

## Demonizing Transhumanism and Creating Otherness in Frankenstein and Other Selected Science Fiction Novels

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Received: 04 / 07 / 2024

Accepted: 30 / 05 / 2025

Published: 15 / 07/ 2025

### Abstract

Transhumanism refers to the use of science and technology to overcome the limitations of humankind and has been one of the earliest themes found in myths that predate modern civilizations by millennia. While only a few works acknowledge its significance as a vital step in human evolution, most—including the texts examined in this study—portray it as a dangerous and ultimately doomed alternative to traditional healthcare. This article traces the cultural and literary evolution of transhumanism from its mythological roots to its modern representations in selected science fiction works, highlighting its chronological emergence in human consciousness from the 18th century onward and examining its posthuman developments. Central to the analysis is the concept of mediated otherness, or the alienation imposed by metanarratives, viewed through the Nietzschean lens of herd morality, which explains how power is preserved by rejecting diversity. The study also explores the role of high executive function modeling in behavioral development and its impact on shaping the collective unconscious. Through discourse analysis, it demonstrates how metanarratives generate meaning, enforce power structures, and establish social norms, while a theoretical framework reveals how cultural conventions shape literary traditions over time, traditions that are not always neutral or benevolent.

**Keywords:** Discourse analysis, Nietzschean philosophy, otherness, science fiction, transhumanism

### ملخص

يشير مصطلح "ما بعد الإنسانية" إلى توظيف العلم والتكنولوجيا لتجاوز حدود الطبيعة البشرية. ويعود هذا المفهوم إلى الأساطير التي سبقت الحضارات الحديثة، إلا أن معظم الدراسات تعتبره بديلاً محفوفاً بالمخاطر للرعاية الصحية التقليدية. يستعرض هذا المقال التطور الثقافي والأدبي لمفهوم ما بعد الإنسانية، من جذوره الأسطورية إلى تجلياته في أعمال الخيال العلمي الحديث، مع تركيز خاص على مفهوم "الآخرية الوسيطة" من منظور نيتشوي. كما يبحث المقال في أهمية نماذج الوظائف التنفيذية العليا في النمو السلوكي وتكييف اللاوعي الجمعي. ويعتمد على تحليل الخطاب لفهم كيفية بناء المعاني وتشكيل علاقات القوة والمعايير الاجتماعية، مع الاستعانة بإطار نظري لتحليل تأثير القواعد الثقافية على تكوّن التقاليد الأدبية عبر الزمن.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** تحليل الخطاب، فلسفة نيتشه، الغربة، الخيال العلمي، ما بعد الإنسانية

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70091/Atras/vol06no02.3>

## Introduction

Despite the endless data and millions of libraries - made accessible to most researchers and scholars worldwide thanks to globalization, social media, and free web browsing - Transhumanism remains one of the most obscure topics known to Man. Very few people, whether laymen or academicians, can claim any deep knowledge of the field, let alone cognizance of its main agenda and goals. The veil of obscurity that clings thus tightly to the field is the residue of misinformation and cultural resistance, which might seem surprising given the ancient history of the movement that goes back to the earliest myths in human culture and connects to its present through the same unchanged goals and aspirations. Examining the latter sources is sufficient to explain the subsequent attitude regarding transhuman ambitions and the general approach of science fiction towards them. Accordingly, this article takes a deep dive into the literary portrayal of transhumanism to explain the influence of mythology and religion in shaping it. Drawing from Friedrich Nietzsche's conclusions about herd morality, it maps the process used to create social and political otherness. The article also examines how such portrayals can impact societal attitudes and political agendas. It argues that the best way to understand and include transhumanism in human advancement is by bridging the gap that separates the humanities from natural sciences using neuroplasticity and similar concepts.

