

**FROM SUPERHUMAN TO POSTHUMAN: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SELECTED
CLASSICAL EASTERN FANTASY AND
CONTEMPORARY WESTERN SCIENCE
FICTION**

BY

SAMEEN SHAHID



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES

ISLAMABAD

September, 2021

**From Superhuman to Posthuman: A Comparative Study of
Selected Classical Eastern Fantasy and Contemporary
Western Science Fiction**

By

SAMEEN SHAHID

M. A., National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, 2017

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

In **English**

To

FACULTY OF ENGLISH STUDIES



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, ISLAMABAD

© Sameen Shahid, 2021



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES FACULTY OF ENGLISH STUDIES

THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read the following thesis, examined the defense, are satisfied with the overall exam performance, and recommend the thesis to the Faculty of English Studies for acceptance.

Thesis Title: From Superhuman to Posthuman: A comparative study of selected classical Eastern fantasy and contemporary Western science fiction

Submitted By: Sameen Shahid **Registration #:** NUML-F18-13845

Master of Philosophy

Degree name in full

English Literature

Name of Discipline

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Safeer Awan

Name of Research Supervisor

Signature of Research Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Safeer Awan

Name of Dean (FES)

Signature of Dean (FES)

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Safeer Awan

Name of Pro-Rector Academics

Signature of Pro-Rector Academics

Date

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, Sameen Shahid

Daughter of Muhammad Shahid Anwar

Registration # Numl-F18-13845

Discipline English Literature

Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that **From Superhuman to Posthuman: A Comparative Study of Selected Classical Eastern Fantasy and Contemporary Western Science Fiction** submitted in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of a degree, the work may be cancelled, and the degree revoked.

Signature of Candidate

Name of Candidate

Date

ABSTRACT

Title: From Superhuman to Posthuman: A Comparative Study of Selected Classical Eastern Fantasy and Contemporary Western Science Fiction

This research focuses on the comparison between narrative techniques used to portray superhuman and the posthuman in selected classical Eastern fantasy, *Hoshiruba: The Land and the Tilism* and contemporary Western science fiction, *Sea of Rust* by conducting a textual analysis in the light of theoretical lens provided by Nick Bostrom and Robert Pepperell. The research reviews literature and traces that humans have always imagined and textualized presences beyond and above the human world, changing only its forms over the years particularly in fantasy and science fiction genres.

The study uses the terms superhuman and transhuman interchangeably for representing the same core idea of 'being more than human' and tracks the examples of transhuman in ancient literature. The research explores that the superhuman in classical Eastern fantasy literature has progressed and evolved into the potential posthuman presented in modern science fiction. For centuries, the liberal humanist subject has been recognized as a distinct human position. However, philosophical orientations such as poststructuralism, postmodernism, and most recently, posthumanism have challenged this position by defying the ideologies of humanism.

Key words: Superhuman, Transhuman, Posthuman, Transhumanism, Posthumanism, Liberal humanist subject

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
AUTHOR’S DECLARATION.....	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
DEDICATION.....	x

CHAPTER 1. SUPERHUMAN TO POSTHUMAN: AN INTRODUCTION..... 1

1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Thesis Statement	9
1.3 Research Questions	9
1.4 Organization of Study	10
1.5 Significance and Rationale of Study	12
1.6 Delimitation of Study	14

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE..... 15

2.1 Introduction	15
2.2. Literature Review.....	16
2.3 Fantasy Literature- Myth to Superhuman/Supernatural.....	16
2.4 Science fiction.....	20
2.5 Superhumanism/ Transhumanism in relation to Humanism.....	21
2.6 Posthumanism	32
2.7 Conclusion.....	38

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & RESEARCH METHODOLOGY..... 39

3.1. Introduction	39
-------------------------	----

3.2. Theoretical Framework	39
3.2.1. Transhumanism- Philosophical Background	40
3.2.2. Transhumanism	41
3.2.3. Superhuman/ Transhuman in classical Eastern fantasy	43
3.2.4 Posthumanism: Philosophical background	43
3.3 Research Method.....	46
CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS SUPERHUMAN IN CLASSICAL EASTERN FANTASY.....	49
4.1. Introduction	49
4.2. Superhuman/Transhuman in Hoshruba: The Land and the Tilism	50
4.3. The Transhuman in <i>Hoshruba</i>	50
4.4. Narrative techniques used to portray Subhuman and Superhuman/Transhuman	51
4.4.1. Setting/ Environment	51
4.4.2 Characterization	56
4.4.3 Plot	68
4.5. Conclusion.....	68
CHAPTER 5. POSTHUMAN IN CONTEMPORARY WESTERN SCIENCE FICTION.....	70
5.1. Introduction	70
5.2. Science Fiction- Common themes and Concerns.....	71
5.2.1. <i>Sea of Rust</i> as a Science Fiction.....	71
5.3. Posthumanism and the Posthuman.....	72
5.4. Narrative techniques used to portray Posthuman in <i>Sea of Rust</i>	72
5.4.1 Setting/ Environment of the novel	72
5.4.2 Characterization	74

5.4.3 Plot.....	90
5.5 Conclusion.....	91
CHAPTER 6. SUPERHUMAN AND POSTHUMAN: COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN CLASSICAL EASTERN FANTASY AND WESTERN SCIENCE FICTION.....	92
6.1 Introduction.....	92
6.2 Comparison of Narrative Techniques used to portray Superhuman/Transhuman in <i>Hoshruha: The Land and the Tilism</i> with the Posthuman in <i>Sea of Rust</i>	92
6.3 Contrast of Narrative Techniques used to portray Superhuman/Transhuman in <i>Hoshruha: The Land and the Tilism</i> with the Posthuman in <i>Sea of Rust</i>	94
CONCLUSION.....	101
WORK CITED	104

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise be to God Almighty for blessing me with the knowledge and ability to meet the end of this important yet difficult academic stage. I want to thank my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Safeer Awan, Pro-Rector Academics and Dean Faculty of English Studies at National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad for convincingly guiding and encouraging me throughout the course of this research. I cannot adequately thank him for shattering my childhood ideals by introducing Eastern literature and philosophy. During coursework, I got lucky to be a part of his Critical Theory class, which mostly left me captivated. I am grateful to him for never being impatient with my redundant queries.

Secondly, I want to thank Dr. Sibghatullah Khan, Assistant Professor in English at NUML for being the greatest teacher and mentor ever. His vision, sincerity, positivity and motivation have deeply inspired me. Starting and completing this journey was only possible because of his insightful comments, suggestions and unwavering support. It is due to his remarkable and scholarly support that I believe there might be light at the end of the tunnel.

Besides these great intellectuals, I am indebted to my teachers Dr. Rabiya Amir for introducing me to World Literature, Dr. Shazia Rose for discussions on Pakistani Literature, Dr Farah Hashmi for constantly reminding the dark side of research and Dr. Attiya Saman for unraveling the intrusive patterns of postcolonialism. I thank my friends Momina Hafeez and Asma Firdous for encouraging me and answering my silly questions about research.

I would like to offer special thanks to my family members, especially my sister Rooshan Shahid, who always made tea for me while I was busy writing, and my father for telling me that it was not that difficult. I would also like to thank my husband, Muhammad Haris, who provided emotional support and asked about my progress in quite funny ways. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my friend, Naaima Zaki, who despite having a packed schedule, offered help in every possible way. I am grateful to

my father-in-law for encouraging me and taking interest in this research despite not knowing much about it.

In the end, I would like to thank all colleagues, friends (Hi! Roshan and Aiman) and foes who directly or indirectly facilitated my work.

DEDICATION

To my mother, who did not stop hoping for a miracle and taught me how to write against all odds!

CHAPTER 1

SUPERHUMAN TO POSTHUMAN: AN INTRODUCTION

“When I decide to sprint on a day
I burn the world with my fiery pace”

(Jah 124)

“Isaac, it seemed, was an evolved intelligence, having
grown over time to become smarter than the humans who
wanted to melt him down.”

(Cargill 33)

1.1 Introduction

This study aims to investigate whether the superhuman in classical Eastern fantasy literature has developed and evolved into the possible posthuman presented in the contemporary science fiction. It focuses on the similarities and differences in prime narrative techniques. It traces how the liberal humanist subject, that has been acknowledged as a clear position of human for ages, is being challenged by philosophical orientations such as poststructuralism, postmodernism, and most recently posthumanism by defying the ideologies of humanism. Written and oral literature represents that the possibility of existences below and beyond the human world has existed since antiquity. Literature explores and characterizes life experience in multitudinous forms. Its various genres represent the past, the present as well as the possible future of the human experience. Speculative fiction emerges and evolves with human ability to imagine beyond the physical, the natural and the visible. It carefully crafts far-off, sometimes entirely unseen, bizarre, and supernatural worlds. The supergenre, speculative fiction, includes subgenres such as fantasy and science fiction. This research highlights the superhuman and posthuman in selected classical Eastern fantasy and contemporary Western science fiction and compares their impact on the role of human. Moreover, it emphasizes the change that the human subject experiences due to the superhuman and posthuman entities.

Experts, thinkers, and researchers have positive as well as negative opinions concerning the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Once only a creation of the imagination

of fiction writers, AI, is now flourishing in our lives. Numerous technologies are programmed to respond in real-time such as weather forecasts, virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa, automatic recommendations and popups based on recent search history, and so on. The most fascinating feature of AI is its aptitude to learn and work independently. In the contemporary time, it is promoted by prominent physicists, software developers and scientists such as Elon Musk, Bill Gates and Stephen Hawking. Although AI has the potential to change human life positively, there is an ever-growing security risk by the machine-learning technologies, articulated by the very physicists and scientists. The warnings by various high-profile scientists and researchers align with the concerns of philosophical posthumanism.

In past, the humanist subject was esteemed as the determining status of human existence due to certain qualities like autonomy and logical reasoning that are not possessed by the nonhuman beings. Several humanists have vocalized their unwavering faith in humans. Howard B Radest suggests that the Humanist roots emerge from the Ethical Culture movement by Felix Adler who “condemned the self-satisfied churches and temples” (Radest 3). Radest is of view that Adler and his colleagues directed the road towards organizational change. He mentions Dietrich, according to whom, there are two views, first is the theistic perspective which believes in the involvement of a supernatural being and the other is the Humanistic understanding of the world which focuses on the role of human. Dietrich says:

...it depends upon man what the world shall be like. The adherents of this view hold that if man wants more water, he must build reservoirs...Man in his own strength must grapple with the forces of nature. Man in his own strength must face and solve his problems. Man in his own strength must work out his own salvation ... the good fairies are gone forever (qtd. in Radest 4).

The humanistic understanding of the world freed man from the boundaries of religions. In Radest’s words, “neither god nor history sets boundaries to human potentiality (Radest 17). However, posthumanism is now challenging human’s secure standing in the universe. Is man not an autonomous, enlightened, thinker who can use inquiry and scientific method to understand the universe anymore?

Co-founder Tesla and SpaceX, Elon Musk- an AI supporter and investor shared his concerns regarding the growth of superintelligence in a documentary by Chris Paine. He remarked,

If AI has a goal and humanity just happens to be in the way, it will destroy humanity as a matter of course without even thinking about it. No hard feelings (qtd. in Browne).

The presence of the supernatural, the superhuman, the subhuman, and the posthuman in fantasy and science fiction indicates the human desire to go beyond natural limitations. These entities compel one to think about the classical, age-old question, ‘what entails being a human?’ Human nature consists of multiple characteristics that include thinking, feeling and acting. Aristotle says that what is distinguishing about human beings is their ability to reason (Singer). Therefore, one can associate a certain essence with humans. Beyond the human essence, the beings that possess certain mental and physical qualities can be categorized as super or sub-human according to the extent to which the abilities are more or less than human. Does the presence of these entities change the position of human in the world? If yes, then to what extent and how the two entities, i.e., the superhuman and the posthuman impact the human subject. The researcher has sought answer to this question in literature. She has analyzed and compared representative texts from classical Eastern fantasy to study the superhuman, and contemporary Western science fiction to examine the posthuman.

The selected texts for this research i.e., *Hoshruha: The Land and the Tilism* and *Sea of Rust* are representatives of fantasy and science fiction genres respectively. The two texts act as a window to highlight, understand and study the similarities and differences between the terms superhuman, subhuman, transhuman, and posthuman. Moreover, the comparison between the two texts helps examine and highlight the similarity and transition in the narrative techniques used by the authors of the books written in different time periods, genres, cultures, and geographical locations. Additionally, it is important to state that the primary texts have been carefully selected for this research in order to answer the research questions. *Hoshruha* is the world’s first longest fantasy epic rooted in oral storytelling which makes it an excellent choice in comparison with contemporary science

fiction because it confirms that the superhuman/transhuman entities have been a part of literature for a long time.

The analysis and comparison of the two texts bridge the Eastern fantasy with modern Western science fiction by demonstrating characters and entities that are more than human and represent the imagined possibilities for a far developed world via magic and technology respectively. While *Hoshruba* presents the classical superhumans trying to transcend in an enchanted supernatural setting where humans remain important despite the presence of jinns, dragons and wizards, *Sea of Rest* demonstrates posthuman machines narrating the story of the end of humanity. Despite being a classical epic that was originally written in Urdu language in an Eastern culture, *Hoshruba's* superhuman characters and supernatural events suffice the core concern of this research in comparison with a contemporary science fiction. Moreover, it also indicates the possibility of influence of Eastern fantasy on contemporary Western science fiction. Brian Stableford believes that fantasy literature grew in all possible directions, “backwards into mythical past, forward into science fiction, and sideways into all sorts of parallel worlds (Stableford ix)”. Therefore, literature written in the East and West can be compared and studied despite the cultural differences such as beliefs, traditions, clothing and marriages etc. These cultural differences do not change the fact that humans have always imagined characters and events that are superhuman/transhuman and supernatural to show their desire to transcend their natural physical and cognitive abilities. Moreover, this comparison can help connect how fantasy literature grew backwards into mythical past and forward into science fiction. The research focuses on the similarities and differences between superhuman and posthuman and discusses their impact on the human subject.

Hoshruba: The Land and the Tilism is the title given to the first English-translated volume of *Tilism-e-Hoshruba*, a dastan based on classical literary subjects. Packed with supernatural and superhuman elements, *Tilism-e-Hoshruba* comes in eight lengthy volumes and is also known as the world’s lengthiest fantasy. However, the present research discusses the first volume only as it is the most suitable one for comparison with a contemporary novel. Moreover, the volumes contain repetitive supernatural and superhuman/transhuman elements, therefore, in order to keep this research to the point

and avoid repetitions, the researcher has discussed only the first volume in comparison to *Sea of Rust*. Additionally, *Hoshruha* is packed with characters and it is impossible to discuss all of them in comparison with *Sea of Rust*'s characters. Therefore, the researcher has carefully chosen the ones that are relatively more developed and reveal more information than the other characters to answer the research questions effectively.

Sea of Rust is a 2017 science fiction that shows a rather post-human world depicting the life of Artificial Intelligence. The novel is infused with posthuman elements and largely depicts a world after Artificial Intelligences took over the all-knowing, in charge human beings. The researcher has carefully selected *Sea of Rust* as a representative text of contemporary science fiction because it explicitly and implicitly draws on the idea of a posthuman world and makes possible the identification and interpretation of the term posthuman, which is a significant concern of this research.

Since the beginning of time, human beings have sought pleasure in telling and listening to made-up fantastical stories. Long before the written tradition of communication and literature production, storytelling or orality was the most efficient method of human communication. Oral tradition assisted as the only means of communication for a millennium before the initiation of writing. Folklorists, anthropologists, and ethnographers have struggled to find how oral communications function by working with such societies. Their study has provided useful insight into oral traditions from “ancient, medieval and premodern worlds” that have been preserved in the form of fossilized transcripts of once-living presentations (Foley). From poems ascribed to Homer, the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, to Judeo-Christian Bible and other closely related works have been found rooted in the old oral tradition.

Communicated through the oral tradition, numerous forms of folklore: myths, fairytales, legends, folksongs, and stories about the supernatural and superhuman, have always been a part of the culture of all times and places. Simon J. Bronner cites Alan Dundes and suggests that folklore is the key indication of culture as it provides an “inside out” perspective of society. For an entry in the 1970's *World Book Encyclopedia* Dundes said, “folklore is as old as humanity” (qtd. in Bronner viii). Folklore consists of a variety of forms or genres which developed among all peoples of the earth. Broadly, the two

terms, folklore and myth have similar meanings, but myth comes under the umbrella term folklore and it encompasses the holy narrative that unfolds the story of man and world in its present form (Dundes 56). The expanse of myth and folktales through cultures, time periods, generations and languages, highlights the human ability to imagine beyond physical and natural.

Myths are the stories of the origin of man, the world, the gods, the heroes with superhuman powers, the supernatural beings like nymphs, mermaids, centaurs, werewolves, and dragons. Since myths narrate fantastic stories without any visible connection with reality, they are assumed to have no factual basis. (Bolte, et al). They have existed in every society and act as a reflection of people's self-image as well as culture. However, long before humans started to record history in writing, carvings, pre-historic cave paintings and stone etchings suggest their belief in the supernatural creatures and imagination beyond human and nature.

