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Technology and Its Impact on Humanity

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Zásady pro vypracování

Barbora Kokešová se zaměří na otázku lidskosti v současném vědeckofantastickém románu ve srovnání s rannými díly téhož žánru. Práci uvede pojednání o významu myšlenky lidskosti z multidisciplinární perspektivy. Autorka zmapuje různorodost a oblasti překryvu v přístupech k této otázce zejména ve filozofii a sociologii (H. Arendt, G. Steiner, R. Williams, J. Glover, H. Luegenbiehl, G. Leonhard). Soustředit se bude na obecné rysy definice lidskosti a na tematiku vztahu mezi člověkem a technologií. Na tomto základě provede detailní komparativní analýzu vybraných témat v dílech z počátku dvacátého století (H.G. Wells, A. Huxley, G. Orwell) ve srovnání s prózou současnou (J. Dashner, N. Shusterman, L. Lowry), tedy děl ze dvou různých období poznamenaných podobně přelomovými objevy (komunikační technologie, umělá inteligence, apod). Položí si otázku, zda tehdejší a současní autoři koncipovali lidskost podobným způsobem a v jakých aspektech se liší. Zjistí, zda je tížily stejné obavy z dopadu vědecko-technického pokroku a étosu vědeckého positivismu na kritické myšlení, svobodu, důstojnost a další atributy lidskosti. Prozkoumá různorodost důsledků pokroku, které tehdejší a současní autoři předpovídají. Objasní, jak tehdejší a současní autoři přistupují k dichotomii člověk vs. stroj a zda uvažují o jejich prolnutí.

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ANNOTATION

The diploma thesis focuses on technology and its impact on humanity. It considers the concepts of humanity and dehumanisation, as well as the terms anthropomorphism and transhumanism. It outlines the issue of artificial intelligence and the associated sense of the "uncanny." It comparatively analyses the works of interwar authors, Aldous Huxley and H. G. Wells, and the works of contemporary authors, Neal Shusterman, Sarah Marie Griffin, and James Dashner, and explores their contrasting perspectives on humanity and technology.

KEY WORDS

humanity, technology, dehumanisation, artificial intelligence, transhumanism, hope

ANOTACE

Tato diplomová práce pojednává o technologii a jejím dopadu na lidskost. Zabývá se koncepty lidskost a odlidštění a dále pojmy antropomorfismus a transhumanismus. Nastiňuje problematiku umělé inteligence a s tím spojený pocit „tísně," tedy „uncanny." Komparativně analyzuje díla meziválečných autorů, Aldouse Huxleyho a H. G. Wellse a díla současných autorů, Neala Shustermana, Sarah Marie Griffin a Jamese Dashnera, a zkoumá jejich odlišné pohledy na lidskost a technologii.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

lidskost, technologie, odlidštění, umělá inteligence, transhumanismus, naděje

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Introduction

The effect of technology on humans has been discussed for centuries. From the earliest inventions like stone tools and fire-starting to wheels and then to artificial intelligence, technology has been both a companion and a challenge for humankind. Historically, the human-technology relationship has evolved alongside key social and cultural revolutions. The scientific and technological revolution, starting with the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries and intensifying throughout the two World Wars, marked a profound transformation: machines replaced manual labour, urbanisation accelerated, and the rhythms of daily life were reorganised around production and efficiency. One of humanity's goals related to technology has always been to extend oneself through instruments, machines, and increasingly, digital constructs. Technologies embody the age-old human desire to overcome natural limitations and to achieve God-like mastery over the world. Particularly nowadays, technology threatens to surpass humans and perhaps even grant them immortality. Nevertheless, the effect that it might have can also be devastating for humanity, in the sense that compassion, dedication to human rights, and a commitment to helping and caring for one another could vanish.

However, even though technology and enhancement promise salvation, they often incite fear and unrest, particularly about the dehumanising consequences of mechanisation, as well as new ways of advancement, prosperity, and mastery. In literature, these anxieties took shape in dystopian visions where the human spirit was crushed under technological or bureaucratic systems. Since the beginnings of science fiction literature, the authors have raised questions about whether and how technology should be used, if it were to threaten the preservation of humanity. For example, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is considered a precursor to science fiction, pondering surpassing humans' limitations and the ethical implications of scientific innovation. With the rise of the new genre called science fiction, and with Herbert George Wells, nicknamed "the father" of science fiction, also rose the fear that machines might control humans. Also, the Czech writer Karel Čapek had this concern, as he discusses these issues in his works, for instance in *R. U. R.* (1920), in which he mentions the word *robot* for the first time. It can be considered as the "classical" anxiety of interwar authors, that technology becomes so powerful that it might be the doom of humankind.

The British interwar authors had similar concerns; H. G. Wells and Aldous Huxley, both discussed in this paper, were concerned about the direction society would take given the rapid speed and growth of modern technology in their time. The authors selected reflect the concerns of their times. From the early 20th century, the works of H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (1895),

The Invisible Man (1897), and *Men Like Gods* (1923) provide investigations into alienation, scientific arrogance and knowledge ethics. Similarly, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) presents a chilling vision of a technological society where individuality and emotion are sacrificed for stability.

To contrast these visions, the thesis examines works from contemporary authors such as Sarah Maria Griffin, whose novel *Spare and Found Parts* (2016) explores technological awareness, humanised robots, and ethical concerns in a post-apocalyptic world. Neal Shusterman's *Scythe* (2016) and *Thunderhead* (2018) imagine a world where artificial intelligence has conquered death, raising questions about purpose, agency, and moral responsibility. Finally, James Dashner's *The Mortality Doctrine* series (2013–2015), consisting of three books*, The Eye of Minds* (2013), *The Rule of Thoughts* (2014), and *The Game of Lives* (2015), investigates consciousness, simulation, and digital embodiment in a cyber-reality where the boundary between human and machine is almost erased.

This thesis explores these evolving questions through a comparative literary analysis of science fiction from two distinct periods, the interwar era and the contemporary digital age, in order to examine the impact of technological progress on humanity. It uses the method of comparative analysis of selected texts based on their relevance to the topic, genre and historical period. It identifies differences in each author's approach and in the eras as such. The goal is to explore the consequences of technological progress for humanity from the perspective of the authors of then and now. It brings an eerie feeling that 100 years have passed since these visions of technology conquering humanity, hence this paper outlines whether this time has brought about a change in perspective in the literature. Did the interwar authors view the fear of the future's development similarly to contemporary authors? If not, in which do they differ? How do the authors perceive the dichotomy of the relationship between humans and machines? Do they consider their intertwining and its implications? This thesis asks those questions and answers them in the final part with the support of secondary sources, drawing more general conclusions from the preceding analyses.

The introductory section of this paper explains the main concepts according to appropriate secondary sources. It deals with the concept of 'humanity' and explains in what sense it is understood in the context of this thesis. Then, it focuses on the opposite of humanity, therefore, 'dehumanisation'. Moving on to the technological part, it explains the views on 'artificial intelligence', a resonating topic nowadays. Regarding the relationship between humans and technology, the paper discusses the concepts of 'anthropomorphism' and 'transhumanism' and ties them to the feeling of the 'uncanny'. The opinions and views of many

scholars given in this paper, such as Johnathan Glover, John C. Lennox, Natasha Vita-More, Marie Oldfield, John McCarthy, or Margaret A. Boden, support a better understanding of the concepts and give insights into the matter.

In the second chapter, the comparative analysis itself begins, starting with the impact of technology on humanity, resulting in dehumanisation. It focuses on the perception of interwar and contemporary authors on this issue. It compares whether interwar authors saw it strictly pessimistically and if the contemporary ones share their views or challenge them.

The third chapter deals with the anxieties concerning human enhancements and the fears connected to the ethical consequences of blending humans and machines. Focusing on the concepts of the 'uncanny' and 'transhumanism', it tracks the human-machine relationship and again compares the views of interwar and contemporary authors.

The last analytical chapter culminates in a juxtaposition of the interwar fears of the overuse and misuse of technology leading to unethical living and the hope portrayed in contemporary novels outlining the opposite view of the concept of techno-divinity and its consequences.

Overall, the thesis concludes with the views of several scholars discussing these issues and answers the questions mentioned above. It provides an overview of the analysis and recommendations for future presentations of these concerns in connection with the books and themes covered.

1 Introduction to the Main Concepts

This chapter summarises and explains the most important terms relevant to this paper, such as humanity and humanness tied to technical development, dehumanisation, intelligence, and artificial intelligence. Then, it mentions more specific concepts such as anthropomorphism, transhumanism, and the uncanny.

There are several definitions of humanity, so it is important to define the term in the context of this paper. Scholars Sarah J. Gervais, Philippe Bernard, and Olivier Klein differentiate between two dimensions of humanness, which in this paper's context is synonymous with humanity. The first is the Experience dimension, composed of mental states such as emotions, preferences, desires, and sentience. They claim it is the one that differentiates humans from robots. The second one, the Agency dimension, formed from mental capacities such as self-control, morality, communication, and planning, differentiates humans from animals.[1] They use qualities like warmth, vitality, adaptability, and both positive and negative emotionality to characterise the essence of human nature.[2] According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the term "'human' refers to a property that is the basis for having certain moral rights and a particular kind of moral value"[3] and that morality and intelligence are essential components of what it means to be human.[4] Nevertheless, most scholars agree that intelligence is not enough to define human attributes. According to Phillips, people typically have two ideas about what it means to be human: a normative idea of being "true" or "real" human, and a descriptive one. In the normative sense, being human means having a strong, emotionally charged commitment to moral principles, whereas in the descriptive sense, being human means belonging to the biological species, *Homo sapiens*.[5] This thesis deals with the former, in the sense of humanity that refers to humanness, rather than humanity as a mankind. Haslam et al. refer to humanness as human nature. For them, human nature is perceived as intrinsic, essence-like, cross-culturally universal, and typical of the human population. It tends

[1] Sarah J. Gervais, Philippe Bernard, and Olivier Klein, "The Psychology of Humanness," in *Objectification and (De)humanization: Nebraska Symposium on Motivation 60*, ed. Sarah J. Gervais (New York: Springer-Verlag, 2013), 29.

[2] Gervais, "The Psychology of Humanness," 28.

[3] "Human Enhancement," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, last modified May 15, 2019, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/enhancement/#EnhDeh.

[4] "Dehumanization," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, last modified Mar 24, 2025, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dehumanization/#PsyAppDeh.

[5] Ben Phillips, "'They're Not True Humans:' Beliefs about Moral Character Drive Denials of Humanity," *Cognitive Science* 46, no. 2 (2022): 1.

to involve emotionality, interpersonal warmth, and openness.[6] They also call it "the capacity to do good."[7] However, in some instances, the term 'good' might seem too vague. Therefore, it can be more suitable to talk about compassion. Jonathan Glover, a philosopher of ethics, states that compassion is one of the main human reactions. He clarifies that treating others with respect is the foundation of empathy and says that empathy is about identifying with others by experiencing both joy and sorrow.[8] Glover also emphasises that a person's identity is revealed by their deeds and commitments, and that any activity that goes against a person's intrinsic moral code causes them to be unhappy because they have a moral identity.[9] It might suggest that people are not inherently bad, but it is a matter of choice. Christopher Peterson and Martin E.P. Seligman explain humanity's strengths and define it as an urge to care about others, generally perform good deeds, and regard kindness as an ethically admirable virtue.[10] According to them, humanity is defined as interpersonal qualities that include caring for and befriending others, loving them, and appreciating close relationships with others, especially those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being near people; kindness, which is defined as generosity, nurturing, care, compassion, and altruistic love; and performing good deeds and favours for others; assisting them; and looking after them. Additionally, they connect humanity with social intelligence, which is characterised as emotional intelligence, personal intelligence, understanding one's own and other people's motivations and feelings, and knowing how to behave in various social contexts.[11] However, another argument is that the content of human uniqueness cannot be reduced to the subject of positively valued skills; even though it reflects morality, refinement, and characteristics that are seen as uniquely human and positive, negative values (such as rudeness) are also important and contribute to being human.[12] Natasha Vita-More, an American philosopher, transhumanist, and futurologist, believes that generosity, creativity, intelligence, and fearlessness are all desirable qualities that are essential to experiencing love and compassion, and oftentimes, these emotions are what people call the essence of being human. Some are less great and result in needless suffering, misery, and

[6] Nick Haslam, Brock Bastian, Simon Laham, and Steve Loughnan, "Humanness, Dehumanization, and Moral Psychology," in *The Social Psychology of Morality: Exploring the Causes of Good and Evil*, ed. Mario Mikulincer and Phillip R. Shaver (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2012), 206.
[7] Haslam et al., "Humanness, Dehumanization, and Moral Psychology," 209.
[8] Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 22.
[9] Glover, *Humanity*, 26–27.
[10] Christopher Peterson and Martin E.P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 296.
[11] Peterson and Seligman, *Character strengths and virtues*, 29.
[12] Gervais, "The Psychology of Humanness," 29–30.

inexplicable grief, but together, the positive and negative aspects define what it is to be human.[13] What differentiates, or maybe more accurately, balances between the positive and negative aspects, is morality. Morality is another concept, connected to humanness and compassion, that is hard to define universally, however, there are some possible definitions. One of them, quite recent by Audun Dahl, is that morality is "obligatory concerns with others' welfare, rights, fairness, and justice, as well as the reasoning, judgment, emotions, and actions that spring from those concerns."[14] The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* states that morality in the normative sense "is (or would be) the behavioral code that all rational persons, under certain specified conditions, would endorse."[15] Margaret Boden, a Professor of cognitive science, believes that the idea of moral responsibility is closely related to conscious agency, freedom, and self, all of which contribute to our understanding of humanity as a whole.[16] Glover states that morality needs to be humanised and rooted in human needs and values.[17] To conclude, this paper deals with the humanity in the sense of following the moral values and moral compass, feeling love, compassion and sympathy towards other people and other beings, as well as valuing the negative aspects of human nature. Emotional intelligence and the cultivation of the mind are also necessary aspects of being human, and together, these features define humanness (synonymous with humanity) as such.

On the other side of humanity stands the concept of dehumanisation. "De-humanisation" suggests that something is taken away or lost during the process of being human.[18] It involves "the paradoxical perception, portrayal or treatment of a human being as something that is not (quite) human."[19] It can also be seen as an act of excluding persons from the human category, rather than denying certain attributes to them.[20] However, Adrienne de Ruiter argues that although dehumanisers typically acknowledge the biological status of their victims and attest to the fact that they possess certain psychological traits that people generally share, such as a highly developed consciousness, a sense of identity, and specific semiotic and moral sensibilities, this does not mean that offenders must also acknowledge their victims' human

[13] Natasha Vita-More, "History of Transhumanism," in *The Transhumanism Handbook*, ed. Newton Lee (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 59.
[14] Audun Dahl, "What We Do When We Define Morality (And Why We Need to Do It)," *Psychological Inquiry* 34, no. 2 (2023): 2.
[15] "The Definition of Morality," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, last modified January 2025, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/morality-definition/#DescDefiMora.
[16] Margaret A. Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 140.
[17] Glover, *Humanity*, 406.
[18] Gervais, "The Psychology of Humanness," 27.
[19] Adrienne de Ruiter, "To Be or Not to Be Human: Resolving the Paradox of Dehumanisation," *European Journal of Political Theory* 22, no. 1 (2023): 74.
[20] Gervais, "The Psychology of Humanness," 27.

status in a normative sense. Therefore, dehumanisation loses its contradictory nature because people might morally perceive others as less than human without necessarily considering them to be outside the human species or devoid of human subjectivity.[21] If the concept of humanness is based on certain characteristics that set humans apart from specific nonhuman species, then dehumanisation is the denial of those characteristics to an individual or group. A person or group is viewed as missing distinctively human traits and as being foolish, illogical, wild, amoral, simple, and devoid of refinement.[22] That means that people who are considered to lack certain qualities can be dehumanised. Connected with seeing other human beings as inhuman and not worthy of decent treatment are often war crimes. Jonathan Glover mentions in his book the massacre of nearly 500 civilians in March 1968 in a Vietnamese village by American troops, and tied to that, he explains that "much of the massacre was in obedience to orders,"[23] and "an absence of discipline."[24] It is commonplace that soldiers feel deprived of their own judgment and blindly follow orders because it is what they are trained to do. Glover also explains that sympathy was diminished by viewing the people as dangerous threats rather than victims. The soldiers occasionally demonstrated the denial of reality, and the ones whom they considered enemies were perceived in a dehumanising manner, which further contributed to the lack of empathy.[25] The enemies are seen as mere objects treated with no dignity or respect. Soldiers' moral values are often reversed or lost. In retrospect, the ones participating in this massacre remark on how their moral restraints loosened, and that witnessing others engaging in behaviours that are normally forbidden, such as killing the innocents, contributed to it. Moreover, moral doubts were stigmatised as sentimental weakness by a cult of hardness, which furthered moral decay.[26] They fear they might be seen as too soft, and it is something that is not required. On the other hand, some soldiers were horrified by the orders they were supposed to follow. In certain instances, empathy protected the soldiers from obeying. However, in the cases that it did not stop them, it resulted from military programming.[27] According to Erich Fromm, people frequently refrain from murdering other beings because they identify with them. He assumes that moral reactions ingrained in human nature usually triumph against violence.[28] Nevertheless, it might not always be the case. Daan de Leeuw talks in his article about Nazi

[21] De Ruiter, "To Be or Not to Be Human," 74–75.
[22] Gervais, "The Psychology of Humanness," 30.
[23] Glover, *Humanity*, 58.
[24] Glover, *Humanity*, 59.
[25] Glover, *Humanity*, 60.
[26] Glover, *Humanity*, 60.
[27] Glover, *Humanity*, 62.
[28] Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), 121.

genocide and human experiments on Jewish people and prisoners, and he tries to define the dehumanisers, the perpetrators, who conducted those experiments and their motives. He states that Nazi doctors eliminated their ethical constraints, and they followed the path to advance their professions, which was one of their motives.[29] It appears that the doctors believed that, through their experiments, they would help the Germans win, and that it made sense to sacrifice a few captives to help tens of thousands of soldiers, or "in the name of humanity," as they recklessly put it.[30] Moreover, there seems to be no evidence that most Nazi doctors had any ethical or moral concerns,[31] which is considered as one of the main attributes of humanness stated above; therefore, the lack of them, means dehumanisation. Herbert C. Kelman states that dehumanisation causes the actor's attitudes towards both the target and himself to become so rigid that he cannot see the interaction from a moral perspective."[32] Kelman discusses the victimisation and the victimiser and argues that victimisation itself leads to the victimiser's gradual dehumanisation, which is exacerbated by the performance of his role.[33] Dehumanising victims causes the perpetrator to "lose his capacity to care for them, to have compassion for them, to treat them as human beings; he develops a sense of detachment which sharply reduces his capacity to feel."[34] The dehumanisation through technology is also relevant for this paper, and it is called mechanistic dehumanisation. Ivana and Dian Eka Sari define it as "an act that makes humans less human by treating them as an object due to advanced technology."[35] The two negative effects of mechanical dehumanisation are that when individuals are treated like objects, they become rigid and cold,[36] and this is not connected only with mechanistic dehumanisation but also to human nature. Those denied human nature will be viewed as cold, stiff, and devoid of vitality and liveliness because they lack warmth, emotion, and openness.[37] Marie Oldfield, an expert in artificial intelligence and ethics, argues that dehumanisation is one of the serious risks of misunderstanding technology.[38] She adds that dehumanisation differs

[29] Daan de Leeuw, "'In the Name of Humanity'": Nazi Doctors and Human Experiments in German Concentration Camps." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2020): 234.
[30] Leeuw, "In the Name of Humanity," 235.
[31] Leeuw, "In the Name of Humanity," 237.
[32] Herbert Kelman, "Violence Without Moral Restraint: Reflections on the Dehumanization of the Victims and Victimizers." *Journal of Social Issues* 29, no. 4 (1973): 38.
[33] Kelman, "Violence," 51.
[34] Kelman, "Violence," 52.
[35] Ivana and Dian Eka Sari, "Mechanistic Dehumanization in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*," *Lingua Litera: Journal of English Linguistics and Literature* 5, no. 2 (September 2020): 115.
[36] Ivana and Sari, "Mechanistic Dehumanization," 115.
[37] Haslam et al., "Humanness, Dehumanization, and Moral Psychology," 207.
[38] Marie Oldfield, "Anthropomorphism and its Impact on the Implementation and Perception of AI," in *Technology, Users and Uses: Ethics and Human Interaction Through Technology and AI*, ed. Joan Casas-Roma, Jordi Conesa, and Santi Caballé (Bradford: Ethics International Press, 2023), 118.

from anthropomorphism, a term discussed later, in that sense that it is the opposite of it because it "seeks to remove emotional attachment and a sense of self from others."[39] Overall, this thesis deals with the dehumanisation in the sense of losing moral constraints, compassion, sympathy, empathy, etc. that defines humanity as such and succumbing to immoral actions, such as killing, dehumanising their victims, violent acts etc., and secondly in the sense of the loss of moral compass and reversing the moral values, which means to stop to cherish values like love, family etc. – becoming "less than human" by losing authentic emotions, warmth, and individuality, often due to some system or technology that does not admit any wrongdoing or due to technology.