## Literature Review

Transhumanism is a “philosophical movement that affirms the human ability and right to fundamentally influence our own evolution” (Rizzuto & Fost, 2012, p.569). It also refers to using science and technology to surmount the limitations that restrict humankind. These restrictions group themselves into two main categories. The first has to do with longevity. No species on Earth, nor any other planet or system yet known to Man, is immortal. Human beings do not and cannot escape this rule either. However, the historical records in the Judeo-Christian scriptures indicate a significant decrease in our lifespan compared to ancient races and generations. Whether that is true or not, dreaming of longevity persists over time and culture. Since Man is said to have lived longer in previous ages, one of the main objectives of transhumanism today is to extend His current lifespan using both available and futuristic technologies. The other main concern of the movement is the quality of life itself, which finds a precursor in the Myth of Tithonus. The titular character's wife in the narrative was Aurora, the Dawn's goddess. As the mate of a mortal man, the latter asked Jupiter (the Roman appellation for Zeus) to grant her partner eternal life so as not to lose him to the toll of death. Jupiter answered her prayer, and she lived happily with her man for a while. However, as the years went by, Tithonus began to age. Eventually, his wife realised that although she obtained eternal life for her husband, she had nevertheless forgotten to ask Zeus for eternal youth. Consequently, Tithonus went on ageing and decaying year after year until his goddess wife decided at last to put an end to his suffering by turning him into a cicada. Even though it could be a moralistic argument against transhuman ambitions, the adherents of the latter doctrine knew how to turn the tables by using the Myth of Tithonus to their advantage and extract an essential idea from its narrative, namely the importance of youth and perfect health as idiosyncrasies of life itself. Accordingly, the second most crucial issue on the transhuman agenda is to enhance the human body and mind in ways that would alter our cycle of existence and the shape and nature of our future.

Before we dive deeper into a detailed study of transhumanism as portrayed and dealt with in Modern literature, it is essential to point out the great veil of obscurity which stands between its achievements in medicine and technology on the one hand and public opinion on the other. Few individuals, whether laypeople or academicians, know anything substantial about the transhumanist movement. On top of that, the entire field is likened to the fantasy realm of science fiction, despite the valuable contributions of contemporary transhumanist thinkers such as philosopher Nick Bostrom, who contributed so much to the cause by promoting radical physical, cognitive, mood, and moral enhancement to defeat ageing and the suffering that comes alongside sickness and death. Consequently, the movement's findings are neither taken seriously nor given a chance as practical alternatives to traditional healthcare. In short, transhumanism today is erroneously identified as an imaginary futuristic province entirely isolated from reality through the semi-fictional barriers that place the entire field amid pseudosciences instead of regarding it as a realistic way out of many troublesome issues. This attitude would undoubtedly seem quite surprising if not altogether absurd; however, if the public opinion were to be directed towards the ancient background of transhumanism that is as old as The Epic of Gilgamesh, that is to say, as ancient as the first book ever written of which we are aware. The cuneiform tablets which bear this lengthy poem are estimated to be about 4000 years old. Transhumanism is just as old, if not older. In its narrative, the earliest transhuman design appears in the guise of Gilgamesh's desire to conquer death and extend his lifetime. This desire expresses the first of the previously mentioned concerns of the contemporary transhumanist movement, forming a recurrent theme that would repeatedly appear in different myths, legends, and literary records.

Other ancient precursors of the transhumanist movement include the myths of Icarus and Daedalus, Prometheus, and Osiris. In the Promethean myth of creation, the eponymous titan faced punishment for stealing fire from Olympus and gifting it to humanity. His punishment consisted of being chained to a rock on top of a mountain and having an eagle devour part of his liver daily, only to have the same organ regenerate overnight. Apart from the cruelty of the ordeal, this myth echoes the ancient human desire for rejuvenation, recreation, and rebirth, reflecting a longing to overcome human frailty. That is to say, the desire to conquer the universal human limitations of sickness and death and acquire instead the strength to trample over injuries and disease. Similar themes are found in Egyptian narratives about Osiris, who moved from ruling Egypt to overseeing eternal life. The fact that Osiris had ruled Egypt and was involved with human transactions, such as agriculture, before taking charge of the underworld suggests a fixation with getting over the fundamental limitations of human existence and moving from a realm of restrictions to one of infinite possibilities, including the deification of Man himself. A more practical and realistic transcendent motive is Daedalus' urgent need to conquer gravity and allow his species to wing its way through the air, which he did. Humankind accomplished that later with the invention of planes, jets, and other flying mechanisms. However, despite its presence in so many of these ancient and culturally significant records, transhumanism is often undermined and even demonised through the turn that the events usually take. In The Epic of Gilgamesh, the quest for longevity is ridiculed. In the stories of Prometheus and Icarus, transhumanist aspirations are associated with suffering and vanity instead of progress and advancement.

