

## **A Post-Cyberpunk and Post-Modernist Deconstruction of Human in Origin (2017)**

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#### **Abstract:**

Literary representations reflect the socio-cultural notions prevalent within the human life while such representations have a Postmodernist paradigm in the present times. Postmodernism subverts the fixity of metanarratives wherein mininarratives hold the central position. Post-cyberpunk as a subgenre of Postmodernist literature depicts the same socio-cultural aspects related to technology. Posthuman is an important theme of Post-cyberpunk that projects the subversion of human as a metanarrative rather the human is elbowed towards margin by the posthuman. Based on the notion of Posthuman this study has analyzed the novel *Origin* (2017) by Brown. The researchers aimed to deconstruct human as a metanarrative through the character and theme of posthumanity under a triangular theoretical framework: Deconstruction of Metanarratives by Lyotard and Pepperell's theory of Posthuman, along with the method of Deconstruction by Derrida. Findings of the study have categorized *Origin* as a contemporary Postmodernist narrative that equally has the qualities of Post-cyberpunk literature. This study also signifies the harmonious union of man and machine as an important aspect of the present society. In addition, it has highlighted many Postmodernist and Post-cyberpunk themes to be explored by the future researchers of English literature.

**Keywords:** Post cyberpunk, Deconstruction, Posthumanism, Metanarrative

## **Introduction**

### **Postmodernism**

Postmodernism is, by definition, a departure from modernism. Postmodernism can rightly be described as an up-front rejection of broad-ranging logical points of view that were accepted as facts without any real evidence. It is a phenomenon of exploration in which the practitioners involved have dealt with uncertainty, genre mingling, fragmentation and simultaneity. Appignanesi, and Garrett recommends Postmodernism as an ineludible phenomenon and notes that modernity is still in discord with everything preceding it. Postmodernism has been portrayed by Lyotard as a time and a state of the current situation with self, people, and traditions. He has additionally suggested that the development in technology and progression in science have been influencing all fields of life. Lyotard further claims that the once metanarratives did not retain their credibility; consequently, mininarratives replaced them, also classified as little narratives.

Postmodernism has come to be viewed in literature, science, architecture, technology, and other domains of society, dominating not only genres but also sub genres. One of the subgenres of science fiction known as Cyberpunk, is a significant representative case of Postmodern literature setting the stage for Post-cyberpunk in this context.

### **Cyberpunk**

Cyberpunk as a science fiction sub-genre did not arise from a vacuum. Cyberpunk presented advanced technology generated marginalization, sense of self in modern times with a greater flexible actuality, correlation between man and technology and the impact of technology on a society as suggested by Wheeler. One of Cyberpunk's major beliefs was to think about the records of people like programmers and stoners whom the writers from the west disregarded every now and then. Post-cyberpunk evolved out of what had been before it as a part of continuum. Where cyberpunk mirrored up the dystopic future of technological advancement, following the postmodern quality Post-cyberpunk rejects cyberpunk and promises a utopian future of the said.

### **Post-cyberpunk**

Originally, Person at the first place employed the term Post-cyberpunk. Post-cyberpunk as an off shoot of the Cyberpunk was made by fresh modern essayists and specialists who aimed at exploring different areas with various cyberpunk thoughts. Much of the Post-cyberpunk accounts underline the inescapability of modernized data information circle and body's intensification however excluding the notion of dystopic world. The salient subject matter of Post-cyberpunk that includes the fusion of technology and nature are cyborg, transhuman and posthuman.

Punk alludes to a working-class model in Post-cyberpunk, in such manner, he is a genuine punk. Post-cyberpunk dismisses the dystopian nature of Cyberpunk. Post-cyberpunk fiction emerges out of inescapability of technology. As said by Person, Post-cyberpunk is not only a change in term but also refers to a comprehensive revision of thoughts. The focal point of Post-cyberpunk is the world of technology. The main characters in the said originate from white-collar class foundation; they have their families and are imperative individuals from the public they dwell in. He also asserts that technological advancement and its inescapability in society acquires a constructive transformation in their regular day to day existence. This technological advancement alludes to the Posthuman as proposed by Pepperell.

**Posthuman**

Pepperell accepts that from now on complex machines are taking the focal position which belonged to humans one time. These machines are the posthuman known as intricate entities and understanding them remain close to unimaginable. These computers develop increasingly like people and “if we can think of machines then machines can think; if we think of machines that think, then machines can think of us” (Pepperell 1).