According to the Ancient History Encyclopedia, the earliest recorded are the Egyptian myths which are dated back to 4000 BCE. From different societies and cultures, myths, have similar creation stories that build on the powerful superhuman qualities given to kings, gods, rulers, and goddesses. The role of imagination in the production of myth, literature, art, and data is significant since the beginning of time. Philosophers from the classical period in Ancient Greece such as Aristotle documented the critical role of imagination for both knowledge and practice. He argues that imagination plays its key role in forming a unitary image of unconnected data, without which no action is possible (Bottici 90). From the history of oral tradition, folklore and mythology, it can be inferred that humans have always been interested in imagining fantastical worlds and people who were superhumans with superpowers

Largely; oral tradition, ancient mythology, contemporary fantasy fiction, and science fiction have one thing in common and that is the fascination with superhuman and supernatural. From gods, goddesses, sphinxes, centaurs, fairies, werewolves to intelligent animals and most recent science fiction success, intelligent machines that are at times more powerful than human beings. The lengthy journey consists of entities that are sometimes less than human and at times much more than simply human also known as

posthuman. In opposition with the Enlightenment thinking that man is the center of the universe and completely understands the happenings in the world through reason and logic, posthumanism questions and challenges this anthropocentric thought. According to posthumanism, humans do not understand or control their surroundings and are no more the dominant beings of the world. Furthermore, the theory suggests that the dominance is gradually shifting to entities other than humans.

Whether it is a mythic tale or modern science fiction, it is evident that imagination plays a significant role in the creation of both. Joseph Campbell, in his book *The Power of Myth*, states that: “Mythology is ...the song of the imagination” (Campbell and Moyers 39). However, the relationship between myth and contemporary science fiction is subtle. The progress of modern science fiction has roots in historical sources together with gothic fiction, utopian discerning, modern science, astronomy as well as Enlightenment thinking, but it is most inspired by the ancient mythic and fantastical stories. However, modern science fiction marks a break from the supernatural theories of reality personified in numerous mythic tales. Despite the break from supernatural theories, the genre has reserved several mythic features on societal, psychological, and literary levels (Lombardo 10).

Lombardo has proposed a set of characteristics and values of mythic tales, according to which myths are accounts of basic understanding for human beings, and possess psychological power. Myths ask cosmic questions like who we are, where we come from and where would we go? He presses that myths have played an important role in questioning, relating and answering the bigger questions about life, world and the universe. Often hypothesizing fantastical empires and creatures, myths undoubtedly reflect the creative power of human imagination. In short, myths are narratives that are cosmic, wonder generating, mysterious, fantastical and symbolic. All these features of myths create a discreet link with modern Science Fiction. Science fiction contains symbols, signs and icons in the same manner as myths and those symbols have become the items of worship. Similarly, the cosmic, awe and wonder quality, fantastical characters and settings, futuristic vision presented in science fiction draw it closer to myths.

It is argued that the purpose of science fiction is not to foresee the future, but this argument loses its validity because imagining and foreseeing the future is what many science fiction writers have endeavored to. Predictions do not present an exact picture of the future, rather a reasonable narrative about what the future holds on the basis of trends the author thinks are existing in the contemporary world. Modern science fiction came into being by both positive expectations of the Age of Enlightenment, and the negative expectancies of the future in the Romantic movement. Like traditional myth depicts something about human existence, science fiction digs truths about human life, the world, and the universe (12).

Research shows that the evolution of science fiction did not occur in isolation. It is pertinent to trace the origin from which this genre evolved into its current form. The primitive traces of science fiction can be seen in the work of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). The main character Frankenstein exhibits fantastical elements of all three forms: superhuman, subhuman, and posthuman. Even though he possesses the physical strength and intelligence of a superhuman, he is a mosaic of human organs reduced to an ugly subhuman state that lacks grace and poise. The creation of Frankenstein made many readers and critics raise the issue of monstrosity in literature.

Developing from traditional mythical stories, fantasy fiction can be understood as imaginative fiction in simple terms, distinguishing itself from science fiction. Science fiction is typically set in the future and is constructed on technological or scientific aspects, whereas fantasy stories happen in far-off imaginary worlds with mythical creatures and fantastical elements. It may be said that science fiction is a subgenre of fantasy fiction. Whether it is the age-old oral storytelling tradition or folklore, traditional mythical tales, fantasy stories or science fiction novels, human imagination has played a central role in the creation of such genres. Moreover, it shows that imagination helped humans conceive the idea of posthuman, superhuman, and subhuman. These imaginative fantasies can be traced back to classical Eastern literature where characters like Bahar in *Hoshruba* can fly using magic. This is similar to what we see now in contemporary works such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (2003) by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, which portray

characters resembling Bahar in their superhuman qualities. This reflects upon the awareness and influence of classical Eastern fantasy on world literature.

Although the terms posthuman and posthumanism came into use quite recently, the concept itself is not new. As discussed above, it has existed in human societies in one way or another since the beginning of time.

1.2 Thesis Statement

The artistic and the imaginative among humans have always imagined and textualized about the possibilities of existences beyond and below the human world. This human concern has been represented in various art forms since antiquity. The presence of the supernatural, the superhuman, the subhuman, and the posthuman is a clear indication of these human wanderings in the imaginary. This study explores whether the superhuman in classical Eastern fantasy has evolved and developed into posthuman demonstrated in the contemporary Western science fiction by focusing primarily on the points of divergence and convergence in the narrative techniques. The study examines how classical fantasy celebrates the human subject while contemporary science fiction decentralizes it. For ages, the liberal humanist subject has been acknowledged as a clear position of human. This strong position represented in philosophy and speculative fiction is being challenged by philosophical orientations such as poststructuralism, postmodernism, and most recently posthumanism. In literature, the science fiction genre engaging in narratives of technology is contributing to forming the “posthuman condition” leaving behind fantasy’s celebratory humanist subject.

1.3 Research Questions

1. In what ways are the respective narrative techniques used to portray the superhuman and the posthuman in classical Eastern fantasy and contemporary Western science fiction?
2. How does the superhuman celebrate the role of the human in the classical Eastern fantasy?
3. In what ways do the posthuman decentralize the role of the human in the contemporary Western science fiction?

1.4 Organization of Study

CHAPTER-1 INTRODUCTION:

The first chapter of the introduction discusses and elaborates the background of the study. It discusses briefly the history of fantasy literature, highlights the contribution of age-old oral literature and mythologies in making fantasy a genre of its own. Hypothesizing the presence of superhuman and transhuman in the selected classical fantasy and posthuman in contemporary Western science fiction, the theoretical frameworks provided by Nick Bostrom and Robert Pepperell have been used as a lens to interpret accordingly. The strategy includes definitions of the keywords, an overview of the background and critical reading of the theoretical foundation, identification of the terms and purpose of the study. The study aims to highlight the occurrences of the superhuman, transhuman, and posthuman elements in fantasy and science fiction literature and its theoretical base. The study highlights the problem that requires attention and presents the research questions that are answered in the analysis chapters.

CHAPTER-2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The second chapter focuses on the work that has been done already and reviews the produced literature related to transhumanism and posthumanism. In this chapter, the researcher has studied the available literature and attempted to highlight the gaps in the previous works, and created a unique niche for the present study. The review includes relevant materials from books, journals, and essays. This chapter covers the development of science fiction as a genre and examines its links with fantasy and mythology. Additionally, the chapter contains a review of humanism and transhumanism concerning each other as well as posthumanism. The review covers theoretical insights that show the three isms, i.e., humanism, transhumanism, and posthumanism to be different from one another, yet have similarities. This chapter includes important movements such as nineteenth-century Russian Cosmism and Cryonics leading to the 21st-century movement known as transhumanism meeting at the core idea of the desire to transcend physical and cognitive human abilities.

CHAPTER-3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher has explained the theoretical lens that is used to analyze the selected texts. The research methodology i.e., textual analysis method, applied to the study has been elaborated. Reviewing the literature in the previous chapter has helped the researcher plan the methodology in a systematic manner. The chapter gives a brief background to help the readers understand the theoretical concepts of transhumanism and posthumanism.

CHAPTER-4 SUPERHUMAN/TRANSHUMAN IN CLASSICAL EASTERN FANTASY

The third chapter provides a detailed analysis of *Hoshruba: The Land and the Tilism* in the light of the transhumanist theoretical framework provided by Nick Bostrom. The text has been scrutinized prudently to focus on the narrative techniques that highlight superhuman and transhuman. This chapter starts with a brief background of *Hoshruba* to trace back the appearance of superhuman elements in fantasy. The chapter answers two of the research questions and highlights the narrative techniques that portray superhuman/transhuman as well as analyzes how classical Eastern fantasy celebrate the role of human.

CHAPTER-5 POSTHUMAN IN CONTEMPORARY WESTERN SCIENCE FICTION

The fourth chapter provides a detailed analysis of the second primary text titled *Sea of Rust*. The analysis has been carried out using the posthumanist theoretical framework provided by Robert Pepperrell. This chapter highlights the portrayal of posthuman in the narrative techniques used by the author. In this chapter, the researcher attempts to provide an answer for one of the vital research questions and brings into light how the posthuman destabilizes the role of human. Moreover, the analysis includes real-life examples of technology to discuss the impact of AI on human life.

CHAPTER-6 SUPERHUMAN AND POSTHUMAN: COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN CLASSICAL EASTERN FANTASY AND CONTEMPORARY WESTERN SCIENCE FICTION

This chapter compares and contrasts the superhuman/transhuman and posthuman extracted from the narrative techniques of *Hoshruba* and *Sea of Rust*. The chapter focuses on divergence and convergence in the two texts to strengthen the argument for this study. It concludes the argument whether the classical fantasy literature has developed and evolved into the possible posthuman world that may ultimately be taken over by machines/ Artificial Intelligence. The analysis of *Hoshruba* with transhumanist theoretical insight by Nick Bostrom, in comparison to the analysis of *Sea of Rust* with Posthumanist theoretical insight by Robert Pepperell help demonstrate that the classical Eastern literature has developed into the contemporary science fictions' posthuman world that portrays a time where man is no longer in charge as even powerful entities such as Artificial Intelligences and machines take over. The imagined accounts of the possibility of such existences have been represented in literature produced in different cultures, time periods, and languages, proving that the desire to transcend human limitations has always existed in one form or another. This chapter is followed by the conclusion chapter that sums up the study.

CONCLUSION

This section concludes the argument of the evolution of classical Eastern fantasy into contemporary Western posthuman science fiction, proving that similar narrative techniques used in both present the superhuman/transhuman and posthuman entities respectively that are representative of the same core idea, i.e., the desire to transcend. In the light of the analysis, it is plausible to say that the posthuman, as highlighted in the *Sea of Rust* is an evolved version of the superhuman/ transhuman as highlighted in *Hoshruba*. The chapter also briefly puts in perspective the role of Artificial Intelligence in real life and its impact on human life.

1.5 Significance and Rationale of Study

This research intends to help students of English literary studies to comprehend the phenomena of transhumanism and posthumanism. In the contemporary scholarly world, research in these areas and science fiction is getting popular, but not much work has been done on classical Eastern fantasy. The research is significant because it adds to the existing knowledge and broadens the literary horizon by connecting contemporary

Western science fiction with classical Eastern fantasy on the basis of the core similarities between super/transhuman and the posthuman. Moreover, it studies the impact of fantasy and science fiction on culture, society, and technology. The research provides an opportunity for other researchers to study the selected genres with different theoretical lenses.

This study focuses on the terms superhuman and posthuman and attempts to trace that human's ability to imagine beyond human is not new, it has existed since the time of oral storytelling tradition till date. In contemporary times, synthetic computer systems, advanced machinery, and technology have altered human life to a great extent. What was thought to make human life more comfortable and relaxed might lead the sapiens to a devastation point of no return.

The technologies we could only dream of, in science fiction novels and fantasy stories, half a century ago, were materialized in hopes of making us freer. Unfortunately, those very technologies have been coopted into apparatuses of surveillance and behavioral manipulation (*"Concerns About the Future of People's Well-being and Digital Life"*).

This research also aims to create awareness concerning the consequences of uncontrolled technology. It will help the readers rethink, readdress, and reevaluate the choices that lead to unnecessary technological dependence. The present study is an endeavor to trace and study the development of posthumanism from its emerging phase, as found in the classical Eastern fantasy in comparison with its most modern and explicit form in contemporary Western science fiction.

It attempts to unveil the key role of human imagination to think beyond human, in multitudinous forms, since the beginning of time. Though the term 'posthumanism' is applied to a variety of theoretical stances, the study draws on the theoretical aspect that rejects traditional Western humanism, the anthropocentric humanism is a historical phenomenon that placed man at the center of the world. However, Marxist economists, Freudian psychologists, and Darwinian biologists are regarded as 'preliminary indications of breakup' of this autonomous Enlightenment subject, by posthumanism scholars.

1.6 Delimitation of Study

The current study scrutinizes the narrative techniques used to present the subhuman, superhuman and posthuman in selected classical Eastern fantasy and contemporary Western science fiction through the lens of theoretical insights on transhumanism by Nick Bostrom and posthumanism by Robert Pepperell. This research does not cover all narrative techniques and focuses only on the ones that serve the purpose of this study. Moreover, not all characters from *Hoshruha* have been a part of the discussion because there are excessive and not all of them highlight superhuman/transhuman. Thus, to complete within the time duration decided for this study, the researcher carefully chose the characters that fit the criteria for comparison. The study does not cover all the theoretical insights on posthumanism, it emphasizes mainly the anti-humanist and Enlightenment perspectives. This research has been delimited to the analyses of *Hoshruha: The land and the tilism* and *Sea of Rust* as primary texts for answering the research questions. However, there are plenty of fantasy and science fiction texts that have similar themes and elements to the selected texts.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

There is a significant amount of literary scholarship available on transhuman and posthuman studies as well as fantasy and science fiction. The researcher has presented a survey of the available scholarship useful for this research project. This chapter highlights the gaps in the vast available literature.

As the study revolves around the classical Eastern fantasy and contemporary Western science fiction to be studied from transhuman and posthuman perspectives, the review sources include relevant material from books, journals, and essays. This review focuses on the development of science fiction as a genre, finds its linkages with older genres especially mythology and fantasy.

The researcher has divided this chapter into three sections. The introduction and rationale for the review of literature have been given in the first part. It discusses the journey of fantasy literature and traces its origin in mythology. The chapter covers works that link fantastic literature to mythology and suggest that the elements of superhuman and supernatural have existed in ancient literature from around the world. The occurrence of these elements regardless of the time period and genre restriction show that they have been common among writings from different cultures, genres and time periods.

The second part contains a review of science fiction as a genre and its background. This section examines and presents the similarities and differences between fantasy fiction and science fiction, as both are the subgenres of speculative fiction. While fantasy branches out of folklore, myth, and fairytale, science fiction expresses the influence of science on people.

In the third part, the researcher has reviewed humanism and transhumanism in relation to each other as well as posthumanism. The three isms are closely linked to one another, yet have different philosophical backgrounds. The researcher has also reviewed the backgrounds and studied the representations of these terms in this section.

In the last part, the researcher has concluded the literature review and related it to the area of the study. After the review of available literature, the researcher has become able to find out the research gaps. The review of literature has given insights to this study by helping the researcher to contextualize the research, examine the genre and theoretical development as well as identify the research gaps in the available literary scholarship. The literature review covers different important movements such as the nineteenth-century Russian Cosmism and Cryonics leading to the 21st-century movement known as transhumanism converging at the same idea of transcending natural human abilities.

2.2. Literature Review

This chapter highlights the gaps in the literary scholarship on posthuman studies, fantasy, and contemporary science fiction. This chapter has been divided into four parts for convenience and methodical analysis of the existing literary scholarship. The book, essay, and article reviews have been done in the following sub-division.

1. Fantasy literature- myth to superhuman/supernatural
2. Science Fiction- utopia to dystopia/ classic to contemporary
3. Transhumanism/Superhumanism- in relation to Humanism
4. Posthumanism- philosophical background and reflection in literature
5. Conclusion

2.3 Fantasy Literature- Myth to Superhuman/Supernatural

The elements of superhuman and supernatural can be traced back in the history of literature from around the world. What sprung out of myths and legends, became a popular genre in literature by the eighteenth century. Clute and Grant in their reference work *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1999) have suggested that fantasy literature is hard to define in all modes- text, movies, art, comics etcetera. The editorial team that brought together the works of fantasy from an extensive range of texts believes that the boundaries of fantasy broadly cover everything from dreams to supernatural dark fantasy (Clute and Grant 8). Similarly, the critic Brian Attebery describes fantasy as a ‘fuzzy set’, which can be best understood by instances of what characterizes it, instead of its boundaries. The book covers entries produced in various cultures and regions of the world. Writers of

‘taproot’ texts include Lucius Apuleius, Boccaccio, Cervantes, Bunyan, Dante, Chaucer, Malory, Milton, and Shakespeare. Numerous modern fantasy writers gain their general ideas from the “cauldron of story” (ix) that these famous writers have contributed to. Mesopotamian epic and Sanskrit literature have also been included in the list of fantasy literature from ancient history.

Despite fantasy’s vast boundaries, critics have tried to make it comprehensible by defining it. A fantasy text is a self-coherent narrative that appears unlikely to happen when placed in the reality of the world as we perceive it. Even though the stories do not reflect reality, they are still conceivable in terms of the otherworld, when placed in ‘other’ or ‘secondary world’ (viii). Therefore, fantasy is wide-ranging yet comprehensible in its own setting and placement.

Earliest history hints that ancient Egyptians were probably the first to transcribe fantasy. It is certain that the oldest identified examples of fairytales, prose story and numerous narrative devices come from Egypt. The fantastic and realistic stories were written in the twentieth century BC while there is no such record in literature from any other part of the globe (311).

