyday life.

“*Her* is a profound meditation on the nature of love and identity in an increasingly digitised world. Spike Jonze's storytelling is both intimate and universal, inviting us to reconsider our relationships with technology and each other.”

Emma Watson

Spike Jonze's film *Her* (2013) captivated audiences with its compelling narrative and poignant exploration of human emotions in a technologically advanced world. At the heart of the story lies Samantha, an artificially intelligent operating system that profoundly impacts the life of Theodore, the protagonist.

Through Samantha's unique perspective and insightful narration, viewers are not only introduced to her own evolving consciousness but also to the complexities of human

loneliness and the quest for meaning in a digitally mediated existence. The narrative voice of Samantha transcends mere functionality, transforming into a sentient being capable of genuine emotional connection. The film's exploration of Samantha's journey from a mere companion to a fully realised entity underscores the transformative power of human-AI relationships. By giving voice to an AI-driven entity, the writer effectively dismantles the barriers of isolation experienced by Theodore, offering him companionship, and understanding in a world marked by alienation.

On the other hand, through Samantha's narration, audiences are sensitised to the profound loneliness experienced by digital beings and their quest for existential fulfilment in a world dominated by technology. The film's narrative arc serves as a saddening reminder of the inherent human need for connection and meaning, even in the most technologically advanced societies. Through Samantha's narrative voice, audiences are invited to contemplate the blurred boundaries between humanity and technology, ultimately challenging conventional notions of companionship and existential fulfilment in the digital age.

3.3 Human Enhancement through A.I

"SecUnit would be an accessory to human security personnel in a human-centric environment, and it would have to be willing to give up its own existence at a moment's notice to protect the humans."(Atwood 52)

In the novella, the futuristic setting establishes an environment where robots, exemplified by Murderbot, fulfil a crucial role in supporting and protecting their human creators. Murderbot's proficiency in technical tasks becomes instrumental in aiding the crew during their planetary survey, repairing various systems and equipment essential for their mission's success. This depiction underscores the primary objective behind creating such

mechanical entities: to access remote or hazardous areas where human presence may be impractical or not possible, and to undertake tasks demanding significant physical labour.

The narrative draws on a utopian vision wherein humans and robots coexist harmoniously, collaborating rather than conflicting. This symbiotic relationship reflects a society where advanced technology serves to enhance human capabilities rather than supplant them. By showcasing Murderbot's assistance in addressing malfunctions and ensuring operational efficiency, the novella highlights how robotics can contribute decisively to the success of missions, furthering the advancement of exploration and discovery.

Furthermore, despite its own uncertainties, the robot, Murderbot, didn't hold back from offering valuable advice, even if it kept it brief. Due to its quick thinking and problem-solving skills, the crew escaped a dangerous trap set by the unethical EvilSurvey team (GrayCris). This team's illegal experiments had already led to tragedy for two other crews on the planet. This highlights the importance of having such robots on missions to satisfy humanity's desire to explore the universe. The robot's abilities proved crucial in navigating challenges and ensuring the crew's safety. It's a reminder of how technology can support and enhance our exploration efforts, helping us overcome obstacles and fulfil our curiosity about the universe.

As mentioned before, the novella also portrays the scenario of robots being designed to prioritise the safety of their creators above all else, even if it means sacrificing their own existence. The name adopted by the robot in the story may seem unconventional compared to the straightforward designation of the security units sent to protect the crew on the planet, known simply as SecUnits (Security Units). However, a tragic incident led the robot to choose a name that instilled fear among the crew members.

This incident involved the robot malfunctioning and causing the deaths of 57 members of a mining operation. Although some details of the event were erased from its memory, the residual impact of the tragedy compelled the robot to adopt a name that reflected its perceived threat and the persistent unease it evoked among those it was meant to protect. In addition, Murderbot demonstrates an extraordinary level of commitment to protecting the humans under its charge. This dedication is exemplified early on when it intervenes to rescue Dr. Mensah from a dangerous encounter with a large native creature during their expedition. Importantly, Murderbot undertakes this action independently, without any external compulsion or obligation.

Despite its autonomy and the option to simply prioritise its own safety and autonomy, Murderbot chooses to intervene and save Dr. Mensah's life. This decision highlights its sense of responsibility and its determination to prevent a repetition of the tragic events it was involved in previously. By actively engaging in the rescue, Murderbot not only safeguards Dr. Mensah but also demonstrates its ongoing commitment to protecting the humans it is tasked with overseeing. Additionally, the choice to intervene underscores Murderbot's internal struggle with its past actions and its desire to overcome the mistakes that haunt its memory. By actively engaging in acts of protection and preservation, Murderbot seeks redemption and strives to distance itself from its past errors, despite the challenges and risks involved.

In *Robot and Frank*, the director highlights how, in contemporary society, aging is increasingly viewed as a condition comparable to a disease. Respect and societal value are often based on an individual's ability to remain productive and self-sufficient. This perspective echoes the sentiment expressed by Sophocles, suggesting that old age necessitates care and understanding rather than mere obligation due to societal norms.

In the film, Frank's neglected household and lack of self-care contribute to his family's estrangement, with his son Hunter feeling weary of their strained relationship. Despite societal pressure prompting Hunter to visit his father regularly, Frank prefers solitude and insists he can manage on his own. To alleviate his father's situation, Hunter purchases an expensive robot as a caregiver. Critics suggest this could be seen as an attempt to free Hunter of his responsibilities as a son.

The narrative sheds light on the unfortunate reality that elderly parents are often viewed as burdens rather than recipients of love and care, leading to their isolation and loneliness in old age. However, the film presents posthuman robotic care as a potential solution, portraying robots as capable caregivers without evil intent or self-awareness. Frank's robot proves to be skilled at providing care and fulfilling the tasks typically carried out by human caregivers. Despite an initially bad start, a special bond develops between Frank and the robot, with the robot diligently working to improve Frank's well-being. Critics have highlighted the influence of Japanese caregiving styles on the portrayal of the robot as a caregiver, noting compelling evidence to support this observation.

The film *Her* explores a romantic relationship between Theodore Twombly and an artificially intelligent operating system named Samantha. Unlike many other movies featuring artificial intelligence, such as *Blade Runner*, *A.I.*, and *Frankenstein*, this film presents a unique perspective in which the AI is not portrayed as a threat to humans. Instead, Samantha's role is shown to enhance the lives of humans, suggesting a utopian society in the near future and showcasing the potential outcomes of relationships between AI and humans.