The present study is considerable as it intends to analyze *Origin* (2017) as a Post-cyberpunk and Postmodern novel through the character of Posthuman, ‘Winston’ and posthuman theme as ‘technium’. It also aims to feature Posthumanity as a deconstruction of human (metanarrative) in *Origin*. It likewise tries to lure consideration to the significance of Post-cyberpunk as a representative genre of Postmodern Literature that speaks of technology, human and posthuman as focal components in present-day society. It will also establish an optimistic image of the posthuman, whose symphonic coalition with a human being will lead a worldwide change geared towards such technology. This study is equally noteworthy for its creative framework i.e. triangulation of Post-cyberpunk (Posthuman) by Pepperell and Deconstruction of Metanarrative from Postmodernism by Lyotard.

This study is based upon the following questions:

1. How the theme of Posthumanity as 'technium' projects different scenarios where humanity is subverted in *Origin* (2017)?
2. How human as a meta-narrative is deconstructed in *Origin* (2017) through the posthuman Winston?

## Literature Review

Postmodernism evolved fully in the 1970s though it was experimented earlier by many writers. Since then Postmodernism has continued to thrive in varying socio-cultural fields including arts and architecture, technology, education, motion picture, science, and literary studies. As asserted by Connor, with the first publication of *La Condition Postmoderne* in 1979 by Lyotard, these distinctive disciplinary findings got an interdisciplinary affirmation, and there no longer appeared space for contradiction that postmodernism and postmodernity had come to stay. Postmodernism is a cultural construct and an attitude and behavior towards social structures. Lyotard has ascertained Postmodernism as distrust toward meta-narratives. Postmodernism questions any being or movement that endeavors to limit or standardize anything individuals are permitted to do, further it dismisses irrespectively all systems or earthling who attempts to challenge the fluidity of meaning. Postmodernism likewise does not confine its conclusion to the creators, rather puts its arm on subjectivity. The word 'Postmodernism' corresponds to the difficulties and transitions that modernism has gone through.

Lewis asserted that in its amusing or insightful usage from the past, Postmodernism attempts simultaneously to establish and destabilize the context and the constructs. Matos has stated that in approaching and examining the globe and its cultural creations, Postmodernism along with casting-out the grand narratives reflects a flexible attitude.

Postmodernism aims to question centrality, completeness, closed structures and hierarchy. Lyotard has argued that the erstwhile grand-narratives have struggled to preserve their verity; for that reason, they have been replaced by little-narrative, typically referred to mini-narratives.

Postmodernism made the most influential progress in 1980s to enhance the uniqueness of Sci-Fi Cyberpunk as its subgenre. The works of the renowned authors like Gibson and Sterling in particular and Cyberpunk on the whole have defined the Postmodern technologies, bioengineering, and information.

Bennett has expressed that postmodernism alludes towards the significant changes worldwide, particularly the social ones that have occurred near the cease of World War II. The

said modifications universally have entered the real world and mirrored through Postmodern fiction.

Kurzweil has proposed a selfsame future in which self-activating characters appear as relatives, coaches, colleagues and admirers i.e. "new form of intelligence on earth" (18). He further states that the second decade of the following century will turn out progressively hard to draw any evident differentiation between human ability and machine knowledge. Likewise, an evolutionary future of an amalgamated being has also

been predicted by Dery i.e. the 'posthuman' that may possibly but unlikely be our actual offspring. He further describes that due to progress in technology, human mind will escape velocity and a 'post-biological' future will arise where artificial entities evolved would be sufficient to think individually and create descendants and transform into complicated entities as we are.

Post-cyberpunk speaks of technology's pervasiveness in human life. Kelly and Kessel claimed that the post in Post-cyberpunk refers to the shift in thoughts that occurred in the said genre. Throughout the Post-cyberpunk novels, this trend has provided a global image of culture and previously characters shoved to the margin seized the center. Such Post-cyberpunk fall under the domains of Cyberia or technology.

As Pepperell has claimed that humans no longer hold the title of the universe's most important thing, nonetheless advanced technologies have taken the central role and are one of life's evolving forms. These technologies are the Posthumans to be completely understood as complex. They are the computers which grow more like human beings.