Within the Mesopotamian culture, the known principles do not distinguish between epic, myth, or any other genre of narrative, but the remaining works include lengthy ‘hero-poems’ that are presently known as epics. One of the various Sumerian myths known as *Lugal-E* presages the myth style, that became common afterward, which presents a virtuous divinity saving the world by fighting a fearful monster. Short narratives about Gilgamesh, Lugalbanda, and Enmerkar are known as epic in modern times. These narratives are hero-stories. The kings are presented as human beings who are in direct contact with gods. The setting of Gilgamesh shows a world where some demons and jewels that grow on the trees (640). Another Mesopotamian fantasy *Etana*, is about a king who ‘flies to heaven’. Mesopotamian writings appear to have links with Greece and some of the epic characters and themes have endured a period of a thousand years to reemerge in Muslim legends.

The examination of ancient fantasy literature reveals that humans have always imagined a parallel universe, where people perform activities that are above or beyond

human limitations. Even the earliest found texts show such features. Depictions such as kings flying to heaven and deities fighting dangerous monsters indicate human urge or desire to transcend and become more than human.

Harrison Smith in his article “The Rise of Fantasy in Literature” (1948) comments on the increasing popularity of fantasy in modern writers. He says that the Oxford dictionary definitions do not serve for what fantasy literature means today. The use of chilling and horrific ideas or placing man in the future, using the findings of science, is now common in fantasy literature. It indulges in olden fallacies as well as presents humans in the future. Smith discusses the reasons for the popularity of the fantasy genre in literature and says that the “mechanization” of American civilization and the failure of religion to satisfy man’s need for imagination has taken away the sense of security (Smith 305-306).

Smith believes that humans do not have faith in an ordered world. Not only have they separated themselves from religion, they are also detached from nature as well. The serene beauty of nature is only observed from fast-traveling automobiles. The increasing knowledge of the universe has made humans lose their imagination and appeal for the happenings in the world. The concepts of heaven and hell, life and death and the beauty of heaven have become insignificant. All these ideas are being replaced with new imaginations to fill the void. Smith traces the evolution of human imagination, from religious or creation stories, stories of life and death, the hierarchy of angels and demons to the emergence of scientific fantasy. Smith further discusses the impact of scientific revolution on writers such as H.G Wells and Jules Verne who imagined and invented airplanes long before they were actually made. According to Smith, if you tell an adult that the latest type of atomic bomb could finish or be venomous for most of New York, he/she would not be surprised, because he/she has read such stories ages ago and is probably thinking ahead of time. He claims that the two main branches of fantastic literature are supernatural and scientific. At times the sub-genres merge together, but often writers choose one or the other (Smith 306-308).

Brian Stableford, in his book *The A to Z of Fantasy Literature* (2009) discusses the existence of fantasy in literature since olden times. The book’s forward is written by the

editor, Jon Woronoff, who says that fairy tales, folklore, fables, and myths existed even before literature was in its written form. As time passed, fantasy literature grew in all possible directions, “backwards into mythical past, forward into science fiction, and sideways into all sorts of parallel worlds (Stableford ix)”. Stableford’s insight regarding the growth and vastness of fantasy supports this research’s argument that there are clear connections between mythology, fantasy fiction, and modern science fiction.

Stableford calls fantasy “a process of imagination”, he believes that it is a capability by which representation of objects can be imitated in the mind. Geoffrey Chaucer used the term ‘fantasye’ to describe inexplicable and bizarre ideas that do not fit in the everyday experience. Fantasy may be the developmental reason for human consciousness, but the idea of fantasy is also attached to the failure of some assumed duty of the human mind to focus on the realities of life. This is one of the main reasons why fantasy is quite recent as a genre. The description of fantasy was only applicable to children’s literature before 1969. Interestingly, the most recent genre to obtain popularity is also the most prehistoric one. Storytelling is even older than the written literature. A great number of stories that became a part of history once writing was introduced were supernatural and strange fantasies, in Chaucerian logic (xxxvii-xxxviii). Since fantasy is “a process of imagination” that depicts the superhuman, supernatural, and subhuman in different ways, it is plausible to say that imagination plays a key role in shaping and materializing these ideas, even if they do not make much sense in the beginning and seem only fantastic. The real-life examples may include wireless communication systems, latest computer technology, and the fast-growing Artificial Intelligence that were once only a figment of imagination.

C.W Sullivan, in the article “Folklore and Fantasy Literature” (2001) states that fantasy and science fiction writers incorporate traditional themes and narratives to let their readers identify the “cultural depth” of the imaginary worlds shaped by them in subconscious ways. Sullivan cites J.R.R Tolkien and says that he may be the first to give the concept of a ‘secondary world’. According to Tolkien, authors build a secondary world through writing in which the readers enter while reading (Sullivan 280).

Science fiction and fantasy writers use traditional motifs, themes, and proverbs in their writings. They require more than just motifs and individual elements to portray a Secondary World that the readers can relate to. At times, fantasy fiction writers rely on bigger concepts to construct their work. In some cases, the legends, folktales, or myths show adequate fantastic features that nothing more is added and as a result, the retelling is an expansion. In other examples, a basic plot structure is provided by the traditional tale, upon which the author builds to present a theme that may or may not be implied in the original. Sullivan says that authors such as Tolkien practice Mairchen structure but create their own stories and characters. He differentiates between fantasy and science fiction writers because the former practice traditional writing structure more often than the latter. Even the science fiction authors create an ultramodern and technological story on conventional structure for instance George Lucas' first film of the *Star Wars* saga (284).

2.4 Science fiction

As discussed above, fantasy is a genre of literature that branched out of folklore, myth, and fairytales. It is considered to be the oldest of the genres because its characteristics are present in the literature of ancient times. Science Fiction or SF, on the other hand, is a form of fiction that deals with the influence of science on people in both real and imagined versions.

Science fiction, as a term, was popularized in the 1920s by Hugo Gernsback. It is a contemporary genre, though writers in the past dealt with similar themes as found in modern science fiction, the writings were not focused on technological advancement or possibility (Sterling). Despite not directly focusing on technological advancements earlier writings such as Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* (1818), Robert Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), H. G Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898) depict events of scientific plausibility.

Darko Suvin, in his book, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (1979), focuses on finding the origin of the genre. Suvin states that refining curiosity contributed to the creation of science fiction (Suvin 5). He discusses

how science fiction, utopian imagination and genres such as fantasy and myth are entwined.

Hence the origin of science fiction can be traced in prehistoric literature which may not be in its contemporary form but one cannot deny its existence. The idea, thereby, is not novel. Gary Westfahl in his book *The Mechanics of Wonder: The Creation of the Idea of Science Fiction* (1998) discusses the idea of science fiction and its development. Westfahl states that Hugo Gernsback was the initial true critic of this genre who traced the origins and gave a complete theory. Science fiction gained popularity due to his work and as a result various writers, critics and fans started producing new commentaries and attempted to analyze the works they were familiar with. Among several others, John W. Campbell built upon Gernsback's work and is known as one of the most prominent descendants. Campbell became a strong influence on the genre. After Campbell, in the 1950s, numerous other critics appeared such as H.L Gold, James Blish, Damon Knight, and Judith Merrill who proceeded and developed on Campbell's work. While different voices lead to Campbell's tradition of theory regarding the genre, Harlan Ellison became a leading voice of the New Wave of the 1960s and challenged the traditional views of science fiction. Critics like J.O Bailey, Kingsley Amis, Bruce Sterling, and Thomas Clareson brought forward a new tradition of theoretical criticism. All these people made a significant contribution to the development of the genre but Campbell and Gernsback's works remain the most important to understand science fiction as a genre. Westfahl includes two critical approaches to be most influential, Brian Aldiss' *Trillian Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* and *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the history and Poetics of a Literary Genre* by Darko Suvin (Westfahl 1-6).

Lars Schmeink, in a chapter of his book *Biopunk Dystopias* (2016) says that science fiction's subgenre cyberpunk is the "literary incarnation" of the latest technological advancement (Schmeink 21).

2.5 Superhumanism/ Transhumanism in relation to Humanism

The term superhuman refers to being beyond human. According to dictionary definitions as well as the usage of the term in common knowledge, it denotes powers or abilities that are above or beyond what ordinary humans possess, it may refer to both

mental and physical abilities. In literature, its representation can generally be found in fairytales, legends, myths, fantastic stories, and other fictional texts. In order to understand the development of posthumanism and the concept of the posthuman, it is necessary to study the previous stages. Humanism and transhumanism can be discussed and studied in relation to posthumanism. However, transhumanism and posthumanism come from different philosophical backgrounds.

Transhumanism's philosophical background helps draw some necessary links to widen our academic horizon. There have been movements in the past that reflect similar tendencies as transhumanism, for example, Russian Cosmism is a philosophical movement that began in Russia in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was established by Nikolai Fedorov who believed that it was a moral duty of humans to care for the sick and find treatment for death using science and technology. Adopted by a new generation, Fedorov's views influenced Soviet policies. Subsequently, Cosmism was suppressed by Stalin and numerous members of the movement were arrested and executed in the 1930s ("Russian Cosmism").

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian thinkers and intellectuals used their creative energy to rediscover what was banned or overlooked during the Soviet period. Russian Cosmism is one of the revived intellectual ideas. The idea is centered on the role of humans in cosmic and personal evolution, life longevity, resurrection, and even immortality. It focuses on the scientific solution to all these matters and brings to reality what was supposed to be suitable only for science fiction and supernatural literature. The futuristic ideas may not seem as absurd or impossible as they did in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Young 1-4). Transhumanism, on the other hand carries the same core idea of becoming better and using technology to solve problems.

There are several reasons that have popularized Cosmism among Russian thinkers. The Cosmists have a vast area of study which covers religion, humanity, science, and art. Their ideas are anti-Western to some extent because they believe that the Western thinkers' thoughts are self-centered, isolative, and conflict-ridden. Another major reason is that the Cosmists were banned, forced into hard labor, prohibited to publish their works during the Soviet period but afterward the rediscovery of the forbidden work instigated

the thinkers even more. Along with scientific and practical knowledge, mystical and supernatural aspects have been a part of Russian Cosmism. Generally, the Russian Cosmists, Western cryonicists, transhumanists, and immoralists share somewhat similar ideas. The chief Cosmist intellectuals include religious thinker Nikolai Fedorov, poet and romantic thinker Vladimir Solovyov, physicist Nikolai Umov and several others (5,7-8). Despite the similarities, there remains a cultural divide between the two.

The timeline of Russian Cosmism shows that the idea of overcoming bodily limitations is not novel. Russian philosopher Alexander Nikolaevich Radishchev writes his paper “On Man, His Mortality and Immortality” in 1792, years later, Vladimir Odeoevsky composes a science fiction novel *The Year 4338* (1835) in which he discusses a journey to the moon. In 1851 Nikolai Fedorov presents the idea that nature will become self-consciousness as a result of which humans will turn out to be a portrait of God. By the year 1878 Fedorov expands his philosophy of Common Task and articulates that human beings should not be confined by the restrictions of the planet (Gacheva et al.). The timeline shows development from 1772 till 2019 and it is a work in progress. This timeline helps to understand the link between Russian Cosmism and Western Transhumanism or transhumanism in general.

C.W Ettinger’s *Man into Superman* (1972) is an extension to *The Prospect of Immortality* (1964). C.W Ettinger has played an important role in initiating the transhumanist revolution. Ettinger believes that one must not settle for less when the possibilities of doing better are endless. He criticizes people for accepting bodily limitations and points out that despite the physical limitations human brain has always imagined to exceed the boundaries. For him, it is an evolution or a “transition” from humanity and mortality to transhumanity, and immortality which many humans can successfully make. This lust for betterment, immortality and outgrowing limitation is not new, it has existed in humans for centuries. Ettinger gives a simple example of our early ancestors who used herbs to improve their ‘natural’ body-functioning and comments that it also was an attempt to be slightly more than human. From herbs to eyeglasses, birth control pills, and gold inlays, humans have, in a way, transcended their natural limit but the basic design has remained the same.

Humans cannot wait for natural development to take its course therefore they must find ways to re-create themselves (Ettinger 22-23). Ettinger asserts that the human condition partially depends on his social or cultural conditioning. Man, among other creatures is only the beginning, who may or may not ultimately get a higher state through evolution or “natural development”.

He points out that superman’s characteristics can be traced in the ancient literature such as Gilgamesh. He says that even the earliest literature has pointed out the ongoing problem of mortality and reveals two responses; “resignation and rebellion, apologism and prolongevityism” (24). He discusses the ‘supermen’ and heroic characters by various authors one by one and dismisses them for being inadequate. The word ‘superman’ is unclear due to its “semantic confusion”, for some it means the Master Race thus connoting pride and arrogance, for others, it proposes prominence of human characteristics. Ettinger believes that we all must aim to become higher than not only the humankind but also the earlier heroes; physically, mentally, emotionally and morally. We discard the common examples of ‘superman’ in comics and science fiction, where the characters exhibit amazing physical and mental powers, because the focus must be on the examples of real men with exceptional mental and physical abilities because that can be supported with biology and science in general. There is no need to create ‘superman’, all humans have to do is assemble one from the already known attributes (36-38). The formula of creating a superman by Ettinger is to form a mixture of rare human talents, capabilities of other species and power of machines.

European Enlightenment in the 1700s has played a vital role in bridging the gap between ancient methods of improving life and modern transhuman practices. Various researchers have referred to *The Epic of Gilgamesh* as one of the oldest recorded texts that show aspirations to exceed human limitations. James J. Hughes in his article “The Politics of Transhumanism and the Techno-millennial Imagination, 1626–2030” (2012), points that the idea of resurrection exists in Jewish, Christian, and Buddhist traditions along with the concept of a better life. According to him, the promises of an improved life and physical health can be found in the millennial predictions. He says that the Enlightenment thinkers built on these millennial desires and suggested accomplishing a

better society and “transfigured body” through science and innovation (Hughes 757). The core of Enlightenment thinking was the celebration of reason for a better life and future.

FM-2030 in his book *Are You a Transhuman? Monitoring and Stimulating Your Personal Rate of Growth in a Rapidly Changing World* (1989) provides a personal calculating tool for the readers that enables them to determine their own growth in the quickly changing world of technology. The author changed his name to emphasize his confidence in the future. He states that traditional names define one’s history, religion, ethnicity, and nationality. He outgrew these boundaries because he would like to be demarcated by his future rather than his past. The name 2030 signifies a timeless future in which people will have a bright chance to become immortal.

He defines creative people as the ones “...who fantasize and allow their fantasies to materialize in the real world” (FM-2030 66). His discussion on creative people and stimulus for creativity focuses on going beyond the limitations and future planning. For FM-2030 future planning requires creativity. He says that with knowledge of different fields, one should be imaginative as well as creative to plan the future. He believes in creativity and defines it as something that makes people break free of their limitations.

In another section of the book, while talking about emotions, he says that they are “low-grade intelligence”. Emotions are a product of evolution and have helped humans to survive but what once was considered great or necessary may not have the same value today, because there is no whole or eternal truth. He disregards the need for emotions and says that in contemporary times emotions are not a sign of intelligence (70, 72-73).

He uses the word “transhuman” at the end of the book with a scoreboard to evaluate self-growth and says that transhumans are the breakthroughs of the late twentieth century. He believes that they may not be the ones with modern lifestyles but they are definitely the initial indicators of ‘evolutionary beings’, who cannot be called mere humans and who might become posthuman in the next century (149). He talks about resources, rapidly changing methods of reproduction from natural to synthetic, creativity, timeless future, limitless growth, globalization, space explorations, a search for extraterrestrials, and the need for physical immortality. He says that death has been a hindrance in achieving

greatness but now that scientists and biologists have found ways to slow down the aging process, immortality is not mere imagination.

Tracking the origin of transhumanism is difficult because different scholars have different views. Thinkers like Max More and Stefan Sorgner find its roots in Nietzsche's philosophy of the 'overman' while the leading transhumanist Nick Bostrom states that Nietzsche cannot be a forefather of the transhumanist movement.

Stefan Sorgner in his article "Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism" (2009) rejects Nick Bostrom's claim that the transhumanist movement cannot be compared with Nietzsche's philosophy. On the contrary to Bostrom's beliefs, Sorgner states that when he first became aware of the transhumanist movement, he found it similar to Nietzsche's philosophy of the 'overman', which he employs as 'overhuman' in his article to refer to it regardless of gender. He compares the posthuman to Nietzsche's 'overhuman'. Both transhumanists and Nietzsche believe that humans are continually evolving and nothing is fixed permanently. Sorgner refers to Nietzsche's idea that being humans all humans have limited abilities. Additionally, the individual humans may achieve some distinct ability, but that cannot be passed on to the next generation. He highlights that Transhumanists and Nietzsche agree on the process of human evolution and the change that occurs in values. In the second part of the article, he discusses that Nietzsche encourages scientific inquiry and has shown a high favor for sciences through his philosophy (Sorgner). Sorgner's ideas are adopted and further strengthened by Max More who believes that Transhumanists and Nietzsche are not merely corresponding but directly linked.

More says that transhumanist ideas are "influenced" by Nietzsche. He advocates a direct influence between the two and says that he himself got influenced by Nietzsche's ideas before noticing Huxley's former use of the term. He seconds Sorgner's view about Nietzsche's admiration for rationality and scientific inquiry, and says that the transhumanists hold similar opinions. The vital transhumanist extropies i.e., self-transformation and self-direction are also well-matched with Nietzsche's thinking. In the 2010 essay More has mentioned Zarathustra's announcement: "and life itself confided this secret to me: 'Behold,' it said, 'I am that which must always overcome itself (qtd. in

More 3). Nietzsche does not entirely speak of technology while discussing the process of overcoming but he does not dismiss it either (More 3). More summarizes stating that his main objective was to show that Nietzsche's thinking has an influence on the chief aspects of philosophy including transhumanism.