Of all the literary genres, science fiction has long been the most suitable to represent the ideas incorporated in transhumanism, mainly because it bridges the gap between science and

imagination and gives present shape to the countless possibilities still exclusively lodged in the future. That is, arguably, the reason why the earliest Sci-fi work, namely Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), was centred around a set of existential conflicts set in motion by Man's instinctive desire to use his knowledge and to put his scientific discoveries in the service of transcending the already-mentioned limitations. The plot surges from Victor Frankenstein's thirst for knowledge and determination to establish a branch of science that would transport him across the vulnerability barrier imposed on his entire race by death and mortality. Frankenstein describes his studies as focused on "the metaphysical, or in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world" (Shelley, 1818, p.21). None could have explained the transhuman designs better, for in its core, the entire doctrine is exclusively concerned with the physical aspects of the human body, the material world, and all that can be altered to ensure a better, longer, and more enjoyable existence. And yet, it is so easy to fall into the trap of thinking that "Victor had the desire to play God and go beyond the capabilities of man, unaware of the consequences of his actions [even though] there is more to Shelley's tale regarding responsibility and the monster's fall than Victor's abandonment" (Alvarado, 2017, p.76)

Accordingly, the religious arguments often levelled against the movement should not interfere with its agenda because transhumanism neither interferes with religion nor attempts to do so in its efforts to improve the human condition. The movement is instead entirely oriented towards the physical realm of material beings. That is why Frankenstein put so much effort into his attempt to revive the dead and fashion a man who would be the prototype of superiority in size, strength, and durability. The creature was not only meant to be the victory of Man over death, as in the case of Tithonus, but also symbolised heights attainable only if science were to serve such dreams as the ones fuelling transhumanism. However, Victor's desertion of the creature reflects a universal response to transhumanism. This act of rejection and abandonment represents the general reaction towards the transhuman doctrine as depicted, on a subconscious level, by Mary Shelley. As long as the idea had remained ink on paper, Victor was more than satisfied with what he was doing. However, once his work had finally come to closure and his mission accomplished, the fear of the unknown and the clash with the culturally inherited norms convinced him of the monstrosity of his acts and creation. That is made evident by the fact that nowhere in the text is the creature described as actually repellent on a physical level. Because of that, Victor's disgust did not come from the creature's appearance or behavioural pattern but was caused instead by its social position as a culturally abhorred organism.

The improved existence sought after by Victor Frankenstein relies entirely on an enhanced biological fabric that transcends the current state of bodily well-being. Such improvements represented an end goal for both Hawley Gryphons in H. G. Wells's *The Invisible Man* (1897) and Henry Jekyll in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). For a starter, the pair is depicted as intellectually advanced individuals who had mastered their respective branches of science and were capable of making long strides in the history of humanity. Accordingly, both had decided, at one point, to use their extraordinary skills to modify the very structure of the human genome to reach an unprecedented biological state of being. On the one hand, Griffin was drawn to the advantages of invisibility, something he described in the following terms, "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" (Wells, 1897, p.98). The last part of this declaration applies, in fact, not only to Griffin's scheme regarding invisibility but also to the entire

philosophy of transhumanism. The modification of our bodies via the medium of science allows the acquisition of an unlimited amount of power and a prodigious level of freedom. This kind of power and freedom formed the end line that Henry Jekyll had similarly wanted to reach and accordingly sought in the dangerous formula of his potion. Like Griffin, his approach included modifications of the human genome that aimed at transporting Man to a state of physical well-being never experienced before. That included an upgrade in strength, a return of youth and vigour, and the absence of remorse and psychological torments. Although the novella was written in 1886 as an expression of anxieties about the rapid advancements in science and their impact on humanity, its focus on mental health and physical improvement conveys a similarity with the contemporary concern of transhumanist researchers with neuroplasticity and Man's capacity to reorganize his brain architecture, alter, and redesign parts of it to refine and enhance his condition.

However, in a manner quite similar to *Frankenstein*, Jekyll and Griffin are depicted in a way that undermines their quests for better circumstances and paints them instead in the colours of greed, insanity, and even pure evil. On the one hand, Jekyll is said to have committed unpardonable crimes, including murder. His physiognomy under the influence of his potion is described as revolting, even though the elements of disgust are impossible to place or explain; as Enfield suggests, "There is something wrong with his appearance... He must be deformed somewhere... although I could not specify the point. He's an extraordinary-looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way" (Stevenson, 1886, p.7). That is almost identical to the case of *Frankenstein's* creature being repeatedly described as repellent without specifying the cause of such an arbitrary account. The only plausible explanation remains on both occasions tied to the social unorthodoxy of both Victor's creation and Jekyll's alter ego: a form of newness that had allowed humankind to surmount its limitations but remained unacceptable in its collective unconscious on account of the latter's rigid norms and ideas. This same inability to accept and adopt a new way of thinking had prevented the inclusion of Hawley Griffin within his social stratum so much that even his friend, a doctor by profession, had declared that the invisible man was "inhuman" and that he had "cut himself from his kind" (Wells, 1897, p.136).