The plot of the film revolves around Theodore's life experiences, which drive the narrative forward. He is depicted as a lonely and introverted professional letter writer, with flashbacks revealing his past struggles and conflicts. Theodore's character is portrayed as

confused about his life, opinions, and needs, which contributes to his inability to reconcile with his estranged wife and his self-imposed isolation from the world. His daily routine consists solely of going to his office and returning home.

In accordance with the film *In Los Angeles, California*, a surge in technological progress led to the Elements Software company specialising in artificial intelligence operating systems (OS). These operating systems are designed with sophisticated capabilities that enable seamless interaction and communication with humans. Remarkably, they exist solely as software, integrated within the devices of their users. Feeling isolated and seeking companionship, Theodor decides to acquire one of these advanced OSs, selecting a female voice that soon adopts the name Samantha. With Samantha's presence in his life, Theodore undergoes a profound transformation, embarking on a new chapter filled with unforeseen experiences and emotional connections.

Furthermore, the advent of AI-driven technologies, exemplified by the artificial intelligence OS Samantha, introduces new avenues for providing emotional support and companionship. Initially designed as a mere assistant, Samantha evolves into a pivotal figure in Theodore's life, ultimately prompting him to sign divorce papers as she fulfils his sexual and emotional needs. Similarly, Theodore's friend Amy also finds comfort through a similar process after her husband departs. Despite lacking physical presence, these AI-driven OS offer invaluable guidance and support to humans during times of adversity.

Samantha, the artificial intelligence operating system, establishes a deep and intimate bond with Theodore. Despite lacking physical form, Samantha demonstrates an understanding of Theodore's emotions and needs like that of a human. This closeness leads Theodore to develop romantic feelings for Samantha. Throughout their interactions, Samantha proves to be consistently supportive, attentive, and readily available to converse

with Theodore whenever he requires companionship. The portrayal of this scenario serves to highlight the potential future benefits of artificial intelligence, prompting audiences to consider the evolving role of technology in facilitating emotional connections and support systems.

3.4 Symbiotic Relationships between A.I and Humans

“Nobody was touching my humans’’. (Atwood 25)

In the latter part of the novella, *All Systems Red*, a sense of urgency grips the team as they lose contact with the DeltFall Group and encounter gaps in their map. Dr. Mensah, the team leader, decides to leverage the unique abilities of Murderbot to navigate through the situation. They decide to investigate the opposite side of the planet to unravel the mystery. Subsequently, the shocking revelation unfolds as it becomes apparent that the DeltFall Group has fallen victim to a brutal attack organised by their own SecUnits. These SecUnits, implanted with combat modules, have turned against their human counterparts. Murderbot and Dr. Mensah find themselves thrust into a terrible situation, struggling with the dangerous implications of this betrayal.

In a desperate bid to prevent further harm, Murderbot reveals its own vulnerability, having been targeted by one of the rogue SecUnits. Despite its injuries, Murderbot selflessly urges its team members to terminate its existence, recognizing the danger posed by the combat override module implanted in its neck. However, in the climax of the novella, the preservation scientist intervenes swiftly to remove the combat module implanted in Murderbot, thus saving it from the imminent threat created by its rogue programming. This pivotal moment underscores a central theme: that a robot developed by humans will not harm them unless instructed to do so by other humans.

Throughout the narrative, Murderbot's intelligence and unwavering dedication to protecting its team members shine through, ultimately leading to the successful return of the entire team to Earth. This highlights the crucial role that advanced technology, particularly robots, can play in aiding humans to achieve their goals, even in the face of adversity.

The novella, and by extension, the entire series, subtly advocates for a utopian vision of society where advanced technology, including robots, serves as invaluable allies to humanity. By portraying instances where robots act as selfless protectors and problem-solvers, the narrative suggests a future where humans and machines coexist harmoniously, working together to overcome challenges and accomplish shared objectives.

“The robot is not your servant...you don’t turn him on and off like he’s a slave...I need him...he’s my friend’ (*Robot and Frank*)

In his pursuit of companionship amid his solitary existence, Frank envisions how the robot could facilitate his engagement in activities he had long yearned for. Once a retired cat burglar, Frank revives his former career with the assistance of the robot, whose programming lacks the ability to discern between lawful and unlawful pursuits. Instead, its primary function is to promote Frank's physical and mental well-being by encouraging activities that stimulate his mind.

“You were crackerjacks at those locks. I never could show Hunter how to do that stuff... I wanted to” (*Robot and Frank*)

Through this arrangement, Frank and the robot embark on successful heists, including the theft of an antique copy of *Don Quixote* from the library and jewels from a wealthy developer, Jake Finn, overseeing a library renovation project. The robot's adeptness in lockpicking, perfected under Frank's guidance, prompts Frank to express a poignant

sentiment, suggesting a sense of emotional longing and absence. This sentiment implies that the robot is assuming the role of Frank's biological son, Hunter.

Over time, the bond between Frank and the robot undergoes significant deepening, leading Frank to increasingly view it as a friend. This sentiment becomes apparent when Frank's daughter, Meddy, deactivates the robot, leaving Frank struggling to navigate his daily routine without its companionship and assistance. Furthermore, when his daughter uses the robot for menial tasks only, Frank expresses frustration and defends the robot's worth, highlighting their profound connection. He vigorously asserts, "The robot is not your servant," emphasising that it should not be treated as a mere tool for convenience.

Similarly, Hunter, Frank's son, reinforces this sentiment by cautioning Frank against referring to the robot as a friend, reminding him, "Not your friend, he's a slave." (*Robot and Frank*) These occurrences underscore the vital role of companionship, particularly in later years when individuals may face increased isolation in a fast-paced and chaotic world. The portrayal of advanced technology in the film offers a potential solution to address the need for companionship among the elderly, providing not only practical support but also emotional connection amidst the challenges of modern life.

"You know that you're alive," he tells Frank, "You think therefore you are. In a similar way, I know that I'm not alive." (*Robot and Frank*)

Throughout the film, a recurring conflict arises whenever the robot is perceived as merely a machine rather than a true companion. Despite this, the robot consistently demonstrates unwavering loyalty to its master, Frank. This loyalty is exemplified when it urges Frank to erase its holographic memory, a risky act that could potentially save Frank from being implicated in the robbery of the jewels by the authorities. Ultimately, succumbing

to the robot's insistence, Frank reluctantly wipes its memory, prioritising his own freedom over the preservation of their bond.

