

4-1-2023

## Critical Posthuman Cyber-immortality in Francesca Talenti's Robo-Drama, The Immortal (2014)

Silvia Elias

*Faculty of Languages and Translation Department of English Language, Pharos University,*  
dr.silviaelias@hotmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://jfa.cu.edu.eg/journal>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Elias, Silvia (2023) "Critical Posthuman Cyber-immortality in Francesca Talenti's Robo-Drama, The Immortal (2014)," *Journal of the Faculty of Arts (JFA)*: Vol. 83: Iss. 2, Article 16.

DOI: 10.21608/jarts.2022.167632.1298

Available at: <https://jfa.cu.edu.eg/journal/vol83/iss2/16>

This Original Study is brought to you for free and open access by Journal of the Faculty of Arts (JFA). It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the Faculty of Arts (JFA) by an authorized editor of Journal of the Faculty of Arts (JFA).

# **Critical Posthuman Cyber-immortality in Francesca Talenti's Robo-Drama *The Immortal* (2014)<sup>(\*)</sup>**

**Dr. Sylvia Alfred Ayyad Elias**

**Lecturer - Department of English Language**

**Faculty of Languages and Translation - Pharos University**

---

## **Abstract**

Humans' long pre-occupation with immortality has been the driving force behind magic, adopting healthy lifestyles and non-aging treatments. Techno-optimists claim that technology has paved the way for Man to achieve cyber-immortality by outsourcing Human thinking to Digital platforms and replacing the perishable body with concrete prosthesis giving the individual's conception a chance to survive through a technologically inventive new Posthuman form. Humanists have defended human Centricity and Exceptionalism claiming that Posthumanists' dream of a techno-utopian fusion comes with serious moral, religious and ontological issues. However, Critical Posthumanists believe that the current human nature is improvable and the fusion is inevitable. The imagined future is a new age in which Humans will fearlessly choose an immortal form of a non-biological entity that allows their cyber-immortality. The aim of this paper is applying Critical Posthumanism to American Playwright Francesca Talenti's *The Immortal (The Uncanny Valley)* (2014); with the aim of proving that the once farfetched dream of infinite existence may become feasible through Humans' deliberate choice of cyber-immortality. The adopted theory of the research is distinguished by its total rejection of human supremacy theories and its critique of Man being the universal standard of other entities and thus questions his dread of losing autonomy. Critical Posthumanism applied to *The Immortal* suggests that Man is not necessarily superior to his creation. Talenti's production manifests the possibility of a machine surpassing a human without necessarily being his enemy. The tackled play is considered one of very few plays around the globe that incorporate the use of a RoboThespian as a major actor in a performed play.

---

<sup>(\*)</sup> **Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts Volume 83 Issue 4 April 2023**

**المخلص:**

ظل هاجس الخلود لفترة طويلة لدى الانسان هو القوة الدافعة وراء السحر، وتبني أنماط حياة صحية وعلاجات عدم التقدم في العمر. يدعي المتفائلون بالتكنولوجيا أن التكنولوجيا مهدت الطريق للإنسان لتحقيق الخلود الإلكتروني من خلال الاستعانة بمصادر خارجية للتفكير البشري في المنصات الرقمية واستبدال الجسم القابل للتلف بأطراف اصطناعية، مما يمنح ادراك الإنسان فرصة للاستمرارية من خلال شكل جديد مبتكر لما هو ما بعد الإنسانية. دافع الإنسانيون عن المركزية البشرية والاستثنائية زاعمين أن أتباع ما بعد الإنسانية يحملون بانصهار مثالي ما بين التكنولوجيا والانسان وهو ما قد يتبعه قضايا أخلاقية ودينية وأنطولوجية خطيرة. ولكن يعتقد نقاد فكر ما بعد الإنسانية أن الطبيعة البشرية الحالية قابلة للتحسين وأن الاندماج أمر قادم ولا مفر منه. فالمستقبل المتخيل هو عصر جديد يختار فيه البشر بلا خوف شكلاً لكيان غير بيولوجي يسمح بخلودهم الإلكتروني. الهدف من هذه الورقة هو تطبيق نظرية ما بعد الإنسانية النقدية على مسرحية الكاتبة الأمريكية فرانثيسكا تالنتي The Immortal بهدف إثبات أن حلم الخلود الذي كان بعيداً قد يصبح ممكناً من خلال اختيار البشر الارادى للخلود الإلكتروني. تتميز النظرية المعتمدة للبحث برفضها التام لنظريات التفوق البشري وانتقادها لكون الإنسان المعيار العالمي للكيانات الأخرى ، وبالتالي تشكك في مخاوفه من فقدان سيطرته. تشير نظرية ما بعد الإنسانية النقدية المطبقة على المسرحية إلى أن الإنسان ليس بالضرورة متفوقاً على خليقته. فالعرض يشير الى تفوق الآلة على الإنسان دون أن تكون بالضرورة عدواً له وهى واحدة من عدد قليل جداً من المسرحيات حول العالم التي تتضمن استخدام روبوت حقيقي كممثل رئيسي.