Another unfavourable depiction of Transhumanism in Sci-fi literature is the acclaimed 1896 novel *The Island of Dr Moreau*, another work by Wells that unites the heights of knowledge with the sinister and the eerie. The result is a thrilling book that propelled the late nineteenth-century revival of Gothic fiction by giving vent to the fears that clung to vivisection as well as the ethical concerns and moral dilemmas that came with the prospect of experimenting on living beings. Like its aforementioned predecessors, this tale presents us with a man of great genius whose ultimate goal is to overcome the restrictions imposed on his species by altering specific human characteristics and borrowing at the same time some from the animal kingdom. This time, however, the attempt to create a superhuman race was branded from beginning to end as manic, which served the purpose of demonising the advancement of science and cutting the way short towards any transhuman ambitions. Accordingly, the leopard-man and all of Moreau's other creations reflect the image of the Greek Chimaera, a mythological female monster that was part goat, part lion, and part dragon, tormenting Caria and Lycia until it was slain. A similar ending was, therefore, both expected and needed as a convenient closure to the narrative of Edward Prendick concerning the mysterious island and its said-deranged master. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) is another example of sci-



fi literature that offers a futuristic vision of the world if the transhuman philosophy is adopted, the human genome modified, and all our social practices altered to reach a new balance. Like the previously cited literary case studies, its depiction of such heights of technological advancement only focuses on what could go wrong in the social strata and the psychological build of humanity. At first sight, the novel gives the illusion of being an ally to the revolutionary thoughts advocated by transhumanists, especially in its depiction of the ageless status that humanity has accomplished within its pages. Soon enough, however, the price to pay on the way to such summits becomes clearer or somewhat gloomier in its portrayal of social decadence and the subsequent dehumanisation of humankind. In this manner, the longevity and youth that shone and glittered at the start of the novel are spoiled and disfigured by the absurdity of alienation and disunity, as well as the disgrace of chastity's demise in a world ruled by polygamy and voluntary prostitution.

Over time, many of the characteristics of science fiction altered, thus shaping new waves of its literature and creating new landmarks that can be noted, for example, in the drastic alterations which placed the corpus of Philip K. Dick and some of his contemporaries between the 1970s and 80s, far from their precursors. What remained unchanged, however, was the cultural influence of mythology and its unfavourable approach toward transcending human limitations, which eventually resurfaced under new forms better fitted for the change in lifestyle, culture, and the political agendas of the day. Thus, the earlier form of paranoia concerning scientific and medical advancement was replaced by the fear of the posthuman, which justifies the emergence of the cyborg as a key figure in sci-fi literature at the time. One of the best works to illustrate this idea is PKD's short novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968). The book transports the reader to a distant future in which the Earth and its neighbouring planets are populated by a mixed society of human beings and a sub-race of supposedly dangerous androids. The latter species is the personification of all the significant fears which sprang among people at the time about the ideas advertised by transhumanism. Back then, most people thought of the movement as a radical attempt to break free from all that is essentially human, thus leading to the alienation of humankind itself by suppressing and effacing its humanness. Though the novel voices out such fears through the lousy reputation of androids, PKD remained out of their reach, something he had proved by making his protagonist side, at least on a cognitive level, with the Nexus androids he was supposed to terminate. Deckard's conflicted relationship with his prey illustrates the absurdity of posthuman paranoia for the simple reason that no difference had ever existed between people and androids from an affective viewpoint. If anything, Deckard realizes, at one point, that some of the androids he is chasing are capable of expressing feelings and artistic tastes and tendencies in a manner that surpasses by far that of his human brethren, which suggests that the otherness was entirely politically oriented.

