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**Posthumanism in Postmodern Science Fiction**

**Case Study: "True Names" (1984) by Vernor Vinge**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture**

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**Abstract**

This work examines one of the recent topics in the science of computers. It is about the change that technology has caused to the human race, when the human has become one of the electrodes that high technology has drawn its algorithmic programming on. In a more literary analytical process, the novella of “True Names” by Vernor Vinge investigates how postmodern science fiction portrays the human life after being simulated with computer technologies to become merely virtual beings that have no kinship with the boundaries the human body has made. It is a human that has denied its humanistic characteristics to live as cyborgs or precisely like posthuman beings. The posthuman is a creature that has emerged out of the integration between humans and machines. It is a being that has acquired great powers due to its new embodiment; when it can enjoy the virtual consciousness that exceeds that of normal humans due to its transcendentalist process. The posthuman notion has blossomed in the epoch of the postmodern science fiction, specifically in the spread of cyberpunk subgenre that has encompassed a lot of actualities like cyberspace and hypereality. In the shadow of these new contextualizations, the posthuman has adapted the suitable climate for its development. It is the manifestation of the humans’ ever cherished wishes, to enjoy the eternal virtual consciousness freely.

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## Introduction

Science Fiction is a genre that has highly influenced the mass culture in America. The 1980's played a crucial point in the history of science fiction. This era witnessed the emergence of a new concept which revolutionized the previous dimensions of the human life. This concept is known as the Cyberpunk or Cyber Culture. Cyberpunk brought to the literary scene new insights about the human being due to the effect of computational technology. The genre is no more talking about solely human beings, but posthuman characters that are generally of hybrid identities. In fact the postmodern characterization is based on depicting characters with two identities, one holds the humanistic features and the other carries the robotic or the computerized characteristics. This characterization is clearly depicted in the writings of William Gibson, Rudy Rucker, Vernor Vinge and many others.

Vernor Vinge is an American mathematician who is interested in the studies of computers and the technological advancements that the human being will achieve due to these technologies. He has written many literary works that take its inspiration from the love of computational studies and the influence of science fiction like *Marooned in Realtime*, *A Deepness in the Sky*, *A Fire upon the Deep* and many other works. His most influential work is the novella of "True Names" that is considered as the first work to tackle the new themes of the human combination with machines.

The novella of "True Names" (1981) is a very crucial piece of literature, since it explores the concept of posthumanism in the postmodern science fiction. It tackles the human being after the massive impact of the technology, science and cyber culture. The protagonist starts his journey in a virtual world known as "the Other Plane" to get rid of an enemy who is willing to destroy the whole world. This character discovers later that the government is using technology in the wrong way that is why it lost control over it, creating an uncontrolled virtual enemy. The novella states how the human life is changing on the shadow of the

postmodern conditions like the postwar trauma, technology and cybernetics. So, the postmodern actualities gave life to the posthuman, which is liberated from the biological boundaries and surviving in a virtual world beyond humanism.

In this research, the essential thing to tackle is how the postmodern era highlights the crucial depiction of the human being. The idea is manifested when the real and the virtual unites together to create a character who is no longer having pure humanistic feature, a character that is a breed of the technological boom. Hence, the nature of the human being will be examined under the new circumstances of high technology and science fiction narratives. So, the questions tackled in this study will be; what characterizes the posthuman, what are the main changes that postmodern science fiction added to the human perception and how humanism is presented in the posthuman era?

This Study aims at exploring the changing concept of the human in the era of the technological development. It sheds the light on the main factors that led to the emergence of the posthuman being. The core aim of this research is to investigate the major characteristics of the posthuman character in the increased innovations of technology and computer sciences.

The end of 1920s is a revolutionary phase for the worldwide literature. It signals the birth of science fiction, which is a complex genre that brought many complicated yet influential concepts, like: futurism, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Realism, and many others. This genre is the centre of attraction for many critics. Caroline Bassett, in her work *Better Made Up*, states that the term was first coined by Hugo Grensback, the founder of *Amazing Stories* magazine, during the pulp era. Science fiction is not only an eye to the future, however, it goes in each detail of the past, re-explore the past and dive to the future by questioning “the role, relevance, costs of current and future technologies, and represents ideas that can influence public opinion” (Menadue 2).



Though science fiction started in the 1920s-1930s, it has gained its popularity in postmodernism, especially with the growth of “Cyberpunk”. Many icons shined in this period; William Gibson has pioneered the field with his novel *Neuromancer* (1984) which was the actual foundation to cyber culture, along with Rudy Rucker, Vernor Vinge and Bruce Sterling. Herlander Elias, in the book of *Cyberpunk 2.0*, tackles the term of cyberpunk as an analogical combination between punks and cyborgs, and measures its premises, visual artifacts and relevancy. Hence, cyberpunk itself was a field of study due to its huge popularity.

The postmodern context of science fiction has changed many concepts. Now the human being is no longer the centre of attention in the literary scene but the posthuman. In his book *The Posthuman Condition*, Pepperell cites the main reasons behind the emergence of ‘Posthumanism’ and how the posthuman lives beyond the horizons of the brain. According to Bostrom, posthumans are “future beings whose basic capacities so radically exceed those of present humans as to be no longer unambiguously human”(5), Posthumanism then is to live beyond the human and beyond the limits of the body. Hayles, in her book *How We Became Posthuman*, claims that the consciousness of the posthuman era differs from that of the human simply because the embodiment differs. The best example she has provided is that the human thinks differently from machine since they do not have the same body.

The novella of “True Names” (1981) by Vernor Vinge is one of the best representation for Posthumanism in the American postmodern science fiction. Many writers were interested in the new usage of computational technologies and virtual realities. In her book *Also Make the Havens*, Lovén Svante was interested in Vinge’s novella because she considers it as an exemplification of “New Age Transcendentalism”, in which people contact without their biological bodies in a virtual world. Steven Jones, in *The Emergence of the Digital Humanities*, asserts that what is special about “True Names” is that it used the “Other plane”

which is a computer network as a place for its users. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* classifies this novella as a “cyberpunk story” that creates its own virtual reality community.

The eclectic approach is the best method to be applied in this research, simply because it uses an amalgamation of other approaches under it. The first approach is the postmodern Marxism which is concerned with the context of work. The second one is the posthuman criticism, mainly used when analyzing the text as a posthuman piece of writing. Philosophy and the psychoanalytical approach are also used in an attempt to understand the psyche of characters, the ethics of each of them in the novel, and to investigate the novel from a transcendentalist perspective. So, the whole approach can give a full grasping to each detail in this research.

The work will be divided mainly into three chapters. The first one will provide the theoretical background about the American postmodern science fiction, its historical development and major characteristics in addition to the key concepts and notions emerged in this era. It also gives greater emphasis on the postmodern period in which the field grants a higher prosperity thanks to cyber culture. The second chapter is a theoretical glimpse to Posthumanism. It gives its characteristics, some related concepts and the relationship between Posthumanism, Transhumanism. The last chapter will be the application of the previous theories and notions on the novella of “True Names” (1981). So, Posthumanism in the context of cyber culture defines new types of identities in which the self can survive in the virtual world without corporeal embodiment. The postmodern era was the gate that opened new sorts for expressing the human urges in a society dominated entirely by technology. So, postmodern science fiction shifted the interest from the human being centeredness, yet it is still discussing humanist matters in its posthumanist circumstances.

## **Chapter One: American Science Fiction: An Introduction to the Genre of the Eighties**

Science fiction is a literary genre that has come into prominence during the modern era. It has been demonstrated in the alien characterization and the extraterrestrial settings. The 1920s and 1930s was the time in which people started to think more about amazing journeys to the moon or to live on the planet of Mars or to come into contact with aliens. Those writings at that time was a mere reflection of the life people were living in which the damage of the war and the racial discrimination were on the top in inspiring the writers of first science fiction pieces to find a shelter either by transforming themselves into strange creatures or by traveling into space. And though those first writings were not highly structured and received a lot of criticism, science fiction was lucky in attracting a whole generation, especially with writers like Jules Verne and Allan Poe. Science fiction was in its evolutionary progress and the criticism was diminishing. The pulp magazines were looking for more qualified writers and for writings of good style and more brilliant and realistic ideas.

The epoch of the 1960s and the 1970s has introduced a new movement in the history of science fiction known as the New Wave. It has welcomed better writers, who are mainly Americans, like Ursula Le Guin, Judith Merril and many other figures that science fiction owes a lot to their new innovative ideas and artistic pieces of writings. This type of science fiction has carried within the first dystopian seeds that bear the fears from an explosion of third world war that the cold war with all its technological tools was precluding its premier rhythms. The movement was shining to announce new loyalty to new actualities; the actualities that postmodernity and postmodernism has highlighted with excellence. It was soft like the softness of most of its female writers tackling softer subjects like psychology and sociology. Coming to the 1980s, science fiction has appeared with another subgenre that is characterized by its new themes that hold a sign of maturity and fulfillment. This chapter then

will examine the nature of science fiction writing as a literary genre and trace its thematic and stylistic development from modern to postmodern times.

### **I-1-1-An introduction to the Genre**

It is a tiring process to give an exact definition to the concept of ‘science fiction’, since there is no agreement of what is meant by the term, and some go further not to give an exact launching point. In an attempt to define it, the publisher Hugo Gernsback states that ‘scientifiction’ or as labeled now; science fiction refers to the works of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe, which are a scramble of romance and science, along with their ‘prophetic’ insights (3). Those writings are of good quality simply because they mix up romantic stories and scientific knowledge to take the reader to a suspenseful journey to the future. For Robert Heinlein, the story differs; if you are writing a science fiction narrative, an attention must be paid to his five criteria. The first one is that the circumstances of the narration should be various from the real world’s circumstances, though this variation may occur in just one element. Second, those circumstances have to be fundamental in the development of the story events and its track. In addition, the plot of this story should consist of a human-related problem that is created or has resulted from the new circumstances of this narratology, which is by itself another criterion. Thus, according to Robert Heinlein, science fiction is a human-based story that consists of unreal events which are necessary for the developing events of the story, which is different due to these various imaginary events. The preceding facts should not be broken or not respected, and if a new contribution is added it must consider relating to those previous theories and notions (17). No matter what is written if it does not violate the main principles of the genre and does not contradict the early notions of science fiction to be considered as a part of it.

The Scottish computer scientist Paul Dourish relates science fiction to the future and considers it a future-oriented phenomenon, claiming that it is based essentially on technology

as its profound criterion (2). It means that technology has manifested a vital role in defining science fiction and its futuristic visions. Following the same path, the author Eugene Thaker confirms that science fiction is a contemporary phenomenon that depends on the narration of either near or far future or the fantastic life via exploration and speculation techniques, where the reader can taste an overlap between science, technology and social life depiction (165). Again technology is the thick line that confers distinction upon science fiction among other literary genres. Isaac Asimov signals our attention to a very important point which is that science fiction should not be confused with weird or horror narrative, and indicates that science fiction is a literary subgenre that is interested with the advancement of sciences and their inescapable influence on the mankind (148). In other words, it is concerned with examining the relationship between the humans and their world in the shadow of the recent advancements. Brian Aldiss, in *Billion Year Spree* (1973), states that science fiction positions the human being in the scientifically advanced yet puzzled cosmos (8). The more a person is living in a world surrounded by the highly progressed technologies the more that person becomes a science fiction citizen.

Judith Merrill, in an article entitled “What Do You Mean: Science? Fiction?”, sees no difference between science fiction and speculative fiction and defines the latter scientifically, saying that speculative fiction is to make people know and discover ‘reality’ on the light of scientific experimentations and analogies, along with a flavor of modifications, either “imaginary or inventive”. This creates distinct characters that are the product of those new changes (60). Here, being it an imagination or an invention, science fiction opens the horizon of reality and search continuously to reach it. As it has been mentioned by Merrill, most of the time, science fiction has a good kinship with other literary genres; the Scottish science fiction editor David Pringle, for example, relates it to fantasy and asserts that it is a kind of “fantastic fiction” via the use of modern sciences (9). The American narrator Rod Serling, however, in

“The Fugitive” (1962), made the distinction between fantasy and science fiction, telling that “Fantasy is the impossible made probable. Science Fiction is the improbable made possible.” Fantasy then deals with things or events that can never happen on real life, but it enlarges the possibility of their occurrence. Science fiction, by contrast, gives the possibility of happening to things that have little expectations to be realized. Similarly, Christopher Evans tries to define the concept of science fiction saying that it is a literary genre that is interested in “what if?” and opens a list of possibilities. Evans gives the opportunity for the author to create this possibility by building up things on elements that differs from what is commonly known to people (9). In fact, science fiction is not concerned only with providing predictions about the future; it is also involved directly or indirectly in the present or takes the reader back to the past history, as Robinson has claimed (54). Hence, it is not merely futuristic, but it can portray the past and mirror the present.

It is not possible to discuss science fiction without mentioning the significant contribution of Darko Suvin and his genuine essay “On the Poetics of Science Fiction Genre”. In this essay, Suvin uniquely defines science fiction as a “novum” meaning a “strange newness” or “estrangement”. For him, this estrangement takes place when the writer represents factual events in a fictional way. What mark his fiction from other genres are the two poles that construct it. Estrangement and cognition are what make it the phenomenon of its time; the first holds a utopian desire towards the unknown as an escape from the tragic and the miserable known and the second derives its paradigm from the empirical experiences and the historical realities. It means being far away from reality, but not too far from cognition and scientific empiricism via portraying realistic ideas in a magical yet scientific manner. There is always balance between imagination and reality through cognition. It is neither purely imaginary to the extent that makes it lose its realistic value, nor too factual to the degree that lets it lose its literary thrill, then it is no more exciting yet boring (Suvin 374-5).

To grasp more the relationship between science fiction, cognition and estrangement, one has to dive deeper in understanding its worlds. Carl Malmgren first relies on two parts that specify science fiction, the ‘world’ and the ‘story’. The latter is the organizational plot that rules the development of events and help in creating a unified whole, while the former is the fictional world. The estrangement factor then is reached through certain non realistic characterization (139-40). As a result, by mingling reality and fiction, the genre can be sensed.

