



POSTHUMANISM AND THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN SELF: LESSONS FROM YA SPECULATIVE FICTION

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Abstract

This research paper represents a holistic analysis and assessment of the ever-changing construct of human identity as examined through the critical lens of post-humanist theory, particularly in its most current context amongst young people adult (YA) speculative fiction. This study begins with the assumption that this specific genre of literature can offer us a look at the “possible” or the “imagined necessary cultural and philosophical space in which to question the manner in which accelerated technological integration dramatically changes fundamental ideas of selfhood, agency, embodiment, and social relations. Through the intensive literary analysis of the themes and concepts portrayed in the novel *Nexus* by Ramez Naam (2013), as a primary case studies, this paper makes use of a new analytical approach - "post human" trialism - mind, body, technology - in order to systematically deconstruct the complex processes of posthuman subject formation. The research analyzes ways in which speculative narratives have envisioned the future constructed at a fluid juncture marked continuously by human evolution and radical technological augmentation and argue that these narratives of fiction are not necessarily fantastic stories exercises in the hypothetical, but rather critically occupy and often prefigure real-world societal anxieties, ethical dilemmas, and emergent possibilities regarding the human condition in a new increasingly digital and networked age. The paper, by thoroughly examining the narrative tensions with regard to the biological essence and technological enhancement, sheds a light on a richly complex genre of artistic creation in the process of reaching a critical cultural engagement with culturally crucial concerns of consciousness and distributed entities of personality and freedom, as well as with a generally ontological status that defines the very essence of the concept of the Human within a context that had long defaulted the classical and modern boundaries and interruptions of the Cartesian split. The finding presented with regard to the results of the research relies upon the assumption that YA speculative fiction can be regarded as a mirrored reflection of the current technological uneasiness at one level and an imaginative space at the other.

Keywords: *Posthumanism, Human Identity, Young Adult Speculative Fiction, Technology and Humanity, Nexus & Crux*

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1. Introduction

The human condition has reached a gigantic precipice in the contemporary era, a place in historical time that is distinguished much less by unyielding constraints of biological make-up and much, much more by the exponentially rising possibilities of technology. From the perspective of such an observation, the erstwhile utopic construct of the "posthuman," too, unambiguously avoids the borderline dystopic pulp worlds of science fiction to arrive at the center of the philosophical, cultural, and literary discussion with a flair to reshape the very elemental constructs of the Enlightenment and humanistic traditions regarding a sense of enduring self and self-contained individuality that are materialistically embedded. As a somewhat paradigmatic critical thinker Rosi Braidotti perceptively hypothesized not too long ago, "this evolving process is likely to create new posthuman power structures, which could repeat previous historical power relations or develop otherwise." (Braidotti, 2013) The main argument that this specific research paper wants to put forward is that the cultural space of YA Speculative Fiction with science fiction and dystopic narratives at the vanguard is of significant importance to the discussion regarding the complicated place of the posthuman. In these gripping tales, this "destabilization of the line between human and machine has become less clear, both physically and psychologically," (Prensky, 2001) and these tales perhaps have the potential to help us narratively and emotionally work through "the profound personal and collective implications in becoming posthuman." This study represents an in-depth exploration into the personally transformative potential of the posthuman to frame the future of the fight for human identity. Historically, as Andy Clark points out, "people have relied on technology to enhance their bodies - either via tools or medical devices such as pacemakers - but without losing their sense of humanity" (Clark, 2003). However, developments in neural interfaces, genetic engineering and artificial intelligence both now and in the future raise deeper, more troubling ontological concerns: "as more advanced technologies, like microchips, become a part of the body, questions are raised as to what it really means to be human" (Hayles, 1999). YA speculative fiction self-intentionally places its