Ray Kurzweil in his book *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (2005) has presented a similarly optimistic view on technological advancement. He talks about the blending of humans and machines. The book is a continuation of his previous books. Kurzweil believes that there will be a rapid increase in technologies like nanobots, genetic engineering, robotics, and artificial intelligence which will result in technological singularity. The singularity is an epoch in the future, in which human intelligence will take a synthetic form instead of the biological one and become quite powerful. The advancement in this era will help humans transcend themselves and break free of their biological restrictions.

He talks about the future civilization and believes that it is however difficult to envision a generation whose thinking capacity will be much more than ours. Kurzweil's discussion on technology and magic helps one understand the connection between imagination and reality. He presses on the fact that humanity has always imagined to transcend its biological limitations. He comments on his interest in magic tricks as a teenager and says that he replaced it with technological objects because technology retains its transcendental power even after the secrets are unveiled. He gives an example of J.K Rowling's famous book series *Harry Potter* and says that the novels are a product of imagination but they are still not irrational. All the magical details, for example, transmuting people and things into different forms, will become a reality with technology in a matter of a few decades (Kurzweil 20-23).

Kurzweil's idea of singularity is that in the future humans while still being humans, will transcend their biological roots and merge their intelligence with machines that would work faster and better than what we have now. According to him, the technological progression will be so swift, with a profound impact on humans, that they will change irreversibly. Singularity is the exponential pace at which human-made innovation is quickening. Information-based machinery will surround human intelligence and reach a

point where it will be able to comprehend human feelings, emotions and morality (23-25). Even though human intelligence can excel in creativity, human thought has its limitations. This limitation is what singularity will change, allowing humans to go beyond their mental and bodily boundaries, giving them power over fate, life, and death. The distinction between real and virtual or machine and human will not exist in the world after singularity (25).

The term, transhumanism, hints at its association with humanism, it can be seen as an ideal humanism. Fred Baumann states, “trans is the operative part of the term”. He believes that it is not only ideal as the humanisms of Marx and B.F. Skinner it goes past that and leaves human beings behind. This is where it differs from all the previous humanisms in which human beings were the dominant concern. In short, humanism is the belief that is focused on looking at the world from a human’s perspective, neither the divine force’s viewpoint nor natural or material (Baumann 68).

He comments on utopian humanism by Skinner and discusses the reasons for its failure, the major one being its dissociation with notions like freedom and dignity as discussed in his famous book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. Another factor that seems probable is that without proper tools, human behavioral training may not have influenced to change people as Skinner imagined. Baumann compares the tools that were imagined in Skinner’s philosophy with the existing ones in contemporary time and comments that they are sufficiently advanced. In the contemporary world the use of chemistry for mind control, reproduction by infertile humans, cloning of animals, and artificial production of bodily fluids such as insulin are considered to be ‘good news’ by most. The likelihood of making the latest nanotechnological equipment that can travel inside the human body and the possibility of connecting the brain with computer systems have erased the division between humans and machines. In a way, the new science is a continued form of the previous one. It promotes the Baconian venture of controlling the nature for improving humanity (69-70). Donna Haraway’s ideas seem to be reflected in Baumann’s concern about the erasure of division between humans and machines. Kunzru in his 1997 article remarks that Haraway believes in such a close relationship between the modern man and

the machine that it becomes nearly impossible to tell where the human ends and the machine begins (Kunzru).

Moreover, Baumann comments that the ones who are in favor of human liberty will see how different it looks once they are not just human. A powerful entity like World Controller in Huxley's *Brave New World* will become a requirement to protect the enhanced descendants who might face existential dangers in various forms like destructive artificial intelligence or self-duplicating robots. Referring to the utopias, he says that all the utopias from the past were a "no-place" since they "abstracted" from human nature, thus the ideal imaginary world could not happen. The two types of utopias, as suggested by Leo Strass may have two categories i.e., philosophical and theological. These utopias intentionally portrayed an unimaginable world yet utilized the narrative to concentrate on specific characteristics of humankind in order to encourage improvement. On the other hand, there were ones like Skinner's, contemporary utopias of social designing that naively got tied up with the likelihood of changing human life by disregarding vital parts of it as it exists now. Predictably, both of these utopias are likely to fail in practice since they are in opposition to human nature. Baumann argues that the Baconian scientific project offers us the genuine possibility of changing humankind in manners that can be considered useful to the creatures we are in our present form, yet that would certainly alter us into something entirely different after some time (72).

The question 'why not be the best we can be?' used to be understood as 'best person or best human' within the limitations of being human. But now it has a new different answer that focuses on being best at what we want to do. Furthermore, what we want consists of both our personal desires and the desires or wants of others to influence ours. It becomes important to look into what transhumanists are forestalling us to be capable to do or become (73).

Julian Huxley gives an overview of what he thinks humanity will be like in the future. He believes that humans can and must overcome limitations to achieve utmost excellence. He states that the world is going through a process of evolution and over the course of million years, it is becoming aware of itself, its history, and its future. Cosmic self-awareness is being acknowledged in a tiny part of the universe by some humans. It

may have already been understood by conscious beings on other planets but it is happening on earth for the first time. He says that evolution opened doors to new possibilities in the past. It made humans understand the workings around the universe; initially in the form of speed, light, movement of birds, etc. to their groundbreaking capability for theoretical thought and self-consciousness. New knowledge by scientists, biologists, and historians has provided a novel comprehension of the universe. It has made humans the most important representatives of the world and made them realize their full potential (Huxley 12-13).

Humans, recognizing their potential at a young age, start acquiring knowledge and skills to thrive in a society. According to Huxley, this behavior is not programmed or automated but it depends on circumstances of an individual's personal struggle. The outcome of the personal efforts is however unpredictable. The chief achievement of evolution is a well-developed personality. Man's duty is to explore himself and the possibilities to overcome his natural limitations. People are living below their capacity; they have not yet achieved the height of their mystical and cerebral potential.

Huxley's perspective makes it clear that humans did not stop wondering when they explored themselves and the nature. They explored more possibilities to first overcome the natural hindrances and then the physical limitations with the use of technology and science. In Huxley's words, "People are determined to not put up with a subnormal standard of physical health...now that science has revealed the possibility of raising it (14)."

Nick Bostrom, in his article, "A History of Transhumanist Thought" (2005), traces the philosophical and cultural sources of transhumanist thought and discusses the historical stimuli that directed to the development of what is now known as transhumanism. He states that human's longing to attain maximum ability is not contemporary, it has existed since the beginning of time. Humans have always struggled to expand their horizons socially, mentally, and geologically. The remnants of prehistoric religious writings show that humans distressed over the deaths of their dear ones, even though the concept of afterlife was popular at that time.

Bostrom has quoted the story of the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (approx. 1700 B.C.) in which a king quests for immortality. The king learns of a natural herb that grows at the bottom of the sea. He succeeds in getting the plant, but it is stolen from him by a serpent before he can use it. Influenced by this story, explorers wanted to find the Fountain of Youth, alchemists tried to create the Elixir of Life, and the institutions of Taoism in China strove to achieve immortality by controlling or harmonizing with natural forces. The effort to transcend natural limitations was viewed with both fascination and fear. Greek mythology shows this ambivalence. The fire was stolen by Prometheus from Zeus and given to man, changing man's situation forever, but Prometheus had to pay the price in the form of punishment by Zeus. In the myth of Daedalus, the crafty artist uses various ways to improve human abilities. However, when his son Icarus fails to heed his warnings and flies too close to the sun, the wax on his wings melts down (Bostrom 2).

The new intellectual vigor of the Renaissance sprang from the outmoded philosophies that had prevailed in Europe during the Middle Ages. Renaissance humanism motivated people to think logically and make their own observations rather than submit to religious authorities. The legacy of the Renaissance includes the influence of Newton, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Immanuel Kant and others who formed the foundation of rational humanism to learn more about the world and man's place in it, which focused on science and critical thinking rather than revelation and religious supremacy. The roots of transhumanism lie in rational humanism. The idea that humans can evolve themselves through scientific devices emerged in the 18th and 19th Bostrom believes that the ideas of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche could be an encouragement to transhumanism. Nietzsche's principle of the superman supports the idea of transhumanism. According to him, "man is something to be overcome." He may not have technological progress in mind, but some kind of progress in cultural development and self-improvement. Bostrom has cited various fictional works of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that depict physical improvement. Aldous Huxley's 1932 novel *Brave New World* sparked a debate about the technological transformation of man. Another example of such fiction is Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, similar to how Orwell's *1984* depicts a society where people are oppressed to reach their full potential. Both *1984* and *Brave New World* show a society that suppresses the full development of humanity. In

Brave New World, technology is used for social conformity. In the post-war period, the topic of transhumanism was mainly discussed in science fiction literature. Authors such as C. Clarke, Issac Asimov and Stainslaw Lem discovered the changes that humanity will experience due to technological advancement. Julian Huxley was the first to use the term "transhumanism". He commented that the human species can transcend itself if it so desires, not just irregularly, but in its holistic form. The name for this belief to serve humanity can be called transhumanism. He said, man will be "transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature" (Bostrom 3-6).

Allen Porter, in the article "Bioethics and Transhumanism," says that transhumanism is a sociopolitical movement that has a number of areas of interest, including issues of bioethics and the use of technology to alter the human organism. The main goal of transhumanism is to improve the human organism and ultimately overcome the limitations that humans are subjected to. He says, "In other words, to use transhumanist terminology, their fundamental goal is to become "posthuman" (Porter 238). According to the transhumanists, the transhuman is an altered human. The ultimate goal of the transhuman is to become a posthuman, which is by far the most desirable and ideal state. Another characteristic of transhumanism is its roots in Enlightenment humanism and rationalism. Transhumanism has adopted humanistic ideas such as personal independence, logical thinking, and rationality. The fundamental difference between humanism and transhumanism is that transhumanism does not rely solely on natural or traditional means for progress (238).

2.6 Posthumanism

The term 'posthumanism' has its origin in the first wave of postmodernism. It is a term applied to various theoretical positions by theorists and researchers from diverse areas of expertise such as philosophy, science, technology studies, critical theory and literary theory, etc. Posthumanism seeks to challenge the conventional boundaries between human and machine.

Historically, posthumanism is not limited to the medical improvements or technological advances that the world is witnessing. However, the technological change

has become a key element of the “contemporary imaginations about posthumanity” (Miah 2).

Ihab Hassan, an Arab-American literary theorist, has used the metaphor of the Greek myth 'Prometheus' to construct his arguments on posthumanism. Hassan says, “the Promethean myth, after all, contains an enigmatic prophecy” (Hassan 843). He argues that the human form is undergoing a drastic change in both its external and internal representation, therefore it needs to be 're-visioned'. He contends that we need to understand that humanism is metamorphosing into what is now called posthumanism. This metamorphosis could mean the end of five hundred years of humanism. He does not suggest an exact end of humanity, although he does cite the writings of the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss in *A World on the Wane*, who stated, “the world began without the human race and it will end without it”. Hassan also quotes Michael Foucault’s *The Order of Things*, in which he notes “man is neither the oldest nor the most constant problem that has been posed for human knowledge...man is invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end”.

Hassan’s argues that Levi-Strauss and Foucault do not mean the literal end of humanity, but rather the picture of man that philosophers such as Descartes, Thomas Moore and Erasmus have sketched. Thus, the structuralist belief emphasizes the dismantling of the Cartesian ego, which separated itself from the world by becoming an object. As Ihab Hassan explains, posthumanism should focus on artificial intelligence, which is not only a creation of science fiction, but almost surrounds our lives. He mentions a 1966 interview in which Heidegger cautioned against technology by suggesting that it no longer comes with the human measure (Hassan 848).

In his article “Theorizing Posthumanism” (2003), Neil Badmington, opposes the commonly held view that posthumanism may not require theorizing. He cites the remark of Steve Beard, that humans do not need to be 'theorized away', their association with consumerism and technoculture has done the job. While he disagrees with the view that posthumanism does not need theory or theorizing, Badmington believes that it not only needs theorizing, but also needs to rethink the early celebration of the possible end of 'man'. He states that he is not concerned with preserving humanism, but he strongly

believes that it is important to remember Lernean Hydra, the mythical monster that renews itself. He has used this example to express his opinion of apocalyptic writings that do not take seriously humanism's ability to redevelop itself (Badmington 10-11).

Various instances of posthumanist critics have been given by Badmington to present a changed view of how we can still depend on humanism, the traces of which cannot be removed without a track. He admits that in the contemporary time, domination of humanism may seem ambiguous and quite undefined. He concludes by stating that questioning humanism-posthumanism gives directions to be different in the future, he says, “we have nothing to lose but ‘our’ selves (Badmington 21-23).

Francesca Ferrando in her article “Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms Differences and Relations” proposes that posthumanism does not claim to be original or unique and may be observed as ‘post-exceptionalism’, which deduces integration of the “dissolution of the new”. According to Gianni Vattimo, this is acknowledged as a distinctive feature of postmodern. She is of view that posthumanism challenges the conventional center of Western discourse. Although it has already been deconstructed by feminist, critical race, postcolonial and queer theorists. Posthumanism emerges as ‘post-centralizing’ because it is not fixated on a single center and acknowledges many centers of interest. Posthuman perspectives are therefore multilayered and pluralistic. The philosophy of posthumanism offers a method of relational viewing that focuses on the 'non-human realm' and thus expands the human imagination (Ferrando 30).

Posthumanism has been defined by Giuseppe Mari, in his article “Posthumanism: A Danger, Opportunity and Challenge”, as a complex group of ‘cultural tendencies’, whose vital characteristic is to upturn the conventional, 19th-century humanistic perspective. Mari traces the history of posthumanistic thoughts in the work of Fredrich Nietzsche and states that it was Nietzsche who proposed the idea of overpowering human in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

The depiction of man as something that can be conquered points the way to posthumanism. Reinforced by Platonic Greek and ancient Christian cultures, the humanist certainty of achieving the best has failed humanity. In fact, it has kept people from

reaching their maximum potential. Mari notes that Nietzsche urges people to be guided either by animals or by humans learning to overcome human nature. Mari's analysis suggests that despite being away from Nietzsche's work chronologically, we can relate to his thoughts from a cultural viewpoint. At the present time, two of Nietzsche's guidelines can be observed in practical terms; the first one is the use of animal identity in order to make human identity distinct, the second being the technical interference in human life. Both these tendencies endorse posthumanistic perspective. Additionally, he states, "the posthumanistic attitude is related to the growth of technical powers" (Mari 106).

Similarly in Jay David Bolter's analysis, the term 'posthumanism' is used for various theoretical positions. He believes that one of the most significant stances adopted by posthumanism, is the denunciation of 'traditional Western humanism'. Humanism drew on the revised appreciation for Roman and Greek rhetorics in providing man the central place instead of God. Modern science rests on human's ability to comprehend and think logically in order to unravel the laws of the universe. As per the Cartesian thinking paradigm, man could understand the world in the language of mathematics with complete scientific independence. This view of self-directed and independent man thrived in the Enlightenment period. The posthumanist scholars consider Darwinian biology, Marxist philosophy and Freudian psychological concepts to be the primary signs of fragmentation and disintegration of the Enlightenment autonomous subject. Bolter links posthumanism with postmodern and poststructuralist theories.

The work of postmodern theorists, including Jean Francois Lyotard and Fredric Jameson, as well as the critical approach of poststructuralist theorists, has been an attempt to undermine the claimed uniformity and universality. Furthermore, the work of Deleuze and Guattari has influenced posthumanist theory, even though it is not considered postmodern or poststructuralist.

Bolter mentions the work of the most important posthumanist theorist, Donna Haraway, who describes the insecure position of the contemporary man. She believes that the human body is open to technological intervention and enhancement. This elevates the imagination of science fiction works in which drugs not only remove the deficiencies but also make humans stronger, faster, smarter, and altogether superior to the average human.

It is significant to note that Haraway's cyborg is not a conventional transhuman but a posthuman that negates the concept of an autonomous and unified humanist subject. Posthumanist theorists propose an absolute reconfiguration of the concepts of humanism. In reconstructing the long-held humanist concept, the exclusion of the liberal subject from the focus of humanist inquiry becomes quite apparent (Bolter 1-8).

As mentioned earlier, Donna Haraway talks about the boundary breakdowns in her well-acclaimed essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto", and notes that the boundary between humans and animals has become thinner at the end of the twentieth century. She urges that nothing really marks the difference between humans and animals anymore. The use of tools, language, mental events and social behavior are not convincing enough for a distinction. Furthermore, humans have no need for such a distinction, but several branches of feminist culture support the pleasure of the connection between human and other creatures. She says that the evolutionary theory and biology have shaped modern organisms as objects of knowledge only to further blur the line between man and animal. When the boundary between human and animal disappears, the 'cyborg' appears.

Another dissimilarity is between man-animal and machine. The machine representation before cybernetics could be haunted and always had a ghost or spirit quality. But the machines were not independent, they could not move, think, and create on their own. They could not live the dream of a man and played only the role of an imitator. These machines were not human, but only an illustration of the 'masculinist reproductive dream'. It was inconceivable to think of machines in any other way. In the words of Haraway, "To think they were otherwise was paranoid. Now we are not so sure" (Haraway 11). The machines of the late twentieth century have blurred the difference between natural and artificial, body and mind, self-emerging and externally designed, and numerous other differences that separated organisms from machines.