Other notable Cyborg representations by the same author are the eponymous characters of his 1953 short story, *The Second Variety*. This narrative puts the android figure against the background of a post-apocalyptic version of our world. In this universe, human civilization collapsed because of the machines that humankind had made to fight its wars. In an absurdly long and stubborn stand between the Soviet Union and the United States of America, the two bases were destroyed by the humanoid claws made by the Americans. These machines were so like human beings that nobody could detect them in time to prevent the massacre. Up to the

end, when the sole hope for humanity to survive was the last standing camp of the moonbase, the humanoids won and managed to find their way to this last sanctuary. In its entirety, *The Second Variety* echoes the story of the Trojan Horse and condemns humanity for its lust for destructive technology that can bring it no good. Even when the stakes are low and no lives are endangered, Humanoid figures always seem to be harbingers of heartache and downfall. PKD's *We Can Build You* (1972) translates the Pygmalion myth into events we can understand and find relatable. Pygmalion was a sculptor who fell in love with a beautiful statue he had made himself. With the help of Aphrodite, he brought her to life. The same cycle is repeated with the simulacra in *We Can Build You*. Although no pending colossal harm threatens society on their account, the novel focuses on the emotional entanglement that threatens their creators with madness, so much is the close contact with fake and yet compelling human beings fruitless and harmful.

Less objective representations of transhumanism within the posthuman scope can be found in different literary forms, including screenwriting, notably in the Canadian science-fiction thriller *Orphan Black* (2013-2017), created by screenwriter Graeme Manson and director John Fawcett. The five-seasons series unfolds its plot in a world greatly resembling our own, except for the existence of a secret medical society known as the Dyad Institute. The latter foundation is depicted as immorally responsible for the creation, dehumanisation, and ill-treatment of clones, among whom a group of four sisters is trying to survive and assert their unalienable rights to a decent, free, and unmolested existence. Thus, the first blow levelled against the transhuman movement in the aforementioned posthuman context is the objectification of humankind. As the story progresses, the viewers become more cognizant and conscious of the commodification of the clones. The four central characters are essential to the Dyad Institute only as experiments that promise success and, therefore, might herald much money and social and scientific recognition. Moreover, the institute operates on an underground level as a perverse cocoon for depraved and abnormal tendencies and desires, such as futile bodily modifications that include, among other things, the transplantation of tails and other unnatural body parts. This pattern echoes Icarus's perversion, which is that he used his father's mechanisms in a harmful manner. In addition to that, the experimental transhuman attempts to create clones seem to have failed, which is brought to the viewer's notice ever since the first season in the guise of a mysterious illness that gets hold of the sister clones one after the other, causing them infirmity, ill-health, and eventually death.

## Analysis

The literature reveals that although transhumanism holds allure, its practical application meets with fear and ethical concerns. The negative literary portrayal of the movement and its ambitions reflects more profound social anxieties rooted in the foundation of myth and religious beliefs. Despite transhumanist themes in ancient mythical and religious narratives, the desire to go beyond universal human limitations is often approached from an unfavourable angle and depicted in a less-than-favourable light. One proof of that is Prometheus' liver regeneration, which suggests eternal suffering instead of health or endurance. The tale of Icarus and his father's inventions paints another picture of downfall, concerned this time with vanity and greed. The Epic of Gilgamesh is no different since it ridicules the quest for longevity by focusing on human beings' incapacity to face and overcome less challenging predicaments,

such as exhaustion and sleepiness. The negativity surrounding transhumanism in these early narratives has found its way to modern literature and clung even more tightly to the concept. The outcome of that cultural and literary evolution is a form of dichotomy between the movement's aspiration for transcendence and the cautionary tales of its consequences, which managed to impact the public image of this philosophy.

Sci-Fi's depiction of transhumanism, especially in early works of the genre like *Frankenstein*, captures the concepts of the movement side by side with their unfavourable societal implications. Accordingly, *Frankenstein* can be regarded as a prophet of the doctrine and an activist for its aspirations. Fuelled by his dreams of a better future, he put all his efforts into his attempt to turn science into a tool to overcome human limitations and achieve a better and more enjoyable state of being. However, there exists a cautionary tone to his quest in the novel. This undercurrent sweeps him off his feet and eventually submerges him in the dangerous pool of playing God and throwing one's faith entirely on technological advances. This part of the narrative expresses a certain anxiety that often stigmatises the transhumanist movement and overshadows its merits even outside the realm of fiction. Like *Frankenstein*, *Jekyll* and *Griffin's* ambitions are often associated with greed, insanity, and evil. Their portrayal reflects the societal discomfort in store for any intellectual and scientific change that challenges the day's already established communal and cultural norms. *Jekyll's* alter ego and *Frankenstein's* creature share the disgust they had managed to stir in other characters, although there were no stated and clear reasons to justify their presence in the first place. Their rejection from mainstream society mirrors the myth of *Icarus*, whose downfall is attributed to his ambition and self-centeredness. Thus, despite the echoes of brain architecture modifications in these novels, which resonate with neuroplasticity and align with the ambitions of transhumanism, the narratives tip the scale in favour of a cautionary tone against venturing too far in the intricate path of playing creator when one is just a creation. We owe these and other similar depictions in 18th—and 19th-century works of the genre to the influence of early myths, including that of the chimera. Under such influence, these stories fixate on the moral dilemmas linked to scientific advancement and associate progress in the field with nightmarish figures and images that had once populated the myths of antiquity and captivated the unconscious of Mankind ever since.