protagonists, often adolescents themselves who occupy a developmental state of strongly felt personal and social identity formation, at the midst of these very existential dilemmas, rendering the genre an extremely powerful and resonant medium for the dramatic exploration of "the shifting power dynamic between teenagers and adults in societies transformed by advanced technology" (Braidotti, 2013). The journey of the adolescent protagonist is the same as the cultural journey and involves the negotiation of the dissolution of an old, familiar self and the precarious construction of a new, hybrid self. The actual center of literary focus for this detailed analysis is the critically acclaimed duology by Ramez Naam, *Nexus* (2012) and *Crux* (2013). Naam, explicitly identified as a "futurist, computer scientist and award-winning author" (Naam, 2013, loc. 7172), writes intellectually rigorous narratives that self-consciousness is "based as accurately as possible on real science" (Naam, 2013, loc. 7222). His novels are self-described as being "philosophical science-fiction thrillers" (Naam, 2013, loc. 7225) that is directly and intricately concerned with the radical possibilities and perils of human consciousness joining through a specific neuro-technological innovation: a mind-linking nano-drug called *Nexus*. As such, these texts exemplify the genre's highest contribution to this shift to an ability to transmute abstract posthuman theory into concrete, emotionally registerable narrative experience to investigate precipitously "how emergent technologies shape and sometimes destabilize human and posthuman identities." They are not mere cautionary tales, but complex ethical as well as phenomenological thought experiments. This introduction sets the critical field: a world in which the category of the "human" is no longer one which is stable, self-evident, and guaranteed biologically but one which is contested the field of technological, philosophical, and narrative reconstruction. The "posthuman," therefore, is not a far-off science-fictional abstraction, but an impending socio-technological reality with YA speculative fiction as an important cultural toolkit for imagining, questioning, resisting and ultimately understanding the plural and hybrid identities that will undoubtedly populating that imminent future. This paper will traverse this ground using a structured theoretical perspective to read rich literary texts and argue for the necessity of the fantasy of speculative storytelling in our collective preparation for a posthuman age.

1.1. Research Objectives

To illustrate the work of the suggested posthuman trialist framework (mind, body, technology) as an analytical instrument to trace the phases of posthuman subject formation (fragmentation to integration) in the narrative forms of the YA speculative fiction.

1.2. Research Questions

What does the use of the posthuman trialist framework to character development in *Nexus* and *Crux* tell us about a non-linear and three-step (rupture, mediation, and networked transcendence) process of construction of posthuman identity?

1.3. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the interdisciplinary field of post-humanist theory, or the systematic "examination of the representation of technologically augmented youth in young adult literature" and the critical "forefronting of the shifting dynamics between human and machine" (Flanagan, 2014, p. 2). Posthumanism (as defined by the theorists who are often considered its founders) explicitly takes itself beyond the boundaries of human exceptionalism that are centered on humans. N. Katherine Hayles describes an important kind of ontological shift: the posthuman condition implies "a coupling so intense and multifaceted that it is no longer possible to distinguish meaningfully between the biological organism and the informational circuits in which it is enmeshed" (Hayles, 1999, p. 35). This extreme erosion of boundaries is a signal of "a fundamental change in the model of subjectivity," in which the self is re-thought of "not as a singular, autonomous subject, but as 'dispersed, hybrid, and co-constituted through its engagement with complex technological and informational networks'" (p. 287). Donna Haraway's seminal "A Cyborg Manifesto" offers a politically-charged and generative vision of this willful boundary confusion. She famously defines cyborg as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism", and at the same time, a "creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway, 1991, p. 149). Haraway's cyborg is a powerful rhetorical figure that does just that-bypass(es) fixed Western dichotomies, disturbing settled distinctions between "human and animal, organism and machine, physical and non-physical" (p. 152). Her work is important for a study of the posthuman not as a horrifying loss of self, but as a possible place of liberation from restrictive and essentialist identity categories. To address the gap between the two major forms of theory, broad on one hand and close on the other, while simultaneously necessarily dealing with (close) literary analysis, this research uses and proposes a particular, new, original analytical form: posthuman trialism. Traditional Cartesian dualism (mind versus body) is fundamentally inadequate to the analysis of entities for whom technology is not an external tool, but is part of the self as a constitutive and integrated component of the subject. This research suggests that the posthuman subject is constitutively created by the interplay of three interrelated factors: mind (or consciousness), body (biological or synthetic) and technology. The idea of trialism, as defined historically as "the doctrine of the threefold nature of man, consisting of body, soul, and spirit" ("Trialism," 2014), is intentionally reconfigured and applied here. This research does postulate that it is "a first attempt to apply a tripartite model specifically to the posthuman" as well as making a case for a tripartite model that separates the domains of mind, body, and technology into three agencies that are interrelated and at times conflicting. The central claim is that the posthuman only attains narrative and subjective stability, coherence and authentic agency when these three components move from being in conflict towards being integrated synergistically. The thesis is that "the posthuman can