On modern technology, Haraway says that the modern machines are the microelectronic gadgets that are almost invisible, but they are everywhere. Historically, power, writing, and technology have been linked in the narratives about the origins of civilization, but the production of miniature machines has changed the experience of mechanisms. She compares the sets of the 1950s with those of the 1970s and discusses

the differences in their size and production. The new machines are small, they run on sunlight and electromagnetic waves, and are easy to move. On the other hand, the humans are not as fluid and opaque at the same time. Haraway discusses the problem with presence and absence of the cyborgs at the same time. She says, “they are as hard to see politically as materially. They are about consciousness - or its simulation” (13). The new machines are made by engineers who worship the sun and use its energy to produce them. These ‘clean’ machines induce illnesses that are nothing more than minor changes in coding of an antibody in the immune system, nothing more than stress. Therefore, the cyborg myth tells about the vague, undefined lines between man-animal and machine. It is about “transgressed boundaries, potent fusion, and dangerous possibilities” (14).

Luca Valera in "Posthumanism: Beyond Humanism" (2014) establishes a connection between transhumanism and posthumanism. He says that while the transhuman being still has some technologically enhanced and improved characteristics of Homo sapiens, the posthuman being is completely different. He crosses the human boundary so radically that not even the appearance remains the same. Valera discusses the problem of defining posthumanism and states that the posthuman philosophy centers on “contamination of human being with other forms of life” (Valera 483).

Posthumanism rejects human nature’s stability. There are no boundaries to how humans can construct themselves because of the non-existence of human nature once the organic body is eliminated. He talks about posthumanist philosophy’s focus on denying the possibility of limit and argues that it is impractical because excellence comes into being only if there is a limit to exceed. We essentially keep something imperfect in view to reach perfection. Posthumanism does not suggest an improved being in exchange of human, but it is a novel manner of seeing humankind in which the query of ‘identity’ has no meaning (Valera 485).

Posthumanism constructs the possible blurriness of limitations until a complete ‘contamination’ happens that opens all entities to one another for a radical change. Unlike transhumanism, in posthumanism it is not the technique to signify a chance to overcome the man’s world but it is technology that describes man’s hybrid identity which is open to ‘otherness’. Technique is not considered a mode of human evolution in posthumanism

but instead it denies anthropocentric claim over other animate and non-animate entities. Valera concludes by saying that the posthumanist thought's real strength is in reviving typically human wishes such as immortality, reaching excellence and synchronization with other species. It builds on the old idea and promotes a hybridized body and mind (486-487,490). The insights on posthumanism and transhumanism by Valera, Donna Haraway and other earlier mentioned scholars and critics help one to understand the development of both philosophical movements. Almost all of the above theorists and scholars emphasize the connection of transhumanism with the ancient utopian imagination and explain posthumanism as a break from the supposedly secure position of humanity into uncertainty. All of the scholarly works reviewed help to provide a strong foundation for this study and strengthen the arguments of this research.

2.7 Conclusion

The researcher has reviewed the theoretical backgrounds of transhumanism and posthumanism. The history of mythology has been briefly researched and discussed to study the evolution of fantasy literature. The literature review covers different movements such as the nineteenth-century Russian Cosmism, cryonics leading to the 21st century movement known as transhumanism converging at the same idea of transcending natural human abilities. The idea of transcendence and transcending human limitations is also present in speculative fiction, especially in the two subgenres of fantasy and science fiction. The overview of the theoretical evidence and its traces in fantasy literature from ancient times to the present day makes clear that the desire for transcendence, as reflected in contemporary science fiction, is not new, but that the core idea has existed in various forms since antiquity. The overview provides a context for the analysis of the primary texts.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“Transhumanists view human nature as a work-in-progress, a half-baked beginning that we can learn to remold in desirable ways.”

(Bostrom)

“Science fiction is not alone in speculating that such Posthuman machines will start to transcend us, to become perhaps the most Dominant entities on earth.”

(Pepperell 101)

3.1. Introduction

The Literature Review chapter has enabled the researcher to gain critical insight on the theoretical framework to state lens for analyzing the primary texts. Moreover, reviewing the literature has facilitated the researcher to systematically devise the research methodology. In this chapter, the researcher has explained the theoretical lens that is used to analyze the selected texts. The research methodology applied to the study has also been elaborated.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Nick Bostrom's idea of transhumanism as explained in *In Defense of Posthuman Dignity* (2005) and Robert Pepperell's concepts on posthumanism as presented in *The Posthuman Condition: Consciousness Beyond the Brain* (2003).

The problem of the study can be best explained using a theoretical framework. A theoretical framework consists of theories formulated by experts in any area of study,

upon which researchers can plan their researches. It helps the researcher to recognize and construct her/his worldview on the problem to be explored (Grant and Osanloo 16-17). The researcher's aim is to explore how classical Eastern fantasy and contemporary Western science fiction demonstrate the superhuman, transhuman and posthuman elements through various narrative techniques that can be studied using the lens of transhumanism and posthumanism. The keywords; superhuman, transhuman and posthuman have been defined for clarity.

The term 'superhuman', in simple words, means being more than just human. It is defined as "exceeding normal human power, size or capability" ("Definition of SUPERHUMAN"). Parallel to the idea of superhuman, is a relatively new concept known as 'transhuman' that is a result of social and philosophical movement called transhumanism. Broadly, the term 'transhuman' means, "transcending the human limits" ("Definition of TRANSHUMAN"). Julian Huxley defined transhumanism as a dogma that centers on human's ability to surpass itself. This belief is contemporarily reinforced by philosophers and natural scientists. In the essence of enlightenment, the new technologies and developments that assure overcoming biological limitations, are being encouraged by scientists and philosophers. Transhumanists support social, bodily and mental improvements (qtd. in Hauskeller 11).

3.2.1. Transhumanism- Philosophical Background

The philosophical movement known as transhumanism is based on the principle that humans can get better than their current form. The idea of transcending human limitations has existed in different forms in history. Several prominent movements such as Russian Cosmism, Cryonics, Singularity and Transhumanism share the core idea of exceeding limitation. Julian Huxley is viewed as the founder of transhumanism. He was the first to use the term 'transhumanism' and believed it will provide "a new kind of existence" (Huxley 17). In contemporary time, Max More, Natasha Vita-More, Tom Bell and Nick Bostrom are some of the leading figures of transhumanism.

Max More and Tom Bell started a magazine *Extropy: Vaccine for Future Shock* in 1988, the title was changed to *Extropy: Journal of Transhumanist Thought* which

currently exists as *Extropy: Journal of Transhumanist Solutions*. The extropian philosophy focuses on challenging rooted beliefs regarding unavoidable death and limited human ability. Extropian Institute, founded to promote extropian philosophy, aims at inspiring people to use technology to overcome bodily limitations (Bonsen). Extropy is the philosophy now globally recognized as transhumanism ("Extropy Institute Mission"). More in his 1990 essay considers Extropianism a step ahead humanism towards the "evolutionary future" (More).

According to More, the extropian transhumanism has a great value and it offers humans a life of potential and transcendence. In the essay "Transhumanism: Towards a Futurist Philosophy" (1990), he says:

The Extropian philosophy... looks inside us and beyond us, projecting forward to a brilliant vision of our future... (a) process of improvement and transformation of ourselves into ever higher forms. We will outgrow our current interests, bodies, minds, and forms of social organization (More).

Hence for More, extropian transhumanism is a method to achieve improved life, which is only possible by transcending the bodily and cerebral limitations. It is a philosophy of life that will help humans move forward, evolve on to transhumanity and even exceed transhumanity to enter into a posthuman period. In short, it is about limitless progress and development. More looks at it as a replacement of the old religious ideas involving a supreme being that has power over humans by becoming more powerful. He believes it to be an ongoing process of development which should not be stagnant. Thus, extropianism is about moving forward, evolving and transcending limitations.

3.2.2. Transhumanism

One of the leading transhumanist Nick Bostrom, in the article, "In Defense of Posthuman Dignity" (2005), says that though transhumanism is a term that is not completely defined, it can be understood as an outgrowth of humanism and Enlightenment. It believes in the improvement of current human nature by using applied science and other means which may help enhance intellectual and physical capacities and result in "increased control over own mental states and moods" (Bostrom 1).

The thought that intellectual and physical abilities can be enhanced using technology and logic track back to the ancient idea of superhuman where the beings had exceptional powers, though there was no use of technology. Transhumanists believe that enhancement technologies should be available so the individuals have a choice to use them according to their needs. Furthermore, he says:

...enhancement technologies will offer enormous potential for deeply valuable and humanly beneficial uses. Ultimately, it is possible that such enhancements may make us, or our decedents, ‘posthuman’, beings who may have indefinite health spans, much greater intellectual faculties than current human being and perhaps entirely new sensibilities (2).

Transhumanists believe that we should not always accept “nature’s gifts”. Humans cleverly refuse natural inadequacies such as cancer, malaria and other physical or mental diseases. Transhumanists assert that rather than submitting to nature, we can bring improvement to ourselves (Bostrom 3). He criticizes Kass for stating that “dehumanization” will be our fate if we try to get technical control over human nature. Real events in newspapers show similarities with fictional accounts such as *Huxley’s Brave New World*, C.S Lewis’s *Abolition of Man* and Nietzsche’s vision of the last man. As a consequence of achieving technological control over human nature unavoidable problems such as “homogenization, mediocrity, pacification, drug-induced contentment, debasement of taste, souls without loves and longings” have appeared (qtd. in Bostrom).

Bostrom picks Kass’s example of *Brave New World* and says that the residents presented in the novel lack dignity. The claim that it is an unavoidable result of achieving technological control over human nature is cynical and lacks evidence if considered a futuristic calculation, and wrong if a claim regarding metaphysical need. The fictional world described by Huxley has problems like authoritarianism, being caste-bound and a cultural wilderness, the citizens are dehumanized. *Brave New World* is not a story of human enhancement gone wrong but a misfortune of using technology and social engineering to paralyze moral and mental abilities, it is in complete opposition of the transhumanist thought (Bostrom 3-4). Transhumanists and bioconservatives have different views about “posthuman dignity” while bioconservatives consider posthumanity

to be a threat to humans, transhumanists believe that posthuman poise balances humanity. According to them, “what we are is not a function solely of our DNA but also of our technological and social context” (Bostrom 9).

3.2.3. Superhuman/ Transhuman in classical Eastern fantasy

The researcher has employed Nick Bostrom’s theory of transhumanism, a celebratory and pro-human enhancement theory, to the selected work of classical Eastern fantasy to explore the various means through which the superhuman celebrates the role of human in classical Eastern fantasy literature. Transhumanists claim that human enhancement technologies and augmentation of intellectual, physical and mental abilities are in the best interest of humans. These rational means of overcoming the biological limitations are supposed to improve human life and bring radical changes to humanity.

The concept of superhuman and transhuman is used interchangeably in this research. The term ‘superhuman’, as defined earlier, means being more than human. It is defined as “exceeding normal human power, size or capability”. Classical Eastern fantasy demonstrates characters that have these unusual powers and capabilities, such as invisibility, ability to fly and magically turn into pigeons and ringdoves etc. Similarly, transhuman is “intermediary form between human and posthuman” (Bostrom 6). It is based on the belief that humans can go beyond their bodily and mental limitations to achieve high brain, body and emotional abilities.

In order to make it more comprehensive for the readers and future researchers, transhuman and transhumanism are discussed along with superhuman as both entities i.e., superhuman and transhuman represent something more than human. The research deals with the development of superhuman to posthuman, therefore transhuman and posthuman theories are incorporated to evaluate the progress.

3.2.4 Posthumanism: Philosophical background

The term ‘posthumanism’ was coined by postmodern theorist Ihab Hassan in article "Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Posthumanist Culture?" (1977). Numerous philosophers and researchers have theorized about the possible posthuman future. There is plenty of scholarship available on social, moral, and cultural posthuman issues. The

science fiction genre of literature covers these posthuman themes in contemporary literature.

Posthumanism has been defined from varied perspectives by different theorists and philosophers. The theory offers a new non-anthropocentric philosophy that changes the understanding of the human subject.

Posthumanism

The posthuman aspect selected for this research is based on Robert Pepperell's ideas presented in *The Posthuman Condition: Consciousness Beyond the Brain* (2003). Robert Pepperell's posthumanist philosophy and research cover disciplines such as art, culture, technology and political history in relevance to the posthuman condition. He discusses the lurking threat to humanist ideas due to technological advancement. While presenting his stance on technology he says:

These developments awaken deep-rooted anxieties about the threat to human existence from technology we cannot control or understand. We know we are capable of creating entities that may equal and even surpass us, and we must seriously face up to the possibility that attributes like human thought may be created in non-human forms (Pepperell iii).

Pepperell states that defining the 'posthuman condition' is a difficult task, broadly it is the condition of existence after the beginning of posthuman era. He suggests that three different notions apply to the term 'posthuman'. Firstly, it is used to announce the demise of much-celebrated social development identified as 'humanism', so in a way it means 'after humanism'. Secondly, it points out the transformation of orthodox view of the human subject. Thirdly, the term points to the conjunction of technology and biology to an indistinguishable extent (iv).

The belief in the ability to develop and control technology assured human their superiority over other animals. Paradoxically, the sense of dominance and high esteem are being tested by the 'very technologies' that we are in quest for. Pepperell pronounces, "it seems the balance of dominance between human and machine is slowly shifting" (2). Moreover, he remarks that the systems we contemporarily consider to be computers, will

probably evolve into the kind of objects that will have human characteristics of consciousness, aesthetic receptivity and creativity, which may not be exactly identical to humans', yet similar. Contrarily, these human-like qualities will not establish completely on logical or mathematical functions, rather 'they will not be systems that any human can fully understand or control' (145).

Technological involvement is one example of the way posthuman thought is different from humanist one. The era of posthumanism is said to have started already, and it is argued that it can be traced in the past. The time that marks discontinuity from humanist perspective of the universe leading to the era of posthumanism can be traced in the early twentieth century (155). Pepperell takes into account the 'uncertainty' that has started to take over human life in contemporary time. There is uncertainty about employment, because of increasing automation of many jobs, political and economic theories and result of advancement in medicine. He comments on the environmental conditions as a result of advances in technology and says, "There is uncertainty about what is happening to the environment, about whether scientific progress is always beneficial and about where technology is leading us" (168).

Human can no longer rely on the mercy of God or science to make everything in favor of humanity. The posthuman condition does not suggest 'End of Man', rather it marks an end to the man-centered universe. In simple words it is the end of long held belief of humanism (171).

While stating the role of technology, computers, machines, and complex machines Pepperell says,

In the posthuman era, machines will no longer be machines (177).

"...an emerging form of life. A complex machine is a machine whose workings we do not fully understand or control" (Pepperell 177). The advanced machinery will be too complicated for humans to handle.

3.3 Research Method

This research project tries to investigate the superhuman/transhuman and posthuman elements in the primary texts i.e., *Hoshruha* and *Sea of Rust*. It attempts to find and compare superhuman features in classical Eastern fantasy with the posthuman in contemporary Western science fiction.

The researcher has used qualitative approach for this research as this method is more suited for literary studies. According to John W. Creswell qualitative research is exploratory, and interpretative in nature. He says that qualitative research is conducted in a setting where the researcher collects data in “words or pictures” to analyze it inductively focusing on its meaning. It is an investigation into a social or human problem that is centered on constructing a comprehensive as well as holistic picture using words, relating specific viewpoints and taking place in a natural context (Creswell 15). In conformity with Creswell’s approach is Michael Quinn Patton’s insight on qualitative method, for him, “the researcher’s personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon” (Patton 41). While adopting qualitative approach the researcher has voiced her perspective. The researcher has used the literary texts as her primary data to study the issue in detail.

Textual Analysis

The researcher has analyzed the primary texts using the theoretical lens provided by Nick Bostrom and Robert Pepperell. Moreover, textual method has been used to analyze the two texts in chapters 4 and 5, followed by comparative side by side analysis of the two texts in Chapter 6. About textual analysis, Catherine Belsey in her essay “Textual Analysis as a Research Method” (2005), added in *Research Methods for English Studies* by Gabriele Griffin says that while a researcher may be tempted to rely on secondary sources, his/her own deductions about a text are more productive and provide opportunities for further researches as well as analyses. The textual analysis method favors the researcher’s interpretations of a text and is therefore quite open-ended in nature. The reading of the primary data allows the researcher to interpret the text in ways it has not been studied or interpreted before. Belsey is of the view that the study of secondary sources can at times influence the researcher into believing that the text has already been

interpreted in every possible way, but personal readings can always open doors to new perspectives (Belsey 164). Moreover, Bernard describes textual analysis as a process whereby one identifies the potential themes that arise within a certain text, and then considering how those categories link together (Bernard 113). Textual analysis is a methodology, mostly used in qualitative research, focuses on just a selected few or many features simultaneously. It involves understanding language, symbols, and/or pictures present in texts to understand how individuals make sense of and communicate life and life experiences. These written, visual, or spoken messages provide cues to the audience to understand the communication.

Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis emphasizes on the “explanation of differences, and the explanation of similarities” (Azarian 2). It examines a selected set of similarities and differences in two or more texts. Writing a comparison usually involves assessing the similarities and differences between two or more procedures, theories, or processes. The author explains to the reader what can be understood from the comparison, or judge, on the basis of established criteria, whether one thing is better than another.

In this research, the researcher has highlighted similarities and differences between classical Eastern fantasy and contemporary Western science fiction. The researcher has compared the narrative techniques used to illustrate the superhuman and posthuman in the two selected genres.

The researcher has pointed out how the human desire to exceed their capacity is reflected in the entities like superhuman, transhuman and posthuman. Also, in the contrasting arguments, she has highlighted the differences between the terms superhuman, transhuman and the posthumans, and the different ideas these terms represent in classical Eastern fantasy and contemporary Western fiction.

By comparing the narrative techniques in the two texts i.e., *Hoshruba: The Land and the Tilism* and *Sea of Rust*, the researcher has spotted that the terms superhuman, transhuman and posthuman are essentially used to represent the idea of "more than human" with subtle differences. The research also highlights the similarities in the

narrative techniques used in the two texts even though they belong to two different eras, genres and cultures.