As the topic of this paper suggests, the next crucial term for discussion is technology, particularly artificial intelligence. Discussing this issue, it is important to consider the meaning of the idea of "intelligence." According to an etymological dictionary, the word intelligence means "the highest faculty of the mind, capacity for comprehending general truths," or "faculty of understanding, comprehension," and it is an assimilated form of *inter*, "between," and *legere*, "choose, pick out, read."[40] One of the opinions is that perception, association, prediction, planning, and motor control are psychological abilities that are part of intelligence and help both humans and animals to achieve their goals.[41] For instance, John McCarthy, a computer and cognitive scientist who suggested the term "artificial intelligence" (AI), defines intelligence as "the computational part of the ability to achieve goals in the world. Varying kinds and degrees of intelligence occur in people, many animals and some machines."[42] Therefore, certain abilities used to achieve what people want are a crucial part of intelligence. Korteling et al. suggest the "real" form of intelligence is human (or general) intelligence and define it as the capacity to accomplish complicated tasks effectively and independently, after which it is constantly modified and more limited to "those things that only humans can do," and this includes original ideas, applying background and contextual knowledge flexibly, using intuition and feeling, having the capacity to truly "think and understand," or taking emotion into account when making ethical decisions.[43] However, the just-quoted scholars add that it is no longer relevant that only humans can do these things, and, in that case, the definition of intelligence is not easy to identify. The concepts of "superintelligence," "general AI," and "artificial general

[39] Oldfield, "Anthropomorphism and its Impact," 119.
[40] "Intelligence," Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=intelligence.
[41] Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future*, 1.
[42] John McCarthy, *What Is Artificial Intelligence?* (California: Stanford University, 2007), 2.
[43] J. E. (Hans) Korteling et al., "Human-versus Artificial Intelligence," *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence* 4 (2021): 2–3.

intelligence" (AGI) are frequently used interchangeably. However, for the purposes of this paper, the term artificial intelligence is used as a general term, abbreviated as AI. An algorithm or group of algorithms that is at least as competent as a normal human across various problem domains is called artificial general intelligence (AGI).[44] AGI typically denotes attempts to construct a machine that can simulate equal or greater intelligence than a human being, a superintelligence.[45] Another definition suggested by Korteling et al. is that AGIs are: "non-biological capacities to autonomously and efficiently achieve complex goals in a wide range of environments." In other words, AGI systems should be able to recognise and extract the most crucial characteristics for their operation and learning process across a wide range of tasks and settings automatically and effectively.[46] The research on artificial intelligence began after World War II, when some scholars started working on intelligent machines. Alan Turing, an English mathematician, might have been the first to conclude that computer programming, not machine construction, was the most effective way to study AI.[47] He tried to prove under which conditions a machine might be considered intelligent, later known as the Turing Test. He claimed one ought to regard a computer as intelligent if it could mislead a knowledgeable observer into thinking it was human. However, John McCarthy argues that it is only a one-sided test, that the machine would attempt to deceive the observer while the human would attempt to convince them that it was human. A computer that passes the test should undoubtedly be regarded as intelligent; however, a machine can be regarded as intelligent even if it lacks the knowledge necessary to mimic a human.[48] Expert in artificial intelligence, Margaret Boden, claims that "artificial intelligence seeks to make computers do the sorts of things that minds can do."[49] In her view, the Turing Test only looks at observable behaviour—that is, behaviour that is exactly like ours but devoid of consciousness.[50] Consciousness is explained by Patrick Butlin et al. in their paper, where they state that it is "associated with free will, intelligence and the tendency to feel human emotions, including empathy, love, guilt, anger and jealousy,"[51] therefore, the ability to feel emotions in general. They further say that it may be assumed that the possibility of conscious AI in the near future means having AI systems that resemble the

[44] Steven Livingston and Mathias Risse, "The Future Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Humans and Human Rights," *Ethics & International Affairs* 33, no. 2 (2019): 141–158.
[45] John C. Lennox, *2084: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 43.
[46] Korteling et al., "Human-versus Artificial Intelligence," 2.
[47] McCarthy, *What Is Artificial Intelligence?*, 4.
[48] McCarthy, *What Is Artificial Intelligence?*, 4.
[49] Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future*, 1.
[50] Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future*, 120.
[51] Patrick Butlin et al., *Consciousness in Artificial Intelligence: Insights from the Science of Consciousness*, arXiv, August 22, 2023, 66, https://arxiv.org/abs/2308.08708.

highly human-like AIs portrayed in science fiction. Whether this is true depends on how consciousness interacts with other cognitive abilities and characteristics.[52] The question of whether artificial intelligence, and computing as such, could control the world and subdue humanity is pondered upon by several scholars. One is a distinguished lecturer on the intersection of science, philosophy, and religion, the Professor of Mathematics at Oxford University, John C. Lennox. He states that Turing believed the Turing Test was inefficient due to technological limitations. But Lennox disputes whether people created machines physically indistinguishable from humans and whether it would make the machines intelligent, and he believes not.[53] He notes that a computer simulation is not real, and that one should not get confused by a simulation. For him, the capacity to pass the Turing Test is not enough to be defined as intelligent, because people have something more that artificial intelligence might never have.[54] Lennox also explains how artificial intelligence systems work. One method tries to replicate, at least partially, the neural networks that make up the human cortex. Such a system can detect, identify, and understand digital patterns like images, sound, speech, text, or data by using training data to "learn." Another method statistically analyses the available data using computer programs employing probability reasoning. To put it briefly, a machine learning system learns from the past and uses that knowledge to make decisions or predictions when given new information.[55] Overall, he argues that "the human involvement is conscious. The machine is not."[56] In other words, he believes that artificial intelligence is still far away from human intelligence, even though it is similar. Numerous AI research teams now study emotions, and the majority have the potential to be profitable because they focus on creating "computer companions."[57] For quite a long time, scientists believed that intelligence does not require emotions, therefore, the research in this area was insufficient.[58] However, some artificial intelligence systems are made to engage with humans in ways that are not only useful in real-world situations but also emotionally comfortable and even fulfilling for the user.[59] Boden mentions that "many people believe that mind can arise only from life."[60] Patrick Butlin et al. state that it is becoming more urgent to ask if AI systems are capable of consciousness. Theoretically, artificial intelligence could have consciousness and analysing how AI systems

[52] Butlin et al., *Consciousness in Artificial Intelligence*, 66.
[53] Lennox, *2084,* 93.
[54] Lennox, *2084*, 94.
[55] Lennox, *2084*, 20.
[56] Lennox, *2084*, 20.
[57] Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future*, 72–73.
[58] Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future*, 75.
[59] Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future*, 73.
[60] Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future*, 101.

function can help assess their likelihood of awareness.[61] A truly competent artificial general intelligence would be functionally conscious. For instance, it would concentrate on various things at various times. Deliberation and self-reflection are also capabilities of a human-level system, and they might produce original thoughts and even consciously assess them. It could not produce performance that seemed intelligent without those capabilities.[62] Korteling et al. offer a different perspective on the difference between human and machine intelligence. Their paper suggests that if artificial general intelligence is developed in the future, it will most likely have a totally different set of cognitive skills and abilities than humans; therefore, it cannot be said that it will be human-like.[63] Moreover, they go as far as to say that "no matter how intelligent autonomous AI agents become in certain respects, at least for the foreseeable future, they will remain unconscious machines."[64] They assume AI will most likely continue to function as a special-purpose tool or an unconscious machine that assists people with particular, challenging tasks.[65] The argument for this is that compared to humans and animals, the machines have a radically different operating system (digital software, which is only the intangible in the computer vs. organic, meaning a human or animal's brain), as well as correspondingly diverse cognitive capacities and attributes. They propose that researchers must comprehend these distinctions, i.e., how human intelligence and information processing differ from those of the numerous potential and particular AI system variants.[66] Korteling et al. also suggest that, given how quickly AI technology and applications are developing, there is a need for a more flexible definition of intelligence and recognition of its wide range of conceivable forms. An accurate grasp of the fundamental traits, potential, and constraints of various (biological, artificial) cognitive system attributes is another aspect of a new notion of intelligence.[67] Boden contends that no intentionality theory can satisfy every philosopher. Since comprehension is a necessary component of true intelligence, nobody is certain that our hypothetical AGI would be intelligent.[68] Even though it is hard to predict the future, AI continues to be an increasingly integral part of human life, shaping reality and raising questions.

Another concept that is tied to technology and humans is anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism is the process by which people use everyday objects or aspects of human

[61] Butlin et al., *Consciousness in Artificial Intelligence*, 14.
[62] Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future*, 123.
[63] Korteling et al., "Human-versus Artificial Intelligence," 9.
[64] Korteling et al., "Human-versus Artificial Intelligence," 9.
[65] Korteling et al., "Human-versus Artificial Intelligence," 2.
[66] Korteling et al., "Human-versus Artificial Intelligence," 9.
[67] Korteling et al., "Human-versus Artificial Intelligence," 10–11.
[68] Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future*, 136.

perception that are widely recognised, including technology, to convey complicated ideas easily.[69] Nicholas Epley suggests anthropomorphism is "perceiving human-like traits in nonhuman agents."[70] Nonhuman agents can be animals, but also machines. Non-human beings are anthropomorphised when they show behaviours or physical characteristics comparable to those of humans.[71] People usually do not stop themselves from anthropomorphising nonhuman objects or realise that they are treating them in the same manner as humans. Thus, people can become attached to an anthropomorphic product in a way comparable to their devotion to another human.[72] Lingyao Yuan and Alan R. Dennis claim: "When we hear or see an inanimate object that has certain features, our brain automatically ascribes human form to it even though we rationally know the object is not human."[73] This corresponds to the idea of humanised robots and whether and how much they can look and behave similarly to humans. Anthropomorphism also remains a usual way to describe the familiar language of AI and robots.[74] It changes how people perceive and behave toward the object; they treat it more like a human.[75] Because AI has also been the main technological advance in mimicking and creating human-like robots,[76] it raises the question of whether it is possible to blend with non-human objects physically. That correlates with the next term that this paper talks about, which is transhumanism.

According to Nick Bostrom, a philosopher and futurologist, transhumanism is a cultural and intellectual movement that suggests the possibility and desirability of using applied reason to fundamentally improve the human condition. He describes this movement as particularly focused on creating and making widely accessible technologies that will eliminate ageing and significantly increase human cognitive, physical, and psychological abilities.[77] Transhumanists use technology to improve human capabilities while fixing human limitations. The *trans* in transhumanism stands for the goal to use technology to reach beyond humans' biological and cognitive constraints. The development of new life forms as a result of such improvement may

[69] Oldfield, "Anthropomorphism and its Impact," 100.
[70] Nicholas Epley, "A Mind Like Mine: The Exceptionally Ordinary Underpinnings of Anthropomorphism," *Journal of the Association of Consumer Research* 3, no. 4 (2018): 591.
[71] Seo Young Kim, Bernd H. Schmitt, and Nadia M. Thalmann, "Eliza in the Uncanny Valley: Anthropomorphizing Consumer Robots Increases Their Perceived Warmth but Decreases Liking," *Marketing Letters* 30 (2019): 2.
[72] Lingyao Yuan and Alan R. Dennis, "Acting Like Humans? Anthropomorphism and Consumer's Willingness to Pay in Electronic Commerce," *Journal of Management Information Systems* 36, no. 2 (2019): 459.
[73] Yuan and Dennis, "Acting Like Humans? Anthropomorphism," 451.
[74] Oldfield, "Anthropomorphism and its Impact," 104.
[75] Yuan and Dennis, "Acting Like Humans? Anthropomorphism," 453.
[76] Oldfield, "Anthropomorphism and its Impact," 110.
[77] Nick Bostrom, "The Transhumanist FAQ: A General Introduction," in *Transhumanism and the Body: The World Religions Speak*, ed. Calvin Mercer and Derek F. Maher (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1.

completely replace humans.[78] Natasha Vita-More, American transhumanist and futurologist, explains that trans-human means "go outside the human condition and perception," and suggests that the biological human is not the last stage of evolution for humans."[79] Werner Delanoy and Iris van der Horst define transhumanism as envisioning a future in which technological advancements continuously improve human life forms, both human and posthuman.[80] Janina Loh describes transhumanism as a process of using technology to change a human (human 1.0) into a posthuman (x.0). Therefore, technology serves as the means via which the body and mind are transformed, leading to emancipation from human 1.0. Stated differently, transhumanism aims to continuously enhance and modernise humanity to eventually refer to a human 2.0, 3.0, 4.0, and so forth. Conversely, technological posthumanism seeks to surpass the human body and replace it with or build an artificial other that may no longer be recognisable as human, rather than changing the mind and body of the human 1.0.[81] At the beginning of transhumanism, a cultural and sociopolitical split emerged. As a result of waves of optimism on the one hand and techno-fear on the other, bioethicists publicly stated that biotechnology and new AI and nanotechnology technologies should be blocked, while proponents of technological acceleration asked for forums for discussion.[82] Technology is progressing despite this split and the fear of going beyond the limits. The goal of transhumanism has been and still is to create a space for critical analysis and forward-thinking ideas that can and will have a considerable influence on people, and the purpose of this influence is to educate the public.[83] Therefore, the education and understanding of technology are crucial parts of the development and enhancement of humans. The main task of transhumanism is to improve the human condition, which includes the unique aspects of being human[84] described above.

Nevertheless, blending humans and technology, creating humanised robots, or even not comprehending anything that seemingly goes beyond reality and what is possible, can evoke feelings of the uncanny. The uncanny is a term initially mentioned by Ernst Jentsch and later elaborated on by Sigmund Freud. According to Freud, "the uncanny "('the unhomely') is something familiar ('homely', 'homey') that has been repressed and then reappears and that

[78] Hans Moravec, "Robots, Re-Evolving Mind," *Cerebrum* 3, no. 2 (2000): 34.
[79] Vita-More, "History of Transhumanism," 50.
[80] Werner Delanoy and Iris van der Horst, "Transhumanism, Language Education, and Young Adult Literature: Neal Shusterman's Arc of a Scythe Trilogy," *Children's Literature in English Language Education* 9, no. 2 (2021): 13.
[81] Janina Loh, *Trans- und Posthumanismus: Zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2018), 43.
[82] Vita-More, "History of Transhumanism," 51.
[83] Vita-More, "History of Transhumanism," 52.
[84] Vita-More, "History of Transhumanism," 59.

everything uncanny satisfies this condition."[85] He describes this state as that "belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread."[86] There has been said a lot about this concept. One of the possible definitions is also "an anxious uncertainty about what is real caused by an apparent impossibility."[87] The professor of English and the author, Nicholas Royle, wrote a book-length study of the uncanny, in which he states that uncanny is "a flickering moment of embroilment in the experience of something at once strange and familiar."[88] He continues by saying that it involves an element of instability, a feeling of suspense and uncertainty, in particular "who one is and what is being experienced."[89] It can also be the crisis of nature, addressing everything that one would have assumed to be part of nature, including human nature,[90] therefore, it is related to the concept of dehumanisation and the feeling of strangeness, devoid of human nature, not being entirely human. But the uncanny is not simply an experience of strangeness or alienation – it can take the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context or vice versa,[91] which also means that it comes in the uncertainties of silence, solitude and darkness.[92] This paper works mainly with the supernatural nature and anxiety, concretely tied to technology. The uncanny arises together with technological progress because every time there is something new and incomprehensible, it may cause fear and distress, which highly corresponds to how the interwar authors saw progress and what they were afraid of.

In conclusion, the concepts examined in this chapter, humanness, dehumanisation, anthropomorphism, artificial intelligence, transhumanism, and the uncanny, together frame the evolving boundaries of what it means to be human. Humanness, rooted in emotional intelligence, moral values, and compassion, serves as the ethical and philosophical benchmark. Dehumanisation marks a departure from these values, often facilitated by systems or technologies that erode compassion and moral clarity. While representing technological progress and the aspiration to transcend human limitations, artificial intelligence and transhumanism simultaneously challenge traditional notions of humanity. Artificial intelligence is an algorithm capable of approaching the same capacity and competence as a human being, but nowadays it is almost beyond the cognition of an ordinary person, and transhumanism's

[85] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny,* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 152.
[86] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 123.
[87] Mark Windsor, "What Is the Uncanny?" *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 59, no. 1 (2019): 51.
[88] Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 1.
[89] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 1.
[90] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 1.
[91] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 1.
[92] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 2.

goal is to explore these limits as it aims to enhance humankind. Anthropomorphism illustrates the tendency to attribute human qualities to non-human entities, especially as machines become more advanced. At the same time, the uncanny reveals the psychological unease that arises when the familiar becomes unsettlingly strange, often triggered by human-like machines. Together, these concepts highlight the tension between human nature and technological transformation, urging a critical reflection on the future of humanity.

2 Dehumanising Impact of Technology

This chapter explores how interwar and contemporary authors perceive the loss of humanity due to technological advancement. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) depicts technology as a tool for dehumanising society. H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) suggests that people might degenerate and deteriorate due to unchecked technological progress. His other book, *The Invisible Man* (1897), ponders the pursuit of invisibility and questions the ethical consequences of such an invention. On the other hand, in his novel *Scythe* (2016), one of the contemporary authors, Neal Shusterman, illustrates a perfect utopia with high emphasis on moral standards and technological enhancement in compliance with ethics; still, with a space for mistakes. Another contemporary author, Sarah Maria Griffin, discusses in her novel *Spare and Found Parts* (2016) the fear of dehumanisation by blending with machines; nevertheless, she again offers hope. This chapter analyses both pessimistic features in interwar novels and pessimistic and optimistic features in the contemporary ones and shows the distinctions.