### **I-1-2-A Literary Perspective to Science Fiction**

The critic Stableford, in a trial to trace the literary roots of science fiction, states that there is no agreement on the first exploration of this genre, and critics’ categorization is biased by their field of study. For example, a person who is fascinated by fantastic stories sees its dawn on Lucian of Samosata’ *True History*; a story that dates back to the second century, which narrates a journey to the moon, while a mythologist considers the “Odyssey” its birth place (Stableford 66). Adam Roberts, like Stableford, in the book of *The History of Science Fiction* (2006) mentions that the real history of the genre begins with the first voyage between the planets for the Greek writer Lucian of Samosata in the prose of *True History*, considering him as the father of science fiction (27-8). While the peculiarity that qualifies Frankenstein to be a science fiction novel, though most consider it a gothic one, is that it is a consequence of a physiological invention, when Robert Walton meets Victor Frankenstein and tells him about his passion for knowledge, resulting in the creature that is identical to himself, but with scientific components of chemicals, as cited in Roberts’ book (93). These classifications and categorizations are just hints and hold few parts in the thematic considerations of science fiction, still it is a crucial point to give an exact information about with whom science fiction has started.

Herbert George Wells is the first icon in the evolution of science fiction. He is famous with his novel *The Time Machine* (1895). The novel is not just a literary narration of futuristic

prediction; however, it is a welcoming invitation to think seriously about such predictions by unfolding the possibility of becoming the future reality (Stableford, 24). As it is noticed, Wells has opened the space to think about the application of science fiction's anticipations on real life. Thanks to his qualified works and rich themes, he has got the honor to be named the real father of science fiction, as mentioned by D'Amassa in her book *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (2005). He is also famed with his 'Cavorite', which is an item used to stop the gravity of earth, so, people can be released from its control (D'Amassa 144). This talented writer has written many novels that proof his capability and brilliance as a father of science fiction. He has published many brilliant works like the novel of *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) and the list is of a continuous chain. The English writer Brian Aldiss, in his book *Bilion Year Spree* (1973), claims that Wells has asserted that he was transferring gothic components into "scientific romances". Wells, through the use of scientific elements, was able to change the old fashioned tradition of the devil or the malignant magician into an updated notion that can rival the novelties of the contemporary era (Aldiss 8-9). He was rebellious in fighting the fantastic ideas of good and evil and bringing more scientific concepts to the genre.

Edgar Allan Poe is one of the writers who were admitted to be a major figure in early science fiction's history; he is the writer that one of the best known American Award 'The Edgar' is titled after his name. His 1920's poem 'Sonnets – to Science', along with the essay of "Eureka" (1848) are of huge importance for the genre, especially this latter that is an exploration for the universe through astronomic insights. The other recognizable work for Poe is 'Hans Phaal' (1835), later known as 'The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall.' It is a story about lunar travelers; which though it was not taken earnestly, its prefatory manifesto was the first in the modernist science fiction (Stableford 18-19). He has written many inspiring pieces of writings like "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" (1839), "The



Mask of the Red Death” (1842), *Five Weeks in a Balloon* (1863) and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873), each of which is a gate for a certain theme. And the last figure in this range is the French critic and the father of adventure narrations of science fiction, Jules Verne, the writer of fantastic voyages novels (D’Ammassa 393). Though he was interested in fantasy, he has done many efforts to make science fiction special. Verne is also claimed to precede Wells in being aware of creating a unique literary genre that will be later having the name of ‘scientifiction’ or science fiction in the 1870’s, while Wells does in 1890’s) (Bartlinger 32). Verne offered science fiction a gift through the delivery of a method that is able to extrapolate the contemporaneous technologies, paving the way for the implementation of the locomotive technology on the extraordinary voyages that inflamed a glimpse of hope that there might be a chance to visit the outer space (Stableford 20). This utopian way of thinking has made science fiction fans optimistic when it comes to space travelling as a future reality.

### **I-1-3-The Pulp Era: The Golden Age of Science Fiction**

With the coming of the 1920’s and the 1930’s, science fiction has entered the time of its real explosion. The pulp magazine has got its name from the low-quality wood of pulp that the magazines relies on to publish their cheap works. To go broader, the science fiction magazine goes through three basic categorization; ‘scientific romance’, ‘story-telling formulas’ and finally ‘scientific journalism’ (Attebery 32). The *Amazing Magazine* is the first in the pulps to name the genre, primarily as ‘scientifiction’ and later in 1929, as science fiction (34). The magazine has appeared in the scene with its first issue on April, 1926. To be accurate, it has been founded a decade before by its publisher Gernsback, the familiar with his term ‘scientifiction.’ It was targeting to effectuate its slogan “Extravagant Fiction Today–Cold Fact Tomorrow” as cited by the American engineer Nahin, which apparently aims to translate the fictional works of this magazine into an extreme reality in the near future. The magazine was predestinated to be read and forgotten quickly (Nahin 32). Gernsback is an

essential member for the magazine. He has insisted on the didactic value of the magazine, yet he has approved to publish stories that taste a comprehension of science and technology. The output of these prescriptive instructions is the clear neglect to the form and the style, which are the ground for any artistic piece of literature, but still some authors seek an outlet in the fictional transformation of science and technology (Attebery 35). The best example on this exception is the work of E. E. Smith's *The Skylark of Space* that has pinpointed the arousal of a new subgenre known as 'space opera' (Wolfe 97). As stated by Wolfe in her essay "Science Fiction and its Editors," Gernsback's formula of *Amazing Stories* owes the grace of inspiring his contemporaries to start thinking of establishing such magazines.

Gary Wolfe states that in 1930, *Astounding Stories of Super-Science* has replaced *Amazing Stories* magazine to be labeled later *Astounding Stories*, then *Analog* (98). The magazine has not witnessed any difference till the coming of John W. Campbell, Jr. With its new name given by Campbell, *Astounding Science Fiction* fired the first sparks of its popularity, treading the second step in the lifespan of the magazine, following *The Amazing Stories* magazine, denoting the exact time for the onset of the Golden Age. The success of Campbell and his magazine is beholden to Gernsback first, then to the inspiring letters from his followers (Attebery 37). The war events too shaped new mind strata for many skillful writers admired by Campbell like Van Vogt, Robert Heinlein and Theodore Sturgeon who have acquired a serene mentality and great perspectives. This aura of magazines has held new characteristics flavored with its anticipatory narratives. Welcoming scientific writers and ideas, the Golden Age of science fiction has discovered a lot of new themes like "Robotism" in Asimov's Robot series, the "Future History" of Heinlein, Ron Hubbard and his 'pseudo-science' concept of "Dianetics" and many other futuristic themes, with the encouragement of the editor Campbell whom the editor George Mann has described the Golden Age as testament to his editorship (13-14). These predictions have helped in preparing for a new way

of thinking and more utopian desires. This period of science fiction has attracted not only science fiction prosaists like Philip Dick and Alfred Bester, but many mainstream writers including George Orwell and Aldous Huxley (Mann 15). However, by the late 1960's, the magazine era has exhaled its last breathes announcing the death of one the greatest times of science fiction and the start of a new era, new stories, new talented writers and new writing styles in a new order of world.

### **Postmodernism and Science Fiction Writing**

Postmodernism is a composition of three parts; the first component is 'post' which is not a mere equivalence to after; it is a "re-collection," yet it is not a pure recall but calling modernist memory that is convenient to the postmodern context. Second, modern and it is stemmed from the Latin word *modo* meaning "just now" or "at the moment." The third composer is 'ism' the Greek word that means embracement to the customs and habits of one's group (Brann 4-5). Thus, postmodern is to recall the preceding memories and to acclimate them to the current realities. For Jean Baudrillard, things have faced an entire move from real to hyperreal due to the effect of media that have invaded both public and personal life through virtuality, as stated by Bertens (145). Media, as one of the postmodern factors, has transformed real settings into a virtual construction. Habermas and his lecture 'Modernity versus Postmodernity' is the one to come to mind when defining postmodernism. The author Hans Bertens in *The Idea of the Postmodern* (2005) states that though Habermas is one of the advocators of modernism, the value of his work remains attached in providing the historical base for the emergence of postmodernism. Linda Hutcheon, in *A Poetics of the Postmodern* (2004), however, assumes that postmodernism is neither equivalent to the contemporaneous state nor able to manifest its cultural borders only; it is a broad term that encompasses an amalgamation of historical and political contradictions. Though her work provides rich information on theorizing the postmodern, its focus is on history and historiography of

postmodernism. The cultural changes and the unification of high modernism and mass culture after their separation in the classical modernism allowing further possibility for shaping political insights are the conditions that polished the current postmodern (Huysen, 26).

The Polish critic Stefan Morawski in *The Troubles with Postmodernism* (1996) seeks to jettison the aesthetical arts and focus more on the sociological and philosophical aspects of culture (51). This view can be justified by the fact that postmodernism, unlike modernism, does not appraise the elitist aesthetic culture but reflects the mass culture as the trustworthy guide and source of all realities and truths. As Fredric Jameson has put it in *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), “Postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good [...] fully human world than the older one, but one in which "culture" has become a veritable "second nature"” (ix). This indicates that the postmodern paradigm is what has taken the place after the end of modernism. It marks a transitional process from modern to postmodern and a shift to nature that is mainly humanistic and culture which is by itself another nature. Jameson here claims that postmodernism has loaded itself by the exclusivities of its newness that are the fruit of the collision between culture and postmodernism giving birth to “new-expressionism,” punk, the ‘new wave rock,’ new commercial films, in addition to the “nouveau roman” of the French origins (54). Postmodernism is more interested in landscapes, TV series, Hollywood films, science fiction and fantastic narratives that are no more identical to the classical icons of literature (Jameson 1-3). Postmodernism does not incarnate only some thoughts; it has witnessed the blossom of many theorists like John Barth, Charles Newman, and Ihab Hassan (McHale 4). Besides, it is a watershed in each part in the human life.

Postmodernism is a different movement that has actuated radical changes in the human ideology, culture, literature and in other social, economic and political aspects, especially in America. This newness has drawn the whole world to live a unique history. The critic

Huyssen in the article of “Mapping the Postmodern” (1984) argues that postmodernism is a kind of transformation. He annotates that it is an entire deviation in culture, economy and in the social system. The theorist David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989) expresses his interest in the British critic Jonathan Raban’s novel *Soft City*. This interest is because Raban was successful to depict the real image of the world in the 1960s with the first rays of postmodernism. Raban, unlike many, was able to photo a victimized society diving in the dangers of technology and changing to a copy of consumers of technological materials. This one copy of consumers, as stated by Harvey, redefines the cultural life in a clear shift from individualism to pluralism (Harvey 40). David Harvey accuses the postwar boom for changing the human destiny into a period of accumulation which is deluged in new marketing and technologies and spilled over massive innovations (124,147). In the dominance of technology and consumerism, the hierarchical classifications of the bourgeoisie and other classes diminish and technology replaces it leaving the world under the decisive control of technology.

Fredric Jameson in his iconic book *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) draws an accurate depiction to this epoch where everything has been spoiled by the effect of technology. Everything, for him, “has reached the same our on the great clock development” (309-10). From this sight, it is understood that postmodernism has reached the point in which the human being becomes violated and subjugated by the developed technologies. All these shifts let the world in general and America particularly live a period of Pragmatism. As Ihab Hassan has explained in “Making Sense: the Trials of Postmodern Discourse” (1987), pragmatism has turned to be the closest to human hearts on the shades of the postmodernist circumstances. Postmodernism then has marked the evolution of an ideology that has revoked the humanistic old moral for the sake of profiteer advantages. Talking about similar horrifying premises, the American author Richard King thinks that

science and technology have distorted everything to the point that the self becomes nothing other than a fragmentation (King 6). As a consequence, the human life and every signifier that denotes the human history or culture in the postmodern condition has transformed into a big illusion after the technological process of manipulation which can be clear in the new trending characterization of the posthuman that prevails science fiction works of the eighties.

Postmodernism does not only signalize a shift in culture or history, it is also the production of a new literary style. It is based on fragmentation, anarchy, uncertainty and openness and considers the literary work as a text that is rhetorical in nature, as the Marxist David Harvey claims (44). For the literary critic Terry Eagleton, a postmodern text contains different strategies like irony, playfulness and pastiche. The postmodernist style then is characterized by its commercial language and schizoid thoughts and characters. The article “Awakening from Modernity” (1987) proofs that postmodern texts contradict the modernist “metanarratives,” alerts from their hidden ideologies and appeals other branches of science and philosophy to get rid of their subordination to such ideologies and stand by themselves as separate narratives. So, postmodernism is to put aside the traditional techniques, ideologies and style and turn on a new page for enjoying diverse actualities. Jean-François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* looks to the postmodern language as a labyrinth where the houses are mixed of old and new, along with new boroughs, as cited by Lyotard on Wittgenstein’s words (40). It can be understood that language in the postmodern era becomes like a game in which the person can shape it as required. Hence, postmodernism is a movement of many innovations in culture, history, literature or in the overall life to present wholly-reshaped insights.

### **I-2-2-The New Wave as an Introduction to Postmodern Science Fiction**

New Wave science fiction is a subgenre of science fiction that has emerged during the 1960’s and the 1970’s that depends mainly on soft sciences like sociology (Higgins 1). It is

stemmed mainly from the French cinema nouvelle vague, leading Christopher Priest to designate for the *New Worlds*' magazine (Broderick 49-50). The term refers to the collection of writers of the 1960's and the 1970's who are no more satisfied about the old-fashioned science fiction conventions. It has a kinship with the *New Worlds*' London magazine that has reached its maturity and started publishing experimental literature with the editor Michael Moorcock during the 1960's, who has demanded for new genuine writings, choosing four gifted writers whom are E. C. Tubb, John Brunner, J. G. Ballard and Brian Aldiss (Roberts 230-1). This subgenre is the outcome of the Golden Age's anticipated events that seems to become the present's facts. Because people are easily disputed by the massive influence of technology and its signs during the cold war's actualities like the Cuban Crisis and the first landing on the moon, the scene was darkened (Broderick 48). The New Wave science fiction is a mirror to the postmodern actualities that was enormously affecting the literary carrier in America specifically. Those circumstances have lead to the appearance of well polished writings that hold aesthetic connotations and political reasoning savored in the inscriptions of Philip K. Dick, Joanna Russ, Ursula K. Le Guin and Samuel R. Delany (Csicsery-Ronay 117). These writers were under the massive influence of the cultural context and the historical events of the postmodern time in which technology prevails.