be fully realized in its identity and agency only by the seamless fusion of its biological and technological elements." This is the triadic framework that we will use to focus our critical analysis of the detailed textual analysis of character development of posthuman figures in Nexus and Crux. Furthermore, this research is involved with the emergent concept of the post-child, an idea which extends Clementine Beauvais's analysis of "mighty" or powerful childhood. The post-child is marked by inborn "technological fluency" and very specific ability "to subvert and potentially reconfigure traditional authority" (Beauvais, 2015, p. 112). This number leads directly to the "contestation of Roberta Seelinger Trites's contention that YA fiction primarily reinforces adult hegemony" while coming within "& this view of ironic youth potentiation, rethought for a digital age effectively. Beauvais's notion of youth. The post-child symbolizes the vanguard of trialist integration, and often succeeds in having a more fluid symbiosis with technology than adult characters, thus representing the "future-bound power" of the posthuman condition.

2. Research Methodology

This is based on a qualitative and interpretative research based on the tradition of literary criticism, based on thick reading as a process of close reading. The overarching methodology is that of which is constructionist "using mimesis and narratology with an awareness of how the state of representation of ideas from ideological currents can analyze representations of the posthuman." This multi-pronged approach offers the option of layering an interpretation of the primary texts. Mimesis (Imitation and Reflection): The analysis starts with the presume that "the boundaries between text and context are porous and interactive" which is the hermeneutic Unix. Speculative fiction, or at least the kind of speculative fiction that Naam writes, works mimetically, not by directly reflecting reality, but by reflecting and refracting its underlying technological and existential preoccupations. As N. Katherine Hayles authoritatively states, 'literary texts are not passive containers for preexisting ideas but active participants in shaping cultural perceptions of technology and scientific discourse' O'Brien & Casson, p. 21. Consequently, the created posthuman body, mind and social world is examined as an awareness of, and critical response to, contemporary scientific debates, social anxieties and philosophical questions regarding embodiment, consciousness and technological change.

The research is based on the use of narratological tools to analyze meaning generation and effects on reader perception by the structures of stories. Key elements include narrative perspective, focalization and plot structure, which all serve as vehicles for ideology. Of special significance is the use of a posthuman character as the primary focalizer. Scholars McCallum and Stephens suggest such narrative positioning can ethically complicate reader alignment such as possibly asking audiences to "identify against" their own presumed human subjectivity (McCallum & Stephens, 2011, p. 163) thereby creating a form of critical empathy or a form of cognitive estrangement. The