Although science fiction evolved and altered over time, specific themes persisted, giving voice to the still-raging fears surrounding unchecked technological advancements that threatened human boundaries. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Investigates this posthuman paranoia by showing that human beings can be less emotionally developed than machines. Deckard's realization that the Nexus androids are more capable of sympathy and emotional expression than his wife, colleagues, and friends shows that "the identity of our species could be altered not only by genetic enhancement but also by educational enhancement" (Sorgner, 2023, p.91) and lays bare the political narrative framing the Nexus as threats in a society that failed to control and exploit them. At the same time, this blurring of lines between humans and machines and what it takes to be either reflects anxieties about losing humanity through technological progress. *The Second Variety*, on the other hand, parallels the myth of the Trojan Horse, suggesting that humanity tends more often than not to bring about its downfall and demise because of greed and unchecked ambition. *We Can Build You* delves into the emotional side of the question instead of fixating on physical threats. The



novel depicts the simulacrum as a leading cause of the psychological instability of the people who made them. It suggests that because of associating and investing in these machines, the creators can no longer nurture real emotions and sustain healthy relationships with other human beings. By translating the Pygmalion myth into a modern context, Dick draws attention to the fact that artificial beings can disrupt human lives and harmony without necessarily posing existential risks.

Moving to screenplays, *Orphan Black* emphasises the ethical and philosophical concerns that still cling to transhumanism today. The series justifies its stand against the movement through the perversity of the Dyad Institute. This immoral organisation commodifies cloned human beings and treats them as mere experimental assets kept and sustained for profit and recognition alone. This kind of treatment aligns with the radical fears regarding transhumanism and the blind pursuit of technology and science. The perverse misuse of technology by the Dyad experts and followers, including unnatural bodily modifications and transplants, symbolically echoes the myth of Icarus and cautions against the hubris of tampering with human nature. In addition to that, the movement is condemned by the failure of the Dyad experiments, which culminate in a mysterious illness that wreaks havoc with the lives of the sister clones. While *Orphan Black* is acclaimed for addressing autonomy, gender dynamics, and social justice, it ultimately demonises transhumanism by portraying it as depraved and harmful, entailing nothing but human suffering and loss. Such a representation reinforces public misconceptions about the movement by framing it in radical terms and only focusing on one facet without even touching on its positive traits.

In addition to the modern depiction of transhumanism in science fiction, it is essential to stress the aforementioned religious arguments against its aims and goals, not only to shed some light upon how the religious dogma is used time and again to justify the political and social bias of one faction of people against another in a given setting, but also to point out the inconsistencies of such arguments on a theological level. Drawing from the already stated examples, we can summarise the religious arguments advanced about any transhuman ambition as a protest against the idea of playing God by attempting to modify, alter, or rebuild His creations. In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the doctor's desire to transform the initial state of his psyche brings about endless calamities, which eventually end his life; a course of events that suggests the imperfection of Man as a creator, and the absurdity of his attempts to be anything but a creation, which could and would end, as was the case with Henry Jekyll in a series of social, psychological, and moral disasters. A similar case is that of Moreau, whose creations had proved to be nothing but aberrations, which confirms the idea of failure and inadequacy concerning Man as a creator. The animal kingdom exists in nature as a set of independent and pure species that reflect the perfection of God in a religious context. Moreau's chimera-like handiwork betrays Man's deficiency as a maker. It illustrates the subsequent perversion of his acts and morals if he persisted and stayed long enough on that deviant path. Latter-day science fiction such as *Brave New World* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* unfold a gloomier scene in which humankind has already played God and reaped the rotten fruits of its crooked ways. The former work paints the fall from grace after adopting unnatural ways, such as creating lab babies and abolishing the family structure from the social strata. The outcome is, accordingly, portrayed as an ongoing nightmare, the sole way out of which is suicide and self-destruction. In the latter novel, humanity struggles against its

creations that have proved dangerous and fatal to its survival. All in all, the general idea behind the dogmatic influence of religion regarding transhumanism is one of rigid abhorrence closely related to a fixed idea, namely that of playing God and falsely assimilating divine attributes.