Fredric Jameson in *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005) describes the New Wave as the "global dawn of hallucinogenic age" to mean that is the beginning of uncertainties and "dilemmas". Jameson was designing the New Wave as another phase of science fiction that is full of hallucination concerning everything; language status, questioning reality, systems instabilities to reach the examination of human values in the shadow of "alien visitations" culture (93). Science fiction now has shifted its focalization from mere adventurous journeys to the future to talk about valuable issues for understanding the human destination. In fact, as claimed by George Mann in *Mammoth Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (2001), the human

failure to imagine a prosperous future has reversed the attention from exploring the outer life to internalizing the deepest essence of humanity and human nature, acquiring philosophical insights (17). The human now is gaining more considerations and his nature is turning to be the core search of postmodern philosophers and writers. This New Wave was marked by its sardonic style, unconventional narrations and having deeper socialist and philosophical smell (Mann 18). All these changes in literary styles and these social and philosophical depths are just a mere reflection of the influence of postmodernism on literature generally and on science fiction specifically.

### **I-2-3-Cyberpunk Narrative: A New Genre of Science Fiction**

Due to the technological revolutionary boom and the political hysteria of the Second Red Scare and the apocalyptic vision of the entire world in the shadow of the predicted Third World War to start and end humanity, America has entered a phase of confusion between machine and man. On the depth of these perturbations, the end of man has turned a reality in the recent age. Michael Foucault in his *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (1966) has declared the end of modern man; the human being has become a subject to high tech, an ideology that forms both superstructure and infrastructure and states that man will disappear in the new order of things, as quoted in the editor John Mingers' *Social Theory and Philosophy of Information Systems* (251). Culture and literature have changed into a pure shadow of these worries that has destructed the human creature. In this context, the undeniable premises are questioned by the new obligations that have transformed man into a subject of the virtual world where the cyberculture has won all the battles to rule the world.

The 1980's was the cradle that embraced one of the most prevalent science fiction subgenres, 'cyberpunk.' To have a clear definition of the subgenre, primarily a search must be launched about its origins. In fact, this concept is compound of two fractions; 'cyber' and 'punk.' The latter has a strong connection with the music of 'rock and roll.' For the British



writer Jenny Wolmark, cyberpunk is identical to the ethos of punk and rock music and their counterculture, adding that the cyberpunk heroes are commonly rock music or hackers of the 'high-tech' milieu (109). The critic John Shirley too believes that rock and hacking are noticeable elements of pop culture in which cyberpunk is one of its phenomena. Going deeper, he says, that it is an "overlap" between computer hackers and music rockers (50-1). This means that the major founders of cyberpunk subgenre are a combination of hackers and fans of the rock music. The first fraction 'cyber' is a word structured out of the progress of the cybernetics; a term coined by the mathematician Norbert Wiener in 1947, to be appropriated later by cyberpunk writers (Elias 25). And it refers to one global future whence the global, rather than local, industry and politics are governed by informational networking; allowing both humans and machines to coexist in these virtual worlds, and enhancing the human body through those machinery tools. Featherstone and Burrows too assisted in defining the movement, asserting that cyberpunk is a fiction that is concentrated around the works of William Gibson and others, that is focused on technology and power manifested in "future worlds and cyberspaces" (Featherstone and Burrows 3). Consequently, the future world that science fiction writers were imagining in their narratives is now a reality focalized on technology and cyberspaces.

Though the origin of each part of cyber-punk terminology dates back to certain period and though the first coining of the word was in Bruce Bethke's short story "Cyberpunk" (Clute 67), the real foundation of this literature starts with the work of William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer* (1984), preceding Vernor Vinge's novella "True Names." *Neuromancer* is Gibson's novel that has won the Hugo and the Nebula Awards, along with the Philip K. Dick award, being the first to win the three essential science fiction awards (McCafferey 12). The novel narrates the story of the computer hacker, the criminal Case, who enters the cyberspace to steal secret information; unfortunately, he comes across a dangerous 'high-tech'

site for Japanese specialized in killing and drug addiction crimes. This gang gives him the chance to be drug addicted; in return he should participate in their criminal tasks. Therefore, *Neuromancer* (1984) is an experience on the virtual world and a description to virtual realities that, sometimes the actual reality cannot portray. It stands for a whole science fiction subgenre and takes the privilege in introducing or popularizing many concepts for becoming later the foreground themes of cyberpunk.

### **I-2-3-1-Virtual Reality and Cyberspace in Postmodern Science Fiction**

Among the major features that characterize cyberpunk literature are its different themes and techniques that are distinguished from the classical science fiction. Concerning themes; cyberspace and virtual reality are the most prominent ones to be discussed, in addition to the focalization on both cybernetics and biotechnology. For Dani Cavallaro, virtual reality is a term created by the computer scientist Jaron Lanier by the end of the 1980's. It is a computer-simulated reality, where people live in virtual worlds and still feel realistically towards their life there. This happens when their bodies confront a "computer-generated data" that still seems real despite its artificial nature (Cavallaro 27). The human being here is living in an environment in which man and machine work together as one person. According to Arthur Kroker, virtual reality is the human's restructured experiences by means of computer coding wetware (12). This perception gives the computerized realities a great deal of interference in the human life, especially when this device opens the space for seeing things variously in a scientifically-oriented way. Peter Nicholls, in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (1979), asserts that virtual reality is a "machine environment" constructed by data networks, where the human being can login a cyberspace, forming an entry to the matrix through disembodiment (288). This disembodiment is what makes man able to cross the boundaries of the flesh to unite with machines and acquire a hybrid identity.

The previous definition can be an indicator to another definition which is cyberspace; the space that allows the person to discover the complications of self-identity when its virtuality enables the understanding of the postmodern and posthuman characteristics (Robins 140). Cyberspace is an opportunity to understand one's self in the light of its virtual criterion through the extended human features. Most of the science fiction writers turn around one definition of cyberspace as the place where the hopes and fears of embodiment and body take its realization; it aims at reaching the highest degrees of connection to the extent that men become isolated in front of their computers to be disconnected from the real world (Goicoechea 10). Cyberspace hence is the source of all the futuristic expectations for transcending the body to get the maximum accessibility to fields of connection to make the human experience the hypereality of cyberspace away from the usual reality. Marcos Novak defines cyberspace as a point when the conscious and the unconscious integrate with each others in a kind of landscape of "rational magic" (226). From this definition, cyberspace is the location where reality and magic intersect in a rational logicalness. Talking about reality of cyberspace, the professor of Exeter University Giannachi confesses that cyberspace is not the locus of reality but "the very theatre of the real" (144). Consequently, cyberspace through its hyperealities stands for the truthful depiction of reality.

Most of the postmodern science fiction novels enroll its events around the virtual world of the cyberspace when humans leave their bodies and live simulated in the virtuality of their new conditions. The term means a huge informational body that can take different forms; as a result it cannot be handled even if it is permeated. It makes the human take a virtual disembodiment to suit its algorithms (Cavallaro 177). Cyberspace then enables men to get unified with virtual machines and enables them to act freely and independently from the boundaries of their flesh. For Katherine Hayles, cyberspace is when "data matrix" becomes a "landscape" and the narration can take a place in it (289). In other words, it is a virtual world

shaped by network information, granting an opportunity for imaginative episodes to be narrated and giving the matrix the chance to be sheltered under its virtual prospects. The father of cyberpunk, William Gibson who has first explored the term in *Neuromancer* (1984), does not hold any distinction between virtual reality and cyberspace and confesses that cyberspace is a “consensual hallucination” presented by billions of processors scattered everywhere and very complicated, embracing “lines of light” stored in the mind, including “clusters and constellations of data” that resemble the “city lights” in their density and brightness (51). Thus, cyberspace is a complex of processors that reaches every single part of the world; it includes even the human brain that has become in a constant attachment to the virtual worlds of the matrix.

Besides William Gibson’s contributions in this subgenre, Vernor Vinge is another important figure that has greatly revolutionized the 1980s of science fiction. He is the American mathematician who has written many qualified novels like the sequence of *Realtime* that was a new depiction to a world where technology is the master (Mann 305). His popularity owes to his works *A Fire Upon the Deep* (1992) and *A Deepness in the Sky* (1999) that have won the Hugo award (D’Amassa 396). For the Swedish philosopher Nick Bostrom in The Transhumanist FAQ, Vinge is the one who has invented the term ‘singularity’ as a future probability resulting from technological developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence. Gary Westfahl in *Science Fiction and the Prediction of the Future: Essays on Foresight and Fallacy* mentions that Vinge in one of his well known Novels *A Fire upon the Deep* has uniquely depicted a future that holds an entirely original life that is characterized by complexity (Westfahl 38). If Gibson with his *Neuromancer* was described as the father of Cyberpunk, John Clute in his essay “Science Fiction from 1980s to Present” calls Vernor Vinge after his Novella “True Names” the “godfather” of cyberpunk. Vinge then has great

contributions to the field especially with his technological singularity and complicated characters and narratives.

### **I-2-3-2-Cyberpunk Heroism**

After being in the waiting list during the modern time, since there was no real hints for heroic events or virtues, heroism enters the theatre of science fiction from its wider sides; especially with the hacker and the superhero. In an attempt to detail the characteristics of this hero, Bartlett and Byers mention that the real quality that prequalifies a normal hero is to be posthuman and cybernetic, in addition to acquiring the features of “information-machine-like” (42). Along with the qualifications that go beyond the boundaries of humanism and the biological body, the hero looks united and similar to machine through transcending the mortal body and living in the disembodiment of virtuality. Moreover, this hero develops a way of thinking that suits the new acquired features and possesses a consciousness that is entirely linked to materialistic characteristics of a machine. Herlander Elias, in *Cyberpunk 2.0* (2009), contends that the cyberpunk hero is a hero that controls the whole world surrounding and is able to breed cultural elements, making this hero a complex of hacker, rocker, hip hopper, raver and having the name of “rhacker” (Elias 149).

Going further, he says that this hero is a mixture of a music hero and “computer prankster” whose mission is to cut the data of all reality as if living just in a video game (171). The cyberpunk hero has exploded out of the new circumstances in which computer technology is its major component. The French sociologist Jacques Ellul too asserts that this heroism cannot happen unless the human being is unified with machine (146). From this, it can be noticed that heroism needs a setting that is highly technological. In this rank, Veronica Hollinger in the essay of “Cybernetic Deconstructions: Cyberpunk and Postmodernism” considers the anticipations that technology will make humans under its domination is an unreasonable frustration. Further, she states that humans “interface” with technology,

resulting in a “mutual evolution” for both sides (Hollinger 218). Cyberpunk heroes then have emerged from the evolution that technology and humans’ union have made and if technology with its new actualities did not emerge, and then those heroes would not return to the scene after a long absence.

## **Conclusion**

Postmodern science fiction is a mature narrative that digs deeper in the roots of the human life in the presence of high technologies. It is a genre that combines speculation and imagination; in which its imaginary events are mainly of scientific nature. Unlike the fantastic tales of monsters and witchcrafts, its stories emerge from an emergence of scientific or technological events that change the flow of the narration. It sets new dimension to humans in general and to literary characterization in specific; it relegates a new vision of a very developed life in a digitalized condition. This new condition goes mainly in cyberspaces that are sites in which reality becomes highly a construction of the virtual that portrays certainly a hybrid state of being between the computer and the human, real and hyperreal. On the shadow of this complicated virtuality, humanity has witnessed a real destruction. The human then has turned with this setting to be a combination of computerized minds which seem away from physical original nature but still have the human side. This work will show a new figurative different from the modern character, the posthuman character who extends his humanity through technology in virtual cyberspaces precisely, allowing a whole life orientation towards cyborgian manifestation and characterization.

## **The Second Chapter: Posthuman American Fiction**

### **Introduction**

With the arousal of cyberpunk science fiction, the literary themes has witnessed a clear shift from tackling the etymological subjects into ontological perspectives that question the nature of the human beings and their relationship with their humanity and with the surrounding others, in a time that convoys the new updates of the postmodern life. On the shadow of the technologically-dominated world, humanity has become to the prime worry and the first base in the researches and the studies of the postmodern scientists, linguists and literary critics and writers. Technology has shaken up all the rules and balances that control the human life. In the heart of this technological chaos, the first signs that have led to the emergence of the posthuman were fueled by biotechnology and cybernetics. Thus, posthuman representation has overwhelmed the postmodern science fiction narratives and extended identity into artificial beings and virtual minds. In this chapter, the main intention is to unravel the questions and the mystery of the posthuman and to uncover the real reasons behind its prevalence. In addition, it examines the new themes that have resulted from the emergence of this technological phenomenon.

### **I-1-1-The Origin of the Posthuman**

Though the posthuman has recently flourished, it has its roots back to the works of Derrida, Niklas Luhmann and other theorists. Jack Derrida, for example, in *Without Alibi* (2002) wonders whether it is possible to connect the “thinking of event” to that of machines, meaning to ask about the possibility to unite the thinking of both machine and human to become as one dogma or not. Completing this idea by answering that someone who is blessed by the effect of the machine is, as a result, able to be active and reproductive for any demand, freely from the limitations of the organ or, what he calls, “organicity” (Derrida 72). Claiming that it is a new way of thinking, he mentions that if there is a reconciliation between the thinking of event and “machineness” the outcome then would be “a new logic” that humanity did not hear about at all. Extending this vision, he states that this can give birth to a new

character that is similar to a monster (73). As it is deduced, the meaning here is the posthuman, since the latter is the ultimate response to the unification of the human being and machine. Thanks to the “politics of the virtual”, Derrida sees that the virtualization of the events can happen through machines, in which this virtualization can cross the boundaries between the possible and the non possible (135). Following Derrida’s path, the German philosopher Luhmann indicates that meaning is the consolidation of the actual and the virtual. Explaining that meaning is not the only term for systems to procedure, he refers to organic and neurophysiologic ones (37, 65). The simulation between the real and the virtual can also reach the human embodiment to include it in the transformational process and transfer the human organism under its numerical algorithms.