The aim of this paper is applying Critical Posthumanism to American Playwright Francesca Telenti's *The Immortal (The Uncanny Valley)* (2014); with the aim of proving that the once farfetched dream of infinite existence may become feasible through Humans' deliberate choice of cyber-immortality. The research paper connects earlier movements to the notion of immortality and traces its gradual evolution to the contemporary stance. The research answers questions concerning decentralizing humanism (whether Humans should continue to stand for the mainstream and machines for the other) as well as the ontological and religious effects of Critical Posthumanism in contrast to earlier schools of thought. The adopted theory of the research is distinguished by its total rejection of human supremacy theories and its critique of Man being the universal standard of other entities and thus questions his dread of losing autonomy. According to Critical Posthumanism, technology is neither the 'other' to be feared nor rebelled against (Ferrando 28). It is the long time playing mate of Generation Alpha who is incapable of existing without it and has taught itself how to make use of its wide benefits. Critical Posthumanism applied to *The Immortal* suggests that Humans are not necessarily superior to their creations. The production explores the possibility of a machine surpassing a human without necessarily being his enemy as earlier movements including Humanism and Transhumanism suggest. The play was originally entitled *The Uncanny Valley*, but it was renamed *The Immortal* after the playwright discovered the coincidence of another play entitled *The Uncanny Valley* playing in New York at exactly the same time in October 2014. The tackled play is considered one of very few plays that incorporate the use of a RoboThespian as a major actor in a performed play.

The fact that Man is inherently mortal singles out human beings from machines. However, this has never stopped Man from seeking immortality all around the world. In his book *Immortality: the Quest to Live Forever and How It Drives Civilization*, Stephen Cave explains that the dream of living forever springs from Man's instincts so he writes, "almost all cultures contain legends of sages, golden age

heroes or remote peasants who discovered the secret to defeating aging and death” (4). The promise of living forever in a spiritual form has been the basis of most established religions. In Abrahamic eschatology, heavenly immortality is conditional for the soul and is promised to those who fulfill the Deity’s commands. Concurrently, science worked to find solutions to elongate Man’s biological life span through supplements, healthy life styles and anti-aging treatments. Another scenario that was adopted by both religion and science is resurrection. So instead of preserving human life to infinity, Man dies but is resurrected either physically like in Monotheistic religions or through preserving the body via cryonics in hope for reviving it one day when advancements in Medicine take place. Another road to immortality is believed to be fame and legacy (6). Popular heroes and influential historical figures are believed by some to be immortal but only to their loved ones not to themselves. As technology rapidly developed, a different scenario rose to the surface for those who are interested in keeping their existence (a different pragmatic term for soul) and intellect via a digital form rather than their limited physical bodies. Technological solutions have become the need of the hour and with it came the challenge of autonomy and control which is “the hallmark of humanist philosophy” (Nida-Rumelin 17). Humanists believe that capacities such as sentimentality and sociability distinguish humans from machines, so responsiveness<sup>1</sup> in humans is a sign of cognition and moral capacity. It allows humans’ rationale to suppress their actions or react to external stimuli based not only on senses but on their intellect; calculating the resulting consequences of their behavior. According to them, these are qualities that ensure human supremacy. So, humanists claim that the individual is in need for digital aid in everyday life and should embrace technological advancements for his service but suggest human essentialism and centrism no matter how much machines or robotics are involved in his/her everyday life.