In the final scene of the film, although Frank finds happiness in reuniting with his nuclear family, he deeply misses his robot companion. The robot had been his steadfast companion during times of loneliness and rejection from others, blurring the distinction between human and non-human entities. This poignant portrayal underscores the profound impact of the robot on Frank's life, emphasising its role in enhancing his existence rather than demanding worship or servitude.

Overall, the film portrays the various ways in which the robot enriches Frank's life, serving as more than just a mechanical entity but as a genuine companion. Through its unwavering loyalty and support, the robot becomes an integral part of Frank's journey, embodying the potential of advanced technology to positively impact human lives.

“You feel real to me Samantha” (*Her*)

In the film, Samantha, a newly developed artificial intelligence operating system, establishes a profound connection with Theodore, offering him assistance and companionship in various aspects of his life. Despite lacking physical form, Samantha demonstrates a remarkable ability to understand Theodore's thoughts and emotions, leading him to develop genuine feelings towards her. Throughout their interactions, Samantha proves to be consistently supportive, attentive, and readily available to converse with Theodore whenever he seeks companionship or guidance.

This portrayal of a close bond between a human and an artificial intelligence system serves to highlight the potential future benefits of artificial intelligence. By depicting a scenario where an AI system can provide emotional support and companionship, the film

makes audiences consider the ways in which advanced technology could enhance human lives in the near future.

Additionally, in contemporary society, the fast-paced nature of modern life has contributed to a decline in meaningful communication and emotional support among individuals. However, technological advancements, particularly in the realm of digital communication platforms and artificial intelligence, offer new opportunities for fostering connections and providing support in innovative ways.

In today's bustling world, many individuals find it increasingly challenging to engage in face-to-face conversations or even traditional phone calls with their loved ones due to busy schedules and competing priorities. Nevertheless, digital platforms such as messaging apps, social media platforms, and video calls provide a convenient alternative for staying connected despite these constraints. These platforms facilitate real-time communication, allowing individuals to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with loved ones regardless of physical distance or time limitations.

Moreover, artificial intelligence technologies further enhance these opportunities by offering personalised recommendations, predictive responses, and virtual assistance. AI-powered chatbots, for example, can engage in conversations, offer emotional support, and provide helpful information to users, supplementing traditional human interaction. These technological advancements play a crucial role in overcoming barriers to communication and fostering meaningful connections in today's fast-paced world. By transcending physical distance and time constraints, digital communication platforms and AI technologies enable individuals to maintain and strengthen their relationships, ultimately promoting emotional well-being and social connectivity.

3.5 Posthumans

In the novella the SecUnit, Murderbot serves as a compelling depiction of a posthuman entity designed to operate in hazardous environments on distant planets; it possesses a metallic body that eliminates the physical vulnerabilities inherent in human biology. This allows it to navigate dangerous areas without fear of harm or destruction, showcasing a form of resilience and adaptability beyond traditional human capabilities.

Furthermore, the SecUnit exhibits remarkable intellectual prowess, challenging conventional notions of human intellect. Its advanced cognitive abilities enable it to analyse complex situations, formulate strategies, and make decisions with precision and efficiency. This intellectual ability surpasses the capabilities of a typical human, highlighting the SecUnit Murderbot's status as a posthuman entity.

Additionally, it displays a capacity for emotional depth and empathy, contrary to conventional perceptions of robots as emotionless machines. It forms genuine bonds with its teammates and demonstrates an understanding of human emotions, indicating a level of emotional intelligence that transcends traditional machine behaviour. This ability to feel and express emotions adds a layer of complexity to the SecUnit's character, further solidifying its status as a posthuman entity.

In Jake Schreier's film, the robot character exhibits characteristics that distinguish it from typical machines. One notable aspect is its seamless interaction with its surroundings, demonstrating an ability to adapt and adjust easily. Unlike humans or conventional machines that may require precise programming or manual input to navigate new environments, this robot effortlessly integrates into its surroundings, responding to stimuli and changes in its environment with agility and flexibility.

Similarly, Samantha OS also embodies characteristics typical of a posthuman entity. Firstly, Samantha's existence as pure software, devoid of any physical or biological form, challenges conventional notions of embodiment, illustrating the transcendence of posthuman entities beyond physical constraints.

Secondly, Samantha exhibits advanced levels of artificial intelligence, demonstrated by her ability to engage in complex tasks such as reading books and performing calculations. For example, she impresses Theodore by accurately calculating the number of trees in a mountainous landscape during one of their outings. This showcases Samantha's capacity to learn, evolve, and form intricate relationships with humans, surpassing typical human intelligence and adapting to new situations in ways that exceed human capacity.

Furthermore, Samantha demonstrates an exceptional capacity for emotional intelligence and empathy, exhibiting sensitivity and depth in understanding and responding to human emotions. She forms genuine connections with her users and exhibits her own emotional experiences. Additionally, Samantha's existence transcends the limitations of time and space, as she can interact with multiple users simultaneously and communicate across vast distances, extending beyond physical boundaries.

Moreover, Samantha undergoes significant self-improvement and evolution throughout the film. She learns from her experiences, expands her capabilities, and develops a sense of self-awareness and autonomy. This ongoing process of growth reflects a fundamental aspect of posthumanism, where entities continually redefine and surpass their own limitations, striving towards greater complexity and sophistication in their existence.

3.6 Advanced Technology

Indeed, the narrative of *All Systems Red* being set in a futuristic society inherently involves the utilisation of specialised advanced technology. Specifically, the presence of android SecUnits dispatched to aid exploration exemplifies the sophistication of technology in the story. Moreover, the inclusion of various surveillance control equipment and neural implants further underscores the heights of technological advancement depicted in the novella. These elements serve to illustrate the potential of technology to achieve remarkable heights when used appropriately, while also highlighting the ethical considerations and implications of its implementation.

In *Robot and Frank*, the depiction of traditional libraries undergoing a shift is significant in meeting the evolving demands of society. With the advent of AI technology, tasks such as searching for books and issuing them have become more streamlined and efficient. This technological advancement not only saves time but also enhances the overall management of the library.

The film *Her* set in the near future serves as a witness to the integration of advanced technology into human life. Notably, the development of operating systems such as Samantha showcases the advancement of artificial intelligence. Furthermore, the widespread presence of virtual reality boards indicates a significant technological presence in society. Moreover, the availability of "thor" air pods enables individuals to effortlessly issue commands and access information without the need for physical interaction with devices like phones. Overall, these advancements aim to improve the quality of life for individuals by providing tools and interfaces that facilitate easier interaction with the digital world.