Though the previous contributions play a vital role in the springing of the posthuman notion, its real explosion has emerged due to two essential factors. Biotechnology and cybernetics, especially the latter, have revolutionized the entire way of studying mankind’s history and culture, introducing a new conceptualization in addressing the human in the era of technology. Biotechnology, as it is spelled, consists of two parts ‘bio’ that is referent to biology and ‘technology’ to indicate a new age that is deeply –reliant on ‘high techs’. The first theorist to hold the fears that biotechnology would transform the human into posthuman was Aldous Huxley in his famous novel *Brave New World* (1998). In a process called “bokanovskification”, the director D.H.C. has transformed the “ovas” and “male gametes” into adult human beings through a process that moves as coming:

One egg, one embryo, one adult-normality. But a bokanovskified will bud, will prolefirate, will divide. From eight to ninety-six buds, and every bud will grow into a perfectly formed embryo, and every embryo into a fully-sized adult. Making ninety-six human beings grow where only one grew before. Progress. (Huxley 8)



This caption is an accurate depiction to the prime footsteps of biotechnology, in which the human beings enter the stage where technology is seen as a means to transform fertilized eggs into complete human beings through a process that has been undergone using gammas, alphas and epsilons (Huxley 7). From this idea, it can be clear the flavor of technological interference in changing the human genetics, biological constructions and many other aspects, creating new circumstances and realities that go simultaneously with these facts that has served directly in the evolution of the posthuman notion.

Defending on the same claim that Huxley has stepped through, Francis Fukuyama devotes a whole book entitled *Our Posthuman Future* (2002) to discuss how biotechnology has contributed in the flourishing of Posthumanism. In this book, Fukuyama was expressing his fears concerning the biotechnological threat that may inter the human life into a posthuman alternation after the apparent effects of technology and its enhancement on the human aspects, especially in the field of biology. He asserts that biotechnology is not concerned only with DNA manipulation, moreover, it is a revolutionary change in the science of biology encompassing psychology, anthropology and behavior genetics, etc. since the ultimate challenge and focus is to get knowledge about the brain mechanism (19). Fukuyama consequently wonders how a rational creature like the human can stay without benefitting from these enhancements and claims that it would be a great foolishness that humans accept death in the shadow of all these biotechnological advancements (71). Furthermore, he sees that human genetic engineering as the higher level in the development of biotechnology and though it is unlikely to happen soon it bears the probability that humans will face a real change in their personality and identity. Holding the fears that Huxley has pictured in his novel *Brave New World*, Fukuyama confesses that this biotechnology carries the seeds of new dangers of creating abnormal human creatures (82, 83, 86). Noticeably, biotechnology has put its hands on a very sensible part in the human history. It has sewed the fitting suit that man

can wear in a climate that is fully covered by technology to make the human strange to one's self, or simply a posthuman.

Another reason for the emergence of Posthumanism is the science of cybernetics and its revolutionizing explorations concerning human beings in the high-tech era. For the founding father of cybernetics, the theorist Norbert Wiener, the word is originated from the Greek word *kubernētēs* that stands for its equivalent "steersman" holding the same connotation of the term "governor" (Wiener 15). From his book *The Human Use for Human Beings* (1989), it can be understood that real foundation of the concept is dating back to his book *Cybernetics* (1948) that provides a detailed explanation to the term for the public to grasp its realities and novelties. According to Gordon Pask, cybernetics is an interdisciplinary science that is based on other natural sciences like biology, engineering and other disciplines; however, they are measured and dealt with in a different manner. For instance, cybernetics can be concerned with economy, yet it never analyzes it as an economist usually does. For him the science of cybernetics is majorly interested in guaranteeing a stabilized milieu in the presence of what he calls "control mechanisms" (11-12). Hans Moravec also has depicted clearly the roots of cybernetics in his work *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* (1988). He defines cybernetics as an updated "feedback regulation" theory that is created due to the post-war developments in the field of electronics and the mechanism of the human nervous system that have helped in the formation of animal-like machines, especially in their responses and learning (Moravec 7). Cybernetics was the notion that has theorized the effects of technology on the human life.

There are many other writers who have clarified the idea of Posthumanism by providing related thoughts appeared first as cybernetic technologies. For the American Stephen Pfohl, cybernetics has contributed in the construction of the so-called "material complexity" that has put off the boundaries between machines and physical organism by

altering everything into particles of information. Going beyond the normal casualties, he says that cybernetics gives the human the quality to cross the limits and challenge death by overpassing it even if to lose the body or to deconstruct the other (Pfohl 23, 34, 40). The computer specialist Lydia H. Liu, in an attempt to analyze Lacan's perception of cybernetics, states that the science of cybernetics is grounded primarily on a premise derived from the combination between communication networking and neurology (316). Cybernetics is to use the nervous system and communication as complementary parts for understanding human thinking when connected with machines.

The English psychiatrist Ross Ashby too has an undeniable effort in the cybernetic theory. Treating it as a theory of machines, he mentions that cybernetics allows defining and understanding machines and enables people know how to relate them (2). The last connections between cybernetics and Posthumanism have been introduced through the term "transformation", opening the space for the unification of the two polarities of technology and biology (Ashby 191). By coming closer to a theory that facilitates the perception of machines and biology, it starts to be familiar how this notion has played a vital role in constructing the posthuman. In the summative definition of Derrida in his book *Of Grammatology* (1976), cybernetics is the umbrella term for metaphysical terms like the soul, life, value and memory that work till these recent times to separate the human from machine (84). To conclude, cybernetics was like a map that highlights the pillars of Posthumanism and guides the reader to the major parts of this theory, including machines, computers, transformation and control to name just a few.

### **I-1-2-Posthuman Discourse and Literature**

Posthumanism is a term that has been grounded in the early history of technological machines. The American bioethicist Cary Wolfe states that the human being is now living in a new universe that is occupied by nonhuman subjects (47). In *What is Posthumanism?* (2010), Wolfe states that Posthumanism does not indicate “the triumphal surpassing or unmasking of something.” This means that by being a posthuman the human being does not leave the humanistic features or hide them. By contrast, it portrays the inhabitation of the world by inhabitants that are augmented in the process of getting approximate to technological machines. Stefan Herbrechter and Ivan Callus in “What is Wrong with Posthumanism?” (2003) envision Posthumanism as the “episteme” that takes place after humanism and after the human. In other words, it is an epistemology of the replaced and the obsolescent human, in which its interest is to look after the nature of humanism on the shadow of these ontological alterations. Thus, Posthumanism seeks to understand the new humans that have blossomed after the coming of technology. In “Extroductio. The Irresistibility of the Posthuman: Questioning New Cultural Theory” (2004), Callus and Herbrechter state that Posthumanism is able to grasp the necessity to rethink about humanities in the shadow of digitalism, virtuality, bio and nanotechnology, attempting to reassess the human in the integrationist process with the overriding enhancement of the artificial subjectivity. The overall theory is about the insights that allow the perception of humans and their new relations with technological machines.

Herbrechter has also made a unique formula that summarizes the posthumanist works of Hayles and Haraway, mentioning that Posthumanism equals poststructuralist theory and techniques. He thinks that Posthumanism is the “natural” step in finding the right place to situate the posthuman in the same range with the postmodernist notions like the Artificial Intelligence, cyborgs and digital machines that has replaced the Homo sapiens and their humanistic nature (2). Hence, Posthumanism is a theory that longs to situate the new beings in

the chaotic conditions of the postmodern epoch; it is the process that intends to give posthumans their deserved identity in the mess of high technology. As cited in the book of *The Matrix in Theory* (2006), Posthumanism is defined as a way of thinking that replaces the old humanist idea which depends on the belief that the human and machines are totally different and cannot achieve any agreement or integration (Herbrechter 279). This definition does not assist only in putting a clear definition to the theory of Posthumanism, it resembles the rebellious nature of this augmented creature too. The book of *The Ultimate Star Trek and Philosophy* (2016) is a good reference when searching for an accurate meaning to the concept of Posthumanism.

According to its writer Kevin Decker, Posthumanism is a futuristic envisioning to the nature of humanity in which humans can be anything but not humans. This phenomenon can become a reality in the presence of two main reasons which can be either the biotechnological changes or the escape from the flesh limits (320-1). In other words, it is the abandoning of the human body to live more as a mechanical or a computerized character.

Taking into consideration the contribution of one of the pioneers of the field, Robert Pepperel, in *The Posthuman Condition* (2003), claims that Posthumanism is the portrayal of life as if there is no separation between things, selves and environments. He asserts that Posthumanism is also the way of living, the utilization of one's own self and of the surroundings, in addition to the questions being asked and the suppositions unfolded from them (171). Here, Posthumanism means a new life style that has resulted from the advancements that have made humans re-evaluate their new conditions. Holding the same claim, Rosi Braidotti, in *The Posthuman* (2013), explains that there was an infinite debate concerning the relationship between the human and the anti-human. This view was a futile discussion that had blocked any understanding of life. Sooner this fallacy has come to an end by the appearance of the posthuman that has crossed these limits through finding new substitutions (36-7). Thus, the

posthuman is the solution that has sustained in conceiving the link between the human and the non-human. Through its virtual spaces and digital processing, the posthuman has opened new scopes for bringing together the humans and non humans; it is these factors that have facilitated the integration between them, giving more extended envisioning of humans as being cyborgs, superhuman and immortal creatures.

Braidotti was highly influenced by the professor Paul Verbeek and his idea that the technological development has pushed the human in a circle in which the human and the non-human can coexist creating new ethics that guarantee the well being of both sides (5). Verbeek has paved the way for the spread of the posthuman ethos notion that technology has shaped it very well. Moreover, the book of *Moralizing Technology* (2011) says that it is only by understanding the morality of the artifacts that the human can live peacefully with these technologies, resulting in the offspring of the posthuman. Knowing the relationship that connects the human with the artificial subjects that surround them can have an observable benefits on the preservation of the human that has been augmented to a posthuman. The posthuman notion seeks to increase the human awareness about the best methods for dealing and interacting with machines; it enables humans to understand the technological devices and makes them qualified for using and interacting with mechanic organisms. Above all, Posthumanism is a new theory that is based on human-machine integration in the epoch of high technologies, it does not include only literature or technology; it is an all-encompassing notion that covers cultural aspects too.

### **I-1-3-Posthumanism in Literature**

Many American authors have used new shapes of the human to define characterization in new terms of machines and virtuality. Hans Moravec, Neal Stephenson, Rudy Rucker and many others have a paramount works in displaying these new posthuman characterizations. The author Hans Moravec, for instance, in the book of *Mind Children: The Future of Robot*

*and Human Intelligence* (1988) expresses very intelligent human beings that can transfer their conscious mind into machines without noticing any changing or damage at the level of their humanist brains (109-110). This indicates that even literature has received the massive influence that has attached the human being after the domination of technology and the global transformation of the world under these circumstances. The other influential figure that has discussed such posthuman identities and personalities is Rudy Rucker with his artistic piece of *The Hacker and the Ants* (1994) that narrates the story of a computer programming that intends to create “superintelligent robots” (D’Amassa 314). Hence, this novel is about the evolution of posthuman characters that varies abnormally from usual humans. Besides Moravec and Rudy Rucker, the American author Neal Stephenson is also a salient writer in the postmodern science fiction, especially by bringing the usual twist of virtual life that characterizes the cyborgian characters. He has a very influential novel that discusses the change the “near future” is bringing to America, in which the matrix has shifted to become a “virtual reality” in which drugs (the best known drug kind is the one that causes a frozen nervous and it is the type from which the novel has taken its name, ‘Snow Crash) and hacking are the very components of it. The novel is about the protagonist Hiro; a hacker that lives disembodiedly in the virtual world when he fights a virus that seeks to destroy the virtual system (Mann 282). So, like any cyborgian narrative, these novels are about the new characters that have emerged in the technological environment that sways its puissance even over literature. They manifest the new realities that life and humans are changing under conditions that have turned the world from real to hypereal.

#### **I-1-4-Transhumanism or Posthumanism?**

The process of virtualizing the world has transported the human life into computerized subjects that can be fully free from the restrictions of the body or to creatures that can peacefully exist with the new changes that have reached their own selves. The confusion now

relies on what to call these virtual bodies and whether Transhumanism and Posthumanism are exchangeably-used concepts for this phenomenon. The Swedish Nick Bostrom sees Transhumanism as the condition in which postmodern technologies have achieved their effect on improving the human beings, resulting in breaking the humanistic borders; however, Posthumanism is related to future creatures whose capacities outstrip those of normal humans, but it does not refer to 'posthumous' or indicate the finality of humans. Bostrom contends that every transhumanist ends to become a posthuman after obtaining new consciousness and big amount of artificial intelligence. Posthumanism simply can be escaping body, living as an "information pattern" or as a "super-fast computer network" (4-6). Posthumanism thence is the last stage in being blended in the informational networking field. By this conception, Transhumanism is, as quoted in *The Transhumanist FAQ*, a "transitional human" (Bostrom 7). It is the point that transfers the human to a posthumanistic phase. The Canadian professor Bob Doede too asserts that Transhumanism is an optimistic prediction to the future in which the posthuman character will acquire more sub-humanist features (41). This futuristic depiction will enunciate the efflorescence of the posthuman that still preserve its humanity.