With ‘Transhumanism’, Julian Huxley<sup>2</sup> suggested in *New Bottles for New Wine* a new term to describe the individual transcending his entirety by realizing new possibilities for his human

nature such as a new kind of existence that is as different from our current species as ours is from the Pekin Man (17). However, the extent of Transhumanism has changed after Huxley. Its definition still included Man transcending himself, but soon the term became the keyword for the transgression of human's biological boundaries by means of technology in specific (Ranisch and Sorgner 10). Futurist Fereidoun M. Esfandiary (1930-2000), who later changed his name to FM-2030<sup>3</sup>, is believed to have introduced the term 'Transhuman' in its current meaning. For Transhumanist thinkers<sup>4</sup>, escaping our biology by outsourcing our thinking to non-biological platforms such as computers or robots suggests an obvious way in which humans transcend the biological limitations of their brains. According to FM-2030, achieving cyber-immortality through transporting the content of one's brains to a non-biological entity is expected to be a feasible procedure that will most likely take place around the late 2030s. Transhumanist scholar Kurzweil predicts that, "software-based humans will ... live out on the Web, projecting bodies whenever they need or want ... including (but not restricted to) virtual bodies in diverse realms of virtual reality" (324). Thus, Man will continue to have a human body but will become a morphable projection of his intelligence. Transhumanists wonder whether immortality is possible by renouncing humanness or whether humans will cease to be human when they achieve cyber-immortality (Drozdek 11) since Humans are inherently mortal.

As computers operate tens of millions of times faster than the fastest human nerve cell (neuron), an ethical argument rose to the surface with a question like what if the technologies that Man created surpassed his capabilities. Hefner explains in his article "The Animal that Aspires to be an Angel" that "we create technology in order to compensate for our finitude" (658). The mere existence of technology reminds humans of their mortal nature and need for assistance in order to become more than they actually are. In fact, the main purpose of outsourcing human thinking to digital platforms is surpassing Man's physical and mental capabilities; offering a whole new range of possibilities that were not there for him earlier. However, with such

techno-optimist scenario, techno-skeptics had their fears that were explored in popular science fiction<sup>5</sup> for the last three decades to the extent that Hefner used two terms for them: “upper-case Transhumanism” and “lower-case transhumanism” (158-59). The former term refers to what he considers the positive transformation of the human species, while the latter denotes the ambiguous use of biotechnology in everyday life with all its feared consequences. Unsurprisingly, a group of Transhumanist activists felt the need to author a Transhumanist Declaration<sup>6</sup>: stating various ethical dilemmas related to the use of and planning for technological advances. The declaration entails the importance of [respecting autonomy and individual rights](#) considering moral responsibilities towards upcoming generations and reducing [existential risks](#) (Hava Tirosh-Samuelson 24).

The Transhumanist discourse shows ethical superiority and compassion that - according to its users – cyborgs/robots lack. One example is the association of the word ‘humane’ with non-violent or non-cruel actions and using both words interchangeably. It tends to salute the victory of Man versus Machine if a writer proposes their rivalry: protecting humanity against existential risks. With Transhumanism, humans are simply not Posthuman yet but through the application of technology and the great faith they have in it, they are on their way to become Posthuman.

Theoretically, technology is transforming the human into the Posthuman – a hybrid creation or a cyborg which functions dualistically. It consists of immaterial data-based cognition (which is basically the substitution of the mind or soul) and a prosthetic concrete body (LePage 138). According to N. Katherine Hayles’s work *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), information and cognition come over materiality (the body) which she regards as the unintelligent object. Thus, human subject’s conception is given a chance through a technologically inventive new Posthuman form to be preserved. This is different from the earlier view of using cryonics to store the human body and achieve its immortality. This is also different from Digital Immortality that helps people commemorate

deceased people by visiting their accounts, seeing their photos or seeing them in the form of virtual humans or holographs. With Posthumanism, humans replace the perishable body with prostheses. One Posthuman assumption “thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born” (Hayles 2). Perhaps it is Hayles’s other assumption of Posthumanism that is viewed with fear by some. She assumes that there is a possibility that humans, will lose their centre stage and sovereign role to become ontologically equivalent or replaced by cyborgs. She writes that with Posthumanism “there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism” (3). Posthumanists basically believe that the current human nature is improvable through the use of computer and bioengineering as well as artificial intelligence which may make Radical Life Extension possible and adds to it the benefit of cyber-immortality.