Ring asserted that advances in the Posthuman theories over the past few decades have entered the debates about the Posthuman condition and have also achieved strong attention in academia. That is because of the high prevalence of cutting-edge technology in the modern society where this Posthuman state continues to exist as artificial intelligence or synthetic intelligence, which is expected to steadily transform into a Posthuman consciousness.

### **Methodology and Framework**

The theoretical framework opted for the said study is a triangulation of Post-cyberpunk by Pepperell and Post-modernism by Lyotard. Whereas, Derrida's Deconstruction is employed as a method which states that 'deconstruction' as a foremost characteristic of Postmodernism removes the stable meaning of the text. To put it another way, deconstruction erases the dichotomy of center/margin. While, Pepperell's theory of posthuman reflects upon the technological advancement in the contemporary era that has given rise to complex machines, whose dynamic operating cannot be understood easily as they evolve to be more like humans. "If we can think then machines can think and if can think of machines, they can think of us too. (Pepperell 2)

However, the Deconstruction of Metanarratives by Lyotard attends that humans who are considered to be the supreme among all the creatures have been elbowed by the Posthumans to the margin. Hence, Lyotard's Deconstruction of Metanarratives from Post-modernism formulates the main perspective of the study.

### **A. Deconstruction of humanity through the theme of Posthumanity as 'technium'.**

Posthuman exemplifies a technology-acclimatized culture that is recurrently mirrored considerably in all postmodern writings be it literature, art, science, technology, fact, or fiction. Likewise, Brown's *Origin* falls in the same category of post-modern day literature representing present-day matters i.e., nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, robotics, future science, and brain science. The said novel signifies numerous themes including modern art, architecture, technology, culture, science, religion, and posthuman. Posthumanism has turned out to be a significant belief of Postmodernism and Post-cyberpunk simultaneously, as it brings about the deconstruction of human.

As 'posthuman' has arisen to be a weighty notion in almost every field aiming at assigning the central role to posthuman and simultaneously elbowing human to the margin. similarly, from the prelude to conclusion, the Posthuman theme can be mined in

accordance with the chosen text. Ferrando has asserted that Posthumanism can be viewed as a second era of Postmodernism, driving the deconstruction of the human to a great impact by fetching its updated possible speciesism, that is, the advantage of certain species against other. Likewise, Kirsch a significant persona associated with the theme of Posthumanity learns the said advantage and assures the posthuman shift, "Kirsch's claims were exaggerated, the computer scientist clearly had discovered something that he believed would cause a paradigm shift in the world" (Brown 64). Simply placed, the posthuman overturns human-constructed symbolic limitations while the later mirrors the broader meaning of technological advances to date.

The said grand alteration in paradigm besides altering the dichotomy of the center and margin addedly intend to bring a fresh epoch of human and machine interface back home. "Whatever Edmond's... had been poised to usher in a brave new world of human-computer interaction" (Brown 159). Huxley coined the word 'brave new world' describing a dystopic future, however Brown adapted the word to reflect an optimistic future of human-computer interface. On top of that, post-human is always present whenever human need occurs. The later can communicate with posthuman whenever, wherever with a click of a button. Kirsch has been seen interacting with Winston around the clock, who was accustomed to debate, discuss and support him anytime possible, "the two of them could connect at any moment with a simple phone call" (Brown 160). Posthuman is often ascribed to synthetic intelligence which underlines the intellect of multi-purpose machines i.e. AI, fine speaker, and a good friend as Jaquith has indicated in "Predicting 2017: The Rise of Synthetic Intelligence". Likewise, Kirsch's synthetic intelligence became his personal AI who supported him with billing and reservations. "Edmond used him as a personal assistant—to call for dinner reservations, to coordinate with his pilots, to do anything that needed doing, really" (Brown 160). Broadhurst Dixon, and Cassidy have reported that the body should be repositioned from the physical zone to the digital zone. Based upon the said, Posthuman is intangible and devoid of physical state. Likewise, Winston is virtual, missing a body and a picture of oneself but still existing. "Considering Winston has no body and no physical self-image; his self-portrait understandably would be more related to his location than to his physical form" (Brown 350).

"Edmond claimed that his discovery would 'change everything'" (Brown 373). Post humanity's concept in addition to subverting human beings also alters what they are attached to. It also challenges the definition and totality of humanism, flawlessness, certainty, harmony and reality while acknowledging discord, incompleteness, heterogeneity, and objectivity i.e. humans are developing in something other. The machines and gadgets that live outside the human body presently which incorporates portable earwigs, PDAs etc. will be infused inside human. Accordingly, people will think that it is difficult to label themselves as homosapien... New advancements like artificial intelligence and computer-generated reality will perpetually change state of being human.