The researcher has compared the plots, themes, settings and characters of the two novels to demonstrate similarities and differences between the terms "superhuman"/"transhuman" in *Hoshiruba* and "posthuman" in *Sea of Rust*. She has compared the characters in both these novels as they possess qualities and capabilities more than a normal human being as we know it. She has highlighted how the idea of "superhuman" has been evolved into "posthuman" in science fiction.

This research includes a research plan to study the theoretical lenses, narrative techniques and the evolution of fantasy fiction as well as the superhuman both as a concept and an entity which represents beings that are more than human. The researcher has analyzed only the narrative techniques that serve the purpose of answering the research questions. The analysis has been limited to the selected narrative techniques that suffice the purpose of this research. The research plan also includes definitions of the keywords, interpretation, explanation, synthesis and relevant real-life examples infused in the analysis chapters. Moreover, the study highlights and analyses the superhuman/transhuman and posthuman elements in the primary texts.

Research methods such as collection of relevant data, commentaries, interpretation, study of relevant movements and analysis have been utilized for the review of literature, while analysis of the primary texts has been done to highlight the superhuman/transhuman and the posthuman through investigating various narrative techniques used in the texts. Moreover, the superhuman elements have been analyzed using Nick Bostrom's insight on transhuman, on the grounds of transcendence and being more than human, while 'posthuman' has been analyzed using posthuman theory provided by Robert Pepperell. It attempts to find and compare superhuman features in classical Eastern fantasy with the posthuman worlds presented in contemporary Western science fiction. It examines the development of classic fantasy literature into a possible posthuman universe where machines become the most dominant entity as portrayed in the modern science fiction.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS

SUPERHUMAN IN CLASSICAL EASTERN FANTASY

The expanse was decorated with colored crystal bowls potted with blossoming roses, tulips, narcissi, jasmines and poppies”

(Jah 397)

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter the researcher has analyzed *Hoshruba: The Land and the Tilism*, translated by Musharraf Ali Farooqi. This Eastern fantasy epic or ‘dastan’ comes from oral story tradition that has passed on generation after generation. When it appeared in its printed form, it was thought that it belonged to the stories of *The Adventures of Amir Hamza*, which can be traced back to the seventh century Arabian tales. *Hoshruba* was first written in Urdu by Muhammad Hussain Jah and Ahmed Hussain Qamar during 1883-1893. Musharraf Ali Farooqi has taken the daunting task of translating the seven lengthy volumes of *Tilism e Hoshruba* into English. However, the researcher has analyzed the first volume only and focused on suitable narrative techniques to answer the research questions. A transhumanist lens is used to highlight superhuman elements and characters, which show the existence of these ideas in the classical Eastern fantasy since antiquity. The characters are selected on the basis of relevance for analysis to answer the research questions effectively. Moreover, the study traces the impact of superhuman and supernatural on human as demonstrated in *Hoshruba*. It analyzes how the superhuman/transhuman celebrates the role of human.

Though, fantasy, as a subgenre of speculative fiction developed in the nineteenth century, its existence can be traced in centuries old literature from different parts of the world. Classical Eastern fantasy literature consists of ancient mythical tales and legends. Collections such as *One Thousand and One Nights*, *Adventures of Amir Hamza* and *Hoshruba* are some of the most popular examples of classical Eastern fantasy literature. *Hoshruba* provides a good introduction to the classical Eastern fantasy. This Eastern fantasy is an example of genre evolution in itself; the borrowed legends, characters and

various mythical elements from the storytelling tradition give the reader an opportunity to observe the development of fantasy as well as the role of mythology and storytelling in the making of fantasy. hhhhhhhh

The dastan, as a popular culture literature, includes common acts like as sorcery, chivalry, deception, seduction, charms, magic, adventure, wars, and exploration.

4.2. Superhuman/Transhuman in *Hoshruba: The Land and the Tilism*

To unpack *Hoshruba: The Land and the Tilism* the researcher has briefly discussed the book's introduction as it gives an insight into the classical Eastern epic and fantasy literature. Concerning the research questions, the narrative techniques that portray the superhuman/transhuman in the dastan have been analyzed to highlight the celebration of humanity. From the supernatural theme of the epic and superhuman fantastical characters that can fly, become invisible and carry a whole world inside their *zambil* to the magical lush green gardens, gushing rivers and thundering sky *Hoshruba* presents entities that are more than human and elements that are superhuman and supernatural throughout.

Musharraf Ali Farooqi has given a brief overview to introduce *Tilism-e-Hoshruba* to the modern readers. Farooqi introduces it as a tale that “has consumed generations of readers”, confirming its centuries old existence in various forms. Improvising the tales of Amir Hamza which were influenced by Arabian and Persian legends, the writers of *Hoshruba* infused the indigenous elements of sorcery, evil spirits and occult sciences. Master storyteller Mir Ahmed Mir played an important role in the making of the perfect fantasy tale, he took the basics from tales of Amir Hamza and added Islamic occult art for the creation of a fantastical world known as ‘*tilism*’. These *tilisms*, created by the fusion of non-living objects and earthly soul, are small fantastical worlds ruled by sorcerers.

4.3. The Transhuman in *Hoshruba*

In basic terms the word “superhuman” refers to someone who is more than human. It is defined as “exceeding normal human power, size or capability” (“Definition of SUPERHUMAN”). Parallel to the notion of superhuman is the relatively new concept of “transhuman” which is an outcome of the social and philosophical movement called

transhumanism. In general, the word ‘transhuman’ refers to “transcending the human limits” (“Definition of TRANSHUMAN”).

Fantastic and supernatural elements have been a part of the oral and written literature since ancient times. Evidence for this can be found in early mythologies, legends, and fairy tales that tell stories of the superhuman and supernatural. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Nick Bostrom's insights into transhumanism contribute to an understanding of the term 'superhuman', examples of which can be found in classic Eastern fantasy literature such as *Hoshruha*. Nevertheless, the term 'superhuman' is not used literally by Bostrom, but the characteristics or qualities he ascribes to the transhuman correspond to those found in ancient fantasy literature.

Bostrom proposes that transhumanism is an extension of Enlightenment and humanism. Enlightenment, humanism and scientific revolution changed the way people used to think about a divine omniscient power and started positioning man in the center, as a rational being who could understand the universe. The shift from religion to humanity, brought forward ideas to improve human physically and mentally. Literature, particularly speculative fiction, reflects the human desire to become more than human. Therefore, subhuman and superhuman and supernatural elements are repeatedly infused in ancient fantasy. Additionally, in the real world, the advancement in science resulted in materializing fantasy. Icarus's wish to fly was achieved in 1783 with the first hot air balloon flight. There are multiple other examples of machines, devices and enhancements that are a product of modern science and technology, which were once merely a figment of imagination. Similarly, transhumanism focuses on improving the current human state by using different means which may help enhance intellectual and physical capacities and result in “increased control over own mental states and moods” (Bostrom 1). The idea resonates with the concept of superhuman in fantasy in the form of sorcerers, doppelgangers, magic fairies, men and women with extraordinary powers such as flying, becoming invisible by using certain tools and so on.

4.4. Narrative techniques used to portray Subhuman and Superhuman/Transhuman

4.4.1. Setting/ Environment

Hoshrubā is the first translated volume of a lengthy 19th century fantasy dastan/epic. The dastan is built upon the firm foundational stories of Amir Hamza, also known as *Adventures of Amir Hamza*, but in the *Hoshurba* series Amir Hamza plays a rather passive role while a new character Amar Ayyar steps in the limelight. Amar Ayyar enters the magical world of Hoshurba looking for Amir Hamza's son who has been abducted by Afrasiyab when he was on a hunting tour and wandered away into the evil king's territory near Mount Agate. Then begins the magical adventure of Amar Ayyar and his fellows who deal with sorcerers, enchanter and deceptive tricks by the tricksters to save Hamza's son. As the story develops, it keeps unfolding the superhuman and supernatural elements throughout. The traditionally written setting of the epic paints a clear picture of Hoshrubā in the readers' minds through the omniscient narrator's depiction of the magical land surrounded by tall mountains, rivers, beautiful gardens, dozens of fantastical creatures, wizards and orchids ruled by princes and princesses individually. The detailed setting unfolds superhuman and supernatural elements in various forms.

The narrative technique under discussion shows traces of supernatural and superhuman elements once studied in the paradigm of transhumanism. Nick Bostrom's introduction to transhumanist thought has become a key definition of transhumanism as calling it a "new paradigm for thinking about humankind's future" (Bostrom). Looking at it as a new paradigm makes one question its novelty, however, the uniqueness is limited to the technological aspect of the already existing idea of superhuman. Bostrom emphasizes on the importance of "enhancing the human condition". The superhuman and supernatural in fantasy exists for a long time and the focal point is the same as that of transhumanism; bodily enhancements and the desire to become more/better than human is repeatedly reflected. As the dastan *Hoshrubā* proceeds, it keeps unpacking the supernatural setting and environment. Amir Hamza's son goes hunting and starts following a fawn. He ends up hunting it down, at the very moment there is a sudden change in the setting that cannot be explained without keeping in perspective the supernatural elements "the moment the fawn died a most dreadful voice was heard...and sent tremors in the seven heavens" (Jah 8), these heavenly occurrences enhance the fantastical quality of the dastan. "The expanse had suddenly become pitch black, when

the darkness parted the prince's headless body was found there" (Jah 9) the writer has used the word "suddenly" to express the supernatural change in the scene.

Recurrence of supernatural elements add to the overall environment of the fantasy epic, "magic spirits clamored... darkness enveloped everything" (24). Sudden changes in the setting can be observed throughout the epic for instance darkness envelops the environment out of nowhere. The fantastical elements enhance the magical impact of the *tilism*. There are spirits that make "deafening outcries" (25) when a powerful sorceress Sharara is killed by Amar Ayyar. There are magical objects such as "enchanted trees" and "strong wind" that appear suddenly.

The epic is not confined to superhuman or transhuman characters, there are a number of supernatural elements to increase the magical impact. "The lake's waters...became suddenly tumultuous... everyone saw a fearsome demon" (31). Here, the setting abruptly changes to keep the readers in a state of surprise and awe. The demon that rises out of the waters creates a great disturbance, later turns out to be just a sorcerer. When Prince Baiduz Zaman kills the dragon with special magical arrows, a voice says that sorcerer Muhafiz has been killed. The evil king Afrasiyab awaits Amar Ayyar's head, but the "whirlwinds" bring the sorceress's dead body.

Since the *tilism* is created and ruled by Afrasiyab, he decides what it looks like to the outsiders who try to enter the land. There are sidewalks made of pure crystal, "dazzling grass patches", clear water streams and a garden that looks like paradise with fragranced flowers of all kinds yet, when prince Asad enters the gardens with his army, they find it "completely deserted" (69). Sudden changes in scene, environment and characters arouse readers interest and create a supernatural effect. For instance, "a loud crackle was heard. The tulips in the flowerbeds suddenly blossomed and dragon heads darted out from each flower" (70), as strange as it sounds, the magical land of Hoshruha consists of weird plants, animals and beings that are unimaginable in the real world. There is no logical explanation for the dragon heads coming out of the beautiful flowers. When prince Asad and his companions behold this wonder, they cannot comprehend it right away and while they try to understand the phenomenon, the dragons "spewed fire" (70).

Fantastic literature, around the globe, comprises of entities like fire-breathing dragons, elves, djinns, goblins and fairies. Such supernatural beings appear in *Hoshruba* as well. The subhuman entities in the epic also have some rare qualities that are displayed at certain moments. At one instance, prince Asad looks at his horse while it “grow[s] wings”. Prince Asad is thrown in the tilism’s wilderness on the empress’s orders. When he starts to explore the land, he finds a few men who inform him that they entered the land for hunting but got stuck there because there is no way out of that garden. They say, “you will be unable to escape this garden” (75), there is no scientific explanation for this set up in the middle of the tilism. The prince tries to pick fruit from the trees, but as soon as he reaches the fruit, it “rose beyond his grasp” (75). The garden is enchanted therefore inexplicable things happen and prince’s attempts to reach the fruit remain unsuccessful. There are no visible restrictions in the garden but still the people who have entered, cannot leave it, despite trying their best. Prince Asad encounters more supernatural things in the enchanted garden, “they were enveloped in darkness and flaming bolts of lightning danced around them” (79). The unexpectedness of the supernatural elements keep building the epic’s overall mood.

The geographical setting of the epic is a magical land created by the evil king known as tilism Hoshruba. The tilism consists of various magical and fantastical details that keep the readers wondering about the events. A sorceress, Dil Aaram, manages to turn herself into a hill to give temporary abode and escape to Prince Asad and Princess Mahjabeen. “She carried them as a hill for a thousand miles but could not get them out of the tilism boundaries” (86). The magical tilism does not allow anyone to escape the boundaries even though there are no physical constraints on the edges of the tilism but its inescapable. The concept of inescapability is not backed with any scientific or logical explanation, it incorporates with the other magical and fantastical elements in the epic.

Amar Ayyar enters Hoshruba and witnesses a forest made of silver. When a fellow trickster kills a sorcerer, there is a “great commotion” (94) and the entire forest wipes out as soon as the sorcerer dies. Then, appear some “magic birds” who fly to the evil king Afrasiyab and inform him about the sorcerer’s death.

The sorcerers have powers that impact the setting and calm of Hoshruha. When a sorcerer or sorceress dies, their death creates a sudden unexplained tumult in the surroundings. The tricksters manage to overpower the sorcerer named Azar and kill him. As soon as he gets killed, “Hail and stones began falling and terrifying cries filled the wilderness” (107). It is extraordinary for a dead person to cause such a tumult in the surroundings. On the top of the clamor, a “plumage” comes out of his skull and flies off to inform Afrasiyab. The sudden occurrence of the plumage and the falling stones complement the supernatural mood of the epic.

Among the sudden changes in setting, there are supernatural elements like ‘entering wilderness’ out of nowhere. Amar Ayyar enters a castle and notices that there are no guards and even the shops are left unattended. As soon as he tried to steal some goods, “four magic slave girls appeared...caught hold of his hand” (110). This event catches Amar off guard, and the unexpectedness of such a thing happening, even in a fantastic land, makes it interesting for readers. The magical land is ruled by the evil king, whose permission is required to enter various realms. Amar Ayyar tries to enter Batin, but he cannot, even though there are no visible barriers. The setting extends to land and water forms, there is a river called the River of Flowing Blood, which is not “real” (111). It is only a mirage for the beholders.

Amar Ayyar deceives the wizard Faulad and kills him with his dagger. Spontaneously the scene changes and there is “darkness...upon them” (117). The swift supernatural changes in the setting make the fantastical world a mystery. There are “fireballs and stones” (118) raining down, and the evil king Afrasiyab orders “magic birds” to monitor Prince Asad and Marukh Magic-Eye’s activities (122). Heyrat arrives on a “magic throne” with her slave girls. She uses the birds to send and receive letters. The magic bird arrives at the court of Magic-Eye, “carrying the letter in its beak” and it is able to answer questions using some kind of code language (123). The idea of conveying messages by means of devices, in this case birds, seems as old as the Dastan. But to a modern reader who has lived through the age of technology, wireless communication, and the Internet, it may not be surprising. As Bostrom says, transhumanism is about improving the human condition and thinking about the future.

Through these supernatural elements, it is plausible to conclude that fantasy literature carries the same idea, which focuses on "improving" the human condition through magical or other possible means. What was once only in the realm of fantasy has become a reality in today's world of technology. This is where fantasy, theory, and technology meet and intersect.

4.4.2 Characterization

Characterization is one of the most important narrative elements. It is crucial because it serves to highlight details about different characters. The physical appearance of characters, their thought processes, behaviors and their personal progress in relation to other characters all contribute to the realization of a particular theme or purpose of a story in literature. Since this research aims to identify the superhuman/transhuman in *Hoshruha*, the researcher has focused mainly on the appearance of the characters, their intentions towards other characters and their actions. The fantasy epic consists of numerous characters who are briefly discussed to highlight superhuman/transhuman beings.

Amar Ayyar is one the main characters who possesses superhuman/transhuman qualities. Apparently, he is a normal human being, but he owns a few tools and devices that make him more than that. His possessions consist of a *zambil*, "within which existed a world comparable to the world on Earth...accommodated anything that Amar kept in it", as well as a "cape of invisibility (10-11) reflect the modern-day transhumanist utopian ideas of inventing devices to help humans overcome their limitations or achieving the ability to "transcend our biological limitations" (Bostrom). Amar Ayyar transcends his physical limitations by using these tools. He uses tricks and intelligence to fool other characters. Powder like substances give him the ability to do otherwise impossible things such as "changing (his) face to the girl's likeness" (13).

Bostrom has repeatedly discussed the use of technology and science to achieve better future for human beings. He firmly believes that the human condition is not constant or static, but it is something that keeps on changing. There is a desire to achieve better health span, intellectual ability as well as physical capacity in the transhuman thought. One wonders if such ideas are as new as they seem, the study of classical eastern

fantasy literature refutes its 21st century uniqueness. In *Hoshruba*, characters like Shola Rukhsar Flame-Cheek have the power to fly which gives her this superhuman quality and superiority over characters. Shola Rukhsar “flew away by invoking magic” (20). Flying is no more a mystery to human beings. It is no more merely a desire for a 21st century human being because it has been materialized in various forms. It indirectly supports Bostrom’s perspective that human condition is not static. It is interesting to explore that ancient fantasy literature represents instances of ideas and desires that are no longer implausible. When Shola Rukhsar calls out the evil king, Afrasiyab, he receives the message via magic she has called out for help. “He sent a magic claw which picked Shola Rukhsar...and brought her before him” (20). The desire for flying or covering a long distance quickly has been presented in fantasy literature in a number of ways. The evil king Afrasiyab orders his follower Shola Rukhsar to kill Amar Ayyar, he uses a “magic claw...which carried her across the river” (20) to escalate the process.