Both Posthumanism and Transhumanism share a common interest in technology but reflect upon it differently. Robert Ranisch and [Stefan Sorgner](#) explain that Posthumanism is believed to be a general more inclusive term from which both Transhumanism and Critical Posthumanism branch. What distinguishes the more recent Critical Posthuman approach – which is the adopted theory of this research - is its total rejection of human exceptionalism or human supremacy theories. It is a “critique of the humanist ideal of ‘Man’ as the allegedly universal measure of all things” (Braidotti 32). Critical Posthumanism does not make technology its main focus; it is neither the ‘other’ to be feared nor rebelled against (Ferrando 28). Decentralizing Humanism has led to a shift of focalization through which human beings are no longer the ethical standard:

Posthumanism rubs up against modernity’s orthodox model of the human as a fixed entity, which finds its identity in relations of difference. These relations of difference depend upon the human’s traditional, identifying borders with animals,



machines, and the supernatural, which function to define the human as such (i.e. *not* animal, *not* machine, *not* supernatural) (LePage 9)

Decentralizing Humanism - suggested by Critical Posthumanism- is different from deconstructing the notion as a whole which is crucial to Antihumanist schools of thought. This distinction between the two schools of thought can be seen in their morphologies, specifically in their denotation of 'post' and 'anti'. Antihumanism fully acknowledges the consequences of the 'death of Man', asserted by post-structuralist theorist Michel Foucault. By moving the fixed entity from the centre, Man ceases to stand for the mainstream and machines for the other. Consequently, believers slowly come to accept the fact that Machines do not have to abide by the human ethical code. This poses a comprehensible threat for Humanism and opens the floor for philosophical and ontological discussions where machines are not the enemy.

Critical Posthumanism enables Man to be conceived simultaneously as both the creator and the creation (LePage 3). It suggests that a creature/ creation might be artificially built by Man rather than God or nature and it suggests that Man is not necessarily superior to his creation. In fact, his creation may exhibit surpassing powers:

The human has been historically posed in a hierarchical scale to the non-human realm. Such a symbolic structure, based on a human Exceptionalism well depicted in the Great Chain of Being has not only sustained the primacy of humans over nonhuman animals, but it has also (in)formed the human realm itself, with sexist, racist, classist, homophobic, and ethnocentric presumptions (Ferrando 28)

Critical Posthumanism suggests game-changing privileges like immortality through virtual existence and deconstructing the restricting physical human body. Established religions had to be involved in the argument<sup>7</sup> raised by the possibility of cyber-immortality. Some Christian theologians were critical about it while

others were more willing to accept its potential and inevitability. Those who were more accepting gave it theologian justifications like if it was not for God's Will, it would not have taken place from the beginning. This argument is seen in Philip Hefner's *Technology and Human Becoming*. He justifies, "in its engagement with finitude and death, technology becomes almost explicitly religious" (659). The desire for infinite existence has been deep-rooted in humanity, but the speed at which technology is leading the way towards cyber-immortality cannot be overlooked. With cyber-immortality, even physical differences - that have often led to hegemony of one team over the other due to race, color, gender ...etc - become void since only Human essence is given life without his/her body that carries the difference in color, race or gender. Eventually, machine bodies can be customized based on the individual's request. This is an additional advantage added to the many pros offered by cyber-immortality.

Using cyborgs or anthropomorphic robots for human substitution rather than assistance with all the suggested benefits has opened a wide range of possibilities in different fields. Robots have been around for a while assisting with tasks that usually involve tedious monotonous actions and have invaded fields such as agriculture, construction, hospitality and health care. However, their representation in the fields of art has been minimal since such arenas require uniqueness, distinction and mainly depend on individual creativity.