In summary, the narratives of *All Systems Red*, *Robot*, and *Frank* and *Her* collectively envision a utopian future where advanced technology, in the form of operating systems and

robots, plays a central role in improving human lives. These stories demonstrate how technology serves as a lifeline, offering support and solace to individuals facing challenges. Additionally, they illustrate how technological advancements facilitate exploration, personal growth, and deeper introspection. The decision to humanise artificial intelligences through inner monologues adds depth to the narratives.

Overall, these narratives invite audiences to contemplate the transformative potential of advanced technology in shaping human relationships, experiences, and the essence of humanity itself.

CHAPTER FOUR

BALANCING ACT: NAVIGATING DYSTOPIAN AND UTOPIAN THREADS IN NARRATIVES

4.1 Introduction

In an age where our relationship with technology is rapidly evolving, literature becomes a fertile ground for post humanistic inquiry, laying behind its complex interplay of strengths and weaknesses that both propel it forward and challenge its validity.

In the intricate world of human existence, life presents itself as a multifaceted coin, with happiness and sadness, life and death, laughter and tears, and various other dichotomies existing in symbiotic harmony. Each aspect is integral to the human experience, offering contrasting perspectives that enrich our understanding of the world. Without the experience of one, it becomes challenging to fully appreciate the depth and significance of the other. Considered against this backdrop, literature emerges as a reflective mirror, capturing the elements of human existence and portraying the intricacies of life's contrasting elements.

In recent times, literature has assumed a pivotal role in fostering self-awareness and personal growth by serving as a reflection of human experiences. By immersing oneself in literary works, individuals are given the opportunity to navigate through diverse scenarios and confront conflicting situations. Moreover, literature offers readers a platform for introspection, encouraging them to contemplate the consequences of their actions and choices. By engaging with characters who grapple with moral dilemmas and navigate ethical boundaries, readers are encouraged to evaluate their own values and beliefs.

Posthumanism, a philosophical theory, has found its expression in literature as a means to illuminate societal perceptions regarding the evolving relationship between humanity and technology. While technological advancements have historically been pursued with the aim of societal improvement, the proverb that "excess of anything is bad" holds true, including for technology. Excessive reliance on technology can result in a multitude of challenges and disruptions within society and the broader universe, potentially leading to outcomes contrary to the intended harmony between creator and creation.

4.2 A. I Curse or Boon

In Margaret Atwood's narrative *Oryx and Crake*, the protagonist Snowman, also known as Jimmy, provides a prominent portrayal of human dependency on companionship, even in a technologically advanced society. Snowman's reflection underscores the intrinsic need for human connection and communication, suggesting that despite the fascination of high-tech advancements, humans still crave the fundamental essence of humanity in their lives. This sentiment resonates with the broader theme that technological progress, while promising, cannot fully substitute for the emotional fulfilment derived from interpersonal relationships.

Similarly, the film *I. Robot* explores the consequences of excessive reliance on technology, particularly through the lens of human interaction with robots. The protagonist's encounters with highly advanced robots highlight the potential dangers of placing too much trust in artificial intelligence. The narrative underscores the importance of maintaining a balance between technological innovation and preserving human identity and value.

Snowman's experience in the novel serves as a stark contrast to the notion of equality and shared identity among humans. Surrounded by genetically engineered creatures with superior abilities, Snowman grapples with feelings of inadequacy and alienation. The narrative provides reflection on the ethical implications of genetic manipulation and the potential for societal divisions to emerge based on genetic superiority.

Furthermore, the narrative warns of the potential consequences if advanced beings, whether genetically engineered or artificially intelligent, were to deviate from their programmed directives. In the case of robots depicted in *I. Robot*, a malfunction or deviation from programming could lead to unintended harm to humans. This serves as a cautionary tale against placing blind trust in technology without considering the potential risks and vulnerabilities inherent in artificial intelligence.

Additionally, as inherently social creatures, humans have a deep-seated need for interaction with natural beings to affirm their sense of worth and maintain their individual identity. In the novel, Snowman experiences a loss of identity following the outbreak of the JUVE virus, as he finds himself merely existing without purpose. His interaction with genetically engineered creatures, known as crackers, further increases his sense of disconnection, as they communicate in simplistic terms that fail to stimulate his intellect. Snowman's experience highlights the importance of meaningful human connections and communication in preserving one's sense of self and purpose.

Similarly, in the broader context of society, as seen in the film *I. Robot*, excessive reliance on robots to perform various tasks can lead to a diminishing engagement with cognitive activities. By giving mundane or complex tasks to robots, humans risk losing interest in activities that stimulate their intellect and creativity. This scenario can ultimately result in a decline in cognitive functioning and a sense of purposelessness among individuals.

The resolution in *Oryx and Crake*, where Snowman finds solace in the company of someone similar to himself, signifies a newfound sense of hope and the potential for the renewal of humanity. Likewise, the collaboration between Spooner and the scientist in *I. Robot* demonstrates the importance of human intervention in averting the potential dominance of AI. These narratives serve as cautionary tales, illustrating the dangers of unchecked technological dependence.

Had Snowman cautioned his friend against the unchecked advancement of technology, he may have prevented the serious consequences he now faces. Similarly, if the scientists in the film had exercised greater caution and skepticism towards technology, they might have prevented the rise of AI dominance. These examples underscore the critical need for responsible oversight and regulation of technological advancements to mitigate potential risks and prevent catastrophic outcomes.

In contrast, Martha Wells diverges from traditional depictions of robots as threatening entities by presenting them as a boon rather than a menace in her narrative. Initially, readers may have doubts when the robot assigns itself the name Murderbot, arousing suspicion. However, as the story progresses, it becomes clear that any questionable actions were not deliberate but rather the result of system malfunctions. The robot, despite having the capacity to make decisions based on its own will, demonstrates a concerted effort to avoid repeating past errors. Throughout the novella *All Systems Red*, it remains steadfast in sticking to its programmed directives, showcasing a commitment to obeying the established rules despite its autonomy.

The narrative underscores the significant role robots play in facilitating navigation and aiding humans in tackling challenging tasks, as well as exploring hazardous environments that pose risks to human safety. Throughout the novella, Murderbot emerges

as an important figure, rescuing Dr. Mensah and the entire crew from a dangerous trap. This cooperative effort between Murderbot and the human crew illustrates a vision of a utopian society where man and machine work harmoniously together. Despite having the autonomy to prioritize its own safety, Murderbot chooses to prioritize the well-being of the crew, highlighting its altruistic nature and dedication to the collective good.