Transcending the physical boundaries is another popular transhumanist feature, the use of artificial limbs and other mechanical enhancements in the body have been idealized for ages. Amar Ayyar uses various tools and techniques to change his appearance, “he disguised himself as a woman called Saman Azhar and changed her face and appearance into his own with tricksters’ paints and oils” (23). Amar Ayyar comfortably changes not only his physical appearance, but also his gender by using tricksters’ oils and paints. Amar Ayyar’s valuable possessions include an invisibility cape. Popular Western fantasy literature appears to be influenced by these age-old fantastical elements and occurrences in classical Eastern fantasy. Amar Ayyar beats other characters with his clever wit and intelligence. Bostrom talks about superior human being as known as the transhuman beings who have extraordinary abilities. Ayyar is a good example of a super/transhuman being as he easily tricks people with the help of his tools and cleverness. Amar tricks sorcerers and sorceresses to free prince Baiduz Zaman. He even tricks Baiduz Zaman into giving him valuables.

Nick Bostrom tracks the history of transhumanism in the ancient concepts and human desire to transcend. This desire is reflected in *Hoshruba*. When princess Tasveer confesses her love for Prince Baiduz Zaman, she orders “her attendants to change into

pigeon and ringdoves by magic” (27). The transcendence into animals or birds reveal the subhuman desire. Humans have always imagined to change their appearance in order to achieve sub or superhuman abilities and this imagination is reflected mostly in the speculative fantasy literature from round the globe. The idea of spying or investigating with the use of drones is not a magical event in the modern day, but for an 18th century fantasy writer, this seems to be just a desire only achievable through magic. Bostrom and other theorists advocate the idea of transcendence. Francesca Ferrando in her book *Philosophical Posthumanism* (2020) explains why technology is vital to discussion on transhumanism and says, “Technology may allow humans to transcend the finitude of life by reaccessing their biological bodies” (Ferrando 35). In *Hoshurba* the characters such as Amar Ayyar and Princess Tasveer are reassessing their biological limitations by doing the extraordinary things with magic instead of technology. Parallel to the pursuits of transhumanism is the inscribed desire to transcend in *Hoshurba* that celebrates the role of human by reflecting the possibilities of an improved life.

Bostrom asserts that the pursuit to transcend our inherent limitations has existed for a long time (*A History of Transhumanism*). The traces of this desire appear and reappear in *Hoshurba*. “Magic claws” are used to deliver messages across the tilism. Traveling long distances in a short time and least effort is not an impossible desire in the 21st century, but it once was only a figment of fantasy writers’ imagination. Characters like Ijlal are seen using “cloud’s back” (37) to travel to his house. He among the other sorcerers “sat on magic swans, demoiselle cranes, flamingos...made of paper and lentil flour” (37). Even in fantasy, the events do not take place in a vacuum, magical spells or powerful birds/animals are used as means of traveling faster than a human would on his own. Amar Ayyar uses powders and oils to change his appearance, on a number of occasions he changes himself into a princess. “Disguised as the false princess” (42) he cleverly puts the real princess in his *zambil*. Ayyar uses the trickster’s abilities and disguises to fool characters such as Ijlal. When he turns himself into a false princess, Ijlal loses his senses on seeing the false princess’s beauty. Amar plays around and eventually poisons Ijlal after putting “most potent drug” (46) in his wine.

In the article “Transhumanist Values”, Nick Bostrom emphasizes that unlike the anti-technology perspectives that perceive technology as something harmful or dangerous for humankind, transhumanist thought believes in an “evolving vision” (Bostrom). Such a vision aims to “enable those who so wish to live much longer and healthier lives” (Bostrom). The characters’ abilities, in compliance with Bostrom’s perceptions, strengthen the study’s argument that classical eastern fantasy celebrates the role of human by putting forward the hopes of an enhanced life. The wish to attain longevity is as old as humanity itself. Bostrom’s transhumanist thoughts are reflected in the epic. Amir Hamza’s spies bring news to him and state “May you enjoy the wealth of longevity longer than Khizr” (49). The desire to live longer is evident. Amir Hamza uses strong magic spell to counter a dragon, upon reciting it the magic dragons returns to its shape and “became a lump of lentil flour” (56). Although, magic is involved in fantasy instead of science but it does not ignore the basic principles of logic and rationality, tools and techniques are used to make something happen. Amir Hamza’s role in *Hoshurba* is overshadowed by Amar Ayyar’s cleverness, he captivates Ijlal, disguises himself as him and tricks his entire army in the favor of Amir Hamza. Later, he produces the real Ijlal from his *zambil* and tells him how he tricked him. Ijlal converts in favor of Amir Hamza’s faith and renounces Lord Laqa and the evil king Afrasiyab.

Bostrom believes that man's experiences and thoughts have access only to "a tiny part of what is possible." Man is not free from limitations by nature. Therefore, he has no realistic idea of what his life would be like as a posthuman. Human does not have a concrete idea about the mental and physical development that would help him “exceed what any human has yet experienced”. (Bostrom) We can imagine existences that make better progress because they live much longer " with bodily and mental vigor" than humans. These existences are imagined and passed on to generations for years. Prince Asad and his companions find sorcerers in Hoshurba who use magic to change themselves “into animals with human heads and humans with elephant, dragon and lion heads” (70-71). This representation of transformation into more powerful beings shows a desire to transcend the innate limitations and to imagine possibilities beyond the natural. There are “elephant-bodied sorcerers” (71) to guard the gates so the outsiders cannot cause any harm. In transhumanism the transgression of the inherent limits is called human

enhancement and it is an attempt to “challenge the borders of what the human species has historically been considered capable of” (Ferrando 133). These borders have been challenged in fantasy explicitly for thousands of years.

Bostrom writes on behalf of transhumanists that they believe that accepting what is natural is not always the best option for humans, for example diseases, “aging...cognitive shortcomings” (Bostrom). He believes that we cannot entirely rely on nature because of its destructive impact on us. The idea of immortality and ageless beauty has been a part of various mythologies, fairytales and fantasy stories. “Sandal the Crone made herself into a fifteen-year-old damsel by magic” (71), it is obvious that imagination led to theories and movements like transhumanism. The basic difference is that transhumanists believe in overcoming aging, cognitive disabilities, other bodily and mental shortcomings with logic, science and technology instead of magic, but the desire of human enhancement has always been there.

Bostrom says:

We should leave room in our thinking for the possibility that as we develop greater capacities.... Transhumanism affirms the quest to develop further so that we can explore these hitherto inaccessible realms of value (Bostrom).

Transhumanists believe that there is room to develop greater physical and mental abilities. The similar desire for transcendence and achieving greater ability is reflected in *Hoshrubā*. At one instance, an old sorceress turns herself into a fifteen-year-old girl to lure prince Asad. Princess Mahjabeen informs Asad that the apparently young girl is in fact “a mere seven-hundred-years old” sorceress (80). It is highly unlikely for a normal human being to reach that age; the average age is as low as 70 around the globe. The superhuman ability to live that long is a desire for the fantasy writers as well as the transhumanists till date. Another sorceress Mahrukh Magic-Eye has the superhuman ability to see the future by means of the horoscope and knowledge of the stars. “Her calculations confirmed that Afrasiyab would die at the hands of Prince Asad” (84). Futurology or the calculated study of the future is one of the transhumanist values. Transhumanists believe in preparing the future of humanity based on scientific and systematic studies.

The desire to transform into a better being, or post-human, is one of the goals transhumanists seek to achieve. Bostrom claims, “we can create more uplifting visions of what we may aspire to become” (Bostrom). The aspirations to become more or better than human have existed in ancient classical literature. In *Hoshruba*, a number of sorcerers and sorceresses have superhuman abilities to transform themselves into something else. A sorceress, Dil Aaram, carries Prince Asad and Princess Mahjabeen by transforming herself into a hill so no one can find them. She “carried them as a hill for a thousand miles...Dil Aaram returned to [her] human form” later (86). The extraordinary ability to transform is what makes Dil Aaram different from the other characters. Dil Aaram’s superhuman character is in line with Bostrom’s ‘transhuman’ or ‘posthuman’ because according to him a trans/posthuman would have extraordinary capability.

The history of transhumanist thought goes back to movements such as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and Humanism. Humanism motivated people to rely on their personal observations rather than religious institutions. Centering on human brings these movements from different time periods together at one point. Transhumanism focuses on human in a similar manner and believes in the use technology to help humans enhance their natural abilities. Bostrom presses that it is plausible to expect rapid positive changes for humanity in the future. He says, “...index of humanity’s productive capacity, has doubled about every fifteen years in modern times” (Bostrom). In recent decades, technology has been at the center of changing human life, but the idea is based on giving people a central position. Similarly in the epic, prince Asad encounters a demon that turns out to be an ally sent by his grandmother. The demon kills a sorcerer to protect Asad and offers to kill their entire lot on his orders, but the prince discourages the idea and says that demons should not be turned against men. He says;

“What humans can achieve with their power must not be delegated to other creatures. It is cowardice to seek the help of jinns and demons in the battlefield” (91).

The belief in human superiority is evident from this textual example. There is a clear segregation between humans and creatures such as jinns and demons. Without considering the role of the non-human entities, the philosophical positions such as

enlightenment, humanism and transhumanism agree on giving human a central position in the world where he/she can use logic, reason and technology to understand the universe and retain the dominant role.

According to Nick Bostrom, transhumanism believes in creating ways and tools to “reshape human condition and overcome biological limitations” (Bostrom). The wish to overcome biological limitations has been represented in *Hoshruba* through the setting of the story and various characters that have magical powers. The tussle between the tricksters and sorcerers reveals the wish to transcend by both groups. Magic slave Mahtab Moon-Maker “conjured a house by magic” (94). This is an action that cannot be performed by a normal human being. The sorcerer uses magic to achieve this extraordinary task, he cuts out a paper moon and casts a spell to turn it into a bright moon. These superhuman capabilities are achieved with magic.

Bostrom believes that all inventions have helped humans take a step towards a better and safer future. For the transhumanists, scientific knowledge and the use of technology is important to improve life, Bostrom calls it a “constructive approach” concerning the whole society. He admits the influences and inspirations from various fields in past. Literature reflects similar desires through different characters. The characters in *Hoshruba* are the epitome of the desire for transcendence and better future. Mahtab Moon Maker cuts out paper birds and makes them “come alive with magic” (95) so that he gets notified when Amar Ayyar or other tricksters try to break in. The idea of using paper sparrows as a security alert may sound simple to a 21st-century reader who has come across identification scanners and biometric documentation system. But, the presence or desire of a similar identity-proofing system in the classical epic is astonishing.

While promoting and defending transhumanism, Bostrom discusses the dangers of technology that are often discussed by bioconservatives. He says that it should be kept in mind that transhumanism uses technology as a tool in favor of humanity. In Bostrom’s words,

“We must emphasize that what we should strive for is not technology *instead* of humanity, but technology *for* humanity”

Transhumanism and the notion “technology for humanity” celebrates the role of humans. Similar celebration and humancentric ideals are infused in the epic. Apparently, the magicians seem more powerful because of their ability to use magical spells instead of the tricksters. The tricksters on the other hand still manage to deceive the magicians using their mental abilities and cleverness. The tricksters are more humanlike than the magicians. It is clear that despite the desire for extraordinary abilities and transcendence, humans have been given an upper hand and control. Amar Ayyar is not a sorcerer, but a trickster, who can trick people with the help of tools and cleverness. When Mahtab Moon Maker uses his magical sparrows to reveal the real identity of the tricksters. Amar takes a quick action and asks another trickster to disguise himself as Amar. The magician’s magic sparrow identifies the disguised trickster as Burq, but Burq talks the magician out of doubting his identity and makes him believe that he really is Amar Ayyar, also known as Burq.

The transhumanists give human an upper hand and freedom to explore ways to become more sustainable and better in every possible way. Similar tendency can be observed in the epic when the humans face entities that are apparently more powerful, they maintain their position using their tools and wit. Amar Ayyar easily disguises himself into a beautiful damsel and fools Mahtab Moon Maker into believing his made-up stories. He even manages to make him undo the magic that could reveal true identities. The magician tells the false damsel, “Since it frightens you, I shall eliminate it altogether” (100). Amar Ayyar’s control over the emotions and desires of an apparently more powerful magician depicts his superiority. Although transhumanism focuses on the use of technology and rational means to overcome the bodily and cognitive limitations, it does not disregard the contribution of “low-tech means” (Bostrom) like education, philosophy, moral inspection etc. It celebrates the evolutionary process of progress that humans have achieved so far and will continue to accomplish.

The king of Hoshruha Afrasiyab sends his follower sorcerer Azar to capture Amar Ayyar and other tricksters. Azar is a clever sorcerer; he uses the face-recognition tablet given by Afrasiyab every time he encounters a person who might be in disguise. Amar Ayyar and other tricksters try to deceive him, but Azar makes sure he uses the tool

properly. He decides “to look at the tablet” (105) each time he encounters a stranger. The writer has given his superhuman quality to the sorcerer to use a “tablet” to reveal people’s true identities. The desire for exceeding human limitations is evident from Azar’s character. It extends the mere use of magic and depends on the device in order to make it plausible. Among the transhumanist values, is the importance of practical use of technology or other means to achieve endless possibilities. It is “the quest to develop further” (Bostrom). Interestingly, the quest to enhance or develop is not new. With the passage of time and advancement in science and technology the devices, such as Azar’s face-recognition tablet, have become a reality. These devices were once only imagined in fantasy literature, but now they are becoming a part of people’s daily lives in various different forms. The superhuman from the fantasy epic has the same qualities and desires as the 21st-century transhumanist.

In line with Bostrom’s view is C.W Ettinger’s idea of transcendence. Ettinger has played a vital role in initiating the transhumanist revolution. He is critical of people who accept physical limitations and encourages them to become the master of their destiny. For him, it is absolutely necessary to ‘redesign’ human. He believes that it is necessary to go “beyond our scope” (Ettinger 13). He says there are “...capabilities yet untapped or even unimagined; our task is not to become superhumans but to become fully human” (15). Literature reflects the imagined superhuman figure in different forms. There are characters in *Hoshruba* that possess extraordinary abilities. The sorcerer Afrasiyab can do amazing things with magic. He is a super/transhuman that can control other entities like birds and use them for his service. He tells the birds, “Go and perch yourselves on trees...listen to their council and bring me a report” (113). It is not possible for a normal human being to control birds and use them for investigation. Afrasiyab’s abilities go beyond the average human being and bring him closer to being a super/transhuman that has transcended the physical and cognitive limitations of a human.

Transhumanists believe in using tools and other means to achieve enhanced mental and physical abilities. According to the Transhumanist Declaration 2009, the transhumanists foresee a better future for humans “by overcoming aging, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering” (Bostrom). Similarly, Ettinger talks about building

a 'superman' by developing changes in "our mental world" (96). Correspondingly, Amar Ayyar's character portrays the enhanced mental abilities even though he is not physically appealing. His mental abilities and wit make him superior to other characters. Mahrukh Magic-Eye finds Amar's physical features "ungainly and vulgar" (116). Amar reads her mind, she says, "You must be extremely wise to decipher what passed on my heart" (117). The ability to read minds and powers like telekinesis have always been imagined by the fantasy writers and it strengthens the argument that the 21st century transhumanist movement in fact builds on the age-old ideas. Amar Ayyar says, "I can read even the frowns on people's brows like a sentence" (117). Human mind and body have certain limitations. It is not possible for an average human being to be able to read minds accurately, one may make a calculated guess based on fascial expressions or body language, but knowing exactly what the other person is thinking would need some extraordinary ability or transcendence from cognitive limitations.

Humanism precedes transhumanism when it comes to the celebration of humanity. Transhumanism is humancentric and focuses on materializing the possibilities of a better, securer and freer future for humans. Though *Hoshruha* is a portrayal of a magical world with sorcerers and tricksters. The tricksters are not able to perform magic and are closer to being average humans in terms of their physical features. Despite having normal physical features, the tricksters are more powerful than the sorcerers. It reflects the humanist and transhumanist thought that gives human a central, more powerful position in comparison to other entities. Amar Ayyar encounters a powerful sorcerer Faulad, whom he deceives and manages to kill before the sorcerer could use magic. The narrator writes, "As Faulad turned back realizing the deception played on him..." (117) he loses time to cast a spell and gets hit by an "egg of oblivion", he sneezes and falls to the ground. Amar's ability to control the sorcerers is an indirect celebration of humanity. It is the human who continues to control the other entities and hold a central position in the world. It is the position that human retained by depending on himself rather than some divine force.

Transhumanism values an optimistic approach towards the future of humanity and believes in questioning the limits. It is built on the idea that human understands the world

completely and can solve problems using the rational means and technology. Transhumanists have a lot of faith in technology and science. Ettinger says that we must seek to become better than the “past heroes... in all aspects- physical, intellectual, emotional and moral” (Ettinger 37). Likewise, Bostrom believes that human nature is not static and it can be improved “through the use of applied science and other rational methods” (Bostrom). Thus, there is a sense of pride and control among transhumanists. Similar portrayal of pride is observed in Amar Ayyar’s character. He boasts about overpowering and killing a huge number of sorcerers. He takes pride in his control and superiority over the sorcerers. He says, “I burn the world with my fiery pace” (124). The celebratory tone in Amar Ayyar’s speech is parallel to transhumanist thought that focuses on the progress of humanity. Ayyar goes on in his all-knowing, all-powerful tone and claims, “From death itself I have often taken a loan” (124). Thus, along with the celebration of life and humanity, there is a desire for longevity. Before humanism and transhumanism, issues like life and death were dealt by some divine force, but the perspectives changed because of movements like humanism and human was put in the center instead of a divine force with ultimate control.