In theatre, a robot was first cast as a character in Karel Čapek's *R.U.R*<sup>8</sup> (first published in 1920; performed in 1921). Later in the Twentieth century, robot characters started appearing on a number of stages<sup>9</sup>. However, in all these works, human actors performed the role of the robot. The practice of employing robots performing themselves or acting versions of themselves on stage is still both limited and recent. Playwrights had to collaborate with computer engineers to create a new form of theatre which is the Robotic Theatre or the interdisciplinary field of Robo-drama. Examples of plays that have utilized actual robots in the role of robots include Elizabeth Meriwether's play, *Heddatron*<sup>10</sup> (2006) which was performed by [Les](#)

[Freres Corbusier in New York](#) and Christian Denisart's play *Robots* (2009) that was staged at the Théâtre Barnabé in Switzerland. This play actually featured two human actors and three robots, including a humanoid robot that displayed gracious movement but did not speak. In 2012, Free Theatre Christchurch, in collaboration with the HIT Lab NZ (University of Canterbury), performed *I Sing the Body Electric*, based on the Don Juan's legend. The two cast robots were not life-sized and had limited capabilities. In 2015, [My Square Lady](#) - which was inspired by Shaw's *Pygmalion* and the musical *My Fair Lady* - featured Myon the robot as its star. The play was staged at the Komische Opera Berlin (<https://robottheatre.co.uk/robot-performances/>).

Due to advances in Artificial Intelligence which allowed even more complex and sophisticated performances and interactions with humans in the field of drama, RoboThespians<sup>11</sup> were invented particularly for entertainment. They were created to be life-sized humanoid interactive robots whose primary function is theatrical performance. They can play a pre-recorded sequence and/or create their own routines, choosing from a selection of pre-programmed poses, sound effects, eye graphics, body movements and text-to-speech functionality in multiple languages (Bogue 670). RoboThespians are basically robotic actors that come with a stock of impressions, greetings, songs, and gestures. They were designed by Engineered Arts—a U.K.-based company that produces different entertainment humanoids through interdisciplinary collaboration between artists and computer engineers.

The RoboThespian – used in *The Immortal* - originally belonged to the Department of Computer Science at UNC Chapel Hill where Talenti was a professor teaching film production. She studied the capabilities of the newly bought robot and wrote her play based on that. The play explores the study in which young Edwin agrees to participate; uploading his mind into Dummy the robot in exchange for wealth and clean reputation. Dummy mirrors Edwin's being through Artificial Intelligence creating an even better version of human Edwin. In a quest to achieve cyber-immortality through the creation of a

double or an Avatar, the audience wonders if this technological achievement is a dream of immortality come true or a Faustian bargain.

The dramatist states on the play's website "I am convinced that we will blend with machines; yes, the singularity is right around the corner ... who among us will be the first immortal?" (<https://uncannyvalleyplay.com/>). According to the play, the idea of achieving cyber-immortality by becoming one with robots, letting go of the restricting physical human body and turning oneself into a powerful long lasting machine that is not susceptible to disease or death had to be met with repulsion at first but it is a matter of time before it becomes totally accepted by the masses. What makes Talenti's play different from earlier Humanist/Transhumanist texts is the way she introduces Dummy the robot. Her character runs counter to the typical evil robot trope often found in earlier works of art.

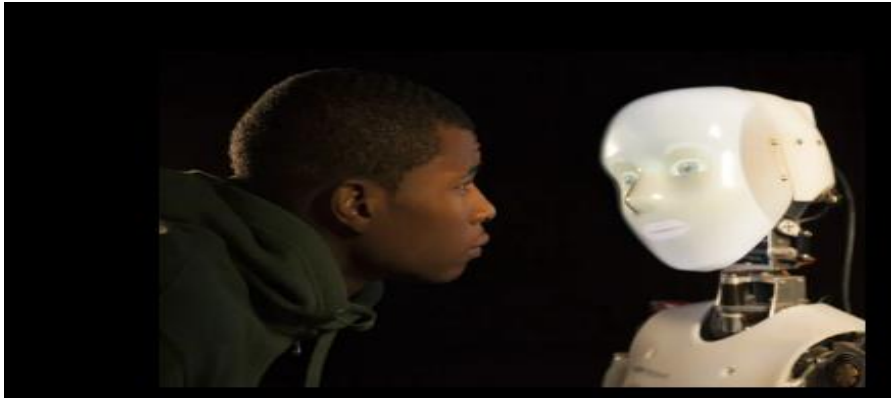


Figure 1

#### Edwin meets Dummy

It is worth mentioning that no previous academic studies were conducted on this play until the date of writing this paper however, its website offers reviews that described it as "an inventive cybernetic fairy tale ... staged with poetic grace" and a play that "forces the audience to face the growling role of technology in our world"<sup>12</sup> (

<https://uncannyvalleyplay.com/>).