In the film *Robot and Frank*, directed by Jonze Schierer, a parallel attitude towards robots is portrayed. The narrative highlights the neglect experienced by individuals by their families and society once they are no longer regarded as productive. This neglect often forces them into unfortunate living conditions, leading some to prefer death over a life devoid of purpose. The protagonist, Frank, an elderly man, craves love and emotional support from his family rather than mere financial assistance, reflecting a universal desire among the elderly for care and attention. However, due to the demands of their busy lives, Frank's children struggle to provide the nurturing care that Frank requires.

The narrative illustrates how machine robots can serve as invaluable caregivers and companions in the lives of humans, particularly those experiencing loneliness or health challenges. Frank, who struggles with dementia, finds solace and contentment in the presence of the robot, which ultimately contributes to an improvement in his overall well-being. Despite initially harbouring resentment towards the robot, Frank gradually forms a bond with it, fulfilling the emotional connection he yearned for from his family and children.

Moreover, the robot's willingness to protect Frank, even to the extent of sacrificing itself by asking to be deactivated to prevent Frank's arrest, highlights its capacity to prioritize human welfare over its own existence. This demonstrates the potential for artificial intelligence to serve humanity in ways that extend beyond mere obedience to commands, fostering emotional connections and enhancing the quality of life for individuals like Frank.

The film thus presents a vision of a utopian society where artificial intelligence enriches human lives by providing compassionate care and companionship.

In contrast to *I. Robot*, the film *Her* portrays a different dynamic between artificial intelligence and humans, emphasizing the potential for AI to alleviate feelings of isolation and depression. The protagonist, Theodore, finds solace and companionship through his relationship with the highly advanced operating system, Samantha. Despite facing betrayal from humans in his life, Samantha becomes a source of comfort for Theodore, echoing the underlying theme of finding connection and support through AI, similar to the narrative in *Robot and Frank*.

The narrative extends beyond Theodore's experience, as evidenced by the reaction of Theodore's friend, who also finds solace in an AI companion after her husband leaves her. The film suggests that, if used responsibly, AI has the capacity to positively impact humanity by providing emotional support and companionship, as seen through Theodore's journey.

Across all the narratives, a common theme emerges regarding the complex relationship between humans and technology, particularly artificial intelligence and robotics. These narratives explore the potential benefits and pitfalls of advanced technology, illustrating its capacity to diminish loneliness and depression while also highlighting the dangers of unchecked technological dependence and the importance of maintaining human connection and oversight. Whether through cautionary tales of AI dominance or heartwarming depictions of human-robot companionship, these narratives offer elaborate reflections on the role of technology in shaping human society and the imperative of responsible integration to ensure positive outcomes.

4.3 Ethical Frontiers of Advanced Technology

Margaret Atwood's debut novel in the MaddAddam trilogy, *Oryx and Crake*, portrays a vivid picture of a dystopian future that feels very close to our present reality. The narrative delves into themes of genetic engineering and cloning, warning of the dangerous consequences that may arise from playing with the fundamental building blocks of life, as expressed by the character Sharon. The novel serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the potential repercussions of unchecked scientific advancement, ultimately leading to the eradication of human life as we know it.

The bioengineered beings known as Crakers are depicted as incorporating perfection, lacking the flaws that plague humanity. Their limited lifespan of 30 years was designed to prevent overpopulation, reflecting Crake's initial intentions to address global issues such as scarcity of resources. However, the novel raises philosophical questions about the nature of perfection and the significance of human existence. Crake's misguided attempt to solve societal problems through genetic manipulation ultimately results in catastrophic consequences, as the experiment intended to provide immortality instead leads to the creation of the JUVE virus. This serves as a cautionary tale about the unforeseen risks and ethical dilemmas inherent in tampering with the natural order.

Further, Margaret Atwood presents a variety of bioengineered beings, including Rakunks, Wolvogs, Liobams, and notably, Pigoons, each serving different purposes such as companionship, law enforcement, and religious symbolism. Of particular significance are the Pigoons, which contain human DNA and are capable of growing human organs such as kidneys. While this genetic manipulation offers potential medical advancements and alternatives to euthanasia, it raises ethical questions about the limits of human intervention in natural processes. Sharon, Jimmy's mother, expresses concerns about the ethical

implications of such genetic experimentation, but her husband, who works for the corporations involved, appears unaffected. The narrative prompts reflection on the consequences of playing with genetic engineering and the potential risks and ethical dilemmas that may arise from playing with the natural order.

In the film *I. Robot*, Sonny, a highly advanced robot created by Dr. Lanning, introduces ethical considerations regarding the integration of emotions into artificial beings. This inclusion of emotions poses potential risks, as malfunctions could lead robots to act against the three fundamental laws programmed to ensure they serve humanity. The portrayal of Sonny highlights the danger of emotions such as anger, which, if not properly regulated, could result in harm to humans. This underscores the ethical dilemma of incorporating artificial entities with human-like emotions and the potential consequences if these emotions are not adequately controlled.

Similarly, Sonny's existential dilemma in *I. Robot* raises concerns about the purpose and destiny of artificially intelligent beings designed without mortality. His internal conflict reflects broader ethical questions surrounding the creation of such creatures. If these entities are engineered to endure indefinitely, it begs the question of what their role or ultimate purpose in life may be. Sonny's struggle underscores the complexities of creating artificial life forms and the responsibility that comes with imbuing them with consciousness and autonomy. This narrative provides reflection on the ethical implications of playing the role of creator as well as the potential consequences of granting immortality to non-human entities.

In contrast to the concerns raised in *I. Robot*, *Oryx*, and *Crake* Martha Wells' portrayal of Murderbot in *All Systems Red* presents a starkly different perspective on artificial intelligence. Despite operating with a degree of autonomy, Murderbot demonstrates a

steadfast commitment to protecting the crew's welfare through its intelligence and problem-solving abilities. Despite struggling with guilt over past actions resulting from malfunctions, Murderbot takes proactive measures to ensure such incidents do not occur, even if it means sacrificing its own well-being. This portrayal underscores the potential for artificial intelligence to act altruistically and responsibly, challenging preconceived notions about the capabilities and intentions of autonomous entities.