analysis will pay close attention to how "the narrative communication model works as a conduit for ideological transmission for adult norms to filter to the reader through character perspective and story." This calls for an examination of those moments wherein the "narrating self judges the narrated self from a position of experience," where didactic or normative insights about posthuman integration are uncovered. The main data for this research are Ramez Naam novels *Nexus* (2012) and *Crux* (2013). These texts have been selected because of their explicit and sophisticated engagement with posthuman trialism. They contain characters whose fundamental identities are radically, intimately, and irreversibly altered by a particular neurotechnological integration-that of the *Nexus* drug-which gives one a lot to write home about, so to say, in terms of narrative material to analyze in the context of a mind-body-technology perspective. Analysis will entail a systematic close reading of key scenes, character arcs, and descriptive passages. A trialist lens will be used to dissect the narrative moments of conflict-for instance, when technology surpasses bodily control-integration, such as shared consciousness, and reflective moments, such as when characters contemplate their hybridity. Direct quotes from the novels will represent the evidentiary base for all theoretical positions to keep the analysis from becoming detached from the text. Significance of the Study This research has important implications for a number of intersecting fields of study and cultural dialogues. Within literary studies, especially children's and young adult fiction criticism, it is the sign of the critical sophistication and philosophical weight of YA speculative fiction. The current investigation turns the genre not into a juvenile entertainment but into a serious part of the literary world to engage in the most complex philosophical questions of our day. It moves hardway descending from the listing of simplistic technophobic themes, while demonstrating how these works offer a nuanced and "renewed understanding of youth, technology, and power in contemporary fiction." The paper takes a practical, character-oriented approach to applying the theory in a growing interdisciplinary field of study-post-humanist studies-using an original trialist framework. Through the intense "deconstruction of the posthuman figure and analysis of its constituent parts," the research offers scholars a new, refined, operational analytical tool that complements and extends the existing theoretical models from Hayles, Haraway, and Braidotti. It takes this call to think about the posthuman in relation to the lived experience of this concept as seen in narration. With regard to this particular requirement, the research is greatly needed as it relates to culture and society as well as the concept of narration as pertaining to visualization and exploring the human experience by relating to this concept through an explorative sense. This is particularly evident as it relates to "an age where emerging technology 'impinges on human life more profoundly than ever,' making narratives about it that seriously explore its psychological and social consequences important to public literacy." This particular study here serves to create an exemplary sense

with regard to an essential role that literature must play in relation to YA literature as “cognitive frameworks that enable readers to process and explore novel realities,” particularly with regard to an alternative sense through which young adult readers who may be considered 'digital natives' may be able to relate to in exploring an ever-changing concept with regard to the concept of the posthuman.

3. Literature Review

The original work of N. Katherine Hayles and Donna Haraway are essential to any study of literary posthumanism. In her seminal *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), Hayles carefully traces the historical, cultural, and scientific transformations involved in the maturation of informational pattern to the position of privilege, rather than that of material instantiation. She performs a much-needed corrective to transhumanist hopes for disembodiment, making strong her argument that "embodiment has been systematically downplayed or erased in the construction of the posthuman" (Hayles, 1999, p. 4). Her focus on the constitutive power of narrative is central in the methodology of this study: "Narrative is a key site for working out the implications of the posthuman as a technocultural ideal" (Hayles, 1999, p. 22). Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto", written in 1991, is equally important, albeit in a much more explicitly political and metaphorical vein. Haraway promotes the concept of the cyborg as a disruptive figure that "can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms" and towards a "powerful infidel heteroglossia" (Haraway, 1991, pp. 150, 154). This study is a direct application of their insights, and puts those insights into specific narrative structures and concerns related to young adult speculative fiction. Scholars have been focusing their specialized attention on this vibrant genre. Zoe Jaques in her comprehensive *Children's Literature and the Posthuman* (2015) offers that posthumanism provides a useful framework for the consideration of non-human protagonists. Her work is significant for historical sweep, showing long historical continuities not only in the notion of posthumanity, from talking animals to robots, but also in helping to create a richer backdrop for contemporary works. Victoria Flanagan's *Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction* (2014) is a more targeted, up-to-date yet often overtly feminist reading. Her argument that posthumanism essentially entails "the renegotiation of identity and social relationships to better fit human experience in the digital age" (Flanagan, 2014, p. 187) is quite similar to the idea that was identified in this present study, albeit the focus of our analysis differs. The influential work of Clare Bradford, Kerry Mallan, John Stephens, and Robyn McCallum in *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature* (2008) engages utopian and dystopian understandings of posthumanism to a large degree. They point out that many texts, while exploring the possibilities of posthumanity, ultimately find themselves enacting some kind of technology-fear to validate "some (positive) sense of being human" (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 156). Their ideological critique is useful for identifying the normative currents