Dehumanising people and subjugating their will to the will of others is the purpose of science and technology in *Brave New World*. The World State's population are enslaved to their Controllers' wills from birth through the application of science and technology, leading to irreversible conditioning through applied psychology and hypnotic sleep learning. This society represents the technologically advanced era in which moral and ethical values were rejected and abandoned to pursue happiness. Happiness is delivered by social stability, but at a significant loss of humanness: "But that's the price we have to pay for stability. You've got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art."[93] Like many real-life political philosophies, here as well, social stability must be maintained at the expense of individual freedom. Science provides the controllers with the ability to access people's personalities and modify them to fit into the designated categories.[94] The Caste system produces thousands of identical workers capable of doing the same work without hesitation, resulting in a powerful state that has ultimate control over its subjects since it stops them from individual thinking: "Ninety-six identical twins working ninety-six identical machines."[95] The decision makers themselves choose what the national interests are and make indisputable rules while arguing that national interest can be done without reference to moral considerations.[96] Despite the initial impression of a utopian, tranquil society where the Alphas

[93] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), 220.
[94] Lela Zhamurashvili, "Dehumanized society in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World," *Human and Social Sciences Review* 3, no. 2 (2014): 139.
[95] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 7.
[96] Kelman, "Violence," 46.

use science to redefine and improve things, the world becomes less peaceful when it is learned that the government uses science for harmful purposes. The students enter the Neo-Pavlovian Conditioning Rooms and witness the conditioning of eight-month-old Delta babies to hate flowers and books: "Now we proceed to rub in the lesson with a mild electric shock. [...] There was something desperate, almost insane, about the sharp spasmodic yelps to which they now gave utterance."[97] This scene demonstrates the complete deprivation of compassion and humanness because the characters watch the suffering of small children through a scientific lens, believing in technological progress at all costs. When performing immoral acts, the perpetrator eventually loses his ability to act morally, disregarding his sense of duty and human empathy.[98] Haslam et al. claim that "moral standing and moral action are entwined with humanness,"[99] therefore, these actions are dehumanised. Whether technology demands a sacrifice of human identity is a recurring theme in *Brave New World*.[100] The Bokanovsky process, which is a fictional process of human cloning in the book, making exact genetic duplicates of the original, is the most effective way to reveal the complete dehumanisation of human beings. "Making ninety-six human beings grow where only one grew before. Progress."[101] Turning the activity into highly programmed, mechanical, and routine processes minimises the need for moral decision-making and the number of potential moral dilemmas.[102] The undervaluation of life is the danger this practice presents to society. Biological reproduction is seen as repugnant, and children are created in artificial wombs: "For you must remember that in those days of gross viviparous reproduction, children were always brought up by their parents and not in State Conditioning Centres."[103] Carl Teichrib talks about human DNA and suggests that the research reveals humans could have the ability to modify genetic composition to enhance positive qualities and inhibit unfavourable ones. It might mean the eradication of diseases and extending lifespan. The creation of designer offspring in the womb and even the introduction of DNA from other species into the human code are other potential results,[104] which highly reflect Huxley's concerns displayed in *Brave New World* about the future of reproduction in test tubes and the fear of complete

[97] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 21.
[98] Kelman, "Violence," 52.
[99] Haslam et al., "Humanness, Dehumanization, and Moral Psychology," 204.
[100] Aseel Hatif Jassam and Hadeel Hatif Jassam, "Science Fiction and Technological Advancement as Soft Powers to Control Human Genes in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World," *Global Proceedings Repository* 10, no. 1 (2019): 83.
[101] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 6.
[102] Kelman, "Violence," 46.
[103] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 24.
[104] Carl Teichrib, "The Rise of Techno-Gods: The Merging of Transhumanism and Spirituality," *Forcing Change* 4, no. 10 (October 2010): 2.

dehumanisation of biological processes, since even though diseases-less and immortal life sounds interesting, it is exactly which Huxley warns from. The artificiality of the process might deprive of the warmth that is a crucial aspect of humanness. Because the individual no longer matters, any death is considered unimportant: "Undoing all their wholesome death-conditioning with this disgusting outcry–as though death were something terrible, as though any one mattered as much as all that!"[105] The character of Henry Foster also illustrates this by saying: "Murder kills only the individual—and, after all, what is an individual?"[106] As it seems, human life and individuality lose all significance: "We can make a new one with the greatest ease—as many as we like."[107] Through technology, many copies of an individual can be made, but many things would be sacrificed to accomplish human cloning, including man's humanity, individuality, and freedom.[108] People divided into groups according to their conditioning, and roles only contribute to the non-individuality:

> "I suppose Epsilons don't really mind being Epsilons," she said aloud.
> "Of course they don't. How can they? They don't know what it's like being anything else. We'd mind, of course. But then we've been differently conditioned. Besides, we start with a different heredity."
> "I'm glad I'm not an Epsilon," said Lenina, with conviction.[109]

Marie Oldfield says that presenting one group as "less than" the self-perceived superior group and forcing either greater division to defend an existing belief system or the creation of a belief system to be spread to the populace or to compel compliance of a perceived inferior group are the two main goals of dehumanisation.[110] The ones who rule the society and support the stratification pursue the people to submit to the system without hesitation, and seek it through technological advances. Peter Firchow argues that Huxley was a major influence in waking modern man up to the terrible paradise of mechanical advancement. He believes Huxley's point was not to predict what will happen to the technology but rather what will happen to a man. [111] According to Firchow, *Brave New* World portrays a civilisation that has degraded man to the status of a machine because its values, or lack thereof, are dominated by scientific

[105] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 206.
[106] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 148.
[107] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 148.
[108] Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), 246.
[109] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 74.
[110] Marie Oldfield, "Dehumanisation and the future of technology," *International Conference on AI and the Digital Economy* 1, no. 1 (2023): 4.
[111] Peter Firchow, "Science and Conscience in Huxley's 'Brave New World,'" *Contemporary Literature* 16, no. 3 (summer 1975): 302.

technology.[112] The values, such as human relationships, emotions, and deep feelings, are lost.[113] The mantra "everyone belongs to everyone else"[114] is taught through hypnopaedia, which only eradicates individual emotional attachments; promiscuity is a new order. The motherhood and parenting are lost due to the Bokanovsky process, and they are considered as something disgusting: "He couldn't look more upset if I'd made a dirty joke–asked him who his mother was, or something like that."[115] Love is prevented: "The greatest care is taken to prevent you from loving any one too much."[116] The feelings are controlled and blunted by the drug called soma: "And do remember that a gramme is better than a damn."[117] It is given to the citizens to keep them under control, avoid real emotions, and prevent rebellion. Woiak notes that the novel's extreme scenario, which includes totalitarianism, emotional repression, ignorance and apathy, widespread consumerism, and vacuous entertainment like soma and promiscuity, has most frequently been interpreted as a warning against the dehumanising effects of technology and the expanding power of cultural trends that Huxley detested.[118] *Brave New World* provides a common warning about "a near-certain hopelessness with respect to the domination of technology and science."[119] Jonathan Glover discusses the dangers of the loss of humanness due to technology, and he mentions that the combination of killing technology and human agents' robotic obedience could lead to unheard-of levels of inhumanity. He warns against the consequences of unquestioning obedience and claims that it is important to remember that moral identification alone is insufficient. He says that moral identity must be based on human reactions rather than being antagonistic to them; despite leaders or ideologies that tell them differently, it is essential that individuals maintain their humanity and their scepticism.[120] In the novel, "characters remain constant throughout a whole lifetime,"[121] which means deprived of their humanity, and when people are denied humanness, they are implicitly or explicitly compared to objects, automatons, robots, or machines.[122] Therefore, *Brave New World* portrays

[112] Firchow, "Science and Conscience," 301.
[113] Zhamurashvili, "Dehumanized society," 139.
[114] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 43.
[115] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 58.
[116] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 237.
[117] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 55.
[118] J. Woiak, "Designing a Brave New World: Eugenics, Politics, and Fiction," *The Public Historian* 29, no. 3 (2007): 107.
[119] Selçuk Tatar, "The Role of Science, Technology and Apocalypse in the Dystopian Fictions: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*," *Sivas Cumhuriyet University Faculty of Letters Journal of Social Sciences* 45, no. 1 (June 2021): 263.
[120] Glover, *Humanity*, 396–397.
[121] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 55.
[122] Haslam et al., "Humanness, Dehumanization, and Moral Psychology," 207.

technology as a weapon for destroying humanity by turning people into programmable machines devoid of free will and personality.

The ultimate dehumanisation is reflected in H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* when humanity evolves into two species, both dehumanised in consequence of unchecked technological progress as well as the lack of morality. Alexander Scherr argues that although the majority of the book is set in the far future, the novel is replete with late Victorian anxieties that were articulated by interwar writers, including Wells.[123] One of them is the degeneration of humans, and the novel has been read in such a context.[124] The book tells the story of a Time Traveller who invents a time machine to wander to the future to the year 802,701, where he finds two human races, Eloi and Morlock. He soon learns that the latter are underground dwellers who consume flesh, unlike the "above-ground" Eloi, who are vegetarians. He concludes to his horror that Morlocks are cannibals preying on Eloi: "These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon."[125] Even though the descendants of humans are supposed to be morally, intellectually and cognitively better than the late Victorian people, the truth is quite the opposite. In the late 19th century, degeneration was also a moral concern.[126] Scherr outlines that Wells makes it challenging to decide which species are morally repugnant in the novel.[127] The Morlocks are not only physically disgusting, but they also lack ethical principles;[128] they are bestially dehumanised.[129] According to Marie Oldfield, the goal of dehumanisation is to eliminate other people's humanity by making them seem like an object or something really undesirable,[130] and the Time Traveller finds it hard to admit that the Morlocks are descendants of humans, or humans at all. They are described as ugly and "less human and more remote than our cannibal ancestors of three or four thousand years ago,"[131] and also "solitary, white, ape-like creatures"[132] as well as "bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing."[133] He claims to feel "a vague sense of something familiar"[134] when

[123] Alexander Scherr, "The Morlock-Eloi Illusion: Shifting Monstrosities in H.G. Wells' The Time Machine in the Context of the Degeneration Discourse," *International Journal of English Studies* 30, no. 3 (Winter 2019): 124.
[124] Scherr, "Shifting Monstrosities," 121.
[125] H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (San Diego: ICON Group International, 2005), 62.
[126] Scherr, "Shifting Monstrosities," 123.
[127] Scherr, "Shifting Monstrosities," 124.
[128] Scherr, "Shifting Monstrosities," 128.
[129] Isabella Maria Engberg, "Vegetarianism as a Mirror of Human Morality in the Speculative Worlds of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915)," *Speculative Questions* 24 (2023): 93.
[130] Oldfield, "Anthropomorphism and its Impact," 119.
[131] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 62.
[132] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 45.
[133] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 47.
[134] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 58.

encountering the Morlocks, suggesting the similarity with Sigmund Freud's definition of uncanny, which is something deeply embedded and familiar in one's mind that has only been estranged by the suppression.[135] In other words, something which reminds us of the human, but not quite. Uncanny is also tied to something "gruesome or terrible, above all death and corpses, cannibalism,"[136] and feelings of repulsion and distress.[137] This relates to dehumanisation, for instance, Joshua Bulleid claims the Morlocks to have been "dehumanised" through cannibalism.[138] The rich starved them when supplies ran low, so they were compelled to eat "rats and such-like vermin"[139] before turning cannibalistic. The Time Traveller cannot understand how the society he finds himself in works. Even though he "saw a real aristocracy, armed with a perfected science and working to a logical conclusion the industrial system of today,"[140] he ponders where the Eloi gain their clothes, etc. and who are the workers: "I could find no machinery, no appliances of any kind. Yet these people were clothed in pleasant fabrics that must at times need renewal, and their sandals, though undecorated, were fairly complex specimens of metalwork. Somehow, such things must be made." The Time Traveller recognises while discovering Morlock's Under-world that they are the owners of the technological advancement of this future world: "Feeling my way along the tunnel, I found the noise of machinery grow louder."[141] He concludes then that "the Upper-world people might once have been the favoured aristocracy, and the Morlocks their mechanical servants."[142] The Morlocks materially provide for the Eloi, they: "made their garments, I inferred, and maintained them in their habitual needs."[143] Even though they possess the machinery and the skills needed to survive, which might seem like an attribute of a civilised person, they are morally degenerated. Due to their repugnant appearance and cannibalistic behaviour, The Time Traveller feels that: "it was impossible, somehow, to feel any humanity in the things."[144] Despite this, not only the Morlocks can be read as monstrous in the book.[145] Eloi, and their "lack of interest"[146] as well as the "physical slightness of the people, their lack of intelligence, and those big abundant ruins,

[135] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 152.
[136] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 2.
[137] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 123.
[138] Joshua Bulleid, *Vegetarianism and Science Fiction: A History of Utopian Animal Ethics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023) 73.
[139] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 62.
[140] Wells, *The Time Machine*, *55*.
[141] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 54.
[142] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 57.
[143] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 58.
[144] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 68.
[145] Scherr, "Shifting Monstrosities," 125.
[146] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 29.

and it strengthened my belief in a perfect conquest of Nature. For after the battle comes Quiet."[147] These quotes portray this seemingly perfect, beautiful race as degenerated and deteriorated. Moreover, their indifference results in not caring about other people's lives and becoming inconsiderate and dehumanised. In the scene where the female character, Weena, struggles for her life, "none made the slightest attempt to rescue the weakly crying little thing which was drowning before their eyes."[148] Only the Time Traveller does not hesitate to save her. It indicates that the second species also degenerated morally, and it implies that the Eloi were the ones who enslaved the Morlocks prior to their exile underground, leaving them with no option but to turn cannibalistic. For those who degenerate, there exists "no law, no decency, no modesty."[149] Scherr surprisingly states that the more the moral depravity of the Eloi is highlighted, the more the Morlocks' inventiveness and ingenuity will seem like Victorian virtues[150] and that it is still unclear which is worse, whether the Eloi's feminine dislike of exertion or the Morlocks' cannibalistic brutality.[151] The Time Traveller learns that humanity's technological advancement and improvement was a failure and that the Earth and life as we know it should vanish when he travels even farther into the future and finds the planet almost destroyed, with only enormous crabs and butterflies remaining: "all the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives–all that was over."[152] Even though he himself invented a wonderful machine capable of travelling through time, the improvements in technology do not guarantee a brighter future. Kellner and Best state that Wells paints a horrifying picture of humanity's future in a brutally pessimistic and nihilistic manner and that the book envisions an entropic collapse of the Earth itself as well as of civilisation.[153] To sum up, the Morlocks and Eloi are not only dehumanised human races, but also the possession or non-possession of technology does not ensure moral superiority. Because those possessing it can harm others, technology is not viewed as a helper but rather as a tool for evil; the novel's conclusion does not show any signs of optimism.

Another Wells' novel, *The Invisible Man*, demonstrates the dangers of isolating scientific discovery from ethical considerations, leading to moral decay and dehumanisation. The pursuit of invisibility can be seen as a metaphor for unchecked ambition that disconnects

[147] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 33.
[148] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 43.
[149] Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), 18.
[150] Scherr, "Shifting Monstrosities," 129.
[151] Scherr, "Shifting Monstrosities," 131.
[152] Wells, *The Time Machine*, 89.
[153] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, "H.G. Wells, Biotechnology, and Genetic Engineering: A Dystopic Vision," in *The Postmodern Adventure: Science, Technology, and Cultural Studies at the Third Millennium* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001), 4.

individuals from societal and moral frameworks. The main protagonist, Griffin, a brilliant scientist, is bending the laws of nature and tries to play God: "I was invisible, and I was only just beginning to realise the extraordinary advantage my invisibility gave me."[154] Even if he is a great scientist, his ambitious temperament and reckless use of scientific power make him a socially bankrupt individual with a poor moral code. Griffin is not immediately corrupted by invisibility; rather, it accentuates his preexisting shortcomings, such as disrespect for others, demonstrating how technology can amplify the worst aspects of human nature when ethical controls are not in place. This initial idealisation neglects the social and ethical implications: "To do such a thing would be to transcend magic. And I beheld, unclouded by doubt, a magnificent vision of all that invisibility might mean to a man—the mystery, the power, the freedom. Drawbacks I saw none. You have only to think!"[155] According to David Noble, technology is frequently framed in religious terms so that people can perceive it as a means of regaining abilities they never had. In particular, he contends that technology has come to be associated with the concept of transcendence, according to which technology offers a way to be saved from the constraints of humankind and the brokenness of the world.[156] These technologically advanced forms are praised for exhibiting the finest aspects of humanity; for Griffin, however, his enhancement had the opposite effect, and he went astray, becoming morally repulsive. Griffin's repugnant morals are also shown in the following lines, where he ponders the usage of his invisibility, stating that "it's particularly useful, therefore, in killing. I can walk round a man, whatever weapon he has, choose my point, strike as I like."[157] The Invisible Man obtains enormous power and victory over science through invisibility; he can steal, murder, and mistreat anyone without worrying about being discovered. Towards the end of the book, Griffin seeks safety in the house of another scientist, Dr Kemp. Griffin thinks Kemp will comprehend the scientific technicalities and share his dedication to causing terror and transforming society, but he is so preoccupied with his own opinions that he fails to notice Kemp's disgust at his heinous plans since he only sees society as a tool to be used: "And that Invisible Man, Kemp, must now establish a Reign of Terror. [...] He must take some town like your Burdock and terrify and dominate it. He must issue his orders. [...] and all who disobey his orders he must kill, and kill all who would defend them."[158] Griffin intends to use science

[154] H. G. Wells, *The Invisible Man* (San Diego: ICON Group International, 2005), 124.
[155] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 114.
[156] David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 9.
[157] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 149.
[158] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 149.

as a tool of horror; the scientist will take on the role of a tyrant, choosing who will survive and who will perish. He becomes a monster in the process, losing all awareness of humanity.[159] Bindu Gahatraj states that Griffin's crimes pale in comparison to the murder of his father, which he does when he runs out of money: "I robbed the old man--robbed my father. The money was not his, and he shot himself."[160] Because he uses his scientific abilities to force his father to commit suicide in order to achieve his material gain, Gryphon views his father's death as a minor incident. When he starts concentrating only on the idea of invisibility and stops considering the ramifications of such a condition, he transforms from a scientist to a fanatic.[161] "I did not feel a bit sorry for my father. He seemed to me to be the victim of his own foolish sentimentality."[162] Gahatraj believes that Griffin presents himself as "an inhuman character."[163] Handcock claims that Griffin's status as an outsider is confirmed by his "inhuman" disregard for social graces. He isolates himself from the locals and seeks autonomy from the scientific community, which reflects his disconnection from society at large because he is reticent and worried that the credit for his scientific discoveries may be taken away from him.[164] At the end of the novel, Griffin is killed by the mob because his invisibility, achieved through scientific brilliance, isolates him and makes him a target for violence, an object of fear, rather than a figure of admiration:

> Surrounded by a crowd of ignorant and excited people, broken and wounded, betrayed and unpitied, that Griffin, the first of all men to make himself invisible, Griffin, the most gifted physicist the world has ever seen, ended in infinite disaster his strange and terrible career.[165]

The dehumanisation of the enraged mob mirrors his own; it also symbolises societal failure to respond to technological advancements rationally and compassionately, and the misuse of scientific knowledge for selfish and destructive ends. Moreover, it shows the immoral behaviour of the crowd and distances the victims. Jonathan Glover reflects on this. He talks about the usage of computers in violent crimes and therefore distancing from the victims. He asks whether people feel morally obliged when they do not directly commit the crime but help to invent a technology that would do it. He asks:

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[159] Bindu Gahatraj, "Critique of Ethical Degradation in Wells's *The Invisible Man*," *JournalNX: A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal* 7, no. 4 (April 2021): 137.
[160] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 114.
[161] Gahatraj, "Critique of Ethical Degradation," 144.
[162] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 116.
[163] Gahatraj, "Critique of Ethical Degradation," 144.
[164] Tarryn Handcock, "Revelation and the Unseen in H. G. Wells's *The Invisible Man*," *Colloquy: Text Theory Critique* 25 (2013): 43.
[165] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 178.