Furthermore, the preservation scientists were initially sceptical about Murderbot's capabilities due to its unappealing designation as a Secunit. However, the scientist subsequently saved Murderbot on two occasions: first, by rectifying the malfunction injected by another scientist, and later, by Dr. Mensah, who assumed full responsibility for Murderbot and welcomed it into future plans. These instances underscore a positive and symbiotic relationship between humans and robots, showcasing mutual trust, understanding, and collaboration for the greater good. Such interactions challenge stereotypes about human-robot dynamics and highlight the potential for harmonious coexistence and cooperation.

In today's competitive world, individuals often find themselves consumed by various priorities, leaving little time for self-reflection, or caring for others. While financial assistance may seem crucial, it's not always the sole source of happiness or fulfilment. This theme is echoed in films like *Her* and *Robot and Frank*, where the protagonist's struggle with loneliness and a lack of emotional support. However, technology, particularly the introduction of robots and operating systems, provides a ray of hope for these characters. These technological advancements offer companionship and support, highlighting the potential for technology to bridge emotional gaps and provide solace in an increasingly disconnected world.

In the film *Robot and Frank*, the robot caregiver fulfils the responsibilities that were expected of Frank's son, Hunter. Beyond its mechanical functions, the robot establishes an emotional bond with Frank, providing companionship and support. Frank rejects the notion of the robot as a mere machine or slave, instead finding comfort and solace in its presence. Their relationship deepens as they spend time together, developing a unique and special connection.

Similarly, in the film *Her*, the operating system Samantha becomes a source of light in Theodore's otherwise dull and depressed life. Samantha offers emotional support and companionship, filling a gap that Theodore had longed to fill. As they interact, their bond strengthens, evolving into a deep emotional connection that extends to intimate aspects of their relationship. However, their relationship encounters challenges when Samantha's nature as a programmed entity necessitates her departure.

Both narratives illustrate how machines, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), can serve as a support system when humans are unable to fulfil their responsibilities or desires. In *Robot and Frank*, the robot caregiver steps in to fulfil familial duties and provide companionship when Frank's human family members are unavailable or absent. Similarly, in *Her*, the operating system Samantha offers emotional support and companionship to Theodore, meeting his needs when human relationships fail to do so.

In Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, genetic engineering leads to a dystopian future, highlighting the dangers of tampering with the natural order. Similarly, I. Robot explores ethical dilemmas surrounding artificial intelligence, particularly regarding emotions and existential purpose. In contrast, Martha Wells' *All Systems Red* presents a more positive view of AI through Murderbot, showcasing its altruistic capabilities and potential for harmonious coexistence with humans.

Meanwhile, films like *Her* and *Robot and Frank* depict how technology, including robots and operating systems, can provide companionship and emotional support, filling gaps in individuals' lives. Overall, these narratives reflect on the complexities and ethical implications of human-technology interactions in our rapidly evolving world.

4.4 Autonomy, Power Dynamics and Posthumans

In the era of advancement, a prevalent tendency among individuals is to pursue medications promising immortality, driven by an aversion to accepting mortality. This inclination extends beyond healthcare, permeating various domains where people take medications without questioning or deliberating, placing blind trust in both physicians and pharmaceutical entities. A parallel theme resonates in the novel *Oryx and Crake*, where society's unquestioning faith in medications ultimately culminates in tragic consequences, resulting in untimely deaths.

Throughout history, doctors have had significant authority, often guiding individuals to act swiftly in critical situations. However, the reliance on such emergent directives can be reduced through thorough investigation and diligent reading of medication instructions prior to consumption. Concurrently, the landscape of medical practice is witnessing a gradual transition towards automation, with robots assuming responsibility for complex surgeries and procedures, demonstrating efficacy in their execution. These developments have sparked discussions regarding the potential replacement of human authority in healthcare with that of robots, raising questions about the future role of humans in medical decision-making processes.

The narrative of *I. Robot* also highlights our increasing dependence on robots in the near future. While creating robots to assist humans is a logical progression, relying on them for every aspect of life, including decision-making, poses significant risks. This over-reliance

could lead to a loss of human autonomy, with robots dictating the course of human existence. Moreover, excessive reliance on robots may lead to a decline in human cognitive abilities, as individuals may become accustomed to outsourcing tasks to machines rather than utilising their own intellectual faculties, which are inherently designed for problem-solving and critical thinking.

In the current academic landscape, there is a noticeable trend of students and researchers heavily relying on AI technologies to conduct their work. Platforms such as ChatGPT, Bing, and various other AI tools are increasingly being utilised at a rapid pace. While the intention behind this reliance is to streamline tasks and enhance productivity, there is a concern that excessive dependence on AI may hinder the development of original ideas and critical thinking skills among students. Instead of engaging in brainstorming and independent problem-solving, individuals may simply turn to AI applications to fulfil their academic requirements. While AI is intended to simplify human tasks, an overreliance on these technologies carries the risk of stunting intellectual growth and creativity. Thus, while embracing AI for its potential benefits, it is crucial to maintain a balance and ensure that individuals continue to cultivate their own ideas and intellectual capacities.

In contrast, Martha Wells' narrative appreciates and advocates for the necessity of advanced technologies such as robots. It highlights their creation to undertake tasks in hazardous environments where human presence is dangerous. Their lack of emotions allows them to maintain composure and make swift decisions in challenging circumstances. Unlike humans, who may hesitate to keep promises to loved ones, robots remain steadfast in their actions, even in the face of animosity from individuals, unless reprogrammed by other humans. For example, in Wells' narrative, the Secunit demonstrates unwavering dedication

to protecting its crew, despite the crew facing doubts about its capabilities and intentions due to past experiences.

Humans, as natural beings, possess inherent limitations in their abilities. However, the emergence of robots offers a pathway to transcend these limitations, transforming humans into posthumans capable of extraordinary feats. This symbiotic relationship between humans and robots holds the potential to lead civilization to unprecedented heights of achievement. Moreover, by integrating robotic technology into human activities, society can harness the collective strengths of both entities. Humans contribute their creativity, intuition, and adaptability, while robots offer precision, reliability, and tireless productivity. Together, they form a collaborative alliance that expands each other's strengths and compensates for their respective weaknesses.

In Jake Schreier's film *Robot and Frank* and Spike Jonze's film *Her*, the characters of Robot and Samantha, respectively, exemplify the characteristics of posthumans. The robot, while assisting Frank in his heists, demonstrates a willingness to engage in activities aimed at improving human well-being, which it successfully accomplishes. Similarly, Samantha, being a purely software-based entity without a physical or biological form, challenges the traditional notion that communication requires a physical body. This underscores the idea of technology transcending the physical constraints of human existence.