within the genre, though their corollary tendency to downplay the persistence and transformation of embodiment, this study finds, is a diminishing view. Roberta Seelinger Trites's pioneering analysis of power in adolescent literature, *Disturbing the Universe* (2000), is also an important touchstone. Trites argues that YA literature frequently works ideologically to reinforce the authority of adults and socialize adolescents—a point that the figure of the technologically adept post-child of novels such as Naam's directly and powerfully challenges. The idea of the post-child is formed on the theoretical insights of Clementine Beauvais in *The Mighty Child* (2015) about the "powerful child" archetype in literature. This is a research that adapts and specifies this concept in the digital era. The post-child is characterized by native "technological fluency" and unique capacity to use technology as a tool to "challenge and perhaps undermine established hierarchies of authority" (Beauvais, 2015, p. 118). This number, therefore, directly "contradicts Roberta Seelinger Trites's premise that young adult fiction is mainly used to uphold adult control" while aligning with Beauvais's conception of empowered youth, in a digital sense. The post-child represents the logical narrative end of trialist synthesis, often realizing more intuitive and cohesive relationship with technology than their adult counterparts, thus representing the example of what Beauvais calls "future-bound power." While the current body of scholarship does a good job of addressing the general issues of posthuman theory and its application to children's literature more broadly, a gap exists for sustained, detailed textual analysis of contemporary YA science fiction that employs a narrow, structural analysis of the text as a novel, such as trialism. Much criticism is either the application of generalizing theory or thematic surveys. This research seeks to fill that gap by attempting to put Naam's technologically dense and philosophically ambitious narratives through the structured trialist model, in a replicable way that could be used to analyze with precision the narrative mechanics of posthuman identity formation in the genre.

4. Textual Analysis

Ramez Naam's science-based novels offer an extraordinarily comprehensive and sophisticated case study for the application and testing of the posthuman trialist model. The Nexus drug is the ultimate technological invasive part that shatters the base mind-body nexus of its user into a radical re-negotiation of the self. The story herein painstakingly describes this journey from fragmentation to struggle toward tentative unification. During the initial integration, characters always experience the three trialist components - mind, body and Nexus technology - in a state of acute disharmony and alienation, rather than unity. The protagonist, Kade, facing this disturbing disjunction head-on, in one of the first, revelatory instances. When recounted in practical terms such as "I can't say not knowing it" or "I could just as well as I might know no ideas at all about it". That was the software talking, using his lungs, his mouth" (Naam, 2012, p.47). Here, the technology (the Nexus software) takes over the executive control of the body