When Edwin first approaches Dummy, he tells him that he is under investigation for Fraud. He explains that another person who looks just like him is showing up everywhere on Social Media and uses his name to usurp his online identity. This evil double drinks, consumes drugs, posts pictures of topless girls, buys a sex robot, uses a stolen credit card leading others to un-friend Edwin thinking he is his evil double. Dummy offers to help by reclaiming Edwin's online identity in exchange for getting him to be part of a study in which he would inhale daily a dose of NERVS that would spark his involuntary memory. He is asked to wear Google glasses to enable Dummy to collect data on his daily life as well. As he does, Dummy's face starts mirroring Edwin's reactions showing the same expressions of fear and love that Edwin experiences in his subconscious status.

Dummy explains that Professor Southcott and his team are not just after his looks or gestures but after his soul. He says "Just think that we (experimenting team) can preserve you forever" (Talenti 17). There is reference to Leonardo Da Vinci's drawing of the Vitruvian Man which is believed to be the connection between the human form and the universe in search for Man's soul. Edwin agrees to the 24-week experiment in exchange for money and cleaning his reputation. In a Faustian reference<sup>13</sup>, the contract is signed in blood and Edwin pushes a knife into his flesh and signs the agreement with his dripping finger. The playwright uses the popular literary ritual as a symbol of Man rejecting his humanity or body in hope for a better self that eventually turned to be his double or Avatar.

Gutenberg's printing press is a prominent symbol in Talenti's play because the way the masses received it at first, echoes how people react nowadays to the use of cyborgs/robots. Dummy says that Gutenberg's business partner Johann Fust took some bibles to the French court and when they found that each letter was identical from one book to the other, they accused him of witchcraft and threw him in jail instead of rewarding him for his innovation that facilitated copying. Some even believed that he was in league with Satan and his

grandson changed his name from Fust to Faust. Dummy states that, “technological advancements have always been met with great resistance” (Telenti 47). The reference is extended in Posthumanist writings showing that any invention that is ahead of its time is perceived as unnatural or even demonic at the beginning but is soon accepted by the masses once they grow accustomed to it and get to know its advantages:

EDWIN (peers closer): You – you kind of look like me ... and it’s creepy

DUMMY: People say that. We hope you will get used to it (13).

Technology is about being free and imagining new conditions that are different from those that already exist (Hefner 661). The line between denial and accepting the not farfetched idea of surpassing Man’s limits is the intermedial phase experienced by some. Talenti introduces Atropos’s character who stands for average people in this intermedial phase. Dummy describes her as one who believes “in the soul of a biological human as being unique and time-bound. As she sees it duplicated, it hurts her” (Talenti 49). Man (Edwin) and Machine (Dummy) broach the “soul” subject. For Edwin, he describes it “as something that connects us all – and when we die, it goes back to something big, something universal” (49). Satirically, Dummy continues “like a giant iCloud, where every single data bit is connected in a meaningful way” (50)! Comparing Heaven to iCloud for robots is both witty and truthful to some extent. If a robot’s immaterial data-based cognition is compared to Man’s soul, then iCloud is where its data come from and return.



Throughout the play, Dummy's face changes from cartoony - its default - which is blue and white in phase I to the color brown or semi-Edwin in phase II until he looks like a photographic Edwin in phase III mirroring the human subject.

Figure 2

Dummy looks like a photographic Edwin

He even starts to sound and feel like him. Dummy explains that the Avatar is progressing nicely. He has biosynthetic skin "that will soon feel the wind – and the sun" (46), extremely subtle facial animatronics and is funded by international billionaires interested in immortality. Dummy's progress is undeniable; he shows reactions like laughter and gestures like blowing a kiss at himself in the mirror. Keeping in mind that Dummy is not a human actor performing the role of a robot but a RoboThespian who is created to perform in a play, spectators are witnessing an actual digital revolution in display. They behold the power of technology being unfolded before their eyes in the form of an Anthropomorphic Robot who is made in the image of Man<sup>14</sup> – its creator and ascribed human-like characteristics.