Others make a connection between Posthumanism and Transhumanism; they confess that Transhumanism is merely an equivalent connotation to Posthumanism. The bioethicist Cary Wolfe, for example, confirms that Transhumanism is just an updated terminology given to Posthumanism. He claims that it is "the best-known inheritor of the "cyborg" strand of Posthumanism" (xiii). Diving deeper in synthesizing trans-posthuman relationships, it can be recognized that the last stage in the transhumanist development is to acquire the posthuman qualities. According to Bradley Onishi, Transhumanism is a movement interested in enhancing the human's brain and flesh to become a posthuman that is able to transcend the human capacities (Onishi 103). It has devoted itself to measure the possible capabilities can be done when the humanistic features are augmented. As Fransisca Ferrando declares,



Posthumanism is a term that is understood and perceived in a transhumanist manner, where the two are already falling under the broader term of the ‘posthuman’ (27). The posthuman is what brings all the poles together. In “The Animal That Aspires to Be an Angel: the challenge of Transhumanism”, Hefner makes a brief distinction between ‘Transhumanism’ and ‘transhumanism.’ In this distinction, he explains that the capital ‘T’ Transhumanism represents the key aspect that characterizes the American culture in the current times. Transhumanism, on the other side, is the ideology that studies the posthuman as its focal interest. Hence, transhumanism is the theory that predicts the transitional alternations of humanism in the influence of the technology, traces the emergence of the posthuman and sacrifices its efforts to study its characterization.

In the change of the literary styles that have been massively influenced by the technological and scientific culture, the posthuman fiction has been the output that has resulted from these circumstances. Taking the posthuman novel as a sample, this work will explore the main characteristics that distinguish the posthuman novel as a posthuman fiction. The posthuman novel investigates the new characteristics that man has gained in the condition of postmodern technological revolution. In which men, as a result, have lost themselves to leave the space for the posthuman identity to prevail. The posthuman novel also explores what characterizes the worlds that posthumans inhabit (which are most of the time virtual cyberspaces). Then, it examines the major impact Posthumanism has left on the human ethics.

### **I-2-1-The Posthuman Character**

The posthuman is the new figure that has emerged from the mangle of man and machine. It fabricates a hybrid personality, where the body has been escaped for the union with machines to stand for a new consciousness that is different from the human consciousness. The posthuman era then has made man live under a cyborgian identity which is a construction of man and machine dichotomy. This cyborg is a unification of contradicted

components. Donna Haraway in her book *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* (1991) portrays the posthuman, though implicitly, as “chimera” that juxtaposes the hybrid with the natural, the artificial with the organic and the mechanic, the real with the virtual. Donna Haraway calls this tangency between the naturalness of the human and the artificiality of the machines the “cyborg character”. In her description for this new combination, she professes that by connecting the organic with the mechanic, the former has become passive and “inert”, while the latter has acquired the qualities of activeness and life as if the two in their blending have exchanged their roles too (152). Machine due to technological developments is now vivid more than the humans themselves.

The American cultural critic Vivian Sobchack too is convinced that with the “prosthetic technology” the human has vanished to be “invisible” in contrast to the prosthetic that have transmitted to a live being that have a “will” (23). Unlike Haraway and Sobchack, N. Katherine Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman* (1991) refuses to give machine its imagined picture and criticizes Hans Moravec’s “fantasies” in *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* (1989) and confesses that she was shocked by his claim that one day the human consciousness can be downloaded in a computer. She believes that technology has performed its roles in building new identity to the point at which the human cannot live in isolation from it (xiii). Katherine Hayles then denies that the human can live in a simulation without any change as if it was an “informational pattern” that can be “rematerialized” easily (1). The mind and its embodiment are becoming now the fountain of controversies when analyzing the posthuman identity among posthumanists. She asserts that embodiment is very essential for the posthuman and its change means a new type of consciousness.

Katherine Hayles thinks that the body and the mind are inseparable and if there is any chance to alter this organism, the way of thinking will differ absolutely (1). The posthuman has resulted in a various kind of consciousness that does not resemble that of the human.

Pushed by his simulation theory, the Swedish philosopher Nick Bostrom in the article of “Are You Living in a Simulation” assumes that if the computer-simulated beings have the ability of thinking consciously, then this capacity will be unique to those simulated people.

Contradicting Hayles, he imputes this failure in innovating conscious computers to the technological disability and hopes that the coming generations will witness this event (Bostrom 3). Sooner or later, the human identity will be under the fact of shifting to Posthumanism. Rosi Braidotti in her book *The Posthuman* echoes Deleuze and Gatari’s ideas and evaluates their efforts for assisting for going beyond the “binary thinking.” Moreover, she proclaims that as an inevitable result for the “technological apparatus”, the human interest has by passed sexuality and naturalization; now neutrality is the alternative accompanied by its synonymous concepts of mixity and hybridity (Braidotti 97). The posthuman identity has bypassed the humanist distinctions based on sex, race and social classes; it has nullified all these assumptions for celebrating an identity that has crossed the lines to be free from any humanist restriction.

To discuss a consciousness without embodiment, many theorists have shown hints for the end of body on the cost of having an immortal mind. As cited in the American philosopher Hurbert Dreyfus’ book *On the Internet* (2001), the Greek philosopher Plato was lingering to have an immortal mind and this is certainly his optimal goal to get rid of the body for owing a “pure mind” (5). This platonic philosophical perspective that is based on the immortality of the soul away from the materiality of the body can be the equivalent of the new idea of the disembodiment of the human consciousness when it is integrated with computers and machines. The British writer Stefan Herbrechter in *The Theory of the Matrix* tries to explain that the human desire was not to enhance his own status but to practice this desire and realize on machines. The human beings fetish a stronger machine that is beyond all the human capacities; besides, they do nothing to improve themselves and their own capacities.

The roof of these expectations, however, is to preserve the ownership over these machines so remains under its control and possession (284). In other words, the human creatures intentionally augment machines to be their servants, while they keep themselves on the place of the master. The question here is whether these human beings have saved their own identity from despair or they are just caring about their predominance. The human being in the age of posthumanity is mere “informational pattern that is melted in a computer device. Donna Haraway in the essay of “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” makes a comparison between machines before and after the emergence of cybernetics when she estimates the “pre-cybernetic machines” as a profitless mimicking of man’s dreams. Now machines have become developed so that they make distinctions even between the body and its mind (11). To have a conscious mind that can function in its normal manner is a horrifying sign that machines are developing, developing to the extent that men must be aware not to be a slave for a machine they one day invented.

In the aurora of posthumanity the human body has become of slight or no significance, solely because the human mind has found a new embodiment or because it has reached the phase of disembodiment. The (dis)embodied, as categorized by the Spanish Carrasco in her article “(Re)defining the Gendered Body in Cyberspace: The Virtual Reality Film” (2014), has three levels of connection with machines, which are an exemplification for the extreme popularity of science fiction. The first embodiment labeled by Carrasco is the “penetrated body” that is partially related to machine via the technologies of prosthetics (39). Secondly, the “cyber body” that is attained by “jacking” through cyberspaces and it has the ability to impersonate different personalities and genders, as mentioned in Carrasco’s article (41). The last one is the “simulated body” that is fully fused with machines wherein the human body is challenged by the digital world and reality is virtualized to be an “illusion” (Carrasco 43). So, embodiment with machines can be prosthetic, partial or in an entire relationship, marking the

degrees in which the human integration with machines is augmenting the human capacities. In this range, the professor of Technocultural Studies Colin Milburn in “Nanotechnology in the Age of Posthuman Engineering: Science Fiction as Science” pictures that nanotechnology as a model of technological innovation is a tool that has sustained in deconstructing humans. Nanotechnology too has reproduced new embodiment and fastened the human transformation into a posthuman via its hypereality and materialistic reformulation narratologies (Milburn, 286). On that base, the human body like any other realistic feature is simulated and seen as an illusion. From a different angle, the Australian theorist Anna Munster in her book *Materializing New Media: Embodiment in Information Aesthetics* (2006) accuses media technologies for prioritizing consciousness over embodiment. She adds that machines are working to “reconfigure” the biological part of the human into a solely “informatic” body (Munster 10). The major feature that pictured the posthuman atmosphere is the privilege of consciousness over body and embodiment; to live as a cyborg, the human faces the challenge of being out of the flesh bounds to practice a full simulation with machines, making the mind as the only representation that a human being is backing this virtual identity with very progressed powers that differs from those of normal humans.

The theorist Munster expresses another kind of embodiment which is digital. The digital body can integrate with the digitalized world without its corporeality because of machines’ capacity to isolate the body from its sensational functionality. In a justification for this digitalism, Munster answers that new media and its gravitational influence have driven man to run after the informational incorporeality (18). The posthuman body then is subjugated and updated in the multiple faces of technological embodiment. In a more communicative manner, Halberstarn and Livingston in *Posthuman Bodies* refuting to define the posthuman body as a pure discourse, they consider it an intersection of “bodies, bodies of discourse, and discourses of bodies” that eliminates any kind of distinction; however, they explain in echoing

Haraway's words that embodiment is "nodes in fields" and "inflections in orientations." Precisely, the posthuman body for them is the outcome of postmodernity; it is a "techno-body," a body that is contaminated by technology, a body that is no longer exist as a human character but as an individual (if this label can any more used to describe a 'non-human') in the posthumanist zoo (Halberstam 3). As if humans are extincted, the posthuman has changed man into a digital pet that acts under the instructions of technology. According to Halberstam and Livingston, the posthuman does not pass through adolescence or reach senility since it does not evolve or devolve, and unlike the human being that makes hierarchical distinctions among each other based on race or gender, this posthuman being rearranges these variations to be in the way of interfering between each other and between one's self and redefines the emerged identities (10). Thereby, the posthuman body has not succeeded in transiting the frontier of the human race and gender; it has also made a noticeable leap to overtake the confines of age, a characteristic that the human body will never taste its pleasure in its life.

### **I-2-2-Transcendence**

One of the utmost desires of humans is to reach the point in which they can live freely without any corporeal restrictions. With the progress that the human has achieved through science and technology, the human now is able to transcend the bounds of the body and live as an immortal creature in a computer or any other machine. In her article "Trying to Plug In: Posthuman Cyborgs and the Search for Connection," the author Melissa Colleen Stevenson elucidates that transcendence is to dispose of the mortality of one's meat and blood for enjoying the eternity of the immaterial. The posthuman, either embodied or disembodied, can profit a limitless access to a large amount of data and examine pointless potentials (Stevenson 87). In all these attainments and opportunities, the posthuman is still seeking or missing communication; this type of connection is lost in the virtuality of machines. Stevenson in her article depicts the loneliness and isolation the posthuman is living in the post-anthropocene

world; a being that lacks the etiquettes needed to interact with others. Providing true examples from the literary scene like the story of “The Girl Who Was Plugged In” (1973) by James Tiptree and More’s “No Woman Born” (1944), she was adducing by the protagonists Dierdre, Burke and Delphi who were deeply lonely (Stevenson 87). The posthuman has sacrificed its interpersonal relations and isolated itself for the purpose of being immortal in a virtual life. Kim Toffoletti too emphasizes, in the book of *Cyborgs and Barbie Dolls*, that cyber technology via its utopian fantasies allow the transcendence from the materialist corporeality. Seeming optimistic about technology, Toffoletti advises that machines can be used positively to escape the corporal boundaries and transcend into the purity of the free “selfhood” (25). What is apparent here, unlike the complaints of many regarding the end of humanism, Posthumanism and its transcendentalist manifestation helps in understanding the human nature better than humans, through inhabiting mechanic and virtual new bodies, humans in their new figures can witness the exact and accurate realities, though in its virtual manner.

### **I-2-3-Posthuman Science Fiction**

Posthumanism has become a popular term that stands for a whole category of discourse that can be distinguished from many science fiction discourses. The English critic and bioethicist Andy Miah in her article “Posthumanism: A Critical History” states that the posthuman discourse does not encompass only narratives about technological enhancements but also involves the futuristic literatures that have polished the posthuman narratives (which is one of the salient features of postmodern science fiction). For Andy Miah, the posthuman discourse discusses the ethical issues of humanity in the posthuman era like “the species boundaries” and transgenics, adding that these changes have created a unique terminology used by posthumanists like “the language of cyborgs,” “automata” and “robots.” (76). Thus, the posthuman fiction generally questions the morality of humans in the shadow of the

transformations that has affected their entire life in a push to posthumanity for creating a unique language.

Elaine Graham mentions that the posthuman discourse is a combination of scientific and biological discourses and the effects of cultural imaginations or simply the construction of science fiction mythology and popular culture, as cited in Andy Miah's article (82). The posthuman discourse is a kind of science fiction that uses science, biology and culture to build a different narrative centered on the human in the new culture of technological advancements. In the article of "Artificial Intelligence in Science Fiction as a Model of Posthuman Situation of Humankind," the Czech critic Miroslav Kotasek asserts that as a form of Posthumanism, Artificial Intelligence semantics has undergone through many similar uses like 'artificial machines', 'smart city', 'smartphones' and other semantic connotations. For him, the frequent use of these connotations have deviated people from taking their meanings semantically, but it has influenced them "subconsciously" as if they were real. Talking about intelligent machines can be closely related to science fiction discourses and the process as a whole can be symptomatic to the emergence of the posthuman discourse (69-70). From this explanation, it can be understood that posthuman discourses are generally associated with the language of human/machine intelligence which are one of the broader discourses that science fiction is concerned to examine.

#### **I-2-4-Vernor Vinge's Singularity and the Expectation of the Posthuman**

The American mathematician Vernor Vinge has a vital contribution in understanding the condition of posthuman fiction and its futuristic visioning. The concept of "singularity" helps a lot in formulating a clear image about what life could be on the future. Vinge's novel *Marooned in Realtime* manifests his idea of singularity, mentioning that for understanding what singularity is like, the person must "be there" when it occurs, stating that this singularity may last for centuries to take place in reality, but if humans rethink of their future life, they



will make their own singularity (116). The singularity then means to live in the augmented versions of the new life that will take place in the coming times due to the technological enhancements. This depiction can be considered as a direct invitation from Vinge to start thinking seriously about his singularity in which the predicted life, that is scientifically imagined and planned for the future, differs from this normal life that humans live in. In tracing the first hints for a futuristic singularity, he mentions that the hard science fiction writers during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were the ones to write a real science fiction that measures the progress of technology and its impact, describing them as if they were sensing an “opaque wall across the future” (Vinge 13). Their works are seen as the first real plots grounding for a distinct world and inhabitants, in which the posthuman is the extreme anticipation for those writers to achieve in the massive augmentations that have entered humans in virtual simulations and hypereal milieus. The apparent is that the prediction of an enhanced life and humans is the expectation of postmodern science fiction authors who felt the ongoing change on the light of technology.