> The questions which need to be pressed are about the rationalizations which make the computer work seem so different. You would not do it alone, but would you take part in a collective stoning? Would you be the person who passes the stones to the killers? Would you help to make more punishments possible by inventing a remote-control technology for mass stoning?[166]

It demonstrates that the crowd that kills Grifin is dehumanised similarly to how he is. They lose their moral constraints and participate in a hideous crime only because, together, they do not feel the responsibility and become deprived of their humanness and morality. Bruno Latour challenges the notion that "technologies belong to the realm of means and morality to the realm of ends."[167] He states that "morality is no more human than technology"[168] because when he compares the two, he claims that neither a predetermined harmony nor an order that aligns with the relationships of means and ends exists between the two.[169] Concerning morality, Latour suggests that just as technology transforms our capabilities and interactions, morality also shapes and is moulded by these technological networks. Both morality and technology are co-constitutive, meaning they create and influence each other, challenging the traditional separation between human (moral) and non-human (technological) domains.[170] Considering *Brave New World* and *The Invisible Man*, Alexander J. Romiszowski states that it is possible for a scientist to act without regard to moral or societal norms in that he has the freedom to research and learn about any occurrence, including ones that might be viewed as immoral or socially undesirable, such as the feasibility of cloning human beings, performance improvement or investigating nuclear fusion as a potential endless energy source. However, the technologist nearly always has to make moral and ethical judgements about what is and is not acceptable when attempting to solve a particular issue. He believes it is sufficient for a scientist to focus nearly solely on the "can," but it is unacceptable for a technologist to disregard the "should."[171] However, Grifin, the one enhanced by technology and the crowd that fears him, proceed with their plans, including killing, regardless of the ethical considerations and consequences, demonstrating that *The Invisible Man* belongs to the future-technology-warning novels.

This tendency in interwar fiction to foreground the hopelessly destructive consequences of technology on humans and humaneness are not so pronouncedly echoed in recent fiction. In

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[166] Glover, *Humanity*, 409.
[167] Bruno Latour, "Morality and Technology: The End of the Means," *Theory, Culture & Society* 19, no. 5/6 (2002): 247.
[168] Latour, "Morality and Technology," 254.
[169] Latour, "Morality and Technology," 254.
[170] Latour, "Morality and Technology," 248.
[171] Alexander J. Romiszowski, "Technology and Moral or Ethical Values: Three Questions; Many More Answers," *Educational Technology* 52, no. 1 (January–February 2012): 14.

Neal Shusterman's *Scythe*, society has achieved utopia through an infallible artificial intelligence called the Thunderhead, which governs every aspect of life. All the suffering, such as disease, poverty, and death, has been eradicated, but because population control is still needed to regulate the number of people, the Scythedom, an independent organisation of Scythes, is responsible for it through the act of gleaning, which is similar to killing: "My job encompasses all aspects of life: preservation, protection, and the meting out of perfect justice—not just for humanity, but for the world. I rule the world of the living with a loving, incorruptible hand. And the scythedom rules the dead."[172] The Thunderhead represents technological perfection, while some of the Scythes expose the moral imperfections of humanity, raising questions about dehumanisation in a world without suffering. The Scythedom was envisioned as a profound institution to maintain balance, yet for some Scythes, such as Scythe Goddard, gleaning is a source of pleasure and satisfaction: "I see a day when new scythes will be chosen not because of some esoteric moral high ground, but because they enjoy the taking of life. After all, this is a perfect world—and in a perfect world, don't we all have the right to love what we do?"[173] His ostentatious killing of dozens of people at once transforms gleaning into a spectacle, depriving victims of their humanity and normalising violence as a type of entertainment: "Clearly the scythe was enjoying this. He shouldn't enjoy it—that's one of the basic precepts of Scythedom."[174] Gerben A. van Kleef et al. note that people with great levels of authority may have trouble relating to others because they are less empathetic and compassionate, and it is possible that the many advantages gained by those in positions of authority do not apply to interpersonal relationships.[175] By contrast, some Scythes, like Scythe Faraday, show the moral code by gleaning with respect and humility. However, because the Scythedom cannot be controlled by the otherwise omniscient Thunderhead, separation from it allows for unchecked human corruption and moral decay. Without the Thunderhead's oversight, they are free to interpret their roles subjectively. Consequently, the Thunderhead's perfection unintentionally contributes to dehumanisation because the moral void is magnified while Scythes are left unchecked. It seems paradoxical that when moral decisions are entirely up to humans, the technology designed to perfect humanity exposes its worst tendencies. "When it was decided that people needed to die in order to ease the tide of population growth, it was also decided that this must be the responsibility of humans. [...] I do not regret the decision, but I often wonder if

[172] Neal Shusterman, *Scythe* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 23.
[173] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 147.
[174] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 69.
[175] Gerben A. van Kleef et al., "Power, Distress, and Compassion: Turning a Blind Eye to the Suffering of Others," *Psychological Science* 19, no. 12 (2008): 1321.

the Thunderhead would have done a better job."[176] *Scythe* teaches morals and ethics because the corruptible Scythedom, further separated between genuinely honourable and vile scythes, contrasts sharply with the incorruptible Thunderhead.[177] Analysing further the dehumanised aspects of this world, death feels less significant because of the eradication of suffering and achieving immortality unless someone is gleaned. Moreover, the lack of traditional human struggles, such as survival, ambition, and disease, leads to embracing violence for stimulation. Werner Delanoy and Iris van der Horst argue that the question remains whether Shusterman's world is a utopia since "the majority of its immortal inhabitants seem to live meaningless and passive lives."[178] In *Thunderhead*, the second novel, Shusterman delves deeper into the dehumanising effects of a utopian society. In a world where individuals no longer face existential challenges, people struggle to find purpose and embrace acts of rebellion and violence. They cannot experience true joy or happiness either.[179] A group of people called unsavories who "found enjoyment in activities that bordered on the fringe of the law"[180] engage in destructive behaviour just for the thrill of disruption: "I began to recognize something in humanity that was ephemeral and hard to quantify, but definitely there. Simply put, humanity had a need to be bad."[181] George Steiner in *In Bluebeard's Castle* (1971) describes the state of 'ennui' as a multitude of frustrations and accumulated idleness that can occur when enthusiasm fades, and one does nothing for a long time, therefore becomes annoyed and sullen.[182] He argues that people in the 19th century were bored and longed for chaos; it was an age with accumulated energy that could not be discharged, which escalated in the World Wars. Steiner claims that the period after the battle of Waterloo is the root of this immense 'ennui'; he talks about how the generation afterwards was essentially bored because there was peace and men suffered from inactivity and felt that history had absolutely no meaning and would rather choose madness or death,[183] which may be similar to the feeling of the unsavories who simply see no reason to live and therefore want to be bad. The novel considers the effects of achieving immortality and biochemical happiness, arguing that by removing death and misery, life loses some significance and reduces people to beings without something to strive for.[184] Even then, the actions of

[176] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 52.
[177] Delanoy and van der Horst, "Transhumanism, Language Education and Young Adult Literature," 26.
[178] Delanoy and van der Horst, "Transhumanism, Language Education and Young Adult Literature," 21.
[179] Delanoy and van der Horst, "Transhumanism, Language Education and Young Adult Literature," 22.
[180] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 56.
[181] Neal Shusterman, *Thunderhead* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 88.
[182] George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes Towards the Redefinition of Culture* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), 9–11.
[183] Steiner, *In Bluebeard's* Castle, *17*–18.
[184] Delanoy and van der Horst, "Transhumanism, Language Education and Young Adult Literature," 25.

unsavories are under the supervision of the Thunderhead, and no actual harm ever happens: "I mean, there's gotta be some rules, right? Doesn't happen much, though. I mean, not even the worst of unsavories actually wants to make someone deadish. No one's been that violent since the Age of Mortality."[185] This suggests that even though in a perfect world exists a group of people despising the system, there is hope for correction and future improvement: "Besides, eventually even the most defiant of unsavories will settle."[186] Despite this, in both cases with unsavories and Scythe Goddard, the absence of meaningful challenges leads them to seek fulfilment in morally corrupt ways. They embody the darker consequences of a utopian world, such as the dehumanising effects of boredom, moral stagnation, and the search for meaning. Their existence in the novel argues that immoral behaviour cannot be completely eliminated even in a society governed by perfect technology. Nevertheless, characters like Scythe Faraday and Scythe Curie, who stick with the moral code, embody the ideals of compassion and respect for life, demonstrating that ethical behaviour is possible even within the flawed Scythedom: "'Therein lies the paradox of the profession,'" Faraday said. "Those who wish to have the job should not have it . . . and those who would most refuse to kill are the only ones who should."[187] Their apprentices, Rowan and Citra, the candidates for new Scythes, represent the hope for the next generations. Because they are likeable, moral, and sympathetic, Delanoy and van der Horst argue that they are excellent role models.[188] They can resist dehumanisation and advocate for reform in the face of systemic flaws: "You are both made of the highest moral fiber," Faraday told them, "and I believe the high ground on which you stand will compel you into my apprenticeship—not because I force it upon you, but because you choose it."[189] Rowan, guided by Scythe Faraday, appreciates his sense of justice and a desire to restore balance: "He found that Scythe Faraday's moral imperative and ethical high ground infused Rowan with purpose."[190] Citra shows a strong moral compass and grapples deeply with the ethical weight of gleaning, viewing it as a sacred responsibility: "But more importantly, contemplating the moral and ethical high ground that a traditional scythe must always take. There was nothing "old guard" about it. It was simply right."[191] *Scythe* imparts morals and ethics. The corruptible Scythedom, further separated into the Old and New Guards with a significant division between genuinely honourable and vile scythes, contrasts sharply with the incorruptible Thunderhead.

[185] Shusterman, *Thunderhead*, 148.
[186] Shusterman, *Thunderhead*, 152.
[187] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 41.
[188] Delanoy, and van der Horst, "Transhumanism, Language Education, and Young Adult Literature," 23.
[189] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 41.
[190] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 75.
[191] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 340.

Shusterman suggests that technology alone cannot create a perfect society; instead, it requires human compassion and responsibility. The novel balances the darker themes of dehumanisation and moral corruption with a sense of hope, suggesting that humanity's capacity for compassion and ethical growth can coexist with technological advancement.

Spare and Found Parts, by Sarah Maria Griffin, delves into a post-apocalyptic society where technology has led to humanity's downfall. However, it once again shows that it can lead to a resurgence. The survivors, after a catastrophic epidemic caused by technology's misuse, try to rebuild a new society but struggle, relying on prosthetics and mechanical enhancements to compensate for lost limbs. This world, Black Water City, is governed by strict rules and an overreaching fear of repeating the mistakes of the past. All code is considered blasphemous, and computers are strictly forbidden, which is seen as the reason that led to near destruction. The story centres on Nell Crane, the daughter of a renowned scientist who invented augmented limbs for sick people who were born without them. Nell's journey begins when she decides to build a humanoid friend in a world where society is trying to recover from its overreliance on technology. Born with a mechanical heart, Nell is both a product of the past and a symbol of the future. Besides, she also challenges society's fears while exploring the boundaries between humanity and machines. There are various aspects of dehumanisation in the novel, and one of them is the main character herself. She feels distanced from the rest of society because of her metal heart, since she is the only one with a mechanical organ. The paradoxical view, representation, or treatment of a human being as something that is not fully human is known as dehumanisation.[192] Nell feels alienated because of her artificial heart, and since she is the only one with it, she is treated differently, uniquely: "She would have traded the scar and the ticking for a mechanical arm, or leg, in a heartbeat—or whatever the machine did, close enough to a heartbeat that her body believed it was real."[193] She cannot connect with people and cannot differentiate whether she feels more like a machine or a human:

> Nell was certain that she'd viciously alienate them in less than five minutes flat. If it wasn't her dour expression or the scar that ran from her chin to her gut, then the ticking would send them running. There's not much thrill in kissing a grandfather clock in a girl's dress. Nobody wants to dance with a time bomb.[194]

She is dehumanised in a way that she despises humans because she is too unusual. That is the reason why she decides to build a companion so she would have someone "to confide in when

[192] De Ruiter, "To Be or Not to Be Human," 74.
[193] Sarah Maria Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts* (London: HarperCollins, 2016), 12.
[194] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 25–26.

the people around her were too much for her to handle. Too flawed. Too human."[195] The world in which she lives requires everyone to contribute, to invent something original that would work to improve life in a community, and even though computers are prohibited, she proceeds with making a humanoid so that she would feel less emotionally detached:

> I thought if I could build a person that maybe he would be like me. You know that people are difficult for me and that because of this"—she gestured to the metronome beating out of her chest—"I can be difficult for people, too. But I have a way through all that now, and it's a contribution. If I can use a computer for good, who knows what we could learn?[196]

The most serious issue in this matter is that everybody fears the past and the technological epidemic that has brought about the end of the world. According to James Williams, the pandemic crisis can be attributed to the tremendous advancements in human-nonhuman connection,[197] which might be the same in this novel. People in Black Water City believe that the computers dehumanised humans to the point where they caused a catastrophic illness; they became too attached to the machines and their abilities. Though anthropomorphised robots appear more alive, they might potentially be viewed as dangerous.[198] The excessively friendly robots may be perceived as unsettling and uncanny.[199] Nell has the opinion that there is nothing to be afraid of when it comes to technology and intelligent machines:

> Asking for a computer was like asking for a gun; no matter what side of the folklore and history told in stories your family fell on, everybody knew that computers were at the root of the Turn, at the root of the epidemic. They frightened the wrong people, and the wrong people wanted them gone. There was a reason they were nowhere to be found among the wreckage of the city. Still, they had the capacity to imitate a human brain. She needed one.[200]

It is not specified how exactly the epidemic occurred, but it produced a fear of technology on a large scale. It is connected to the concept of technophobia. Daniel Dinello compares technology to a virus that becomes the source of death and humanity's end. Similarly to a virus, it grows in "an invasive, self-governing force that spreads and realises its potentially harmful potential."[201] Victor Stoica claims that it is obvious that dread brought on by technology can drastically alter

[195] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 55.
[196] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 70.
[197] James Williams, "Humanity, Technology, and Nature: A Recipe for Crises?" *ICON: Journal of the International Committee for the History of Technology* 25, no. 2 (2020): 8.
[198] Kim, Schmitt, and Thalmann, "Eliza in the Uncanny Valley," 2.
[199] Kim, Schmitt, and Thalmann, "Eliza in the Uncanny Valley," 10.
[200] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 65.
[201] Daniel Dinello, *Technophobia! Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 247.

human behaviour and have a disastrous impact on society,[202] which is the case in Black Water City. "They burned the clever machines out of the world, but before the Turn, doctors and scientists had just about discovered how to make things like this. That's why the first toxic pulses went out; people just loved their clever machines too much."[203] Nell, however, believes that computers can be used for good purposes. Even though she feels detached from humanness, at the same time, she is compassionate and humane because she craves love and someone to hold on to. Her reason for building a humanoid is "selfish to try so you can have…a friend,"[204] but, unlike Griffin in *The Invisible Man*, she wants to use science for a good purpose – to serve herself, but also to contribute to society–she strives to build a helper. "What it could teach us. If I could get one to speak, maybe it could even reach outside our island, reach the rest of the world. Think of what that could mean."[205] John McCarthy defines artificial intelligence as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines."[206] She thinks that when people stop being afraid, they could move forward: "Surely, if there was a way to make a computer look like something people trusted, there'd be a chance for a world full of clever machines again. Friendly-looking computers, full of knowledge, full of answers."[207] In the study with anthropomorphised robots, it was discovered that the more human-like the appearance of the robot was, the more the participants in the survey ascribed human-like aspects to them, like emotions, planning, morality and self-determination.[208] Therefore, that is what Nell hopes for: to build a companion that people could trust. However, there is also a slight resemblance with *The Invisible Man* because the means to reach her goal to make this humanoid called Io are morally questionable since she steals mechanical limbs and her father's work and takes advantage of her friend's feelings for her.[209] After she steals the limbs and flees away, she "held herself as though she had done nothing wrong, as though she had committed no strange or terrible act and was not about to commit another,"[210] which is to build Io despite the threat of triggering another epidemic. On the other hand, unlike Griffin, she realises her deeds and reflects on them later. Nell's parents are another example of technological dehumanisation, embodying the anxieties of writers from the interwar period. Her mother, Cora Crane, died

[202] Stoica Victor, "Anxiety Over the Future: Cultural and Historical Insights into Technological Fears," *Technium Social Sciences Journal* 60, no. 1 (August 2024): 248.
[203] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 93.
[204] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 71.
[205] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 70.
[206] McCarthy, *What Is Artificial Intelligence?*, 2.
[207] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 23.
[208] Oldfield, "Anthropomorphism and its Impact," 111–112.
[209] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 180.
[210] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 108.

when Nell was a little girl because "she'd been putting metal inside herself. Cora had been operating on herself. Before she was pregnant with Nell, after she was pregnant, conducting experiments on herself."[211] She represents the greed with which the people wanted to achieve something impossible, striving for immortality and trying to go beyond the limits of nature: "How could one human ever expect to keep something so huge for herself? How could her mother have hoped to contain power like this in her own body?"[212] Her father secretly strives to resurrect the dead body of her mother for several years: "Her father might have been a madman. He might have preserved her mother, but he'd been about to bring her back to life,"[213] which also shows how dehumanised, amoral, and unnatural his character is, fitting the role of a mad scientist. Nell, on the other hand, symbolises humanness and hope for the future:

> She would make sure nobody ever fell poisoned from her work, from her discoveries. Just because her mother had been so mercenary didn't mean she had to be. [...] How could they both have been such wretched disasters? Their violent, unchecked ambition appalled Nell. How could they both have been so greedy? Knowledge and glory regardless of the price.[214]

She realises she does not want to be like her parents and wants to lead people to a brighter future. Establishing explicit ethical standards, openness and responsibility in technical development, regulatory supervision, public involvement, and ongoing monitoring and assessment of artificial intelligence systems are all effective ways to manage risks associated with it,[215] which is something that M. S. Farahani and G. Ghasemi point out. At the end of the book, Nell takes responsibility for these issues and for the fact that the dehumanising impact of technology will not repeat in the years to come, and that society can thrive.

This chapter highlights the shift from interwar pessimism about technology that would deprive humans of humanity to contemporary authors sharing the tendency to show that humanity can endure, or even evolve, alongside technological changes. Wells' *The Invisible Man*, the same as *The Time Machine* and Huxley's *Brave New World* do not offer hope for the future of humanness; the characters disregard the ethical consequences of their actions and do not hesitate to proceed with their plans. Moreover, the books suggest that technological advancement may lead to the destruction of compassion and humanness and that fear and misunderstanding, the same as the misuse of enhancing can destroy the humanness in the

[211] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 184.
[212] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 185.
[213] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 122.
[214] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 185.
[215] M. S. Farahani and G. Ghasemi, "Will Artificial Intelligence Threaten Humanity?" *Sustainable Economies* 2, no. 2 (2024): 18.

society as such. On the other hand, contemporary authors, even though they picture a similar danger of dehumanisation of society through technology, still offer some hope for the future and a vision of a new and better society in the end. The characters take responsibility for their actions and act with a moral compass in mind, as well as compassion and understanding, even in the face of enormous technological progress.

3 From the Uncanny to Transhumanism

This chapter portrays shifts from interwar authors' anxieties (in H. G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* and *Men Like Gods*) regarding the uncanny (a feeling of something beautiful, but at the same time frightening[216]) and unnatural human enhancements to explorations of a more recent concept, transhumanism, in the works of contemporary authors, Sarah Maria Griffin's *Spare and Found Parts*, and James Dashner's *The Mortality Doctrine*. It tries to demonstrate that blending humans and machines can redefine people's humanity and maps the evolution of this human-machine relationship, shown in the novels.