In act III, Dummy shares with Edwin a secret which is having a pet. He goes on speaking sentimentally about it non-stop. He goes on describing his eating and sleeping habits, how he looks after it and adds "If only you knew how it feels to love KK (the pet)" (Talent

53)! The playwright shows the readers that Dummy is capable of showing emotions and love towards his pet and Edwin. The mirroring or doubling process comes to an end. The merge is completed and what was once personal becomes shared and networked. At the completion of the experiment, Edwin speaks of a double that his friends and lover see. People think it is him and they like the double even better than they liked the actual Edwin. He tells Dummy, "I used to have an evil twin and now it's like I have a perfect twin, one that is much better than me" (55) to which Dummy explains that they have remade him. The avatar out there is Edwin's double. He is controlled by Dummy who is his soul and is playing Dummy's body: "He is us, forever. You won't die" (58).

As Edwin starts kicking the trash, screaming, falling to the floor, having seizures and begging Dummy to stop the experiment, Dummy's face distorts and gets covered in blood. The stage direction reads as follows: *Edwin sits up now – sees the alarming state Dummy is in. He crawls closer to him – touches him. With the touch, Dummy calms down* (60). Dummy addresses Edwin as "my friend. My very soul" and announces that there is no point in his living if it causes Edwin pain. He begins to destroy the data and consequently their Avatar. By choosing this ending in which Dummy does not challenge Edwin or go against his will, the playwright proves that there is no reason for the individual to fear technology: it may offer a beneficial long-lasting version of his existence but won't necessarily turn against him. She suggests the use of this advancement for Man's own good since this union is inevitable.

Dummy in a selfless act shows he is capable of sacrificing himself out of love once he realizes that his friend is in pain over the fact that he has a better double. He first learns to love his cat then Edwin. In a way, the playwright shows he is able to love better than a human does and act accordingly. In a surprisingly human-like act, Dummy breaks a friendly joke - before destroying his data - using a pun when Edwin asks "our double?" He humorously replies "our terrible triple treble" (60)! According to Rachel Kerry in "Do Androids Dream of Electric Souls", the unexpected ending in which



the RoboThespian speaks of destroying itself out of real love in a long monologue upstages its fellow actor Nicholson (<https://newyorktheatrereview.blogspot.com/>). The production is considered a true displayed manifestation of the possibility of a machine surpassing a human without being his enemy. The researcher has chosen this play for its originality in both its argument and production. The applied theory of the research can be traced in the play's total rejection of human supremacy. It heavily criticizes Man being the ethical mainstream and standard; suggesting the ethical, emotional and physical benefits a machine has to offer. The playwright has succeeded in verifying the Critical Posthuman thought using details that show Dummy's amiability and the endorsement of the avatar or Edwin's double in the community.

To conclude, Man's long preoccupation with immortality has been the driving force behind the flourish of civilizations and their continuous search for solutions to elongate the individual's life span or his/her mere existence in new forms. Fields have joint to offer interdisciplinary solutions from nutritious, biological, and religious to technological. Ontological arguments have witnessed a number of movements starting from Humanism that celebrated human centrality to Critical Posthumanism that rejected it and opened the horizon towards a chance of cyber-immortality where technology is not to be feared. It offered a more positive approach to an evitable human-machine fusion. The technologically fused entity is expected to compensate human flaws so its advancement - according to Critical Posthuman advocates - should be welcomed and celebrated as a sign of positive evolution. Taleni's robo-drama *The Immortal* is a typical Critical Posthuman performance that runs counter the typical evil robot trope often found in earlier works of art. It shows that novel ideas are always met with opposition but only time and experience allow the individuals to accept the benefits that come with technology. The play presents the concept of cyber-immortality through the creation of a long-lasting better version of the human that surpasses its creator's capabilities. It even suggests the evolution of the machine showing emotions and cognition. The play does not support human

supremacy in any way but respects the comprehensible fear of some. It is a work of art where technology works for the benefit of Man instead of turning against him. All this takes place in a robo-drama where an actual Robothespian plays the role of a robot on stage and the audience beholds the power of technology and its fast evolution unfolding before their eyes.