In “The Coming of Technological Singularity: How to Survive in the Posthuman Era?” Vernor Vinge predicts that on the duration of thirty years, the human will be able to reach a ‘superhuman intelligence’ through the use of technology, marking the end of humanity (11). This is the importance of singularity, to raise the human to the maximum grades of augmentation and to pursue the best means to attain the ambition of having an intelligence that surpasses ordinary humans and even the most progressed machines via technology. Basing his anticipation on a scientific proofs gives the singularity greater chances to happen; the computer’s superhuman intelligence, the intimacy between man and machine, the spread of computer networks and the biological science that longs to improve the natural humans are all events that guarantee the approximate coming of a posthuman phase (Vinge, 12). All these symptoms are clearly marking the near possibility that humans can coexist with

machines in an introductory phase for the starting of the posthuman era. Moreover, he expects that the human can be the present and the future, the predecessor and the successor of his race by interring a phase of immortality (19). With the technological accelerations, future life will hold the reality of posthuman beings that are able to transcend to exist as virtual creatures that are able to think without their human bodies.

### **Conclusion**

Posthumanism is a fiction that has emerged in the late twentieth century and early twenty first century due to the accelerations of the technological development. Posthumanism is to live beyond the human limitations in a phase that has exceeded the bounds of the corporeal body. The posthuman then lives in a cyborgian identity as a mixture of human organism and machinic virtuality. The posthuman expands the humanistic features to enjoy a hybrid identity that bypasses the flesh and transcends it through the virtual spaces of networks to reach immortality. Cyberspaces are the point where all the posthuman processes take place in a virtual form. It portrays trueness in its hypereal way that is real than the natural reality itself. Posthumanism then is an overall format that has transformed the humans' life attaching even their own bodies and selves to dive deeper seeking an unknown future. It is the utopian and dystopian expectations that long to raise the human beings to the highest levels of intelligence even if the price is to sacrifice their materialistic bodies. Posthumanism at last is the eagerness to live eternally in the abstraction of a spirit separated from the mortal flesh.

## **Chapter Three: Vinge's "True Names" as a Posthuman Narrative**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is a practical application for the previous theoretical conceptions of the postmodern science fiction and the posthuman identity. It examines Vernor Vinge's novella "True Names" as a posthuman piece of writing that portrays extraordinary events which happen in virtual places and imaginary settings, the novella decodes electronic secrets and demonstrates posthuman characters (human and machine). It also investigates the complex plots and the confused characterization that highlight the cybernetic hegemony on such genre of science fiction. Hence, it is an examination of Posthumanism as the newest trend of postmodern science fiction with a complex depiction that reflects the complexities of the themes that it tackles.

### **I-1-1-Characterizing Postmodern Science Fiction in the Novella**

This chapter discusses the novella of Vernor Vinge "True Names" (1981), a novella that unveils the first attempts for introducing more advanced themes in the history of science fiction. The story is about a group of warlocks whose major interest is to hack governmental sites for their own profit. Vandalism, which is a process of devastating the others' properties for taking advantage from it, is their preferable job in the virtual world of what they call the Other Plane. Things were going normal until the day when the four federals (where Virginia is their boss) visit the protagonist Pollack Rodger's house, who is one of the warlocks of the Coven or the Other Plane, as they call it, to interrogate him and uncover one of his greatest fears, his true name. As barter for his name and his life, they asked him to decipher the big puzzle of the Mailman who is unlike other vandals seeks domination and control. Mr. Slippery, as known among his virtual friends in the Coven, accepts their proposal and enters the Other Plane to meet Erythrina. In a conversation between Mr. Slippery and Ery they try to know the real figure behind the Mailman reaching the point that the revolution of Venezuela

was an alien invasion. The Mailman then was suspected to be an alien that took the advantage of Venezuela's massive facilities in data processing, that were neglected in a period of technological boom, to make a coup there for strengthening his powers. In reporting this conclusion to the federal member Virginia, the idea of the alien invasion seemed at the beginning a silly deduction. When relating it to the Venezuela's coup and what has accompanied it of destruction in data processing and economic bankrupts, however, it has sounded logically.

Sensing the coming danger of the Mailman, Mr. Slippery demanded getting access to the Feds' data system to gain power for defeating him. Being under the threat of this creature, the federal government accepted his request and gave him two 'cartes blanches.' Having the magical cards of mass data, Ery and Mr. Slippery started their intended war to destroy their enemy. In their war, they recognized that the Mailman has transformed his first victim, DON MAC, to an identical copy of himself. Later, Erythrina noticed that DON MAC is truly dead and that what they are encountering now is just a simulator projected by the Mailman. The Mailman was really a strong enemy that has great powers; he was able to make infinite copies of DON MAC, whenever a copy is ended other copies emerge till it was weakened. This temporary success in defeating him has come to an end when Ery was dropped out of the virtual battle to her real world and Slip faced an approximate end. Facing the real death, Slip asked Erythrina about her real name and address to save their lives. Since it was an exception, Ery risked her real name for the sake of their survival. The war was ended and the fear that the government may kill them for their disobedience was signaling. Fortunately, the threat of the Mailman's return rescued them. Under the surveillance of the Feds, Slip enters the Other Plane recognizing that everything has changed as if he has left it for ten years and not ten weeks. After his conversation with Limey, Slip suspects Erythrina for deceiving him and

being the mailman and goes to visit her in her real home, when she reveals the reality of the Mailman and her transformation to be the new Mailman.

Vinge's novella is one of the well known science fiction stories. It is rich with many science fictional descriptions and terminologies. "True Names" then is among the most prominent postmodern science fiction era, specifically with the emergence of cyberpunk subgenre in the 1980s. The critic John Clute in the article of "Science Fiction from the 1980 to the Present" states that "True Names" (1981) has a great contribution in emphasizing science fiction's anticipated technological world. He claims that if the genre was not able to anticipate this technological future, then Vinge's novella could fill this gap (68). This can have only one interpretation; "True Names" has great impact on the postmodern science fiction in the 1980s onwards especially when talking about its diverse themes. Moreover, the novella starts by a brief analogy between the 'Age of Magic' where great sorcerers hide their true names because as much as they are valuable, they may cause them harm and the age of post industrial revolutions. The similarity of this comparison is the danger of revealing real names as if the history repeats itself, but the difference now is that science has replaced the magical fantasies. This novella manifests the time of great technology and the time of science domination; the use of magical namings, like warlocks, the Coven and other terms, for this highly technological milieu is just to manipulate it. However, truly they were very far from the magical fantasies and their success of hiding themselves is due to their belonging to the technologies of sciences and the "magical jargon" is the best description for this highly developed world (Vinge 7, 16). This is a direct confession from the author himself that his novella is a mere representation of postmodern science fiction that has accompanied the post-industrial revolution.

The novella is a representation of postmodern science fiction. The major feature that enables any reader to classify this story as a science fictional narrative is its digitalized virtual

setting. Most of the events in this narrative take place in ‘the Other Plane’ which is a virtual setting that is different from the real world, as its name indicates the term ‘Other’ gives the meaning of variation and difference. The term ‘Plane’ also holds a denotation of something above the ordinary way of living on earth. Combining the two concepts together this denotes the very meaning of the setting; a setting that is grounded on the virtual realities of computers and cyberspaces. As the author Vinge has put it, in the Other Plane one can reach information in a matter of seconds as if someone is looking from the window to check the weather (18). The virtual world of this plane then is characterized by its speed and swiftness. What can a normal human access in hours and days can be accessed here in a few seconds or even milliseconds. When Vinge describes a place in this virtual world, he says that it is identical to the ancient games of computer forty years ago, whereas the difference is on the extent this place is developed. It is special by its complex processors and data bases that are called ‘Portals’ (Vinge 6). The virtual world that Vinge is drawing is based generally on digital information on the spaces of computers. It is a world that relies purely on the algorithms of data bases and computerized processing of information. “True Names” is centered on a reality that has derived from simulation with computer. As Vernor vinge says “You've seen plenty of personality simulators in the Other Plane” (44). It can be understood hence that the setting of the story, which is ‘the Other Plane,’ functions mainly by getting simulated with computers to enjoy a wider access of data and realities that totally differs from real world’s actualities.

The novella’s setting is an amalgamation of different settings, the virtual that includes many subsets like the Other Plane and the federal government’s data sets, and the real that includes the characters’ real world. The virtual world is the place when most of the characters are workaholic agents that try to double and triple their wealth by engaging in the works of vandalism, yet it is considered by Mr. Slippery as the place of pleasure; he has refused to use the Other Plane like others do for gaining personal profits and claims that the time he would

use this space as a source of serious bargain, it will hold just a continuous process of hard working for maximizing one's powers and the joy and entertainment of this setting will be no more flavored (Vinge 10). The virtual world is not just a place of successive profits; it is also a good source of pleasure and amusement. In fact, the virtual setting is like any real setting in which the person can establish friendships and intimate relationships that inspire that the virtual world is open for doing anything. When Mr. Slippery and Erythrina entered the Other Plane, they saw that Robin Hood is busy in "close conversation" with one of the beautiful girls (Vinge 8). This indicates that humanist emotions and feeling of love and intimacy can still be present in the virtual ambiences of computer nets. The virtual world though seems to some extent similar to the real world, since it involves actions and emotions similar to usual humans and continues to tackle a problem that has affected the real world, varies from the real setting, especially the characters that inhabit it. Wiley, for instance, is a shy person in the real world but in the virtual world, he seems a sort of adventurous figure that can do anything for reaching power and control in both worlds (Vinge 12). The two worlds then are rolling in one circle, one is virtually portrayed with distinct augmented characters and abilities due to the virtuality that characterizes its sets and the other is for reality and its factual actions that reflect the simplicity of the human life away from high tech.

Vernor Vinge's piece of writing does not stop at highlighting the cultural dimensions and the technological impact. Like the rebellious soul of cyberpunk rockers and hackers, it carries the grains of a rebellious generation that will blossom side by side in the environment of computers and cyberspaces. The major plot of "True Names" turns around experienced hackers that are experts in vandalistic operations that attack mainly the governmental institutions. When Mr. Slippery was interrogated by the members of the Federal government, Virginia has told him that Robin Hood alone has cost them three percent of IRS revenues just in one year (Vinge 3). The government then is the target of any hacker that seeks to have

power. The story is full of scenes in which the Coven's warlocks disobey the orders and instructions of their government.

Mr. Slippery, for instance, though he seems a thrall to the government, and though he seems the most aware about the danger of working against the government, especially when knowing the dark image of the Mailman, still does not respect the rules of the Feds. Though Virginia has insisted on him for not entering to the Other Plane or meeting any member of the Coven, he has managed a secret entry through a simple data base. When she caught him there and demanded to meet in their usual place, he has immediately closed the data set on her face tasting a temporary victory profiting from her scared status (Vinge 18-19). This is not the last time for Mr. Slippery to disobey Virginia's orders; when he and Erythrina have got an access to the System's data base, thinking that the enemy is on the military system, they entered it without giving a little care to what will be faced by the government (Vinge 24). The sings of disobedience have sparked not only the clear revolutionary soul of the Coven's hackers but also mistrust in the government. Vinge has declared it overtly that warlocks have no trust in the ciphering system of the government; moreover, as Erythrina has asserted, most of the amateur warlocks have started excitedly to turn the system an inconvenient spot for its bureaucratic users (10). This novella has shown also the anarchist view that has imbued the ideas of the postmodern thinkers and authors.

### **I-1-2-Technology in Vinge's Science Fiction**

Technology is another key feature that distinguishes postmodern science fiction from other genres and narratives. "True Names" is a novella that is loaded with terminologies and notions that reflect the technological development of its times. At the beginning of the story, Vinge describes the epoch that his story has taken place. He says that times have passed and now it is the "Age of Reason" that is followed by the two industrial revolutions (Vinge 1). This indicates that the first and the second industrial revolutions are the inevitable result of



logical reasoning that have led to the spread of technological culture and its apparent effect in any domain. In describing this era of technological development, Erythrina when suspecting the Mailman to be an alien said that interstellar invasion is different from old times' invasion that cost years for preparation and great amount of financial recruitment.

It is faster and saves time and money and can reduce the horrifying destructive results of the traditional wars, it is an invasion that is wholly knowledgeable about the computational techniques of the 'Computer Age' and suitable for an imperialist and technological race (Vinge 14). The novella also manifests a large use of technological concepts, especially those of computers. Technological terms like processors, electrodes, data-commuters, links, satellites and portals (Vinge 5) are of high frequency in the novella and reflect the advanced technological influence this story intends to make on its reader. Besides, the impact of technology is attached even the literary side. Virginia and the Feds in their first visit to Rodger Pollak's home, knowing that Pollak -Mr. Slippery- is a novelist, refused to call his literary pieces of writing but games; when an old man in the Feds' group asserts that Pollack is some sort of a genius in writing popular games the thing that has irritated him (Vinge 1). This means that computer games and other technologies of postmodernism have deeply rooted in the way of thinking; seeing a recognizable member in the government addressing a novel as if addressing a favorite computer game indicates that technology has played its game.