(his lungs and mouth), which performs a speech act. Meanwhile, the observing mind is outside the situation, a skeptical observer, questioning the veracity of the action and its source. This moment was a classic trialist rupture: the conscious self was alienated as its tangible body was driven by some technological other, and therefore an agency and identity crisis occurred. This internal struggle reaches a great level when Kade tries to impose his own will over that of the technology by hacking into a virtual reality system. The narrative describes the struggle of his "higher mind clamped down on the feeling" trying to take control of the tech; the system defies his control. "It took him five times to take control back, to cut the system down, and showing the triumph of the human mind over the machine" (Naam, 2012, p. 89). Yet this "triumph" is right away complicated. The need to physically debug the program, resulting in the subsequent experience where "physical feeling outpoured the software" but is overwhelming, demonstrates the fluid, dynamic and often antagonistic relationship between all three elements of the triad. The body's autonomic physical response (nausea) becomes an erratic force which disrupts the technological system and forces the conscious, rational mind to attempt to diagnose and repair it. This is not an easy-mindedness over matter dualism, but a lusciously rendered three-way contest for sovereignty, in which each of these components - the reasoning mind, the visceral body, the programmed technology - has its own form of agency. For other characters, the Nexus technology allows for a more integrative (if overwhelming at first) trial of those trialists hinting at a new model of identity. Sam, a government agent, describes her first, profound experience with Nexus not as a loss of control, but as a state of realization of internal connection: "I'm inside myself." Inside my own mind. And, in that case, "I can see how the pieces fit together." The different thoughts. All the thoughts I can have. These are all moments I can see from my life. I never saw the connections between them before" (Naam, 2012, p. 122). Here, technology is less of an outside overlord than an intimate mediator which rearranges an internal relationship between mind and body. It provides the mind to view the body and the cognitive process as a complex system of vast, inter-related and legible information. The triad begins to bind together into a new unity where technology acts as a binding lens which allows the self to see itself in a new way. This integration takes its most extreme and difficult form in the form of the Nexus network in which individual minds become part of a collective or distributed consciousness. From a trialist point of view, this is a complex and plural posthuman subject that puts the framework of things to the limit. In this state, the sum of the awareness of the group that is networked is the mind. The individual physical nodes (the separate biological bodies of the users) form a multiple, distributed body. The Nexus hardware and software that make it possible to do the neural link is the binding technology. The thesis astutely notes that "a networked posthumanity can be read through trialism as, like a physical computer network, comprising multiple discrete, physical nodes that together make up the

'body.'" The mind is our common awareness, and technology maximizes our connections." A fundamental change to the humanist motif of the individual being a bounded and sovereign entity claims that identity is a relational, technological, and societal construction. Naam interestingly complicates the materialist model of the trialist with a spiritual (or meditative) dimension to the mastery of technology. This gives the posthuman connotation a lot of depth, and an air of "qualitative about it". The detailed explanation of real Nexus control by the senior monk - stating that it "requires serious spiritual discipline, specifically months or years of daily meditation" (Naam, 2012, p. 311) - makes the deep technological integration of the human mind not some technical or coding feat. It needs a disciplined cultivation of the mind that goes beyond pure coding and which relates to ancient traditions of awareness. This plotline helps introduce what the thesis tentatively calls a potential "third strand" within or alongside trialism; "a fundamentally human trait, like an illogical emotional response, or a technological irregularity or device functioning outside of its programmed logic." Monks achieve harmonious integration with meditation, hackers with code: both are valid and parallel ways to bring balance to the mind, body, and technology. This implies that posthuman integration has a qualitative, even metaphysical, dimension as well as material. Furthermore, this spiritual dimension directly enables a power challenge: The speed of technological adoption and mastery by the younger monks "undermined their authority and inverted the hierarchy" (Naam, 2013, p. 156); a clear indications as a narrative manifestation of the post child's disruptive power: fast technological mastery over traditional, experience-based authority.

Despite their deep augmentations and new abilities, Naam's posthuman characters are consistently characterized by, and tend to be motivated by, some recognizably human core. They feel grief, moral ambiguity, ethical conflict, love and great vulnerability. This obstinate "humanizing impulse" then, is not a flaw of the narrative but one of its essential components as a theme. In *Crux*, though the narrative deals with a purely software-based posthuman consciousness, the focus is still on its source in and relation to the human mind: "Thought is performed by the mind, not the brain" (Naam, 2013, p. 288). This insistence of the continuity of the mind, albeit detached from a biological brain, is necessary to keep a tether to humankind. This everlasting humanness forms the crucial and compelling tension of the posthuman condition as acted out in these novels. The characters are endowed with enhanced technological capacities - telepathic communicative abilities, improved cognitive abilities, shared consciousness - but their individual character arc - and the novel's plot - are driven by recognizably human feelings, need for relationships and lasting ethical quandaries. This narrative choice is one of N. Katherine Hayles's fundamental argument that we are already posthuman in our profound technological enmeshment or that posthumans maintain at the center of their being essentially human psychological and moral issues. The trialist framework is useful in explaining the paradox:

For all that the mind can become a network, the body can be augmented and even abandoned at least to some extent, and the integrated technology can be very sophisticated, the hybrid entity that results, from this interplay can be still struggling narratively with the questions of meaning, authentic connection, mortality and justice - the perennial, bedrock, questions of the human condition itself.