The truth of the matter, however, is that none of these arguments has a solid bed in any theological concept for the simple reason that most religious texts refer one way or another to the ideas advanced and argued for by transhuman activists. Theology has a fixation with many of the transhuman concepts we know today. The most obvious example is doubtlessly that of Heaven as an ideal sphere where death and sickness do not and cannot penetrate, which corresponds to the transhuman medical ambitions concerning longevity and improved health. The three prominent mass-organised religions depend on the concept of Heaven for their existence and perpetuity, aiming for a form of eternal and ideal life. Thus, to say that transhumanism is a religious aberration becomes no more than an absurd opinion devoid of truthfulness, for the movement itself is in perfect accordance and harmony with the orthodox teachings of most religions in that it aspires towards their highest ideals. The figure of Jesus, in particular, whether in Muslim or Christian contexts, is very close to the aforementioned ideas in his ability to revive the dead, notably his friend Lazarus, even after three days of his demise. However, there is no need to go to extremes if milder examples could supply a justification for transhumanism in a religious context. In addition to his extraordinary ability to revive the dead, Jesus is said to have been capable of curing various illnesses as well. The Holy Quran details such powers in Surat El Ma'idah, verse 110, in the following terms, "How you healed the blind and the lepers - by my will". Similarly, Hinduism aligns with the aspirations of transhumanism through the morphological liberation seen in the avatars of Hindu gods and the techniques that strive to enhance human potential. Among such practices, we can cite yoga. The latter is a widely spread discipline that aims at uniting the individual consciousness with the cosmic whole through exercises of introspection and reflection that can enhance physical, psychological, and spiritual health. Similar applications include transcendental meditation to develop individual abilities and enhance personal growth. Ayurveda is another exercise often integrated with yoga that focuses on the body's link with the mind to improve well-being. Likewise, according to Taoism, the technological enhancements of the transhuman movement can be regarded as extensions of natural human evolution as long as the latter's patterns are respected and not breached. Accordingly, if religion holds such matters as healing the sick and restoring to the human body the vigour of its prime and the strength of its youth in high esteem, then there is nothing wrong, from a religious perspective, with any of the transhuman ambitions in either technology or medical science. Although it ends the theological debate about transhumanism, this conclusion generates more questions about the nature of that eminent rejection we have seen thus far in sci-fi literature. If it is not religious, what could be its true genesis then?

To answer this question, let us take a few steps back into the historical records of one more Eastern religion and one of the most significant religious figures in the world. Before the Buddha became the version of himself with which most people are acquainted, he had once been a wealthy heir who spent his days rejoicing in the luxuries of his father's castle. One day, he decided to drive around the city and see the lives of commoners firsthand. As his carriage approached a sick person by the side of the road, he ordered his servant to halt and asked him about the man. The servant answered that this was quite an ordinary sight; all people get sick.

They started on their journey again, and again, the young heir asked his servant to halt as he spotted the corpse of another man lying on the ground. The servant repeated his previous answer to his inquiry: This was ordinary; all men die. That had caused the Buddha we know to rise from the existential crisis that such encounters had caused to his psyche. In other words, the encounter with sickness and death and the encounter with the idea that all life should lose its lustre and eventually cease gave rise to this valuable school of thought. Transhumanism is a similar philosophy that has emerged from an encounter with the same fears and created another equally practical, though different, way to deal with their anxiety. While Buddhism is concerned with the mind and the soul and strives to bring the two to a state of inner peace and contentment in the face of illness, misfortune, and death, transhumanism is concerned with the body and hungers after new possibilities that could hold the clutches of disease at bay, and slow down the inevitable end of all living creatures. After all, “the purpose of technology is to enable us to live well. Without those tools we would not survive and certainly not live comfortably, or well” (Clarck, 2016, p.91). However, religious teachings and principles have always been used out of their context to generate political power and limit progress whenever it signified a loss of power to the few wielding it. A Nietzschean reading of how morality and religious teachings can be manipulated to serve political and personal designs might help elucidate the nature of the created otherness in sci-fi literature.