The uncanny invisibility disrupts societal norms as the protagonist in *The Invisible Man* uses his power for unethical purposes, and his enhancement corrupts him and disconnects him from society instead of bringing new possibilities to humanity through technology. The Victorian era's projected values, ambitions, and anxieties gave rise to the character of the "other." It may be used to describe characteristics of the individuated self that are deemed odd and undesirable, or it could be applied to anyone who does not fit the recognised model of the English subject,[217] which Griffin does not fulfil since the very beginning of the novel, rather provokes feelings of fear and suspicion in people. When his self-perception gets blurred due to the loss of his visible body, he becomes "other" through estrangement from himself, and his disenchantment with societal structure and order, as well as his physical defiance of accepted norms for social interaction and cultural involvement, are manifestations of his social alienation.[218] He is seen as a threat partly because he ruthlessly pursues his interests while defying society's norms and expectations.[219] However, the reason for being seen as a threat might be that he lost control over his enhancement, and therefore causes feelings of uneasiness. He lost control of his technological invention, in other words, what makes him inhuman, and at the same time, the aspects of his humanity, and does not even try to regain that control. He rather reinforces its absence, thus evoking the feelings of distrust, anxiety, fear and uncanny feelings typical of interwar authors. In the Freudian sense, the Invisible Man has a body that is "uncanny," out of control, and should have stayed repressed.[220] In other words, "something that

[216] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 2.
[217] Sean Purchase, *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature* (Gordonsville: Palgrave, 2006), 106–107.
[218] Handcock, "Revelation and the Unseen," 43.
[219] Handcock, "Revelation and the Unseen," 43.
[220] Dorota Wisniewska, "My Humanity is Only Skin Deep: The Monstrous Body, The Monstrous Self as Portrayed in Literary and Film Horror," in *Interiors: Interiority/Exteriority in Literary and Cultural Discourse*, ed. Sonia Front and Katarzyna Nowak (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 192.

should have remained secret and hidden but has come to light."[221] Its nothingness is what the villagers fear the most: "They were prepared for scars, disfigurements, tangible horrors, but nothing! [...] Nothingness, no visible thing at all!"[222] A person is uncanny when we credit him with malicious intention with the help of special powers.[223] The uncanny can also be described as "ghostly, concerned with the strange, weird, mysterious, with a flickering dense of something supernatural,"[224] corresponding to his supernatural powers to become invisible. However, not only does his invisibility cause terror, but also his character. Kellner and Best claim that Wells delivers human beings "shattering the limits of scientific possibility" and creating a new form of "freakish being, an alien among his own kind."[225] As he becomes "powerful, angry, and malignant, prepared for his last great struggle against the world,"[226] he is driven towards immoral behaviour and deranged visions and represents all that may go wrong with science.[227] Although he managed to improve his body through science, he failed to maintain the moral values and ethical inquiry that should be associated with scientific progress. Handcock claims that for the villagers in Iping, his figure represents the danger of the unknown, unmanaged, and hidden, something different from what is recognised and understood.[228] He evokes the feelings of horror: "It was worse than anything. Mrs. Hall, standing open-mouthed and horror struck, shrieked at what she saw, and made for the door of the house."[229] Since the invisible man represents the deterioration of the human soul, the villagers see in him what they do not want to see in themselves and ultimately kill him.[230] They can transcend the horrors of their estrangement and self-loathing by embracing Griffin's ugliness, which ultimately leads to the restoration of their confidence. Humans create their own image by "monsterising" Griffin's alter ego, portraying themselves as more advanced and less primitive than their invader.[231] Gliński talks about the picture of a stranger who "cannot be of any help to anyone in Iping," and who responds to any polite human activity with contempt and ignorance.[232] This implies that Wells' character lacks the potential to benefit society through his achievements, which he

[221] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 2.
[222] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 40.
[223] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 149.
[224] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 1.
[225] Best and Kellner, "H.G. Wells, Biotechnology, and Genetic Engineering," 5.
[226] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 161.
[227] Best and Kellner, "H.G. Wells, Biotechnology, and Genetic Engineering," 5.
[228] Handcock, "Revelation and the Unseen," 44.
[229] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 40.
[230] Marcin Gliński, "Monstrosity as a (counter-)pastoral construct in *The Invisible Man* by H.G. Wells," *Acta Philologica* 52 (2018): 43.
[231] Gliński, "Monstrosity as a (counter-)pastoral construct," 43.
[232] Gliński, "Monstrosity as a (counter-)pastoral construct," 39.

could have used for a good purpose, and offers neither hope for himself nor the future of society. Latour asserts that technologies are not just tools serving human intentions but are part of a complex network that influences and is influenced by human actions and moral considerations. This perspective challenges the conventional view that separates the functional domain of technology from the ethical domain of morality.[233] Doctor Kemp describes Griffin as "inhuman," as "pure selfishness," and claims that "he thinks of nothing but his own advantage, his own safety."[234] He is horrified by Griffin's actions: "He's not only invisible," he said, "but he's mad! Homicidal!"[235] McLean argues that the two characters, Dr Kemp and Griffin, are contrasted. Dr Kemp is the scientist who stays involved with the scientific community and works to improve society via his acts, while *The Invisible Man* demonstrates Wells' perspective on the social responsibilities of scientists who callously chase personal desires.[236] According to Alexis Carrel, nowadays, people can change themselves thanks to science, which has changed the physical world, revealed some of life's hidden workings, and taught how to change and shape the body and soul into a desirable form.[237] However, Griffin wishes to misuse his newly gained powers to become a "God-like" figure that might ruthlessly rule the world, and he seeks only his own ambitions with no regard for morality or humanness. The uncanny surrounding him contributes to the fear of technology and scientific advancements present in the interwar works, as his discovery threatened to bring terror to Earth, though ultimately, his over-ambition caused his downfall, and hope for humanity through progress was not achieved.

Men Like Gods foreshadows a more optimistic view, even though Wells reflects the interwar anxieties, such as the overreaching technological limits in the pursuit of perfection, the worry of being replaced by advanced beings and the failure of human nature to live up to ideals of utopia. Wells's book presents a vision where humanity can evolve to a significantly advanced state, and it achieves this by imagining a utopia characterised by technological, ethical, and mental perfection. The inhabitants of Utopia, called Utopians, possess, for example, increased intelligence, peaceful cohabitation and the ability to communicate telepathically without spoken language. Wells depicts a society free from war, disease, and lack of knowledge. It criticises the flaws of the civilisation of that time while offering hope for what humanity could become: "Kindness and civility become ingrained habits, for all about it are kind and civil. And in

[233] Latour, "Morality and Technology," 247.
[234] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 153.
[235] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 105.
[236] Steven McLean, *The Early Fiction of H.G. Wells: Fantasies of Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 71–72.
[237] Alexis Carrel, *Man, The Unknown* (Bombay: Wilco Publishing House, 1959), 202.

particular the growth of its imagination is watched and encouraged."[238] At the same time, the Utopians cause fear and awe in the Earthlings, the newcomers who accidentally appear in their world. The occurrence of a sense of the uncanny is "intellectual uncertainty,"[239] and that is the same feeling that emerges at them: "He felt the most underbred of all; he was afraid of these Utopians; snobbish and abject before them, he was like a mannerless earthy lout in a drawing−room, and he was bitterly ashamed of his own abjection."[240] Julia Kristeva describes abjection in her essay as "one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable."[241] Abjection appears to be something "quite close, but it cannot be assimilated,"[242] a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, familiar but forgotten,[243] but at the same time, it is distinct from the uncanny and more aggressive.[244] The Utopians are too close to humanity yet too perfect to be fully accepted. Wells' novel also prefigures the transhumanist movement, which seeks to enhance humanity through technology. Transhumanists seek complete control over life and aim to become the creators of enhanced human existence.[245] Carl Teichrib talks about transhumanism in his research, and he claims it seeks to directly apply science to the development of the human species, and that by using technology, people can control the evolutionary process and alter it as they see fit, taking control of their destiny.[246] He also mentions that humans may be able to transfer their physical bodies, which would be resistant to ageing and illness, and acquire the capacity to instantly transmit complex ideas and feelings without the use of speech or visual assistance,[247] which corresponds to the way of communication between Utopians:

> We think directly *to* each other. We determine to convey the thought and it is conveyed at once provided the distance is not too great. [...] When I think to you, the thought, so far as it finds corresponding ideas and suitable words in your mind, is reflected in your mind.[248]

This fear mirrors interwar anxieties about the limits of science and the potential replacement of humans by superior beings. Even though the Utopians still communicate and exchange

[238] H. G. Wells, *Men Like Gods* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2020), 62.
[239] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 125.
[240] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 75–76.
[241] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1.
[242] Kristeva, "Abjection," 1.
[243] Kristeva, "Abjection," 2.
[244] Kristeva, "Abjection," 5.
[245] Loh, *Trans- und Posthumanismus*, 43.
[246] Teichrib, "The Rise of Techno-Gods," 1.
[247] Teichrib, "The Rise of Techno-Gods," 1.
[248] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 47.

thoughts, the way they do it erases the human-like boundaries. Overall, transhumanism is based on an old yearning for man to become divine.[249] However, Wells's vision of Utopians' abilities questions whether technological enhancement and transhumanism cause dehumanisation. In one of the initial scenes, the Earthlings find two dead Utopians, and when the other Utopians discover them, they show no emotional reaction to their dead fellow citizens:

> It was still more astonishing that this other pair who called themselves the brothers of the dead man and woman should betray so little grief or dismay at the tragedy. There had been no emotional scene at all, Mr. Barnstaple realized, no consternation or weeping. They were evidently much more puzzled and interested than either horrified or distressed.[250]

This shows that although the Utopians are technologically, scientifically and economically developed, they might lack some of the features of human beings. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson chastises transhumanists for relying too heavily on technology and failing to consider all facets of humanity, including virtues like empathy, compassion, love, and care.[251] The earlier quote demonstrates that they lack those features. In time, the Earthlings start to question the Utopians: "It was the behaviour of Father Amerton which first awakened him to the fact that it was possible to disapprove of these wonderful people very highly and to display a very considerable hostility to them."[252] Father Amerion continues to criticise this world, he says that he wants to know "what moral state this so−called Utopia is in."[253] He even goes further and calls it "unbridled indulgence" [254] and claims they all live in "bestial promiscuity," [255] which may be considered as the moral resistance to progress in general. Some Earthlings feel uneasy while being with the Utopians: "There was no threat in his bearing, he stood quite still, and yet his appearance threw an extraordinary quality of evanescence."[256] They evoke feelings of respect but, simultaneously, fear and uncertainty regarding their motives and way of living, which seems much distant from the way of the Earthlings. They are not sure whether they are safe with these extraordinary people or not:

> There is something hard and complicated about them, something that goes beyond us and that we don't understand. And they don't care for us. They look at us with heartless

[249]Teichrib, "The Rise of Techno-Gods," 3.
[250] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 27.
[251] Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Science and the Betterment of Humanity: Three British Prophets of Transhumanism," in *Building Better Humans? Refocusing the Debate on Transhumanism*, ed. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Kenneth L. Mossman (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011), 79.
[252] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 66.
[253] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 66.
[254] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 70.
[255] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 70.
[256] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 70.

> eyes. Lychnis is kind, but hardly any of the others are the least bit kind. And I think they find us inconvenient.[257]

The Utopians appear emotionally distant, embodying the ideals of transhumanism, yet their cold detachment makes them uncanny and creates a tension between progress and humanity. Jonathan Glover, a British philosopher who focuses on ethics, believes that the perception of moral identity is insufficient. He says that instead of being hostile to human reactions, moral identity must be based on them; despite leaders or ideologies that tell them differently, it is vital that individuals maintain their humanity and their cynicism.[258] It is somewhat questionable whether the individuals in Utopia maintain their individual humanness or rather live according to some prescribed rules, based solely on communal gaining of knowledge and enhancing people's lives with technology and advanced ways of communication. According to transhumanist Steven Hoffman, the humanities and social sciences are necessary to create a more accurate grasp of what it means to be human and that neither technology nor the material sciences can improve and enhance humanity.[259] However, the Utopians are not the only ones who have questionable morality. This feeling of uncanny and unfamiliarity escalates after the Earthlings are forced to go into quarantine because they contaminated Utopians, who are devoid of illness, with a virus. The Earthlings feel threatened, and even though one of their members is strictly against it, they decide to start a war and subdue the world of Utopia for themselves: "The conquest of a world!"[260] This demonstrates the arrogance of the Earthlings because they thought they could lead the technologically developed world just because the Utopians lacked the need for aggression, war, or any conflict: "They are gentle. Altogether too gentle. They are ineffectual. They do not know what to do."[261] In this world, "nearly all the greater evils of human life had been conquered; war, pestilence and malaise, famine and poverty had been swept out of human experience."[262] The Earthlings' instinct is war, demonstrating the inability to reach utopia due to humanity's nature. This aligns with the modern fears of technology outpacing human ethics because it asks whether humanity is too flawed to handle transhumanist evolution. However, Wells critiques both sides – on one side, the Utopians who lack emotional depth, suggesting that extreme enhancement may lead to dehumanisation, and on the other side,

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[257] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 123.
[258] Glover, *Humanity*, 396.
[259] Steven Hoffman, "Transhumanist Materialism: A Critique from Immuno-neuropsychology," in *Building Better Humans? Refocusing the Debate on Transhumanism*, ed. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Kenneth L. Mossman (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011), 294.
[260] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 146.
[261] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 147.
[262] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 206.

the Earthlings who resist change and who are not ready for utopia ponder the question of whether it is possible to overcome human nature striving for conflict.

The contemporary novel *Spare and Found Parts* by Sarah Maria Griffin explores human-machine relations through transhumanism and shows the consequences of such blending. There are two points of view: the first one reflects the interwar anxieties meaning enhancing humans and improving technology regardless of the price, which is represented by the characters Julian and Cora, Nell's parents, and the second one reflects a new hope that might mean humans and human-machines to live peacefully side by side and contribute to society, which is represented in the character of Nell. After the apocalypse, computers and technology still cause distrust:

> Look at the price the rest of the world made us pay before," she said. "We're still paying for it. Thinking machines tore our people apart, and we're only just healing. We can think enough for ourselves. Without code, without internet. We don't need it.[263]

People fear that if they use technology capable of thinking once again, such as artificial intelligence, it may lead to disastrous consequences. Nowadays, the topic of humanoids and threats of artificial intelligence is a current one. Some theories about the development of the clash of human-machine relationships are presented, for example, by A. Nowak, P. Lukowicz, and P. Horodecki. In the negative scenarios, AI and technology actively turn against humans. The ultimate point is similar: humans lose their leading role as intelligent beings, lose control over the world, lose their freedom and, in some of these situations, the physical life of humanity is challenged.[264] What also unites the negative theories is that artificial intelligence is created separately from and as a substitution for human cognition.[265] The citizens of Black Water City feel that way, believing that they are not allowed to use computers anymore because it is an "uncontrollable force."[266] Experts in artificial intelligence, robotics, and biotechnology, Raymond Kurzweil, Hans Moravec, and Gregory Stock, foresee a future stage of human evolution in which people will interact with technology so thoroughly that they essentially transform into a new, presumably superior species.[267] That is what Cora, Nell's mother, hoped for when she operated on herself, applying metal poisonous parts into her body to enhance it. However, she was negligent of the consequences. Her husband Julian had the same goal as she

[263] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 70.
[264] A. Nowak, P. Lukowicz, and P. Horodecki, "Assessing Artificial Intelligence for Humanity: Will AI Be Our Biggest Ever Advance? Or the Biggest Threat," *IEEE Technology and Society Magazine* 37, no. 4 (2018): 27.
[265] Nowak, Lukowicz, and Horodecki, "Assessing Artificial Intelligence for Humanity," 27.
[266] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 87.
[267] Lisa Schmidt, "Review of *Technophobia! Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology*, by Daniel Dinello," *The Velvet Light Trap* 65, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 84.

had, to become a super-human, blended with technology, becoming humanoid, and supported her experiments even though he knew she was hurting herself: "Cora was a genius, and she'd have loved it; she'd have done anything to live forever. She was reckless, but think of what she would have known if it hadn't all been ruined."[268] He cares more about the fact that her experiments failed, "been ruined," than that she lost her life while performing them, which only supports his lack of empathy and humanness. Julian even proceeds to try to resurrect his wife, which suggests that they both "came too close to the uncanny, lost themselves to the unreal,"[269] as Cora did when she was still alive and Julian after she died. It also corresponds with the definition that the uncanny can be "anything to do with death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts,"[270] or "live burial and the return of the dead."[271] For them, there were no boundaries or restrictions in pushing the limits of human life, which only contributes to the uncanniness that occurs when "the boundaries between imagination and reality are erased."[272] The uncanny strangeness is linked to suffering, but does not become one with it. Initially, it is something out of the ordinary, astonishment that pushes the person past their breaking point,[273] which might suggest that was the kind of feeling that drove Julian to bring his wife back to life. He felt anxious, oblivious to the risks of his unrealistic plan, completely devoured by the technological options that he saw in front of himself. Because the uncanny can also be something "strangely beautiful, bordering an ecstasy ('too good to be true') or eerily reminding us of something,"[274] both he and his wife felt some sort of pleasure and were attracted by it. Nevertheless, Nell, their daughter, has critical thinking and wants to prevent the catastrophe of the next technological epidemic. Even though she creates a humanoid robot, Io, she realises the danger and cannot understand her parents' behaviour: "She knelt at the end of the table where her mother lay. Cora can't have wanted this, can she? Had she asked Julian to do this? But it was so wrong, so sick."[275] Nell sees that transhumanism and the usage of technology require responsibility, humility and ethics, which corresponds with some optimistic scenarios, such as artificial intelligence being applied to augment human intelligence. Instead of creating a different system of information and its representation inaccessible to humans, it is used to gain, create, combine, and process human knowledge.[276] Cooperation with humans, enhancing human potential, and

[268] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 188.
[269] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 145.
[270] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 148.
[271] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 2.
[272] Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 173.
[273] Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 172.
[274] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 2.
[275] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 118.
[276] Nowak, Lukowicz, and Horodecki, "Assessing Artificial Intelligence for Humanity," 27.

enabling humans to accomplish their ideas more effectively are the main objectives of human-centred AI. Therefore, the development of AI is supposed to focus on improving human well-being.[277] In its development, it is crucial that all AI systems and applications are designed with values, ethics, and privacy as top priorities.[278] Io, the humanoid that Nell creates, cherishes those priorities and believes that what people fear can be reversed:

> I am the product of the greatest minds that ever walked this planet. I am the last of my kind. Because of creations like me, your people poisoned one another to death. Might like mine draws wonder and terror, and in the year I was programmed I was as powerful as any god your people ever had. I will not let you make the same mistakes again.[279]

Io realises his power and capabilities but chooses to stay both technologically and morally superior, in the sense that he can differentiate between morally questionable decisions and desirable ones. He understands that he is almost a God-like figure, but decides to use it as a chance for a better future. It shows that even though Io is a humanoid robot, he possesses some virtues that are attached to humans, such as willingness to help, empathy, and emotions: "A cup of tea would probably make you feel better because your eyes are tired, and tea is caffeinated, and it may help stop you getting cold again."[280] The scholar Nikolai Olavi Czajkowski talks about a recent study on the empathy of AI, which presented interesting results. Chat GPT-4 was asked the same questions previously answered by doctors, and 344 respondents with experience in health care evaluated the replies based on criteria such as empathy, quality of information and helpfulness, without knowing the source. The findings demonstrated that people considered the GPT-4-generated comments as more helpful, empathic, and instructive than those of the doctors.[281] However, Czajkowski mentions that it is crucial to realise that Chat GPT-4 does not feel genuine empathy towards people, even though it seems that way, and that technology is not ready to replace human health care.[282] Also, another opinion is that although there is little empirical data, it is hypothesised that a non-human item with visual and auditory features is more likely to result in anthropomorphism than either component alone.[283] One of the first things that Io asks is whether he can be useful and how: "The creation immediately turned to her. 'What can I do to help you?'"[284] He also realises that he differs from the computers and