In this novella, Vinge tries to discuss an important stage in the human development, which is the massive influence that technology is demonstrating over people. It is clearly explaining that technology is very useful for the human progress and it is a good source of extraordinary powers that the human has never stopped dreaming about. When Mr. Slippery was describing the enormity and the evolution that technology has reached, it was approximately similar to magic. For Ery and Slimey Limey, concepts like spells, sprites, castles are the best terms for designating this world better than using the twentieth century's

terms like files programs, data structures and communication protocols that seem too old for the virtual world that is highly developed and extraneous (Vinge 16). This means that the virtual world of the Other Plane is portrayed in magical words to describe the greatness of this advanced technological condition. In many places in the novella, Vinge tries to draw a positive image about the virtuality of what is symbolically entitled as the Coven; he states that this place is a fusion of magic and power the thing that is absent in the “magicless” reality of the factual life (38). The appropriate terminology for describing this progress of high technology outclasses the usual terms utilized in reality since it is higher than its simple potentialities. He also stated that the developed technologies of the Coven is best represented in terms of magical depiction since magic is the best tool that is able to manifest the state that science has reached (Vinge 7). Science now has entered a new phase in which the person when hearing about scientific phenomenon wonders whether this is a reality that the human’s continuous trial for having magical life has succeeded finally in reaching the desired hopes or it is one of the old fantastic stories of magic sorcerers and fairies. So, the prophetic author Vernor Vinge as usual hopes to raise the human to a very utopian world in which this being becomes part of machine organism, portraying a new hyperreality that overpasses the ordinary imagination.

### **I-1-3-Cyberspace and Cyberculture in the Novella**

The novella unfolds on another side in the postmodern era; it is the cultural side that has resulted in the appearance of cyberspaces and cyberculture. “True Names” is a narration about the life of computer hackers on cyberspaces. Most of the time spent by these characters is when they face the screen of their computers and surf from their real world to the world of hypereality. Characters like Robin Hood, Wiley, Slimey Limey, Virginia and for sure Erythrina and Mr. Slippery have made their own life in a cyberspace called ‘the Other Plane’ or in their language ‘the Coven.’ They interact in that world as if they are living in an ordinary

life. The difference however is the way they are connected to their other world, especially when their aim is to manipulate others' sights for not realizing their real identities; they are living as if they were digital creatures which inhabit a computer game. To give a few examples about those creatures; there is Erythrina who is living sometimes as a red-eyed spider or like a 'snow-devil (Vinge 7-20), Mr. Slippery sometimes uses the shape of a dog (15) and Virginia with its usual appearance of a frog (17) as if Vinge is imagining the posthuman world in which humans and non-humans will be on the same rank. Concerning the way they get in this numerical world, they generally use drugs as any cyberpunk figure do as if they are escaping the facts that postmodern society has drawn to discuss it in a more simultaneous way of digitalism. Most of the cyberspace inhabitants in the Other Plane use drugs to maintain their concentration and to remain connected in that space for the maximum time. Vernor Vinge in this novella too has highlighted this fact when he claims that computer experts use drugs to raise the amount of connectedness on this world. Mr. Slippery on the other side was an exception, unlike these experts of the pop culture, he finds nature his mutual assistant in diving in the virtual algorithms of the cyberspace; he relies most of the time on the beauty of the trees and the music of "wind-surf" to benefit the highest qualities of virtual communication (Vinge 5). Away from this exception, the general atmosphere of such milieus is dominated by drugs and computer hacking which are the qualifying criteria for any cyberpunk narrative during the times of the pop culture.

Pragmatism is a wide spread conception in the American postmodern culture, especially if there is an easy tool that facilitates the way of manifesting this profiteer ideology. Cyberspace has become the theatre of many Machiavellian events like gaining power and fame, showing off technological cleverness and intelligence, seeking political position or simply searching dominance and control. This novella confirms this reality when Vinge asserts that the majority of vandals are lingering to earn personal profits and that they rate tens

of thousands of the welfare and tax swindles that the government was not able to detect (3). This means that their goal is not to cause a great damage to their country but to have a regular sort of finance that could guarantee them better life in the real world. As Vinge claims, it is just for “their petty individualism” and that is why they are not a real threat to the government (4). Robin Hood and Limey are the best examples of this pragmatic orientation; they have drawn very tricky maps that include the best way for safe operations of attacking banks (Vinge 8). The Other Plane is considered as the appropriate setting for planning to have a wealth and power; with its commercial language, it is like a big market for transferring transactions and shares. Wiley is another example of this opportunist process; he has made an alliance with the greater enemy of the Mailman just because he thinks that this persona has political authority. Moreover, he thinks that this man rescue him from being the thrall of Erythrina after getting his name and help him in establishing his kingdom without considering the fact that this being may cost him losing his life and dying the true death (Vinge 12). In this plane people forget about others’ safety or danger, all what they care about is how to obtain their goals. Vinge here declares that many hackers exhaust themselves for finding each others’ names; truly having others’ name is a great profit because you may simply make them your slaves (9). The profiteer ideology that virtual technologies have maximized its zone cancels any consideration to friendship or kinship relations. Away from gaining power or money many like Mr. Slippery use the Other Plane for being famous. Mr. Slippery once said that “*One meets fans in the oddest places*” (Vinge 2). It indicates that cyberspace has become the location for fandom, power and any other opportunistic processes.

#### **I-1-4-Irony as a Postmodern Science Fiction Strategy**

As one of the frequently used strategies of postmodern science fiction, irony is a key characteristic of this novella. Starting by the title, which is ‘True Names,’ it can be understood that the real names of the characters are very important to be identified, however ironically

the importance or the value of the characters' true names is to be hidden to guarantee the safety of their lives. If the real name of the character is caught, it means being under a wide range of possibilities; either to be blackmailed and traced so the other can have every single piece of information about that figure like what Ery has done with Wiley (Vinge 12), to be followed and interrogated by the government like Mr. Slippery, or horribly to face the real death (4). Keeping names secret is a necessity that keeps the one away of its greatest fears. As Vernor Vinge has mentioned, when true names are discovered, then the weakest enemy can damage the most powerful ones (Vinge 1). The other irony in this novella is the role the government plays in the story. Usually, the government is the protector and the savior of its citizens, but to see this government using one of its weakest indicted to save it from the coming threat of the Mailman is a real sarcasm, especially when the source of legitimacy exercises illegal ways like threatening someone's life (Vinge 4). The oddest irony is when a hacker that masters vandalism does his best to protect the world when sensing a near unknown enemy. Mr. Slippery, when he figures out the coming catastrophe that the Mailman is intending to make, tries his best to rescue the world and get rid of the dangerous enemy along with Erythrina that has sacrificed her 'true name' as a price for destroying the Mailman and saving the world (Vinge 29). Moreover, the pure sarcasm is when seeing one of the greatest vandals whose ultimate goal is to reach power in the world of data accept easily to return it back to its real owner though they have the ability and power to do it (Vinge 32), revealing one of the strangest characteristics of postmodern science fiction.

One of the major characteristics that have made this novella as purely a postmodern narrative is its techno-scientific language that is much known about its complexity and difficulty. As the complexity of the virtual setting of the Other Plane, Vinge has used a very complicated terminology that reflects the influences of the postmodern context and technological language. It is not a matter of ten words or less, in fact, each page of this story

is full of technical words like hardcopy backup, computers, algorithms, inquiries and installations are accurate exemplifications used by Vinge as an inescapable effect of the postmodern technological era (4). The scientific style is what suits this novella, since besides being a postmodern narrative; it is a work of a very mature subgenre of science fiction that narrates the late advancement humans have or may one day attain. As if inspired by Lyotard, Vinge too has used the word labyrinth as if the virtual world has changed into an electronic game (24). In addition, language is described in terms of the computerized concepts that postmodern science fiction has acquired in the shadow of the computer technology. When the members of the federal government have visited Pollack's house, they described his novels as games (Vinge 34). So, even language and style have received and adapted with the conditions that technology and science fiction have made on the postmodern context. The other stylistic feature is the use of fragmented language that symbolizes the fragmentation the cyberpunk characters live in. This caption is one depiction for the fragmented language Vinge has used:

[T]he two searchers found themselves on the inside of the NSA control system  
 —and under attack! Impressions of a dozen sleek, deadly forms converging on  
 them, and sudden loss of control over many of the processors he depended on. (25)

A paragraph that ends without a full stop or a paragraph that starts with a dash is the biggest fragmentation that may occur; however a great author like Vinge won't use such distortion without reason. The fragmented style along with the scientific language is what characterizes this novella that stands for its contemporary context.

### **II-2-1-The Posthuman Identity**

The novella of "True Names" is a story that discusses one of the most current themes that has emerged from the technological ruins of the postmodern context; a theme that emulates the confusions that have entered humans into virtual digitalism. Posthuman identity is the combination of human and machine that has led humans to appear as a superhuman

with its new prerogatives resulting from the new embodiment of mechanic bodies. The posthuman, as defined by Vinge, is a “were-robot” that is similar to “werewolves” in its nominalization; posthumans are humans who seeks to eliminate themselves into machines or simply to be machines (3). The posthuman identity is an identity that has blossomed from gaining mechanic features that can enhance humans to have magical powers. The warlocks in Coven resembles this characterization since all of them have crossed their way into becoming machines by spending most of their time in the virtual setting of the Other Plane. Robin Hood, Slimey Limey, Wiley, Erythrina, Mr. Slippery and DON .MAC are all posthumans but the weirdest kind of posthumans among them, as claimed by Rodger Pollack (Vinge 3). The figure of the Mailman is a sort of highly experienced character in the Coven; it has the capability to disguise and manipulate its enemies. At his first appearance as one of the warlocks, the Mailman used a very tricky artifice, when he has intimidated Allan by his form of an American truck in its Van Lines style. The truck, as Vinge has portrayed it, was composed of two simulators, a driver and loader; it has answered all Allan’s question proper, indicating a great source of artificial intelligence (13).

The Mailman is also able of destroying someone and simulating it into his own usage like what he has done with DON .MAC when he murdered him and instead he has substituted him by a simulator (Vinge 26). This unfolds the reality that the posthuman identity is really augmented and empowered due to the fact that is a hybrid of human/machine construction. However, it is still not similar to that empowerment of pure humans that are escaping their alive bodies to live in mere simulation with machines. The first figure of the Mailman, the Mailman before his destruction, was not similar to the new identity he has acquired when Erythrina has taken its personality after his damage. The Mailman was not able to defeat Mr. Slippery and Erythrina because it has been transformed into a sole program that uses just human simulations, like what is done with DON .MAC, which after few months becomes

merely a repetition of programmed operations (Vinge 28). The Mailman figure lacks the basic humanist criteria that make him able to perceive the organized attack launched by Ery and Slippery. This creature portrays the disability of machines to overpass human intelligence only if human characteristics have been integrated with these machines. Despite the fact that the Mailman was enjoying massive powers, the lack of creativity and imagery (which are the basics of human identity) has made him lose a battle that all the signs indicate his ensured victory (Vinge 26). This defeat is the indication that machines alone does not function appropriately; the posthuman then is not purely an artificial mechanism. Posthuman identities are the needed characters since they work via the dichotomy of humans and machines unification, like two facets for one currency they complement, balance and enhance each other to result in a different hybridity that resembles neither of them.

Talking about posthuman characters and their boosted powers and capabilities, this characterization may be confused by many with intelligent machines. Intelligent machines are promoted and enjoy higher advancements which may outrun those of human-intelligence qualifications. Yet, the problem with these technologies is that they are programmed and work according to their original program. The best representation of these machines is Alan or what Erythrina names Alan Turing T-shirt (Vinge 8). Alan is an eliminator that guards the castle of the Other Plane by questioning its comers about their past practices in the Coven for determining the ones who are familiar inhabitants of this virtual community for its protection (Vinge 9). Alan here can be considered as a posthuman identity that lives in the digital world of the Other Plane; this can be true if the one does not know is just a program that no human being is behind it. Vinge, when defining Alan says that it is a “personality simulator” that no “living operator” is controlling it. Hence, this creature is a clever program that makes tests, yet its skill does not extend the fact that its tests start to enroll in a repetitive chain after few hours. Moreover, if someone change or use a weird sort of answers though its creation has



been as old as the establishment of the space of the Other Plane (Vinge 9). As a result, intelligent machines are solely programs that can function in the realms of their first missions and cannot do another job or enhance themselves unless there is a second hand that has worked to change their proceedings. When the war against the Mailman has been ended, ten weeks later, Mr. Slippery was shocked that the circumstances that were living during the war has caused many changes that have reached even the personality simulator Alan who has become more frightening (vinge 44). This indicates that machines can also have emotions and feelings but these sentiments are the fake of their initial programming, and in any way, they will not overran posthumans. What can be understood is that posthumans are very far from intelligent machines; they are partially humans in their emotions and ethics and partially mechanic when it comes to their embodiment and virtual consciousness.

#### **II-2-1-1-Posthuman vs. Human Consciousness**

Since posthumans are defined as humans who have transcended themselves and their bodies to inhabit the new embodiment of the virtual machine; their consciousness too differs from that of normal human beings. When the body or the embodiment differs, the way of thinking and the procedure of sensing things around differ consequently. Vinge, holding this belief and trying to confirm it, asserts that concentration of someone who has cyborgian features is very developed from that of normal human beings.

[I]n the Other Plane, I can compensate. It's easy for the BEG to detect failure of attention. I've written a package that keeps a thirty-second backup; when distraction is detected, it forces attention and reloads my short-term memory. Most of the time, this gives me better concentration than I've ever had in my life. And when there is a really serious wandering of attention, the package can interpolate for a number of seconds. You may have noticed that, though perhaps you mistook it for poor communications coordination. (Vinge 43)

This accurate portrayal explains precisely how the posthuman consciousness has been improved and how the conscious can gain more powers when it incorporates with or embodies a mechanic organism. The posthuman conscious can reach the highest levels of concentration, simply because there are virtual tools that can imply that attention is lost. Something else can prove the strength of this digital consciousness is the backup that can be repeated each thirty seconds to keep the short-term memory focused and to maintain that it is in the right track. It is really improved, especially when it can understand that the attention is in deep wander, so the package responsible on keeping attention functioning vividly works to give the impact that the attention is being lost by remaining interjected for few seconds though the person can misinterpret it as the effect of lack of communication assortment.