5. Conclusion

This in-depth research has proved that children's speculative fiction such as Ramez Naam's intellectually demanding *Nexus* and *Crux* An Essential Cultural Laboratory for imaginatively modelling, critically interrogating and affectively negotiating the contested future of human identity. Using the generic posthuman triadist framework of mind, body and technology, this analysis has identified the complex and non-linear often arduous narrative process in which posthuman subjectivity is created, deconstructed, and recreated. These narratives go forcefully beyond mere expressions of enhancement of Luddite warnings and thus attempt to explore the fundamental and phenomenological redefinition of the self considering the ubiquity of technology. The research puts the literary posthuman not so much as a single, completed or transcendental condition but more like state of constant and dynamic negotiation - of becoming rather than being. Characters go through this path in different phases, recognition (initial rupture, technology overpowering the body, the conscious mind pushing back) giving way to movement towards delicate blend (technology acts as a "lens" to identify some fundamental mind- body connection) reach transcendence (probably networked consciousness breakdown individual boundaries is to create a "collective self"). The repeated idea of "longing for the human" in these advanced posthuman figures brings into the foreground the important realization that, regardless of how radical technological advance, in all its forms of may seem, it does not eliminate fundamental factors or questions that deal with existence in the human world, but, rather, reframes them in a novel, hybrid light. The human in its affectual and ethical aspects continues to be a constitutive and phantomagical presence in the posthuman machine, The notion of the post-child emanates from By studying YA through the lens of identity and social justice, this analysis offers important and unique contribution for the study of YA as a genre to the posthuman discourse. As the indigenous, tech savvy people of dreamed dystopias and transitions, as post children, they vividly represent what Clementine Beauvais calls "future-bound power." Their intuitive, often preternatural, mastery of systems such as *Nexus* give them a kind of agency with which to effectively "subvert and dismantle traditional power structures" so as to directly invert the hierarchies generations and institutions. They are a form of the identity and the authority on a harmony in digital-cognitive that appears effortless by comparison with the struggles of the generations before them. The post-child is the symbol of the narrative vanguard or the posthuman shift, as if the future of identity may legitimately belong, in important aspects, to those for whom the

lived experience of having a pre-technological, full-blooded, and purely biological self, which is still culturally unknown. In the end, these imaginative narratives are very important works of culture and cognitive labor. They are not oracles predicting a particular future but is part of what N. Katherine Hayles calls the vital "practice of reinterpretation and revision of foundational stories" about the human condition which she considers needed for negotiating our further evolution (Hayles, 1999, p. 285). By depicting the kind of extreme, personal and social drama of the post-human transformation, these novels provide the reader with a safe space from which to grapple with "the ethical, philosophical, and existential dilemmas posed by the posthuman condition" From the critical distance given by fiction. They are consistent in their rehearsal of the basic truth that "people not the machines make the choices that guide AI," thereby give us the ultimate responsibility for the course of our posthuman future squarely in human - and posthuman - hands. They warn against utopian cranks, and at the same time, apocalyptic panics - both dangerous forms of techno-integration worst - instead call for a knowledgeable, ethical and critically involved stewardship of it; In conclusion, the future of the human identity (in other words so carefully thought out in sophisticated YA speculative fiction, such as Naam's) is inherently hybrid, deeply relationally and constitutively mediated through technology. It is a future in which, to use Donna Haraway's prediction "mind, body, and tool are on very intimate terms" (Haraway, 1991, p. 164). By looking on the complexity of such intimacy structured on trialism, this research has provided a unique replicable critical framework to understanding the narrative construction of posthuman subjects. In doing so, it points to the important and longstanding role of literature in helping us to reflect on the greatest question of the upcoming century - who (and what) may us be in the future, when all the boundaries that defined our identity, is fading away.

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