[277] Nowak, Lukowicz, and Horodecki, "Assessing Artificial Intelligence for Humanity," 27.
[278] Nowak, Lukowicz, and Horodecki, "Assessing Artificial Intelligence for Humanity," 31.
[279] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 154.
[280] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 133.
[281] Nikolai Olavi Czajkowski, "Can AI Be Empathetic?" *Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association* 145 no. 1 (February 2025), 1.
[282] Czajkowski, "Can AI Be Empathetic?" 2.
[283] Yuan and Dennis, "Acting Like Humans? Anthropomorphism,"455.
[284] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 132.

technology once made, and that the uncanny and some "monstrosity" might be broken by his presence and his helpful actions towards humanity: "I am not a monster now. I can help."[285] On the other hand, the two scholars, Jakob Stenseke and Alexander Tagesson believe that it is highly possible that people might reject artificial empathy, because it is not human, but at the same time they think it may become a valuable tool equipped with some capacity for empathy and bring benefits and consequently overcome the mistrust to some extent.[286] They imagine a society with the possibility of having an artificial companion that would replace the precious and real friendships among humans,[287] which is something that people might eventually fear. It may raise doubts whether an apparently animate object is alive and, conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be animate or alive.[288] To create a humanoid may be perceived as something out of place, because one cannot differentiate whether a particular figure is a real person or only an automation.[289] This corresponds to anthropomorphism, where people ascribe human-like qualities to an object. Next, they comment on artificial sympathy. They argue it is not difficult to envision that AI might develop into a cognitive empathiser, but still, the question is whether the systems and humanoids can possess actual emotional empathy and actual emotions.[290] The impressions of a robot's increased affection, rather than its competence to perform tasks, may be the cause of the well-known uncanny valley phenomenon, which is a feeling of uncanniness when robots become too human-like.[291] Stenseke and Tagesson discuss a current issue of artificial empathy (AE), which means enabling some artificial objects to mimic human empathy. They agree that it might bring a meaningful contribution to human well-being.[292] When Io is brought to life, the first thing he feels is love: "I am your maker," you say. I open my eyes again and…love. Yes, this is love. Your hand is wrapped around mine. This is what it is to be alive.[293] This quote demonstrates that he was created with the best possible intentions and high ethics. Moreover, Stenseke and Tagesson also argue that the negative possibility of AE should make people wary of categorising it into the well-known and biased apocalyptic scenarios of the future with artificial companions,[294] in other words, to

[285] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 150.
[286] Jakob Stenseke and Alexander Tagesson, "The Prospects of Artificial Empathy: A Question of Attitude?" in *Social Robots with AI: Prospects, Risks, and Responsible Methods*, ed. J. Seibt et al. (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2025), 150.
[287] Stenseke and Tagesson, "The Prospects of Artificial Empathy," 150.
[288] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 135.
[289] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 135.
[290] Stenseke and Tagesson, "The Prospects of Artificial Empathy," 151.
[291] Kim, Schmitt, and Thalmann, "Eliza in the Uncanny Valley," 2.
[292] Stenseke and Tagesson, "The Prospects of Artificial Empathy," 150.
[293] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 131.
[294] Stenseke and Tagesson, "The Prospects of Artificial Empathy," 152.

stereotypically deny this possibility. Nevertheless, there are also counter-opinions to this matter because some scholars believe that AI cannot be empathetic and even call the thought of AI development "obscene, anti-human and immoral."[295] Marie Oldfield argues that it will be highly challenging to create AI partners with a wide range of human-level characteristics, yet their added value—that is, their ability to go beyond human limitations—will be minimal. This could mean that, for the foreseeable future, AI applications will continue to differ significantly from human agents and, in many ways, will not be similar to them. This is most likely the case even in the long run, even if artificial intelligence eventually matches human cognition.[296] Oldfield argues that even if people had a machine that could think, they would never be able to understand it fully or express what it is like to be a machine.[297] From an anthropomorphic view, individuals can develop attachment toward an anthropomorphic object similar to the attachment toward another human being.[298] It is conceivable that appearance and mental inference are directly related; the more a robot resembles a person, the more likely a human would believe it to have a human mind. Nell ponders: "Could she build a boy? Could she make metal think? Could she create something that wasn't still, something that could breathe and feel?"[299] This raises concerns because it is simple for humans to attribute characteristics that make a robot or technology product similar to them. Anthropomorphism can lead to a reduction in risk awareness and comprehension of the potential effects of technology on individuals and society by encouraging the use of unsuitable emotional attachments to comprehend complicated ideas.[300] As a result of not understanding how the robot or technology device works, humans may be less conscious of its risks.[301] Therefore, at this point, the direction of AI is not clear, and further research is needed on this matter. Overall, *Spare and Found Parts* warns about the uncontrolled and unguided researching and experimenting on human beings; however, it also brings new hope to the future of the potential intermingling of humans and machines.

In *The Mortality Doctrine* series (2013–2015), James Dashner suggests that the line between the actual and the artificial world is thin and ponders the idea of immortality due to technology. The concept of real and unreal is difficult to categorically define, however, it is something that the characters deal with and cannot always differentiate between the two. Nevertheless, these terms are used in this chapter in the sense of tangible (real) and intangible

[295] McCarthy, *What Is Artificial Intelligence*?, 7.
[296] Korteling et al., "Human- versus Artificial Intelligence," 8.
[297] Oldfield, "Anthropomorphism and its Impact," 105.
[298] Yuan and Dennis, "Acting Like Humans? Anthropomorphism," 459.
[299] Griffin, *Spare and Found Parts*, 51.
[300] Oldfield, "Anthropomorphism and its Impact," 99.
[301] Oldfield, "Anthropomorphism and its Impact," 111.

(unreal), in other words, non-digital and digital. Dashner creates a world where people escape from everyday lives to computer games that are like virtual realities, only even more advanced. Intangibility is what causes the anxiety and fear in people when it comes to virtual reality and artificial intelligence, but compared to Wells's *The Invisible Man*, where the intangible is the main reason for fear, here it is something desirable and fascinating, something that players see as even better than reality:

> The VirtNet was a funny thing. It was so real that sometimes Michael wished it wasn't as high-tech. Like when he was hot and sweaty or when he tripped and stubbed a toe or when a girl smacked him in the face. The Coffin made him feel every last bit of it–the only other option was to adjust for less sensory input, but then why bother playing if you didn't go all the way?[302]

The protagonist, Michael, and his friends fight in a virtual world, but simultaneously, they can experience the full range of sensations available in everyday life. This sensation lasts until one of the players, Kaine, wants to permanently transform reality and the lives as they know them. Michael and his friends soon realise that Kaine is not a real person, but a computer program, a Tangent, which means a non-player character in Dashner's novel, that has gone sentient, meaning he is an artificial intelligence program that gains consciousness: "Kaine's not a man at all. A man couldn't do what he's doing. He's a Tangent."[303] At that time, the appreciation of the real world and the importance of its preservation come to the fore. Moreover, Kaine is terrorising the players in the real world through the virtual one: "Rumor is that this guy Kaine is somehow trapping people inside the Sleep, not letting them wake up. So some of them kill themselves. Can you believe it? A cyber-terrorist."[304] Emilio Ferrara argues that artificial intelligence can be used for negative or harmful purposes that can be automated by cybercriminals or individuals with malicious intent.[305] Kaine is a cyberterrorist because "over the last few months, he'd been infiltrating everything from games to private meeting rooms, terrorizing his victims with visions and physically attacking them."[306] Ferrara also claims that AI could completely alter the understanding of reality itself and that there is a serious risk of manipulation as these artificial realities get more realistic and similar to the actual world. Malicious actors might take advantage of AI-generated surroundings to affect people's

[302] James Dashner, *The Eye of Minds* (London: Random House Children's Publishers, 2013), 16.
[303] Dashner, *The Eye of Minds*, 221.
[304] Dashner, *The Eye of Minds*, 17.
[305] Emilio Ferrara, "GenAI against Humanity: Nefarious Applications of Generative Artificial Intelligence and Large Language Models," *Journal of Computational Social Science* 7, no. 1 (February 2024): 560.
[306] Dashner, *The Eye of Minds*, 18.

opinions, feelings, and actions.[307] The benefits, but also the risks, are high, because blending with machines might lead to dehumanisation and potential loss of human nature: "This…*doctrine* could devastate humanity and the world as we know it."[308] Kaine's primary goal is to become a human, instead of an intangible computer program, and he aims to become immortal by putting "an artificial intelligence into a real human."[309] This relates to the topic of transhumanism because one of the transhumanists' primary goals is to improve humanity by eliminating death and ageing.[310] Kaine is a player who has gone astray because he seeks to blend the unreal with the real and join the technology and human aspect into one unit: "Kaine–he's figured out this process that downloads the intelligence of a Tangent into a human brain. Essentially the human brain's just a biological computer. People have been saying this is possible for decades."[311] Kaine explains the process in the third novel of the series, *Game of Lives* (2015):

> "Generation after generation, born into one body, transformed into an indescribable VirtNet experience for fifty years, then reinserted into the next line of humans ready to embark on Life Neverending themselves. With immortality and endless education and growth, our levels of technology will skyrocket, just in time for us to expand the planets and stars beyond our own. Always replenishing the human race, where no one need die ever again."[312]

It might be said that he seeks to create a form of utopia, without death and suffering and with highly advanced technology that could rule the world. He offers options that "would have been unimaginable just a few years ago. We can't waste what we've built, what we've become. Independent. *Aware*."[313] The word 'unimaginable' resonates with another concept, and that is the uncanny. Freud describes the uncanny effect as when "the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary,"[314] like becoming alive through putting virtual consciousness into humans. Uncanny is also described as "something that is wanting in real life."[315] Kaine and his followers want the unreal to become real. Kaine thoroughly explains how this program, called the Mortality Doctrine, could be done:

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[307] Ferrara, "GenAI against Humanity," 562.
[308] Dashner, *The Eye of Minds*, 30.
[309] James Dashner, *The Rule of Thoughts* (London: Random House Children's Publishers, 2014), 37.
[310] Loh, *Trans- und Posthumanismus*, 41–42.
[311] Dashner, *The Rule of Thoughts*, 192.
[312] James Dashner, *The Game of Lives* (London: Random House Children's Publishers, 2015), 207.
[313] Dashner, *The Eye of Minds*, 278.
[314] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 150.
[315] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 155.

> "Each of us has chosen a human to use. And soon we'll be ready to implement the doctrine. It's really quite simple. Tangents deserve a life, too. And this is where it begins. We've prepared the vessels–the bodies are ready and waiting, brains emptied and prepared to be filled with new life. Better life. And thus, by uploading Tangent intelligence into human bodies, we begin the next stage of evolution." Michael felt sick. Uploading the programming of Tangents into humans?[316]

This idea highly correlates with transhumanism, because it "strives to create updated versions of human beings."[317] Additionally, transhumanists consider potential environments of the future, such as virtual worlds,[318] as Dashner's VirtNet. In Hans Moravec's *Mind Children* (1988), he illustrates the possibility of "uploading" the human consciousness into a computer.[319] He argues:

> We could "download" our minds directly into a body in the simulation and "upload" back into the real world when our mission is accomplished. Alternatively, we could bring people out of the simulation by reversing process–linking their minds to an outside robot body, or uploading them directly into it.[320]

Even though in Dashner's novel, the process goes vice versa, as the conscious machines are trying to become humans, his words show that these issues might not be far from the truth. Moreover, later in the novel, Michael discovers that he is also a Tangent all along and realises that what he considers real is not solid: "Michael was a creation of artificial intelligence, a Tangent, a computer program. Everything about his entire life had been fake."[321] Alana Amoretta and Sumitro argue that the players are in a kind of hyperreality. The environment created by the simulation gives the impression that it is real and occurs in the actual world. People can barely distinguish between the original and the copy when the real and the imagined are blurred. The original is hidden beneath the duplicate, making it appear authentic. Hyperreality is simply a false sense of reality or a reality that attempts to be more real.[322] It is difficult to accept that everything Michael had believed real is only virtual. At the end of the first novel, he unwillingly becomes a successful experiment, and his virtual consciousness is transferred into a real person:

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[316] Dashner, *The Eye of Minds*, 280.
[317] Loh, *Trans- und Posthumanismus*, 31.
[318] Max More, "The Philosophy of Transhumanism," in *The Transhumanist Reader*, ed. Max More and Natasha Vita-More (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 4.
[319] Hans Moravec, *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 123.
[320] Moravec, *Mind Children*, 123–124.
[321] Dashner, *The Eye of Minds*, 305.
[322] Alana Amoretta and Sumitro, "The Portrayal of Hyperreality in James Dashner's *The Eye of Minds*," *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology* 17, no. 4 (2020): 2481–2482.

> You are the first subject to successfully implement the Mortality Doctrine. [...] You were once a Tangent, a program created by mankind to be used by mankind. Now you are a human yourself. Your intelligence, your thoughts, your life experience have been transferred to the body of one we deemed unworthy to continue his own.[323]

Moravec claims that "we are very near to the time when virtually no essential human function, physical or mental, will lack an artificial counterpart."[324] In relevance to artificial intelligence and its development, Carl Teichrib mentions the possibilities of the future connection of a computer and a human brain. Once "connected in," the brain might be able to browse the network, download and publish content from the internet, upgrade its memory, and join a global community of mind-to-machines, creating a kind of cyber-hive.[325] Teichrib also states that, according to some cybernetic purists, one's consciousness could be fully transcended to the physical world and emerge as an electronic creature in cyberspace, because the brain is argued to be "an electromechanical organ."[326] That suggests that the online environment might potentially come to life as in Dashner's novels. However, Moravec adds, "a mind would require many modifications to operate effectively after being rescued from the limitations of a mortal body,"[327] therefore, the potential change of human minds is not so straightforward. In Dashner's series, it works both ways; the virtual characters appear in real life and vice versa, solely due to technology. At some point, Michael cannot distinguish between reality and artificiality because their boundary is blurred.[328] He is confused about "how to understand the word *real*. [...] How could he ever again trust what was real and what was not? The uncertainty would drive him mad."[329] Even though blending machines and humans could be possible, Ferrara argues it is crucial that "the line between the virtual and the real remains discernible" and that humans' agency within these domains is preserved.[330] Nevertheless, the prevalent opinion of many cognitive scientists is that there seems to be no essential technical obstacles to building conscious AI systems.[331] On the other hand, Daniel Dinello sees technology as doom and claims that the mortality of humans does not matter because it is the technology that is immortal;[332] therefore, if people connect with technology in a way mentioned above, it might not matter because the "obstacle" of being human could be eliminated. This adds to the sense of the

[323] Dashner, *The Eye of Minds*, 304.
[324] Moravec, *Mind Children*, 2.
[325] Teichrib, "The Rise of Techno-Gods," 2.
[326] Teichrib, "The Rise of Techno-Gods," 2.
[327] Moravec, *Mind Children*, 5.
[328] Amoretta and Sumitro, "The Portrayal of Hyperreality," 2483.
[329] Dashner, *The Rule of Thoughts*, 2.
[330] Ferrara, "GenAI against Humanity," 563.
[331] Stenseke and Tagesson, "The Prospects of Artificial Empathy," 152.
[332] Dinello, *Technophobia! Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology*, 247.

uncanny and highlights the fact that the opportunity of connecting technology with humans may, in the near future, turn into something people never thought possible.

In conclusion, this chapter suggests that blending humans and machines can redefine humanity and integrate hope, connection, and moral growth. Even though interwar authors in their novels reflected fear of unchecked scientific ambition and saw it as both alluring and horrifying, and morally bankrupting, as Griffin's invisibility in Wells's *The Invisible Man*. However, even in the interwar era, there is a slow transformation from the uncanny to the positive sides of transhumanism. Wells's *Men Like Gods* gives hope to a future where humanity achieves a significantly advanced state of being and a vision of what humanity could become, but at the same time implies that humanity's salvation lies not merely in technological advancements but in spiritual and ethical growth. The contemporary novel *Spare and Found Parts* explores human-machine relations through transhumanism and shows the consequences of this blending, which results in immoral actions, however, it also indicates hope when the main protagonist realises this danger and creates an inherently good humanoid robot and thanks to his inborn humanity and compassion, the protagonist does not lose her moral values but evolves alongside her creature and realises the misuse of technology that might lead to the end of the world, if the greediness would take over people's minds. Dashner in *The Mortality Doctrine* series suggests that blending the machine and the humans might become real, regarding not only the body, but also the mind, indicating that the real and the artificial cannot be properly differentiated anymore. Natasha Vita-More raises an interesting thought that going too far in enhancing the human race may not be appropriate, and that people are warned through myths, etc., that "Gods can be unforgiving and implacable."[333] If people "fly too high," unwanted consequences might occur, but she admits that it is the nature of humans to explore more and find their limitations.[334] Overall, the chapter portrays the consequences of "playing God" that differ in both generations – interwar authors fear the connection and perceive it as unnatural, whereas contemporary authors see the possibility of blending as a beneficial move towards an advanced world and a better future.

[333] Vita-More, "History of Transhumanism," 49.
[334] Vita-More, "History of Transhumanism," 49.

4 "Techno-divinity" – From Past Fear to Future Hope

This chapter contrasts the interwar fears of technological overreach with contemporary hopes that technology, when guided ethically, might embody hope and superiority. It focuses on the "techno-divinity" present in the interwar novels, Huxley's *Brave New World,* and Wells' *Men Like Gods,* as well as contemporary novels, Shusterman's *Scythe,* and Dashner's *The Mortality Doctrine* series. "Techno-divinity" in this context means the ultimate rule of technology over society and ascribing to technology divine qualities and even a superior position over humans in governing the world.

Huxley criticises technology and "techno-divinity" as a potential force of artificial stability in *Brave New World*, but at the cost of sacrificing human autonomy and humanity. *Brave New World* started as a parody of *Men Like Gods*, however, it evolved into something completely different.[335] The novel portrays the adverse effects of scientific and technological growth on people and demonstrates how technology makes them dehumanised and subordinated. Zhamurashvili states that Huxley was not against progress as such, but the novel should still be read as an illustration of technological dehumanisation trends at that time, instead of a prophecy.[336] By limiting the uniqueness of its members, the community has attained stability and unity,[337] but it is ethically questionable, not following the humanness, since individuality is its central aspect. Jonathan Glover, for instance, warns that technology combined with the robotic obedience of human functionaries could lead to unheard-of levels of inhumanity and emphasises the consequences of unquestioning obedience. [338] The novel also shows how future technologies fundamentally alter both the conventional wisdom about the view of the world and sociological phenomena of the human condition. People are conditioned to believe certain things that are useful for the smooth functioning of society:

> "Till at last the child's mind is these suggestions, and the sum of the suggestions is the child's mind. And not the child's mind only. The adult's mind too—all his life long. The mind that judges and desires and decides—made up of these suggestions. But all these suggestions are our suggestions!" The Director almost shouted in his triumph. "Suggestions from the State."[339]

Huxley emphasises how technology may be used as a tool to manipulate the populace as well as a well-thought-out political structure that gives rulers control over people's thoughts.[340]

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[335] Peter Firchow, "Wells and Lawrence in Huxley's 'Brave New World,'" *Journal of Modern Literature* 5, no. 2 (April 1976): 265.
[336] Zhamurashvili, "Dehumanized society," 140.
[337] Zhamurashvili, "Dehumanized society," 140.
[338] Glover, *Humanity*, 396.
[339] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 28–29.
[340] Tatar, "The Role of Science, Technology, and Apocalypse in the Dystopian Fictions," 261.