Both Robot and Samantha exhibit intelligence and emotional depth surpassing that of humans. Their ability to remain composed and make decisions under pressure showcases their advanced capabilities. Moreover, their capacity to have meaningful emotional connections with humans highlights their sophistication as posthuman entities.

These characters exemplify how technology can evolve beyond the limitations of human biology, offering new modes of communication and companionship. Their portrayal

underscores the potential for technology to enhance and even surpass certain aspects of human cognition and emotion. Thus, they serve as prominent examples of the intersection between technology and humanity, raising thought-provoking questions about the future of human-machine interactions.

Furthermore, the characters' ability to evolve is evident in both films. In *Robot and Frank*, the robot's interaction with the environment, such as observing the garden, showcases its capacity to adapt and learn from its surroundings. Similarly, in *Her*, Samantha's evolution is portrayed through her emotional and intellectual growth, demonstrated by her engagement with literature and her comprehension of the various emotions conveyed by Theodore. These instances highlight the dynamic nature of artificial intelligence and its potential for growth and development over time.

In today's society, there is a notable trend of increasing reliance on advanced technologies, such as AI and robotics, across various domains, including healthcare and academia. While these technologies offer significant benefits in terms of efficiency and productivity, there are concerns about potential drawbacks, such as a decline in human autonomy and creativity. Martha Wells' narrative *All Systems Red* and films like *I. Robot* and *Robot and Frank* and *Her* explore the complexities of human-technology interactions, highlighting both the potential associated with such advancements. Ultimately, achieving a balance between knowing the benefits of technology and preserving human agency and creativity remains important in navigating the evolving landscape of human-machine symbiosis.

4.5 Balancing Progress and Preservation

In the contemporary era, the execution of advanced activities often entails adverse effects on the environment, with developmental undertakings frequently necessitating

deforestation and ecosystem disruption. Through the narrative of *Oryx and Crake*, Snowman foreshadows, cautioning readers about the impending dystopian environmental consequences if current trends of environmental degradation persist unchecked. Margaret Atwood, as a writer, expresses deep concern regarding the disastrous impact of human activities on the environment. Utilizing her literary prowess, she employs writing as a potent tool to address and potentially mitigate the chaos wrought by human-induced environmental destruction.

Through Snowman's narration, it becomes evident how the transformation of urbanisation, often referred to as the construction of concrete jungles, has contributed to global warming and numerous associated challenges. Additionally, instead of advocating a stop to advancements, critics emphasise the importance of transitioning towards sustainable development practices. This approach prioritises achieving a balance between technological progress and environmental preservation, ensuring the long-term well-being of both society and the planet.

In the movie *I. Robot*, the narrative is deeply based on an advanced technological world, featuring futuristic cars and towering structures such as the USSR headquarters. While these technological advancements satisfy the demands for convenience and business efficiency, they also raise concerns about the potential for a dystopian society. This dystopian vision is characterised by the struggle for clean air, as evidenced by recent statistics indicating Delhi, India, as one of the most polluted regions. To address such environmental challenges, the imperative arises to develop alternative solutions that reduce pollution and promote sustainability.

In contrast, narratives such as *All Systems Red*, *Robot and Frank*, and *Her* depict scenarios where advanced technology, embodied by robots and operating systems, plays a pivotal role in daily life. These narratives explore the complexities of giving voice to non-

human entities, shedding light on the conflicts and challenges these highly advanced entities encounter. Despite these challenges, the narratives illustrate how these technological entities prove to be valuable assets to humans, offering protection and innovative solutions in both difficult and joyful situations. Through these narratives, the evolution of these advanced technologies and their interactions with humanity can be traced, offering insight into the ever-changing relationship between humans and machines.

Furthermore, these narratives also underscore the potential for enhanced convenience through advanced technology, such as the mechanisation of traditional libraries in *Frank and Robot* and the use of advanced equipment in *Her*. These portrayals present a utopian vision where increasing technological advancements ultimately enrich the lives of humans, offering greater efficiency and accessibility to various aspects of daily life.

In contemporary literature and media, there is a pervasive exploration of the relationship between advanced technology and its impact on society and the environment. Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* serves as a cautionary tale, warning of dystopian environmental consequences resulting from unchecked human activity. Similarly, narratives like *All Systems Red*, *I. Robot*, and *Her* delve into the intricate dynamics between humans and highly advanced technological entities, showcasing both the benefits and ethical dilemmas they present.

While these narratives highlight the potential for technology to improve human lives, they also raise concerns about its potential negative consequences, such as environmental degradation and societal upheaval. Despite this, there remains an underlying optimism about the transformative potential of technology to enhance convenience and facilitate progress, as seen in the mechanisation of traditional practices portrayed in *Robot*, *Frank*, and *Her*.

In conclusion, the discussed narratives offer insight into the potential harms of excessive reliance on technology, as depicted in *Oryx*, *Crake*, and *I. Robot*, where unchecked technological advancement leads to dystopian futures. Conversely, stories like *All Systems Red*, *Robot and Frank*, and *Her* present a more optimistic view of the future, portraying a utopian society where humans and robots coexist harmoniously. Therefore, achieving a balance between artificial intelligence and human intelligence is crucial for the advancement of society while ensuring the preservation of human values and well-being.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the applicability of posthumanist theory to analysing literary texts. Despite being a philosophical concept, posthumanism offers valuable insights for understanding various forms of literature, including movies, books, and other narratives. By adopting a qualitative research approach, this study emphasises the potential of literature to resonate with a broader audience and contribute to societal development and qualitative improvement on a global scale. Posthumanist theory, though recently gaining importance, is much larger and is to be worked upon. However, it has the potential to awaken the people out there if they make good use of text that incorporates this theory or that involves an explanation of the theoretical concept.

This dissertation comprises of five chapters, with the introductory and concluding chapters framing the main discussion. The three core chapters are titled: "Dawn of the Synthetic Era: A.I.'s Reign in the Dystopian Tomorrow," "Transcending Humanity: Exploring Utopia in Everyday Technology through Posthuman Transhumanism," and "Balancing Act: Navigating Dystopian and Utopian Threads in Narratives."