Describing his experience when gaining the tremendous powers after having access to the Federal government data sets, Mr. Slippery has experienced the feeling of being a part of the machine's conscious system. He claims that he has witnessed what an ordinary human being has never sensed in the entire life; its bandwidth outnumbers the normal sensory by thousands of times and its abnormal accesses give the feeling of infinity and eternity (Vinge 23). When he and Erythrina have immersed themselves in the broad horizons of data, they have felt as if their minds were filled with unexpressed soreness due to the great amount of absorbed data. This process is similar to receiving ten million phone conversations at one time or watching an entire continent's video productions; the pain felt when the mind perceive data gets sharper whenever these detected data increases to the extent that the person approaches "the true death" (Vinge 23). This is truly the immensity of data that the posthuman consciousness is able to process, which is greater than any normal human's capacities; this type of digital processing makes the human kind incapable in front of such technological means. Obviously, the progressed data requires much progressed style of processing that can fit only the qualifications of posthuman beings; otherwise, humans, in their trial to do an

effort that exceeds their abilities, may face pains that increases in accordance to the size of the received data and that may end up in many cases by facing the true death. In another scene that describes the posthuman conscious, Mr. Slippery informs that after long resistance, he becomes able to take control over his new consciousness. As a result, he looks like a small insect that hovers in the supremacy of his new mind; no motion can happen without its recognition and no installment can be paid through bank webs without its knowing (Vinge 23). Once the mind acquires the posthuman standards, things get easy and the conscious gains the privileges of controlling greater powers; this consciousness benefits from the human and machine collaboration to result in new thinking style never granted before.

The depth that Vinge has intended to draw in the minds of his readers about the variation between human and machine's conscious is also demonstrated in the scene where Mr. Slippery was out of the big data field of the federal system. He was like someone whose ears have stopped and his eyes have got blind and the more catastrophic is the feeling that he is no more able to 'think' at all (Vinge 32). Consequently, being a part of posthuman thinking process then getting out of it cannot be like anything but a complete blockage in the mind's function. Going further in his clarification of returning to real life after long simulation with the virtual world, Vinge identifies the process in the sense that it resembles a victim who has exclusively returned from limbo world or like a patient in "lobotomy" that has been out of stupefaction and recognizes this recently (30, 32). What can be sensed here is that the transitional process from human to superhuman consciousness or vice versa is very complicated and emphasizes the actuality that super or posthuman consciousness is very developed from that of simple humans. The novella of "True Names" is not just an explanation of how the posthuman subconscious is different from that of mortal humans, it also examines how the conscious and the subconscious intersect together to produce a systematic way of thinking and reacting specific for mechanic virtuality. When Mr. Slippery

and Erythrina were searching for safe exit from the Other Plane, Mr. Slippery says that the subconscious translates what it sees from its previous knowledge in other communication websites and sends it to the conscious side; the conscious then is the only responsible in making the right decision (Vinge 6). In the virtual thinking, the conscious and the subconscious work collaboratively. Finally, the posthuman consciousness, unlike that of humans, remains even if the body dies and loses its significance (Vinge 46). The posthuman conscious keeps functioning away from human capacities in the world of immortal minds and eternal souls. This is a clear confession that Vinge wants the human conscious to cross its limits and manifest itself so it matches the contemporaneous status of technology.

### **II-2-1-2-Posthuman Figures as Fragmented Hybrid Entities**

Since posthumans are neither pure humans nor pure machines and since their identity is a construction of their mixture, fragmentation becomes an obligatory consequence. Their fragmentation starts from their distinct settings of reality and hypereality. Mr. Slippery when he has arrived from the virtual world of cyberspaces to the real world describes this experience as if he were in a “daydream.” In a matter of few seconds since his arrival from a world where life is in its apex to find that night has wrapped the real world (Vinge 18). This shows that these two worlds are swiveling in two distinct galaxies; each galaxy has its principles and rules. The virtual world holds the person’s fantasies and hopes to have a little fun that the real world has deprived him from it (Vinge 16). Still the virtual world varies from the actualities of the dark reality that cannot be escaped unless the person dives in the imaginings of hypereality. However, escaping the real to virtual or trying to cope with the new circumstances of being a hybrid cyborgian figure can cause big confusions among these personalities and make them live in continuous turbulences about how to balance between these variants. Vinge states that when Mr. Slippery has entered the borders of the virtual space of the Other Plane, he has avoided the use of his true name even in his deepest thoughts (6).

Living as a cyborgian persona necessitates the denial of the original humanist identity, the thing that involves this being to live scattered in the criss-crosses of the new conditions. Moreover, it also makes the person sticking all the time to the new world's influences in which they have spent years and decades in the digital ciphering. Mr. Slippery, though it has been disconnected from his mechanic organism for ten weeks, he still faces a difficulty in calling his virtual friend by her true name though he knows it very well (Vinge 44). Living as machines and humans make the result unvaried whatever happens since having hybrid identities requires the denial of one of the two when the other is no more in its tropics; being in reality predetermines the use of the real identity and vice versa.

### **II-2-2-Transcendence in “True Names”**

When humans are simulated with machines, absolutely the way of perceiving and grasping information differs. As Baudrillard has put it in *Simulations* (1983), “[t]o dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn't. One implies a presence, the other an absence” (5). This means that dissimulation for posthumans means that they deny their human embodiment, besides it asserts the confession of having virtual embodiment in machines. Posthumanism then is to get rid of the human for stronger virtual capabilities, to be one of the gods that sway their control over the whole world, being it real or virtual. DON .MAC, when trying to convince Erythrina and Mr. Slippery that they are very strong and can work without the assistance of the government, declares that the three of them now are simple warlocks but gods who “can rule and prosper” in their new circumstances (Vinge 27). Posthumanism is the state in which humans transcend their physical embodiment of corporeal organism to emerge in a new embodiment or to blossom without any restricting embodiment. Mr. Slippery has portrayed this picture clearly, when he advocates that in the Other Plane, warlocks never used their real bodies; they get gradually influenced by the vast quantities of information and data, so they become very intelligent and

powerful. By contrast to their minds that prosper and flourish, their original bodies lose their importance and become useless, since their minds have found new embodiment to fit in and the physical body now is just an empty shell that has no value (Vinge 41). So, the body loses its functioning in the conditions of the new posthuman bodies. The best representation of becoming pure posthumans is the case of Erythrina when she has been talking to Mr. Slippery telling that "when this body dies, I will still be, and you can still talk to me" (Vinge 46). This transcendentalist phase resembles one of the lingering desires of any posthuman character; to cross the limits of the flesh for living in the immortality of pure minds is last stage in reaching an eternal life.

### **II-2-3-The Posthuman Hero: The Hero of the Virtual Era**

Posthuman heroism is one in the continual oddities of the postmodern phenomena. Posthuman heroes are mainly hackers that inhabit the virtual spaces of computers and use vandalism to reach their pragmatic goals. In fact, this is not something strange in an epoch even the essentials of morals have changed. As the founder of the HBCU Will Moss claims, expedience has replaced the basic principles of good and bad in the human ethics (3). It is very normal to see a person with all the profiteer goals seeking to save someone's life or rescue the whole world. "True Names" then like its contemporaneous arts tackles heroism in an age that depends on its own morals and values. Erythrina and Mr. Slippery are warlocks who have entered the space of the Other Plane, like other warlocks to attain their personal goals. In the mess of the complexity of this place, they find themselves obliged to fight a very vague enemy that uses infiltration as his best method to destroy the whole world gradually (Vinge 21). Posthuman heroes, despite their opportunist morality, still preserve some human values. In their fight against the Mailman, those heroes have used great powers in which they have absorbed all the data bases of the ordinary human beings to seek greater capacities that can overrun and destroy their opponent; they have powers that can destroy the entire life and

put an end to the human descent (Vinge 27). This is the specific feature that distinguishes the digital hero, practicing dominance over huge powers that extends the normal human abilities. Moreover, posthuman heroism discusses an eternal hero that will survive after the extinction of humanity along with its powers and ethics. As Vinge has captured it, when Mr. Slippery was thinking of Erythrina in her new dress of being the good image of the Mailman that will live in immortality, “few years or decades in which its future slavery or greatness rests on the goodwill of one or two persons. It could have been the Mailman. Thank God it was Ery instead” (46). The posthuman hero is the figure that will survive to fight the dangers of any devilish enemy even after billion of years, the posthuman hero is able to defeat any opponent because of the extraordinary powers acquired from the fusion with machines.

### **Conclusion**

The novella of “True Names” is a reflection of the science fiction’s hopes and fears, utopias and dystopias that its extreme ambitions and futuristic predictions would be to reach a phase in which the human can without the bounds of the flesh, in an immortal posthuman phase. Postmodern science fiction tackles many themes and uses various techniques this variation then depicts the various facts and actualities of the technological era. The novella discusses the emergence of postmodern science fiction, a time in which technology has reached its utmost prosperity and glory. The technology and its effects have come with the new concepts of cyberspace, cyberculture and virtual realities. Those new realities have carried the worries that a distinct kind of war may drive the whole world into a global war that will for sure brings damage and destruction to the human race.

It also negotiates the new ideologies that have blossomed and fueled by the mass impact of technology, in which the human values have been vaporized in the face of the pragmatism that revolutionized humanity. In the horizons of cyber technologies, the novella uncovers the theme of Posthumanism, which is by itself a large theme that includes many

subthemes like posthuman identities and posthuman heroes. The former is about characters who are generally revolutionist hackers that have acquired superhuman powers by simulating themselves into machines. Those heroes resemble the ironic case that most cyberpunk novels tackles; heroes, despite their immoral morality, still strangely linger and struggle to protect their world even at the price of their life to live at the end in the immortal world. This immortality does not give any care to the waste body that loses its preciousness in a world that welcomes the eternal spirits of the conscious minds.



## **Conclusion**

This dissertation examines a very brilliant subject in the history of the human race. It is about the posthuman phenomenon that has revolutionized the human studies and investigates the major transformations that has affected the humanistic life in the postmodern circumstances that is highly technological. The work has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter tackles the theoretical concept of postmodern science fiction. The chapter starts by an introductory background about the early origins that have led to the emergence of this genre. It also investigates the evolution that science fiction has moved through to attain its prosperity in the postmodern epoch. In addition, it examines the new conditions the human life has witnessed due to technology, leading to the offspring of cyberpunk subgenre that has included many terminologies and notions like virtuality and cyberspace, and the well known theories of posthumanism and transhumanism.

The second chapter is a theoretical explanation to the posthuman notion that has evolved out of the postmodern science fiction's subgenre of cyberpunk. Posthumanism is a theory that discusses the humans' identity after the simulation of those people with machines. It is about the new criterion posthumans have gained in the milieus of the virtual hyperealities that computers have created, when they have become more than normal thinking creatures. It is a manifestation of a predicted future in which humans acquire abnormal powers and virtual thinking that varies from the humanistic consciousness and exceeds it through the new mechanic bodies that is gained through transcending their flesh for the sake of living immortally. The final chapter is the only practical part in which the science fiction's expectations and the posthuman theorizations are implied on the novella of "True Names" one of the first prophetic narratives that describes the human life in the future and depicts the humans' deepest hopes for living in higher world that resemble the magical world but remains sharply real and scientific.

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## Résumé

Ce travail traite le thème le plus récent dans le domaine de l'informatique. Il aborde tout les changements causés par la technologie contre l'humanité. Donc, l'homme devient le pôle le plus important qui a fait la programmation d'algorithme de la haute technologie. Avec une étude analytique littéraire, "True Names " ou bien "Les Noms Vrais" de l'auteur Vernor Vinge capture la vie de l'homme après l'intégration avec la technologie de l'informatique. Cet être humain devient un être virtuel qui n'a aucune relation avec ça existence. C'est un être qui a nié tout ce qu'il est humain pour vivre comme un cyborg ou spécifiquement comme un post humain grâce à l'union de l'homme et la machine pour obtenir une superpuissance, une créature qui a la pensé virtuel qu'il est plus que la pensé de l'être humain. Cette théorie a été développée avec la science fiction surtout après la prévalence littéraire de cyberpunk qui a construit de différents réalités comme le cyberspace et l'hyperréalité. Dans ce contexte, le post humain apporte un climat qui est propre pour son développement. Le post humain manifeste les souhaites les plus demandés par l'être humain, pour vivre éternellement avec un pensé virtuel.

## ملخص

هذا العمل يعالج أحدث مواضيع علم الإنسانيات فهو يناقش التغيرات التي أحدثتها التكنولوجيا للإنسان حيث أصبح هذا الإنسان احد الأقطاب التي رسمت عليها التكنولوجيا الحديثة خوارزميات البرمجة في عملية تحليلية أدبية رواية الأسماء الحقيقية للكاتب فيرنر فينجي تتفحص تأثير الخيال العلمي لما بعد الحداثة حياة الإنسان بعد اندماجه مع تكنولوجيا الكمبيوتر ليصبح كائنا افتراضياً لا تربطه أية صلة بالحدود التي يرسمها الجسم البشري. إنه إنسان أنكر خصائصه الإنسانية ليعيش كسيبورغ أو مثل كائن ما بعد الإنسانية. كائن ما بعد البشرية هو مخلوق نشأ من التكامل بين البشر و الآلات. إنه كائن اكتسب قوى خارقة، بفضل التجسيد الجديد حيث يتمتع بتفكير افتراضي يفوق التفكير العادي بفضل عملية التسامي. لقد ازدهر مفهوم كائن ما بعد الإنسان في عصر الخيال العلمي لما بعد الحداثة، وتحديداً بعد انتشار cyberpunk subgenre الذي احتضن الكثير من الحقائق مثل الفضاء الإلكتروني و الشفافية المفرطة. في ظل هذه السياقات الجديدة، قام كائن ما بعد الإنسان بتكييف المناخ المناسب لتطوره. إنه تجسيد لرغبة الإنسان منذ القدم في الاستمتاع بوعي افتراضي أبدي بحرية.