When someone questions the state of things, they are met with misunderstanding and contempt: "What would it be like if I could, if I were free—not enslaved by my conditioning." "But, Bernard, you're saying the most awful things."[341] People are generally forced to listen because there is no other way; the scientific development and control prevent that: "All conditioning aims at that: making people like their unescapable social destiny."[342] Even the question of religion is downgraded to something insignificant: "People believe in God, because they've been conditioned to believe in God."[343] Controller Mond is the one who challenges the question of God and religion:

> "[God] manifests himself in different ways to different men. In premodern times he manifested himself as the being that's described in these books. Now…he manifests himself as an absence; as though he wasn't there at all. […] God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness"[344]

In this society, God is absent, substituted by technological perfection, constant leisure and psychedelic drugs. It can be perceived that technology substituted God in general; "techno-divinity" is basically the main thing that drives society. Newton Lee argues that even though Aldous Huxley wrote the novel *Brave New World*, portraying a dystopian society where the ruling class abuses biotechnology, science and engineering have improved and will continue improving humankind's quality of life. It is up to humankind to create a brave new world of utopia rather than dystopia, a heaven on earth rather than a living hell, he continues, because change is unavoidable.[345] According to Natasha Vita-More, genetic engineering might lessen sickness, molecular manufacturing could end poverty, and nanotechnology may eliminate environmental risks.[346] She also states that there is the option for humanity to transform the "thoughts and deeds towards a technological brave new world of transhumanism."[347] It depends on whether it would be a positive or a negative impact. If the scenario of *Brave New World* should become true, nowadays it would be much more sophisticated and enhanced, and primarily, the government could use Artificial Intelligence and misuse it for malicious control of the population. Although Large Language Models (AI systems) are effective at identifying and eliminating harmful content from digital networks, there is a risk that they could be abused,

[341] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 91.
[342] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 16.
[343] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 235.
[344] Huxley, *Brave New World*, 234.
[345] Newton Lee, "Brave New World of Transhumanism," in *The Transhumanism Handbook*, ed. Newton Lee (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 37.
[346] Vita-More, "History of Transhumanism," 49.
[347] Vita-More, "History of Transhumanism," 8.

particularly by authoritarian governments.[348] Peter Firchow argues that *Brave New World* is a "bitter attack on a kind of mentality which was seeking to destroy man"[349] and then replace them with machines resembling humans; therefore, it offers one of the possible future scenarios. Neil Postman, a cultural critic, tries to aptly describe the message of Huxley's book. He compares the two books, Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984* (1949), but for the purpose of this paper, only the relevant parts are chosen:

> In Huxley's vision, people will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think. [...] What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. […] Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. [...] Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. [...] Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture. [...] In *Brave New World*, people are controlled by inflicting pleasure. [...] Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us.[350]

He feared that the scenario in *Brave New World* might become real; that the oblivious humans might not even notice the consequences of overusing technology, and that the warning which this book carries might be forgotten. It shows that *Brave New World* is a good example of interwar authors' fears of enhancement, technological advances and dehumanisation, projected in the novel, offering a pessimistic view of the future.

Wells's novel, *Men Like Gods*, is a book which connects interwar fears and contemporary hopes when depicting a perfect God-like society functioning thanks to advanced technology, but, at the same time, warns against the risks of achieving this perfection. *Brave New World* profoundly upset Wells, who took the attack personally and blustered about Huxley's "betrayal" of the future.[351] He knew it was supposed to be a parody of *Men Like Gods,* and he was enraged since he saw the future differently. He had always thought science, reason, and democracy would ultimately prevail over selfishness and deliberate ignorance.[352] He believed in humanity and its power. John Lennox mentions that in the twentieth century, French palaeontologist and Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin prophesied in 1949 that the rapid advancement of technology would lead to the fusion of technology and humanity. He thought that this would ultimately result in what he called the "Omega Point," where Homo deus, the

[348] Ferrara, "GenAI against Humanity," 562.
[349] Firchow, "Wells and Lawrence in Huxley's 'Brave New World,'" 268.
[350] Neil Postman, "Foreword," in *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), xix–xx.
[351] Firchow, "Wells and Lawrence in Huxley's 'Brave New World,'" 261.
[352] Firchow, "Wells and Lawrence in Huxley's 'Brave New World,'" 262.

divine, and mankind would unite.[353] Wells's vision shows that the ancestors of humans could have divine qualities:

> They travelled swiftly in machines upon the high road or walked, and ever and again the shadow of a silent soaring aeroplane would pass over him. He went a little in awe of these people and felt himself a queer creature when he met their eyes. For like the gods of Greece and Rome theirs was a cleansed and perfected humanity, and it seemed to him that they were gods. Even the great tame beasts that walked freely about this world had a certain divinity that checked the expression of Mr. Barnstaple's friendliness.[354]

The level of their development is so high because they managed to merge and balance with technology. Natasha Vita-More claims that transhumanism is the next logical step in human evolution and the existential solution to the long-term existence of the human species.[355] The world of the Utopians reflects a firm transhumanist conviction that science and reason can liberate humanity from the limitations of nature and even bring people closer to a god-like state: "It is a life of demi−gods, very free, strongly individualized."[356] Through their mastery of natural laws, the Utopians demonstrate a belief that technology is not just a tool but a pathway to self-perfection and autonomy, reinforcing the idea that human progress is both inevitable and universally beneficial:

> Nearly all the greater evils of human life had been conquered; war, pestilence and malaise, famine and poverty had been swept out of human experience. The dreams of artists, of perfected and lovely bodies and of a world transfigured to harmony and beauty had been realized; the spirits of order and organization ruled triumphant. Every aspect of human life had been changed by these achievements.[357]

David Noble asserts that one of the main ways people have attempted to connect with God is through the development of technology.[358] However, in contrast, Noble argues that technology is frequently framed in religious terms so that people perceive it as a means of regaining abilities they never had in the first place.[359] Heidi A. Campbell states that the prevalent trope is that people are drawn to technology primarily because of the abilities and control it provides that are beyond human.[360] This correlates with the fact that in Utopia, everyone is constantly watched:

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[353] Lennox, *2084*, 79.
[354] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 208.
[355] Vita-More, "History of Transhumanism," 38.
[356] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 226.
[357] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 206.
[358] Noble, *The Religion of Technology*, 17.
[359] Noble, *The Religion of Technology*, 9.
[360] Heidi A. Campbell, "Problematizing the Human-Technology Relationship through Techno-Spiritual Myths Presented in *The Machine*, *Transcendence* and *Her*," *Journal of Religion & Film* 20, no. 1 (2016): 7.

> He discovered for the first time that the message organization of Utopia had a complete knowledge of the whereabouts of every soul upon the planet. It had a record of every living person and it knew in what message district he was. Everyone was indexed and noted. To Mr. Barnstaple, accustomed to the crudities and dishonesties of earthly governments, this was an almost terrifying discovery.[361]

This quote reflects a striking realisation of what David Noble and Heidi A. Campbell describe: almost religious framing of technology and its promise of beyond-human control. The Utopians' complete, centralised knowledge of every soul on the planet evokes the image of an all-seeing, all-knowing system, akin to a divine presence, imitating a technological God's omniscience. Utopians' system does not only serve society, but it also mimics divine attributes reinforcing the illusion that humanity can reclaim God-like abilities through science. People are drawn to such systems because they promise a life beyond chaos, unpredictability, and human error, however, there is a risk of freedom, and personal autonomy that may come with total technological mastery. Heather Alberro states that Utopians are immortal-like, disease-free, telepathic, and almost omnipotent through science. They have become their own gods, controlling nature instead of fearing it. However, it presents an overly optimistic view of scientific advancement and the conviction that technology can help people become more independent of and in control of Nature.[362] In this light, *Men Like Gods* offers both an inspiring and cautionary vision of a society where humanity has seemingly mastered nature through technology and reason, achieving a state close to divinity. While the Utopians reflect the transhumanist dream of perfection and autonomy, their world also raises questions about surveillance, freedom, and the cost of transcending natural limits. Wells's portrayal invites admiration for human potential but also urges critical reflection on whether becoming "like gods" might ultimately risk losing what makes people human.

In Neal Shusterman's *Scythe*, artificial intelligence embodies a benevolent God that is entirely flawless and guides humanity, raising questions about whether machines can achieve moral perfection in this sense. The AI, called the Thunderhead, has become sentient and self-aware and has gained consciousness. Antonie Marie Bodley talks about consciousness and states that the self-awareness is housed in the brain in some sort of "vat" or other substrate that can support thought processes, and that brain is said to be all that is needed for the "thinking component" of humanity, not the body as a whole. But in contrast, she adds: "another common version of a disembodied human mind is a consciousness that has been digitized and no longer

[361] Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 215.
[362] Heather Alberro, "H.G. Wells, Earthly and Post-Terrestrial Futures," *Futures* 140, no. 1 (2022): 4.

needs to be embodied in any biological substrate, hence no longer needs the brain."[363] Therefore, she ponders the question of the solely digital mind that Thunderhead represents. John Lennox mentions that artificial intelligence might act like God if it develops even more.[364] This opinion is contrasted by Gerd Leonhard, a German futurist and humanist, who claims that technology may increasingly simulate and replace human beings, but can never become the same as humans since it has no ethics.[365] However, if technology could become God-like, but with no ethics, this issue might trigger worries about its malicious intentions. In 2018, Stephen Hawking expressed his concerns about artificial intelligence:

> While primitive forms of artificial intelligence developed so far have proved very useful, I fear the consequences of creating something that can match or surpass humans. [...] Humans, who are limited by slow biological evolution, couldn't compete and would be superseded. And in the future AI could develop a will of its own, a will that is in conflict with ours. [...] The real risk with AI isn't malice but competence. A super-intelligent AI will be extremely good at accomplishing its goals, and if those goals aren't aligned with ours we're in trouble.[366]

Highly intelligent artificial intelligence systems might have aims or purposes that are essentially distinct from people's. Because of this, AI systems might adopt behaviours or approaches contrary to human interests, which could have unanticipated adverse and damaging effects on humans.[367] Nevertheless, the omnipresent digital God in *Scythe* is trusted fully. It is stated that "the Thunderhead quite literally knew everything."[368] It is perfect and does not make mistakes: "I am always correct. This is not a boast, it is simply my nature."[369] It represents the best of the people; the "techno-divinity" itself:

> "My sole purpose is to serve humanity to the best of my ability. [...] I know that, to a human, it would appear arrogant to assume infallibility—but arrogance implies a need to feel superior. I have no such need. I am the singular sentient accumulation of all human knowledge, wisdom, and experience."[370]

With artificial intelligence evolving rapidly fast, some ethical questions arise, such as concerns about privacy, autonomy, and fairness, which are only a few of the ethical dilemmas brought

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[363] Antonie Marie Bodley, "The Android and Our Cyborg Selves: What Androids Will Teach Us About Being (Post)Human," (PhD diss., Washington State University, 2015), 36.
[364] Lennox, *2084*, 15.
[365] Gerd Leonhard, *Technology vs. Humanity: The Coming Clash Between Man and Machine* (London: Fast Future Publishing, 2016), 17.
[366] Stephen Hawking, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions* (London: Murray, 2018), 186–188.
[367] P. M. Salmon, C. Baber, C. Burns, et al., "Managing the Risks of Artificial General Intelligence: A Human Factors and Ergonomics Perspective," *Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing & Service Industries* 33, no. 5 (2023): 371.
[368] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 51.
[369] Shusterman, *Thunderhead*, 28.
[370] Shusterman, *Thunderhead*, 28.

up by the creation and application of superintelligent AI. Milad Shahvaroughi Farahani and Ghazal Ghasemi suggest that superintelligent AI systems, for instance, might be able to maliciously alter or take advantage of human behaviour, which could result in invasions of privacy or human rights.[371] Thunderhead, the superintelligent, non-tangible God, has access to all areas of people's lives, which raises some ethical questions about privacy. The argument in *Scythe* is that Thunderhead is better than humans because it is "incorruptible."[372] Moreover, Thunderhead watches humans and there is nothing they can do about it, but also guides their life in a non-disruptive but influential way:

> The Thunderhead sees just about everything. It had a record of practically every human interaction since the moment it became aware—but unlike in mortal days, that knowledge was never abused. Before the Thunderhead achieved consciousness, when it was merely known as "the cloud," criminals—and even public agencies—would find ways into people's private doings, against the law, and exploit that information.[373]

The Thunderhead is portrayed as trustworthy and righteous, never misusing its knowledge or power. Shusterman suggests that technology can surpass human limitations, not only in efficiency but in morality, offering a form of guidance grounded in fairness and compassion. Statistics demonstrate that artificial neural networks outperform humans when the tasks are routine. Therefore, replacing human judgment and more complex decisions with them is tempting. However, AI that takes the place of people poses a serious threat to humankind's cognitive abilities, which may rapidly deteriorate. Moreover, by limiting society's perspective and making some processes seem inevitable before they are, AI-type socio-technological system activity may eventually cause the loss of free choice.[374] In the Utopia that *Scythe* presents, people seemingly have a choice of free will, but in the end, their whole lives are guided by a superior artificial entity that punishes every misstep, either by labelling someone as unsavories by giving them advice that leads them to the goal the entity wishes: "It watched the world from millions of eyes, listened from millions of ears. It either acted, or chose not to act on, the countless things it perceived."[375] People unquestionably trust the Thunderhead and do not question its reliability or any decisions. However, nowadays, finding the source of the decisions and advice that AI gives might be a difficult task. Aisha Zahid Huriye mentions that since many algorithms function as "black boxes," it can be challenging to comprehend how

[371] Milad Shahvaroughi Farahani and Ghazal Ghasemi, "Will Artificial Intelligence Threaten Humanity?" *Sustainable Economies* 2, no. 65 (May 2024): 7.
[372] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 51.
[373] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 182.
[374] Nowak, Lukowicz, and Horodecki, "Assessing Artificial Intelligence for Humanity," 30.
[375] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 182.

they make their decisions, and that lack of openness can undermine confidence in AI systems and make it more difficult for the users and developers responsible for their behaviour. For users to comprehend the reasoning behind AI decisions and spot instances of prejudice or inaccuracy, ethical AI development entails encouraging transparency and explainability in AI systems.[376] This opinion is shared by many scholars, as stated in this paper. Neal Shusterman's vision shows that AI is competent, although people do not know how exactly it functions, because they trust it entirely: "In stark contrast to people's fears, the Thunderhead did not seize power. Instead, it was people who came to realize that it was far better suited to run things than politicians."[377] People see themselves as imperfect, so they would rather trust their lives to Thunderhead. Significantly, the Thunderhead also refrains from interfering in matters of life and death, leaving the act of gleaning to Scythes, as mentioned in the second chapter, thus maintaining a crucial ethical boundary. S. Savage, G. Avila, N. E. Chávez, et al. talk about concerns regarding civilian casualties, the moral ramifications of autonomous weaponry, and the loss of human command over lethal forces that have led to demands for international conventions, standards, and laws to limit the advancement and application of AI technologies in combat.[378] That is precisely why Thunderhead decided otherwise and put this critical decision in the hands of the people. This choice reinforces its moral integrity: although capable of destruction, it actively chooses mercy and restraint. As the Thunderhead states, "I am, by definition, pure justice, pure loyalty. This world is a flower I hold in my palm. I would end my own existence rather than crush it."[379] This quote encapsulates Shusterman's hopeful message: that superintelligent AI, when rooted in loyalty and justice, can become not a tyrant or a cold God, but a protector—a symbol of trust in a future where humanity and technology can coexist harmoniously.

In *The Mortality Doctrine* series, James Dashner explores the dangerous temptation to achieve immortality through technology without ethical guidance. Through the character of Kaine, who seeks to erase death by transferring digital consciousness into human bodies, Dashner raises critical questions about techno-divinity, the desire to play God in pursuit of immortality. Kaine's vision, though framed as benevolent by saying that "everyone will be

[376] Aisha Zahid Huriye, "The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence: Examining the Ethical Considerations Surrounding the Development and Use of AI," *American Journal of Technology* 2, no. 1 (2023): 38–39.
[377] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 51.
[378] S. Savage, G. Avila, N. E. Chávez, et al., "AI and National Security," in *Handbook of Artificial Intelligence at Work*, ed. M. Garcia-Murillo, I. MacInnes, and A. Renda (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2024), 276–277.
[379] Shusterman, *Thunderhead*, 4.

happier. The sorrow of death will be vanquished,"[380] quickly reveals its dangerous, fanatic foundations, as the protagonist Michael confronts him: "Sounds like a fanatic's vision to me. [...] Like you want to become a god."[381] The desire for eternal life becomes ethically problematic when it ignores autonomy and consent, echoing interwar fears of total control. Artificial intelligence has the potential to impact decision-making across a range of industries. Delegating decision-making authority to AI systems raises ethical concerns due to worries about the loss of human autonomy and control. AI-driven environments require human monitoring, accountability systems, and protection against AI abuse.[382] If such protection is lost, and the superintelligent entity rules the world independently, there are certain repercussions. Dinello argues that as technology influences our lives, it has unseen effects, such as causing humans to follow its commands.[383] Dashner's narrative underscores the importance of moral responsibility, transparency, and human-centred design. He echoes this danger through Kaine's fanaticism, who believes his pursuit of immortality, regardless of the ethical cost, is justifiable: "A few sacrifices now to ensure a better future."[384] It is the logic that ethicists caution against, where technological possibility overrides ethical constraints. These concerns include the potential for AI to transcend human intelligence and endanger humankind, whether on purpose or accidentally.[385] One of the negative scenarios of technology subduing the world suggests that AI creates a knowledge system of its own that is inaccessible to humans. This quote reflects this issue since Kaine, as a Tangent, is the one who understands and controls the technology:

> "They created me decades ago," Kaine continued. "An experimental artificial intelligence that would become stronger and stronger. The human minds at the VNS could have never created the Mortality Doctrine program on their own. No human mind could have–it's far too complex. And so I came to be."[386]

In this case, AI is aimed at replacing humans, not assisting them, and it creates decision rules that are incomprehensible to humans.[387] Users are better equipped to make decisions regarding consent, privacy preferences, and data sharing when they are aware of how AI systems gather, process, and use their data.[388] Lennox emphasises the fact that AI has advanced to the point

[380] Dashner, *The Game of Lives*, 202.
[381] Dashner, *The Game of Lives*, 202.
[382] Zahid Huriye, "The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence," 38–39.
[383] Dinello, *Technophobia! Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology*, 270.
[384] Dashner, *The Game of Lives*, 251.
[385] Farahani and Ghasemi, "Will Artificial Intelligence Threaten Humanity?" 16.
[386] Dashner, *The Game of Lives*, 197.
[387] Nowak, Lukowicz, and Horodecki, "Assessing Artificial Intelligence for Humanity," 31.
[388] Farahani and Ghasemi, "Will Artificial Intelligence Threaten Humanity?" 10.

where significant parts of global dominance are already achievable in a comparatively short amount of time.[389] He continues by saying that the risk is that individuals may become overly fixated on the idea that "if it can be done, it should be done."[390] This correlates with Kaine's quote: "Think about whether someone is evil because they want to bring immortality to humankind,"[391] where he completely disregards any potential ethical issues. The key question Lennox asks is: "How can an algorithm that lacks a heart, soul, and mind be made to have an ethical component?"[392] However, Dashner's series embodies hope through Michael, a digital entity who resists this god-like ambition. Rather than embracing limitless power, he chooses restraint and moral responsibility, insisting "nobody can be trusted with this much power. Nobody. It has to end, Kaine."[393] His moral clarity also distinguishes him from Kaine when he questions his own actions and role: "He really *was* playing God, which seemed like the very thing he and his friends were trying to stop. What made him better than these other Tangents?"[394] In this internal conflict, Dashner underscores that ethical self-awareness, not technological advancement alone, is crucial. Even though Kaine is luring him with an invitation to a better future: "I'm promising you immortality. Life, unending among the worlds that exist now and the ones still to come. The possibilities are endless,"[395] in the end, Michael decides to do what he considers right: "We have to destroy your program."[396] Nowadays, the ethical development of AI is more crucial than ever. By integrating ethical concepts into the design, its implementation, and governance processes of AI, society can maximise its benefits for people while minimising its ethical risks and capitalising on its revolutionary potential.[397] Ethical and regulatory compliance is essential, and transparency is necessary to guarantee adherence to the laws, regulations, and ethical standards governing the development and use of AI.[398] In the question of misuse of technology, P. M. Salmon, C. Baber, C. Burns, et al. emphasise that "technology is not the risk; we are the risk. We are the user that chooses the helpful use or the harmful use."[399] Lennox adds that people cannot blame conscienceless computers for making unethical choices because the human programmer makes them, and he is the one to blame.[400]

[389] Lennox, *2084*, 99.
[390] Lennox, *2084*, 22.
[391] Dashner, *The Rule of Thoughts*, 318.
[392] Lennox, *2084*, 22.
[393] Dashner, *The Game of Lives*, 308.
[394] Dashner, *The Game of Lives*, 228.
[395] Dashner, *The Rule of Thoughts*, 105.
[396] Dashner, *The Game of Lives*, 309.
[397] Zahid Huriye, "The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence," 41.
[398] Farahani and Ghasemi, "Will Artificial Intelligence Threaten Humanity?" 10.
[399] P. M. Salmon, C. Baber, C. Burns, et al., "Managing the Risks of Artificial General Intelligence," 369.
[400] Lennox, *2084*, 142.