In the bulk of his works, notably in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883), Nietzsche analyses and explains the concept of herd morality as a mechanism created by the weak to conquer the strong by demonising strength itself. Roughly put, we can apply the Nietzschean worldview to the question of transhumanism as the desire of those in a position of fear to stop what scares them the most. In other words, the individuals who have stood against transhumanism ever since the ancient days of Greek mythology are the same people who have feared its potential success the most. If Dedalus and his son had completed their first flight safely, for instance, there would have been no significant difference between them and the idol deities of ancient Greece. That would have meant conquering one of humanity's most oppressive limitations. However, to an individual with a scarcity mindset, this also meant danger, namely the fear of being overpowered by superior beings, such as in Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Although the concept goes beyond rejecting transhuman ambitions into repudiating everything that might signify change and a departure from conformity, Nietzsche's reasoning applies perfectly to the issue of transhumanism and its popular reception. Instead of looking at the bigger picture and contemplating all that could have been achieved if such heights were attained, the scarcity-mindset individuals only focused on the negative aspects of these prospects, which tainted and distorted transhumanism's image first in myths and later on in Sci-fi literature as well. What has allowed the continuity of such a response and attitude is, in fact, the nurture-oriented nature of our brains. That has to do with the outdated concept of the “fixed mindset” and its modern counterpart of the “growth mindset”. Most people believe that we are born with a certain amount of intelligence that cannot change and which determines our responses towards most stimuli. The truth of the matter, however, is that humankind is dependent on and very much influenced by its surroundings, which explains the transhuman inheritance of a lousy reputation through the ages. Generation after generation has adopted and bottled up a form of apprehension towards the concept of transhumanism that eventually became worldwide, trusted, and taken for granted. Although it is revolutionary in its findings, the realm of

neuroplasticity remains limited by the most fundamental characteristics of our brains. That we are nurture-oriented beings is a fact that can never be changed. Therefore, our approach towards specific topics and the given existence should be revised and altered. We “should be careful and thoughtful about how we progress, but we must never forget that advance is vital and not inevitable” (More, 2013, p.263). The present analysis of transhumanism's depiction from ancient Greek mythology to contemporary sci-fi and popular culture sheds light upon the multiple errors of judgment that have persisted against reason simply because erroneous teachings have been perpetuated unchecked over countless generations.

## Conclusion

The influence of mythology regarding transhumanism on mainstream literature and canonical science fiction is undeniable. We have so far demonstrated that the obstinate rejection of the movement's progress, in both social and literary contexts, has its genesis in the early myths that dwelt on the ideas of surmounting illness and death. The latter element, in particular, has always been a constant source of anxiety to human beings and has accordingly led to the rise of several doctrines and philosophies that served as coping mechanisms. Transhumanism is one such philosophy, but instead of concerning itself with mental and psychological fears, it deals with the material world and all its components to reach a state of unprecedented bodily well-being. However, this aim has been opposed by social orthodoxy, misleading religious fallacies, and the state of social and moral regression that Nietzsche termed "herd morality". Given the fact that Man is a nurture-oriented creature, these hindrances have piled up on top of one another over countless generations, thus manipulating and tricking public opinion into perceiving transhumanism as a blemish and a pseudoscience. Against this background, the only solution to such a vicious circle of misinformation is to raise awareness and use critical reasoning when it is a question of the canonical mythical texts, an approach adopted in the present analysis to incite and encourage further studies in the field.

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## Declaration of AI Refined

This document has benefited from the application of AI-driven tools, including Grammarly and Scholar AI Chat, to refine its linguistic aspects. These tools were utilised to correct grammar and spelling and improve the overall writing style. It is acknowledged that the use of these technologies may introduce certain AI-generated linguistic patterns. However, the core

intellectual content, data interpretation, and conclusions presented remain the sole work of the authors.

### Statement of Absence of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research, findings, or recommendations presented in this paper. All conclusions drawn are independent and unbiased.

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**Cite as**

Kercenna, R., & Chaanane, M. A. (2025). Demonizing Transhumanism and Creating Otherness in Frankenstein and Other Selected Science-Fiction Novels. *Atras Journal*, 6 (2), 50-63