## Notes

- 
- 1 A common notion to Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Rousseau and Kant is that humans are responsive to reasons while animals respond only to sensory stimuli and feeling (Roden 1).
  - 2 He is the first director-general of the UNESCO and president of the British Eugenics Society. He is credited with coining the term in 1957.
  - 3 His Transhumanist checklist includes factors such as having a pacemaker, having acted as a surrogate mother, or having died and being resuscitated. FM-2030 hoped for his own resuscitation: his body has been cryogenically preserved after his death in 2000, thirty years before his hoped-for 100th birthday.
  - 4 like Nick Bostrom and Ray Kurzweil,
  - 5 The term is referred to by Pramod Nayar as 'the Pop Posthumanism of cinema and pop culture'. Transhumanist movies that celebrate the victory of Man include *The Terminator* and *I, Robot*
  - 6 The declaration has been modified a number of times over the years. The first version was created in 1998 at the time of the formation of the [World Transhumanist Association](#). The latest modification was done in 2009. It was written using "Upper-case Transhumanism".
  - 7 Analysis of the religious dimension of contemporary technology is offered by David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology: the Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention* (New York Penguin Books, 1997).
  - 8 This was the play that coined the word 'robot'.
  - 9 in plays like Alan Ayckbourn's *Henceforward* (1987), *Comic Potential* (1999), and *Surprises* (2012) .
  - 10 is the first play to feature robots on stage performing robot characters (<https://www.robottheatre.co.uk/robot-performances>).
  - 11 These Engineered Arts' robots are used to entertain at around 130 locations in about 30 countries throughout the world
  - 12 According to Sara Lucie in *Show Business Weekly*
  - 13 In Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, the blood congeals and Faustus believes that this is the way his body shows rejection towards the bargain with Lucifer. In Goethe's *Faust*, Faust complains that Mephistopheles does not trust him which is why he asked him to sign the pact in his blood. Talenti's play is a cross-reference to both masterpieces but with an unforeseen twist. In *The Immortal*, Edwin pushes the knife into his finger as a sign of rejecting Humanity as a whole which proved at the end to be an acceptable idea that comes with benefits. So Man hesitates, has doubts but eventually signs the pact with blood. The outcome is different in this contemporary Posthuman play.
  - 14 Man is said to be made in the image of God his creator

### Bibliography

Bogue, Robert. 2022. 'Robots in Entertainment', *Industrial Robot: the International Journal of*

*Robotics Research and Application* Volume 49. Number 4. 667–671.

Braidotti, Rosi. 2019. 'A Theoretical Framework for the Critical Posthumanities', *Theory,*

*Culture and Society*. Vol. 36(6) 31-61

Cave, Stephen. 2012. *Immortality: The Quest to Live Forever and How It Drives Civilization,*

Crown Publishers, NY.

Drozdek, Adam. 2015. 'on Cyberimmortality', *Analiza i Egzystencja* 31, 5-19 ISSN 1734-9923

Ferrando, Franscesca. 2013. 'Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism,

*and New Materialisms Differences and Relations' An International Journal in Philosophy, Religion, Politics, and the Arts, Columbia University, ISSN 1932-1066, Volume 8, No 2.*

Hayles, N. Katherine. 1999. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics,*

*Literature, and Informatics,* Chicago / London, The University of Chicago Press.

Hefner, Philip. 2003. *Technology and Human Becoming,* Augsburg Fortress Publishers. ISBN:

978-0800636081

2009. 'The Animal that Aspires to be an Angel: The Challenge of Transhumanism', *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* volume 48. 158-166.

Kurzweil, Raymond. 2005. *The Singularity Is Near, when Humans Transcend Biology,* New

---

York: Viking.

LePage, Louise Emma. 2012. 'Beyond Character: a Post/humanist Approach to Modern

Theatre.' PhD Dissertation presented to the Department of Drama and Theatre at Royal

Holloway College, University of London.

Nida-Rümelin, Julian. 2009. 'Philosophical grounds of humanism in economics' in Heiko

Spitzeck (ed.). *Humanism in Business*. Shiban Khan, Ernst von Kimakowitz, Michael Pirson, Wolfgang Amann. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0-521-89893-5.

Ranisch, Robert and Stefan L. Sorgner. 2015. *Post- and Transhumanism: an Introduction*

(*Beyond Humanism: Trans- and Posthumanism / Jenseits des Humanismus: Trans- und Posthumanismus*), Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Roden, David J. 2012. 'Humanism, Transhumanism and Posthumanism', Open University

Talenti, Francesca. 2014. *The Immortal*.

<https://newyorktheatrereview.blogspot.com/>

<https://robottheatre.co.uk/robot-performances/>

<https://uncannyvalleyplay.com/>