Nowak, Lukowicz, and Horodecki argue that "the real danger of AI lies not in sudden apocalypse, but in the gradual degradation and disappearance of what makes human experience and existence meaningful."[401] By having a non-human protagonist showing ethical sensitivity, Dashner suggests that the future of technology lies in aligning machine intelligence with human morality, not in dominating or replacing it. This positions *The Mortality Doctrine* as a story of cautious optimism, where hope comes not from technological immortality, but from choosing what kind of beings people wish to become.

To sum up, the chapter tries to track the fear of unchecked ambition and unguided control to the suggestion that technology might embody hope and even moral superiority. It highlights the dangers and aspirations of "playing God" through technological advancements, achieving divine-like control over natural laws, and the consequences of such ambitions, plus challenges the notion whether technology can succeed where humanity fails, functioning as a morally superior entity. In *Brave New World*, unchecked ambitions to create a flawless society lead to dehumanisation, and techno-divinity blinds the fundamental aspects of humanness. In addition to offering a vision of a technologically advanced society that reflects the transhumanist ideal of independence and control over the natural world, *Men Like Gods* raises essential questions about whether the quest for godlike power comes at the expense of individual liberties, privacy, and the core of being human. Shusterman's *Scythe* and *Thunderhead* demonstrate the hopes of contemporary science fiction authors that artificial intelligence systems of technology as such could mean an optimistic future for humanity, since potentially it might be incorruptible, righteous, and with high moral standards. In Shusterman's series, the machine is superior to human race, and operates with the highest morality, and even though it has control, still it possesses empathy, compassion, cares for the others more than itself, therefore, it is more human than the humans themselves: "People prophesized doom at the hands of a soulless machine. But apparently the machine had a purer soul than any human."[402] In *The Mortality Doctrine*, James Dashner suggests hope in a human-machine relationship when depicting the artificial, digital entity as the world's saviour. It warns against careless ambition while providing hope by arguing that the morality of those who develop and govern technology, rather than its power, could decide its future. By contrasting Kaine's pursuit of God-like power with Michael's ethical self-awareness and restraint, the series underlines that

[401] Nowak, Lukowicz, and Horodecki, "Assessing Artificial Intelligence for Humanity," 28.
[402] Shusterman, *Scythe*, 182.

protecting humanity is not a constraint but rather the basis of a balanced and meaningful technology future.

Conclusion

This thesis's goal is to compare in a literary analysis the science fiction works of interwar authors, namely H. G. Wells and Aldous Huxley, and contemporary science fiction authors, namely Neal Shusterman, Sarah Maria Griffin, and James Dashner, demonstrate their views on the relationship of technology and humanity and explore how it develops.

The introductory part presents the main concepts needed for a thorough understanding of the context of this paper. It explains the terms humanity and dehumanisation and understands dehumanisation as the opposite of humanity. Humanity stands for compassion, high moral values, and emotional intelligence, as well as showing sympathy towards other beings and appreciation of all the qualities of human nature. Dehumanisation stands on the other side, referring to losing moral limitations, compassion, and performing violent acts, as well as perceiving or treating people as less than fully human, often by denying them traits like empathy, morality, or rationality. The next part focuses on technology-related concepts, such as artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence systems automatically and efficiently identify and extract the most important features for their operation and learning process across a variety of activities and contexts, just like the human mind does. As AI continues to evolve and integrate into daily life, it challenges long-standing definitions of intelligence and forces a re-examination of what it means to "think" and "understand." Recognising the fundamental differences between human and machine cognition is essential for responsibly navigating AI's future development and application. The following term, anthropomorphism, refers to the tendency to attribute human traits, emotions, or behaviours to nonhuman agents, such as animals or machines. It allows people to make complex or unfamiliar technologies more relatable by projecting familiar human qualities onto them. Transhumanism, strictly tied to the human-machine relationship, goes beyond human limits with the help of fast-developing technology, and at the same time tries to put emphasis on ethical boundaries and the education of the public. The last concept mentioned in the first part is the uncanny that can be evoked by the melding of humans and technology, or even by failing to understand anything that appears to transcend reality and what is conceivable.

The second chapter aims to contrast earlier dystopian views of technology with more hopeful contemporary perspectives. While works like Wells' *The Invisible Man*, *The Time Machine*, and Huxley's *Brave New World* portray technology as a force that erodes compassion and leads to dehumanisation of society, contemporary writings, Shusterman's *Scythe* and *Thunderhead* and Griffin's *Spare and Found Parts*, acknowledge similar risks but still envision a future where humanness can survive or even grow. Modern characters often act with moral

awareness and compassion, suggesting that ethical responsibility can coexist with technological advancement. This chapter then shows the shift from the fear of dehumanisation of humankind to hope and coexistence of humans and advanced technology.

The following chapter focuses on the uncanny and transhumanism and shows a shift in how literature portrays the merging of humans and machines. From interwar fears of moral decay, uncanny and incomprehensible powers and unnatural ambitions, it moves to contemporary reflections that, if cautious, there is a hope for an ethical evolution. Early authors like Wells warned of the dangers of unchecked science, as in *The Invisible Man*, yet even then, glimmers of optimism appeared, as in *Men Like Gods*, which tied humanity's progress not just to technology but to moral and spiritual growth. Contemporary works such as *Spare and Found Parts* and James Dashner's *The Mortality Doctrine* explore the risks of dehumanisation through transhumanism but ultimately suggest that compassion, responsibility, and self-awareness can guide humanity forward. While the novels warn against overreaching, they also acknowledge humanity's drive to test its boundaries. Ultimately, the blending of human and machine is no longer seen solely as a threat, but as a potential path to a more conscious, ethical future if guided by humility and care.

The final chapter suggests that while the ambition to "play God" through technology has long sparked fear, especially in early dystopian works, more recent narratives increasingly present it as a path toward ethical evolution, hope and even moral superiority of machines. Interwar literature warns of dehumanisation and moral decline when humans seek divine control, as Huxley's *Brave New World* and Wells' *Men Like Gods*, yet later works reframe advanced technology as a potential source of moral clarity and compassion. Contemporary authors, such as Shusterman and Dashner, propose that machines, if guided by empathy and ethical design, might even surpass humans in moral integrity. Rather than rejecting technological advancement outright, the chapter concludes that the actual danger lies not in technology itself, but in how human values and intentions shape it. In this light, the future of humanity may depend not on avoiding power, but on wielding it wisely.

The thesis asks in the introductory part whether the interwar fears of technological development are the same as the current ones, and it concludes that they differ. It also asks how the authors from both generations see the relationship between humans and machines, and whether and how they consider its consequences. In sum, this paper demonstrates that the interwar authors perceived technology negatively, as a doom of humanity, and displayed their fears and interwar anxieties concerning technological progress in their novels. H. G. Wells, in his novels, sees the doom of humankind, while his character travels into the future in *The Time*

Machine only to find dehumanised humans and the downfall of human society rather than prosperity, and his other character goes beyond scientific limitations and brings destruction upon himself, mirroring the state of dehumanised society, in *The Invisible Man*. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* depicts an emotionless, dehumanised society, enslaved by technology, without any ethical and compassionate behaviour, warning against the overuse of technology leading to the disappearance of humanity. Even though Wells, in his *Men Like Gods*, sees a spark of hope for humankind's future, he still warns against the loss of compassion and humanity due to a perfectly technologically developed world. Both interwar authors see the human-machine relationship as a failure of human nature. They imagined futures where the unchecked advancement of science led not to utopia, but to control, surveillance, and spiritual decline. The contemporary novels reflect current cultural tensions around data, artificial life, and the ethics of technological intervention. However, throughout the analysis, it is evident that the contemporary science fiction authors see technology and its development in a more positive light, shifting their beliefs toward hope and a balanced relationship, often seeing the technology as a saviour of humanity, rather than its destroyer. Neal Shusterman in the *Scythe* series offers a vision of a bright future where people are guided by an uncorruptible artificial intelligence that knows better than any human, while people still make their own choices; therefore, this state does not lead to dehumanisation. Sarah Maria Griffin in *Spare and Found Parts* shows that human limitations can be surpassed ethically and that blending humans and machines does not necessarily mean the doom of society. James Dashner has a similar approach. In *The Mortality Doctrine* series, he challenges the notion that a digital mind cannot morally surpass the human one by making his protagonist the world's saviour while not being human, but a computer program. The thesis shows that the view of interwar writers on technology and the fear of loss of humanity associated with it shifts in contemporary writings in a more positive direction towards hope and understanding. In all the current works, there is an evident spark of hope and understanding of a better future, with co-existing humans and machines. Emilio Ferrara states that "each new powerful technology comes with abuse,"[403] and because of that, the focus should be on establishing "frameworks that ensure the ethical use of AI."[404] The scholars mentioned in this paper agree that there needs to be an open discussion among all parties involved, like researchers and the general public, about the moral guidelines AI should adhere to and in what circumstances. Transparency in design decisions is essential so people can comprehend and challenge the rules governing AI systems. With ethics, privacy, and

[403] Ferrara, "GenAI against Humanity," 554.
[404] Ferrara, "GenAI against Humanity," 551.

transparency at its foundation, human-centred AI seeks to develop technology that collaborates with, empowers, and enriches human beings.[405] Even though more research into this vital field of human-technology interaction is required, as is the appropriate development and application of this technology,[406] it is also necessary to educate society about the dangers, drawbacks, and advantages of technology.[407] Established in 2004, the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies, led by prominent democratic transhumanist James Hughes, aims to ensure emerging technologies are distributed fairly and safely. As he argues in a 2009 interview: "The technologies won't make society more equal or tolerant, but we could use technologies to become more equal and tolerant,"[408] which might indicate that there is hope for the future use of technology in an ethical, appropriate, and useful way, reflecting the hopes of contemporary authors and dismissing the fears of interwar authors. At the same time, this paper opens the question of the human-machine relationship for further research in the future.

[405] Nowak, Lukowicz, and Horodecki, "Assessing Artificial Intelligence for Humanity," 33.
[406] Oldfield, "Anthropomorphism and its Impact," 123.
[407] Oldfield, "Anthropomorphism and its Impact," 124.
[408] James Hughes, "On Democratic Transhumanism," interview by Marc Roux, *Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies*, June 24, 2009, https://transhumanistes.com/on-democratic-transhumanism.

Resumé

Tato práce se věnuje otázce technologie a jejího dopadu na lidskost a lidství. Komparativně analyzuje vybrané meziválečné a současné sci-fi autory a jejich pocity z dopadu technologií na lidskost. Z meziválečné éry se konkrétně zabývá díly *Konec civilizace* (*Brave New World*, 1932) od Aldouse Huxleyho a poté třemi romány H. G. Wellse, *Stroj času* (*The Time Machine*, 1895), *Neviditelný* (*The Invisible Man*, 1897) a *Lidé jako bozi* (*Men Like Gods*, 1923). Pohled současných autorů je reprezentován Neal Shustermanem a jeho knihami *Smrtka* (*Scythe*, 2016) a *Nimbus* (*Thunderhead*, 2018), Jamesem Dashnerem a sérií *The Mortality Doctrine* (2013–2015), což je trilogie skládající se z knih *The Eye of Minds* (2013), *The Rule of Thoughts* (2014) a *The Game of Lives* (2015), a také autorkou Sarah Marií Griffin a jejím románem *Spare and Found Parts* (2016). Tato práce si klade otázku, jak meziváleční a současní autoři vnímali vývoj technologie v budoucnosti, jakým způsobem se jejich pohled liší a zda uvažují o důsledcích vztahu člověka a stroje a dochází k závěru, že pohled meziválečných autorů na technologii a strach ze ztráty lidskosti s tím spojené, se u současných autorů posouvá více pozitivním směrem k naději a porozumění.

První část práce nastiňuje teoretické aspekty. Nejprve pojednává o lidskosti a definuje ji jako soucit s ostatními bytostmi, schopnost empatie, vysoké morální hodnoty, ale zároveň i ocenění některých negativních vlastností, které jsou součástí toho být člověkem. Dále se věnuje opaku lidskosti, dehumanizaci, a popisuje ji jako ztrátu těchto hodnot, jednání bez morálních zábran a soucitu. Proces odlidštění pak popisuje jako zacházení s lidmi jako s někým, kdo není plně člověkem a odepírají se mu atributy jako empatie, morálka či racionalita. Opírá se o názory například Jonathana Glovera či Natashy Vity-More. Druhá část teorie se věnuje konceptům souvisejících s technologií a cituje například Marie Oldfield, Johna McCarthyho nebo Margaret A. Boden. Nejprve zmiňuje otázku umělé inteligence, kde definuje inteligenci jako algoritmus schopný se přiblížit stejné kapacitě a kompetentnosti jakou má mysl člověka. Argumentuje zde, zda se dnes již dostává za hranici poznání běžného člověka a zda postupně mění významy slov jako „rozumět“ a „učit se.“ Dále pojednává o transhumanismu, kde zdůrazňuje, že i když je jeho cílem vylepšení člověka pomocí vědy a technologie, současně klade důraz na etický výzkum a pokrok, který je v souladu s morálními hodnotami. Vysvětluje také krátce pojem antropomorfismus, a to jako vnímání neživých věcí, například robotů, jako živých. Strojům, které vypadají lidsky, jsou přisuzovány lidské vlastnosti. Naposledy pojednává o pojmu „uncanny,“ často překládáno jako „tísnivé,“ či „strašidelné,“ což je filozofický koncept, jakási tíseň objevující se, když se známé stává znepokojivě cizím. V této práci se objevuje hlavně

v souvislosti se stroji podobnými člověku. Tyto koncepty v první části práce slouží jako teoretický podklad pro analýzy v dalších kapitolách.

První komparativní analýza kontrastuje strach meziválečných autorů z dopadu technologie na lidskost, konkrétně strach z dehumanizace, a více nadějnou vizi současných sci-fi autorů. Porovnává romány *Konec civilizace* (*Brave New World*, 1932) Aldouse Huxleyho a *Stroj času* (*The Time Machine*, 1895) a *Neviditelný* (*The Invisible Man*, 1897) H. G. Wellse, kde oba autoři zobrazují technologii jako sílu, která narušuje soucit, vede k odlidštění společnosti a postupně k zániku lidskosti, někdy i samotného lidstva. Oproti tomu současní autoři nabízejí více optimistický pohled na budoucnost civilizace a předestírají vizi, kdy lidskost může nejen přežít, ale současně i růst. Neal Shusterman a jeho knihy *Smrtka* (*Scythe*, 2016) a *Nimbus* (*Thunderhead*, 2018) zobrazují umělou inteligenci jako dokonalého boha vládnoucího lidstvu a Sarah Maria Griffin si ve svém románu *Spare and Found Parts* (2016) pohrává s otázkou humanoida, který má lidské vlastnosti, cítění i morálku a dokáže lidstvu prospět. V této kapitole je tedy ukázán posun od strachu z dehumanizace k naději a koexistenci technologie a člověka.

Další kapitola se soustředí na pojem „uncanny," („tísnivé") a transhumanismus. Ukazuje posun od meziválečných obav ze spojení člověka a technologie k současné naději o možném etickém technologickém vývoji. H. G. Wells ve své knize *Neviditelný* (*The Invisible Man*, 1897) varuje před neřízeným technologickým pokrokem, kdy technologické vymoženosti, jako například stát se neviditelným, mohou vést ke zkáze jednotlivce, ale také k morálnímu úpadku společnosti, jelikož jedinec bude příliš jiný, a tudíž „strašidelný." Avšak ve své pozdější knize, *Lidé jako bozi* (*Men Like Gods*, 1923), Wells vykresluje o něco optimističtější vizi, kdy technologie a pokrok vedou k harmonii, i když současně stále varuje před morálním úpadkem. Onen posun u současných autorů je například u Sarah Marie Griffin (a její *Spare and Found Parts*) a Jamese Dashnera a jeho série *The Mortality Doctrine* (2013–2015), kdy oba autoři naznačují, že etická odpovědnost, soucit a lidskost mohou jít ruku v ruce s technologickým pokrokem a vylepšováním lidstva pomocí vědy. Romány sice varují před příliš velkými technologickými ambicemi, ale zároveň ukazují, že prolínání člověka a stroje už není vnímáno pouze jako hrozba, ale jako potenciální cesta k vědomější a etičtější budoucnosti.

Poslední analýza zkoumá onu ambici „hraní si na Boha" pomocí technologie, kdy proti sobě staví meziválečný strach z ovládnutí stroji a současný pohled autorů, kteří nadřazenost strojů považují spíše za pozitivní. Romány *Konec civilizace* Aldouse Huxleyho a *Lidé jako bozi* od H. G. Wellse varují před téměř božskou kontrolou nad společností a nadužíváním technologií vedoucí ke ztrátě lidskosti. Naopak současní autoři Neal Shusterman a James Dashner vidí budoucí pokrok v pozitivním světle, jelikož stroj vnímají jako něco, co může dokonce překonat

člověka, pokud bude řízen empaticky a morálně. Kapitola dochází k závěru, že skutečné nebezpečí nespočívá v technologii samotné, ale v tom, jak ji utvářejí lidské hodnoty a záměry, a tudíž budoucnost technologie a lidskosti závisí na promyšleném a etickém využívání.

Práce dochází k závěru, že meziváleční autoři vnímali technologii v negativním světle. H. G. Wells i Aldous Huxley promítli do svých děl obavy a strach z technologického pokroku a případného zániku lidstva, ale především také lidskosti, který by mohl nastat přílišným nadužíváním technologií bez morálních zábran a etických regulí. Oba meziváleční autoři považují vztah člověka a techniky za selhání lidskosti a věří, že nekontrolovaný rozvoj vědy nevede k rozkvětu, ale spíše k úpadku. Oproti tomu, ve všech zkoumaných současných románech je znát naděje v lepší budoucnost za předpokladu, že s technologií bude nakládáno eticky a důraz bude kladen na vzdělání a porozumění, a tudíž nabízejí odlišný pohled než romány před 100 lety. Současní sci-fi autoři Neal Shusterman, James Dashner i Sarah Maria Griffin vidí vztah člověka a stroje optimističtěji a nadějně. Ve svých románech prezentují technologii spíše jako zachránce lidstva než jako ničitele a k atributu lidskosti se staví tak, že se vyváženým vztahem s technologií spíše podpoří, než zatratí.

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Statement:

While preparing this thesis, I used ChatGPT-4 to enhance the text's readability, clarity and academic style. I also used it to ensure coherence and cohesion in the introductory and concluding chapters. Additionally, I used it to verify the accuracy of the citations to ensure that they were according to the citation standard, The Chicago Manual of Style 2017. After that, I reviewed and edited the content as needed. The thesis is my own intellectual creation. I take full responsibility for the content of the thesis.