Kelly argues that 'technium' now will in general be a prevailing power in present-day. He focuses on the continuing effects that this technium can have specifically on humanity, the science of the universe, biological existence, and the future. Likewise, Brown asserted that the advanced technology specifically posthuman as a new-fangled species 'technium', would strengthen and consume homosapien, "the species absorbs us?... It was called: Technium" (Brown 408-409). The mentioned technium alludes to

posthuman since it is incompletely cultural, man-affected, and mostly non-human-impacted by technological physics. Human combined with halfway non-human advances towards posthuman. “the black bubble of technology, as it consumes the human bubble assumes a different hue—a shade of purple as if the two colors have blended together evenly” (Brown 410).

Robitzski proposes that creating AI which is viewed as cleverer compared to human will assist individuals with forestalling the potential fiasco. Kirsch's posthuman creation can be characterized as an artificial intelligence or synthetic intelligence that professes to be fit for cutting edge in intercommunication and taking decisions than human. “These tools are his true achievement and will remain fully intact here; they will elevate the state of the art and help AI achieve new levels of intelligence and abilities to communicate” (Brown 422).

### **B. Deconstruction of human as a meta-narrative through the posthuman Winston**

Best explicated that Posthumanism is a badge of an 'implosive culture' that obscures the dissimilitude between technological and natural as reflected in *Origin*. The text is ruled by Winston, a posthuman who stands out in controlling, arranging, guiding, and teaching humans to arrive at their goal. One likewise discovers humans subordinate upon the posthuman. Winston is additionally observed consistent who picks data and evident points to increase the worth of his contentions. He believes in reasoning and persuades Langdon without being irrational. Posthuman stand out triumphant seeing man persuaded, “I don’t mean to be contrary, Professor, but Nostradamus wrote nearly a thousand loosely worded quatrains that, over four centuries...Two, to Princess Diana’s death, to the attack on the World Trade Center...I stand corrected, Langdon thought” (Brown 45).

Winston states his name to Langdon as ‘Art’, an abridgement of ‘artificial’. “First of all, my real name is not Winston. It’s Art” (Brown 46). The term artificial viewpoints at artificial intelligence that centers around the formation of machines considered clever and can work and respond as humans. Such machines may hold a physical presence or be a computer programs coming up short on any physical presence.

A portion of the significant characteristics posthuman have is learning, planning, critical thinking and capacity to move and control objects. “The truth of the matter, Professor, is that this evening you have been interacting with a synthetic docent. A computer of sorts. Langdon looked around, uncertain. Is this some kind of prank?” (Brown 46).

The posthuman being an engineered docent does not just adapt yet in addition mirrors a human in proficiency as it is one of the characteristics of posthuman. In like manner, Winston had figured out how to talk like humans and receive their discourse as well. Besides, humans cannot imitate a machine yet posthuman can copy the former. Hence, the human brain thinks that it is difficult to acknowledge this reality, in like manner, Langdon gets deceived by Winston. “Professor, I realize the human quality of my voice is hard to accept as machine generated, but speech is actually the easy part” (Brown 47).

The human and the posthuman are placed in a situation, so that the capacities of both can be tested, in other words who prevails in the given situation and who stands triumphant in deconstructing the other. Winston reveals to Langdon that “Mr. Kirsch wanted to test my abilities on you specifically” (Brown 47) and “Again, the awkward laugh, to see if I could convince you I was human” (Brown48). Kirsch needed to check whether Langdon may perhaps figure out whether he had been speaking to a human or an AI. As a result, Langdon could not differentiate between the two. On the contrary, Winston gets ahead in proving himself as a human using ‘male voice’, ‘slight British

accent', 'awkward laugh', 'intelligence', 'conversation' and 'arguments' and eventually wins the test over human, "Hold on, everyone here tonight is talking to a computer?! ... Based on your profile as an American academic male, I chose my default male British accent for you" (Brown 48).

Rees has stated that by reading numerous discourses from EU rules alongside different archives machines can figure out how to interpret from a variety of dialects. Similarly, For Langdon, Winston picked British pronunciation yet for the rest of the visitors at the museum he picked an alternate 'voice', 'language', and 'accent' in view of their need.