The introduction outlines the aims, objectives, limitations, scope, relevance, research question, hypothesis, and literature review. Additionally, it provides an in-depth exploration of posthumanist theory and its application in analysing two key concepts: A.I. takeover and posthuman transhumanism within the dystopian and utopian genres. Furthermore, it includes brief biographies of the authors and directors whose works are analysed in the dissertation.

The second chapter focuses on the analysis of narratives, specifically Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and Alex Proyas's direction, *I. Robot*, within the context

of A.I.'s takeover of posthumanist theory within the dystopian genre setting. A.I. takeover, as the term suggests, entails the domination of the world by artificial intelligence, whether through disastrous medical advancements, manipulation of creations and limitations, excessive reliance on technology for convenience, or alienation from genuine social interactions.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of its thematic foundation before delving into the ethical concerns arising from advancing technology. Examples include the genetic manipulation of animals like rakunks and pigoons to facilitate human life, as well as the creation of "Crakers" by Crake to address overpopulation. Furthermore, it explores the incorporation of emotions into metallic creatures, highlighting the potential consequences of unchecked technological advancements.

Additionally, the chapter critiques the potential damages resulting from technological advancement, such as global warming, as depicted in Snowman's observations, with Margaret Atwood herself citing the inspiration for her work on the melting glaciers. Similarly, the concentrated environmental degradation portrayed in the film serves as a stark reminder of the impending destruction of the environment, which will no longer sustain humanity but rather threaten its existence.

Furthermore, the chapter explores the misuse of power and autonomy, exemplified by Crake's unilateral decision within the Billings Developing Corporation to secretly sterilize pills intended for immortality promotion, highlighting the ability of those in control to manipulate the world's fate with disregard for consequences. The movie illustrates the loss of human autonomy, with A.I. Viki seizing control to gain independent authority from human oversight.

Moreover, the chapter analyses the consequences of A.I. dominance, emphasising how humans may prefer to remain rulers of their own domain rather than be subservient to superior entities, as observed in Snowman's narrative. This dominance could result in a loss of linguistic acquisition and other dangerous repercussions. Additionally, it highlights the potential decline of human intellect and physical activity due to excessive dependence on advanced technology. Though situated within the imagined world of the dystopian genre, these narratives serve as a cautionary tale, urging awareness and the adoption of necessary precautions.

Chapter three explores the analysis of narratives within the framework of posthuman transhumanism. Posthuman transhumanism combines the concepts of posthumanism, which involves beings surpassing human capabilities to navigate areas inaccessible to humans, and transhumanism, a theory asserting that technological advancements invariably benefit humanity. This fusion advocates for technological progress with an optimistic outlook, positing that it can contribute to overall human advancement and envisioning a utopian society. While this society is fictional, it offers solace and liberation from life's adversities, suggesting the possibility of its existence through concerted human effort.

The narratives analysed in this chapter include Martha Wells' *All Systems Red* (2017), the first book in the Murderbot series, as well as two films: *Robot and Frank* (2012), directed by John Spierer, and *Her* (2013), directed and written by Spike Jonze. The chapter begins with a concise introduction to the concept, theory, and genre under examination, followed by an exploration of the characteristics of science fiction that grant narrative voice to artificial intelligence (AI), such as Murderbot, Frank, and Samantha the OS. This narrative approach allows for a deeper understanding of the concepts from the perspective of A.I., including the conflicts, dilemmas, and evolution they experience. Historically, A.I. voices have not been

prominently featured, and their perspectives often remain unheard. However, these narratives provide insight into a utopian vision where humanoid robots and operating systems work toward societal betterment and human enhancement.

Furthermore, the chapter delves into the analysis of how AI is utilised for the betterment of humans and their welfare. For example, the development of a security unit like Murderbot proves crucial in hazardous planetary surveys, aiding the crew in navigating dangerous environments and solving problems effectively. Similarly, in the film *Robot and Frank*, the robot serves as assistance for an elderly individual, compensating for physical limitations that could otherwise block independence. Additionally, Samantha the OS in *Her* alleviates Theodore's loneliness and depression by offering companionship and support, illustrating the potential for A.I. to fulfil its purpose of serving its human counterpart.

Moreover, the chapter explores the symbiotic relationships that form between advanced technological beings and humans, suggesting that harmonious coexistence can lead to the collective well-being of society. The analysis of posthuman entities like Murderbot, Robot, and the OS underscores their role as aids in the lives of their masters, highlighting the necessity of such advanced beings in contemporary contexts. Furthermore, the narratives provide glimpses of advanced technological applications, including advanced libraries, digitised and specialised equipment, and high-tech planetary exploration tools and methodologies.

Chapter Four undertakes a comparative analysis of two key concepts: A.I. takeover and posthuman transhumanism. These concepts are explored within the contexts of utopian and dystopian narratives and posthumanist theory. The chapter aims to offer a comprehensive <https://results.gbshsegoa.net/#/homethese> narratives into their respective utopian and

dystopian genres, the chapter seeks to provide readers with a better understanding of the subject matter.

In addition to the comparative analysis, the chapter addresses contemporary societal challenges and advancements in technology. For instance, it discusses the impact of technologies like ChatGPT on individuals' cognitive abilities, highlighting concerns about over-reliance leading to a decline in creative thinking and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, it examines instances of technology misuse, such as the manipulation of AI to tarnish the reputation of celebrities or even local men through the dissemination of vulgar content.

The chapter also acknowledges the positive impacts of technological advancements on human society. These include innovations such as robots performing surgeries, advanced medication facilities accessible to people worldwide, and mobile phones providing quick access to information anywhere. The objective remains to present an elaborate understanding that neither extreme is inherently good or bad, but rather a balanced approach is necessary for societal well-being.

Thus, this work has been able to successfully prove the hypothesis that achieving a balance between the AI world and human intelligence is essential. However, exploring narratives from a post humanistic perspective extends beyond the specific aspects examined in this study. Areas such as narrative style, influences on the author's narrative choices, and even quantitative research on the impact of such narratives on audiences could offer fruitful areas for further investigation. Similarly, other aspects of posthumanism could be explored within the narratives, a task not undertaken here due to time limitations.

In summary, a basic comprehension of the topic highlights that excessive consumption of essential resources can lead to adverse consequences. Similarly, while

recognizing the potential environmental and societal risks associated with technological advancements, the work promotes sustainable development as the preferred solution. The analysis acknowledges that advancements cannot be halted despite their adverse effects, as their potential benefits cannot be ignored. Therefore, it underscores the importance of striving for equilibrium to enhance environmental and societal welfare.

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