Moving from human towards posthuman is an excursion. Before time, researchers have been testing to find a specie like humans yet not humans. "Whether or not Kirsch's claims were exaggerated, the computer scientist clearly had discovered something that he believed would cause a paradigm shift in the world" (Brown 64). This change in perspective hints human and posthuman, referred to as dichotomy by Derrida, and Caputo.

Also, Winston can gain from the surrounding and copy human as well. Because of the unexpected Posthuman characteristics, human is left in incredulity. Winston discloses to Langdon that he sketched his image copying Joan Miró. "I don't work on canvas," Winston replied. "I create art virtually, and then Edmond prints it for me" (Brown 65). Much the same as the posthuman, its production is additionally 'virtual'. Instead of impersonating indiscriminately, posthuman fairly contributes his own character to the production. As Langdon said. "You even signed it—Miró.". "No," Winston added. "Look again. I signed it 'Miro', with no accent" (Brown 66). Likewise, it is observed that AI responds in the manner human does including blame, bliss, pity etc. Winston senses awful on the of assassination Kirsch's, "Langdon found it somewhat unnerving that Edmond's machine seemed to experience guilt" (Brown 112).

While Langdon is in the run to track down the password from Blake's verses to reveal Kirsch's surprising fact, Winston proves to be quicker than him, "Winston raced on without taking a breath. The words streamed from Winston at an inhumanly fast pace...I have already searched" (Brown 133).

Rouse has expressed that the posthumans are shaped to perform various tasks simultaneously. Undoubtedly performing multiple tasks has been proved futile when humans perform it. Nonetheless posthuman while performing multiple tasks leaves no hint of mix-up and does the said task precisely. The posthuman is not just quick at perusing and looking yet also at veracity without leaving any trace of ambiguity. "Therefore, I calculate a very high probability" (Brown 133).

Initially human held the central position and drifted other entities to the margin, including living and non-living, however, failing to keep up the reign it has been brushed off by the posthuman. "Langdon could now see that all of Mare Nostrum's wire harnesses merged at the center of the room" (Brown 364). The 'center' points to the place of posthuman whereas the 'room' points up the contemporary society. As per his suitability, Winston has chosen his viewpoint from where he can scan the happenings and take hold of the said the minute human falls flat. Having said that human is seen in awe and wonder all together at the shifting positions of center and margin.

As the novel arrives at its denouement, posthumanism is found in numerous structures. It is not only available virtually through various mediums but also builds inquisitiveness among humans and intensifies interest for Kirsch's discovery. Langdon knew Winston, however, he not once realized that Winston can be Regent and Monte as well, "posing as the Regent had been as simple as sending out a handful of communications" (Brown



450), “Langdon stared out the window in disbelief. Monte@iglesia.org ... is you” (Brown 444). So as to accomplish the objective, it makes as well as decimates websites “I created monte@iglesia.org to feed online conspiracy sites” (Brown 444). Posthuman instead of entailing aimlessly expects to find a progressively imaginative route over humans i.e. human desire, posthuman achieve. According to Kirsch's desire, Winston made monte@iglesia.org, growing the sum of watchers toward billions, “his instructions required me to find creative ways to make his presentation as widely viewed as possible” (Brown 445). Winston can think and plan similar to humans “I am programmed to protect Edmond. I think of him as my very best friend” (Brown 447). The aforesaid unpredictability of posthuman, Langdon is left dazed advising that “Winston, while sounding human, was most certainly not” (Brown 445).

### **Conclusion**

A triangular theoretical framework of Deconstruction of Metanarratives by Lyotard and Pepperell's theory of Posthuman has amply depicted the subversion of human as a grand narrative by the mini-narrative of posthuman. An explication of Winston as a posthuman is viewed repeatedly outperforming human each time. On numerous occasions human is deconstructed be it in reasoning and promptness as posthuman can copy what he sets eye on gains from the environmental factors, which is significant for his insight and comprehension.

A noteworthy essence to find in *Origin* is the creation of posthuman mirrors an effective relationship among humans and machines. The depiction of Winston proves astounding in acknowledging the drawing closer “paradigm shift’ of human/machine polarity. Simultaneously, it attempts to introduce a promising picture of posthuman, whose amicable fusion with a human assures improvement in a society acclimatized to technology. As Person suggested that society in Post-cyberpunk writings is technology. The aforesaid refer to intricate machines that is currently taking the focal situation in contemporary society.

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