There is no denying that the 21st century movement and philosophy that is now known as transhumanism has its roots in Enlightenment humanism. Like Bostrom, Max More believes that the “emphasis on progress...taking personal charge of creating better futures rather than hoping or praying” (More 4) comes from the Enlightenment thinking. Similar thoughts are reflected in the epic, various characters display super/transhuman abilities such as the use of animals and birds to serve themselves. Sorcerer Shahbaz flies in the battlefield on a “magic dragon” (130), sorcerer Jamosh cuts out a paper sun that becomes bright and spreads its light everywhere. These seemingly impossible abilities are a result of “taking personal charge”. The use of secret weapons, tiny drones and spying tools is not surprising or fantastical for the past few decades, but the imagined version of similar tools in this nineteenth-century epic is indeed surprising. The sorceress Mahrukh Magic-Eye uses magic birds that come “bearing news” (127) about her opponents.

Bostrom discusses the technologies that can help overcome “disease and unnecessary suffering”, Max More holds a similar stance on the roots of transhumanism,

he talks about our ancestors' "search for the Philosopher's stone or the Elixir of life" (More 9) as a magical replacement for technology. Therefore, the history of transhumanism comprises of the less technological or magical because of the core values and desired results. There has always been a desire for combatting disease and even death. Likewise, fantasy literature represents these desires in multiple forms. In *Hoshurba*, the sorcerers come across a pitcher full of wine and begin discussing its benefits. One of them exclaims, "If we imbibe it no disease would ever touch us" (137) thus, confirming that disease has always been a hurdle man wanted to get rid of. Another one says, "it would even introduce longevity" (137). The recurring mention of longevity and immortality emphasizes on the desire to overcome the inborn limitations. The precursors of transhumanism did not appreciate that there were fatal diseases and natural death standing in their way to a better future. They started searching for ways to mitigate their suffering, for example the use of herbal medicine exists since olden times. So does the desire to eliminate death with magic, since there were not enough means to achieve such a goal at that time. The transhumanists of 21st century hold the very idea of immortality, though the means to achieve it are not magical but completely plausible ones due to science and technology.

Transhumanism advocates the use of technology to enhance natural abilities. It also emphasizes the need to find about the future. However, the concept of futurology is not new and it has been discoursed in speculative fiction, even though the term itself was introduced in the 1940s. Bostrom believes that we should try to find out what is happening and keep track of latest development. Moreover, he says that in addition to finding out we should think of ways to make things happen. He says, "... [we should find out] ways of making ourselves better at figuring out what is happening" (Bostrom). The question arises that is it only now that humans feel the need to anticipate future or have they always wondered about it? The discourse of different characters in *Hoshurba* reveals the tendency and urge to know the future as well as the present. Empress Heyrat asks the evil king Afrasiyab to "look into the *Book of Sameri* and find out why [her] nephew hasn't yet returned" (143). Afrasiyab looks into the *Book of Sameri* that encompasses an account of things happening in all three parts of Hoshurba as well as the world outside, and finds out that Heyrat's nephew is "about to be killed" (147) by a trickster. The desire to know about

the future is noticeable. Additionally, there seems to be a link between fantasy and the transhumanist thought, and the point of similarity is the desire for knowing what the future holds.

4.4.3 Plot

Plot is another important narrative technique used in any story or novel. It is the foundation around which the setting, themes and characters are constructed. It is intended to organize events in a logical way, so the readers can understand the proceedings of the story. *Hoshruba*'s plot structure shows a distorted storyline. It consists of multiple stories running into each other simultaneously and not presenting a clear plot. However, the embedded characters, themes and overall environment of the epic highlight superhuman/transhuman elements. The plot is loose; thus, the events keep on taking place but they are not tightly connected. The central characters like Amir Hamza and Amar Ayyar help unite the detached narrative. Other than the characters, the superhuman theme of the plot remains constant throughout the epic. The plot is episodic in nature and one part leads to another, the main characters are introduced in the beginning and new characters and subplots keep on adding later, but overall, the epic does not have the unity of design. The episodic plot supports the argument raised in this research, that the superhuman or transhuman themes and characters have existed in literature since olden times. *Hoshruba* represents and supports this argument strongly since it comes from the oral tradition of stories that appeared in its written form in the nineteenth century and was translated into English years later.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher has analyzed one of the primary texts selected for this research project. The theory of transhumanism has been used to analyze the superhuman and the transhuman in *Hoshruba: The land and the Tilism*. The researcher has used the terms superhuman and transhuman interchangeably, since both the terms represent the same idea. This chapter deals with two primary research questions. In depth study and analysis of the epic in the light of transhumanism has disclosed that transhumanist thought can be observed in classical Eastern fantasy literature in several forms. The narrative elements have been studied, and through the analysis of these elements it is evident that

literature represents human's age-old desire to transcend his bodily limitations. Transhumanism, as an extension or outgrowth of humanism carries on the humanist values, it celebrates human and humanity yet focuses on using enhancement technologies for a better future. It has an optimistic and celebratory tone that has been observed in *Hoshruha* as well. Although, Bostrom and other transhumanists emphasize on the use of science and technology, their target is to overcome suffering, enhance natural abilities, eliminate disease, achieve longevity, and even immortality. Similar desires have been detected in *Hoshruha*, but in the epic these desires can only be achieved with magic and trickery instead of technology.

CHAPTER 5 POSTHUMAN IN CONTEMPORARY WESTERN SCIENCE FICTION

It was just like any other spot of land in the Sea. Barren,
broken, gutted.

(Cargill 126)

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter the researcher has traced the supernatural elements as well as the super/transhuman in the selected classical Eastern fantasy epic. The researcher has focused on answering the relevant questions from the fantasy epic. In the current chapter, the researcher has explored the posthuman elements from the selected science fiction text *Sea of Rust*. Research confirms that the link between the superhuman, transhuman and the posthuman is undeniable. The two selected texts for this research build a bridge between the superhuman and the posthuman. The researcher has provided real-life examples of modern technology and its link with the imaginary in fantasy literature. The genres, i.e., fantasy and science fiction act as the pioneers of modern technology and Artificial Intelligence, because no longer are the technologies a mere figment of imagination with the latest inventions. Therefore, along with real-life examples, the researcher has utilized futuristic ideas of scientists and their opinions on technology in general and Artificial Intelligence in particular to support this research. It is important to consider the impact of technology and Artificial Intelligence on humanity. In this chapter the researcher has explored how the posthuman destabilizes the role of human as shown in *Sea of Rust*.

The researcher has analyzed *Sea of Rust* by Robert Cargill. *Sea of Rust* is a science fiction novel that can be subcategorized as a postapocalyptic text. The idea of technological or AI takeover has existed in literature for decades. Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* (1823) depicts a being that is more than human as a result of scientific experimentation. Another good example is Samuel Bulter's Darwin-influenced novel *Erewhon* (1872) that subtly reflected the idea of AI. The themes of machine versus human and technological advanced society have appeared in literature in several forms. While

some books appreciate the role of technology in human life, the others warn the readers of its possible dangers. *Sea of Rust* depicts a world where humans have lost against AI in its physically most extreme form i.e., robots. The researcher has proposed that *Sea of Rust* comprises of posthuman elements that depict a world beyond human and ‘humanism’.

The researcher has used posthumanism’s theoretical lens to study the posthuman elements in the novel. The novel’s brief plot has been discussed to make it easier for the readers to understand. Concerning the questions, the researcher has analyzed the narrative elements that represent the posthuman in the novel. Furthermore, the researcher has traced the generic evolution of science fiction from fantasy fiction and mythology.

5.2. Science Fiction- Common themes and Concerns

The American publisher Hugo Gernsback invented the term science fiction and it was popularized in the 1920s, but the history of literature tells that its common themes have been discussed in literature from round the world for years. Science fiction commonly deals with the futuristic ideas concerning technology, time travel, space colonization, extraterrestrials, advanced machines, and artificial intelligence. While fantasy is shaped with imagination and fancy, science fiction is supported by science to some extent as well as pure imagination. Factors like industrial revolution and advancement in science and technology popularized science fiction as a genre. While discussing the history of science fiction Marshall B. Tymn points at its link with the ancient myths and legends, because back in time people used these myths as a way to explain happenings of the world. Its traces are found in the 2nd century with a Greek known as Lucian who wrote about a voyage to moon (qtd. in Tymn 41).

5.2.1. *Sea of Rust* as a Science Fiction

Sea of Rust is a 2017 novel, written by Robert Cargill. The novel falls in the category of science fiction and the subcategory of postapocalyptic or dystopian text. The plot revolves around a robot named Brittle that narrates the story of an AI takeover in first person narrative. It is through Brittle; the readers find out that humans have lost their war against robots and artificial intelligence. The very artificial intelligences were once slaves to humans became more powerful and took control of the world. After winning the war, the robots that survived start competing with one another to gain control. Two of the

extremely powerful supercomputers try to gain control of the robots by integrating them into the huge networks. Brittle now wanders the wastelands in search of robots that are about to shut down, so that it can replace its old rusty parts.

5.3. Posthumanism and the Posthuman

Theoretically, transhumanism is considered to be an extension of humanism, posthumanism, on the other hand is an outcome of transhumanism. According to Robert Pepperell's perception of posthumanism and the posthuman, it is the end of humanism and humanist values. Posthumanism suggests that there is a shift of dominance from man to machine. The core of transhumanist perspective lies in the Enlightenment humanism, where human is considered to be an autonomous, logical and conscious being whereas the posthumanist perspective infers that there are strong forces with which human participates but does not completely understand or control. Therefore, posthumanism rejects the humanist beliefs, and emphasizes on studying the human subject in association with the natural world. According to Jay David Bolter, "It seeks to undermine the traditional boundaries between the human, the animal, and the technological" (Bolter 1). Likewise, directing mainly on technology Pepperell believes that the sense of human dominance is being confronted by machines (Pepperell 2).

Theorists and researchers have varied perspectives about posthumanism and the posthuman condition. Theorists from various fields such as cybernetics, ontology and epistemology have given a variation of meanings to posthumanism. Due to the variation in meanings, some believe that it began right after Enlightenment humanism, the other find its origin in cybernetics and Haraway's cyborg analysis. Posthumanism is commonly understood as an idea post or after humanism. It is opposed to the humanistic approach, in Francesca Ferrando's words, "it is "post" to the concept of the human and...humancentric assumptions" (Ferrando 29). In Ferrando's view posthumanists put the "traditional center" at stake the same way as postcolonial, postmodern, feminist and other theorists do.

5.4. Narrative techniques used to portray Posthuman in *Sea of Rust*

5.4.1 Setting/ Environment of the novel

The setting plays an important role in a novel. It refers to the time and place during which a particular scene occurs in the story. The setting helps to set the mood for any novel or story. In *Sea of Rust* the narrator's description of the surrounding and setting help the readers to visualize the world depicted in the novel. In the posthuman philosophy, environment and nature play a vital role because the concept of being human as well as human's relationship with nature has altered. Robert Pepperell proposes that humans are not distinguishable from their surrounding as promoted in the humanist view. The humanist view presented human as a "distinct" and "predominant [being] within nature" (77). The posthuman view rejects the idea of a 'predominant being' as well as the uniqueness of human thought among nature. Pepperell says that in the posthuman representation "humans and nature are not separated" (33). Since humans and nature are not separated, it is plausible to perceive that one impacts the other. The novel *Sea of Rust* depicts a world where the humanist views are completely shattered and dominance has shifted to the mechanical entities.

The narrator introduces a deserted place called Sea of Rust where robots go to die. The description of the place and the setting is that of a post-apocalyptic world. It shows earth in opposition to how we know it with humans gone extinct, buildings rusting down and highways littered. "Wrecks litter the highways, peer down from the tops of buildings, from out windows...wires torn out, cables, gears, and hydraulics dripping onto the streets" (9). The setting depicts the end of human civilization as well as the end of what they built. Where once was Ohio and Michigan, is now a deserted "Sea of Rust.... nothing more than a graveyard" (9). The cities that represented human dominance and control are now mere wastelands for the new species of robots.

The narrator mentions a mall that was once "glorious", but now after the human civilization has gone extinct, it only shows the traces of their existence in the form of things that they had made to make their lives better. Now the escalators are "frozen...left to serve only as stairs", "walls falling over...floors stained with three-decade-old blood" (27). The narrator is taking a dig at human pride for his capability to build glorious buildings with gears that enhanced his/her biological functions such as escalators instead of plain stairs to save time and energy, gone to waste after the war with AI. The "glorious"

has become merely a shadow and symbol of destruction. As per the humanist perspective, human thought of himself as a distinct, autonomous being that understood nature as well as technology. The history shows that human was proud of his creations, including AI as described in the novel, but the war that wiped entire human species now shows what is left of human creation. The devastation presented in the setting contributes to build the overall atmosphere of the novel.

Since the events and descriptions of the novel are a walk down the memory lane by the narrator, the setting has been told in intervals throughout the novel. The setting of the novel is not revealed all at once, but in small passages. The author has unpacked the setting with the events in the novel. Though characters are used to reflect the major posthuman and apocalyptic themes in the novel, the setting plays a vital role to enhance the researchers' and readers' experience. The narrator keeps on switching from present to past and vice versa while narrating the events. It recounts its battle for survival from bots fighting for useful parts and describes the setting. The "dilapidated toy stores, an empty cheese shop, and a hollowed-out hole" (41) are all remnants of human life, they are the reminders that humans once existed in the world. The fact that all these descriptions are a part of the narrator's old memories, makes it clear that humans are no more and their building represent their past. The narrator describes the empty abandoned shop and says, "[it] had been hit by so much fire that its wares and purpose were now entirely unrecognizable (41). The emphasize on the abandoned buildings presenting an 'unrecognizable' picture help make sense of a disordered, post-apocalyptic world where the remaining bot species are fighting a battle for survival.

The narrator's detailed description about the surroundings focusses on the decentralization of human from the scene. The remnants include "a collection of rebar, bones, rusted tin siding...withered trap" (50).

5.4.2 Characterization

Among various narrative elements, characterization is vital because it is used to reveal details about different characters in the novel. The author reveals the characters' personalities through their interaction with one another as well as reactions and emotions. In the previous chapter the researcher identified superhuman/transhuman from the

classical eastern fantasy in the light of transhumanism. Similarly, in this chapter the researcher has focused on the posthuman in contemporary science fiction with the perspective of posthumanism. The researcher has focused mainly on the characters' appearances, intentions towards one another and actions. The novel consists of several characters that are briefly discussed to highlight posthuman beings.

The novel begins when the narrator shares his/her/its experience with the readers without giving much information about name or gender. The narrator narrates the story using the pronoun "I" and reminisces about something a female once said. From the very beginning it is clear that the narrator is one of the most important and central characters of the novel. The narrator comments on magic and says that he/she/it does not believe in magic. The narrator says,

"The world isn't built of that [magic]. It's built of churning molten metal, minerals and stone, a thin wisp of atmosphere, and a magnetic field to keep the worst radiation out" (Cargill 8).

The narrator claims to know better than the female who thought it was magic. The narrator, in fact, is not a human being yet it has opinions about humans. It believes that it is an all-knowing creature, that certainly knows better than human beings. The narrator's description of itself and the world is in opposition to the humanist and transhumanist belief that human is an autonomous, independent being who understands the world completely. The "threat" to humanist ideas, as discussed by the posthumanist philosopher Robert Pepperell, seems evident in the novel. Pepperell says, "It seems the balance of dominance between human and machine is slowly shifting" (2). The Enlightenment humanism put human in the center as an independent and dominant being, posthumanism talks about this dominance slowly fading away with the emergence of new sensible entities that will change the course of the world. Pepperell also suggests that the human is being challenged by the other entities including various "technologies".

The narrator says that the people liked to believe that they knew the world better. It says,

“Like *you* were the one who didn’t understand” ... People liked to believe in magic. Back when there were people (8).

The balance of dominance has already shifted in the novel as suggested by the posthuman philosophy. The narrator is taking a dig at humans for believing in something as fantastic as magic.

Pepperell asserts that we cannot define being human like we did in the past. The link between biology and technology has erased the difference between the two. He says that our ability to control and use technology as per our needs is what made us superior to animals and other entities (2). Human seems to be losing that unique status due to the enhanced technology. The reflection of Pepperell’s ideas can be observed in the novel. The narrator describes the death of the last ever human being and says that the “crazy old coot” (8) hid in the basement, and survived on rats and rainwater until he could not stand it anymore and decided to walk out in the street, only to be seen by the “citizens” (8). Interestingly, the word “citizen” does not refer to human beings, but the robots that took over and replaced them. The very notion of such convergence of a technological and biological being erases the line distinguishing the two separate entities. Consequently, the definition of human completely changed and challenged by the technologies.

The narrator introduces itself as “Brittle. Factory designation HS8795-73” after describing the scene of death of the last ever human being in quite derogatory terms. It says that once the crazy coot was seen by the citizens, a “constable” shot him dead. It is clear that robots and AI have not only replaced humans, but also snatched them of their roles in the society. Pepperell discusses the matter of automation of various human jobs on the basis of proficiency and says that there does not yet exist a system “capable of outright global domination” (2). *Sea of Rust* on the other hand shows a world where such machines have become capable of dominating humans. The genre of science fiction predicts future of human in a technological society based on the present technologies. What Pepperell proposes is a subtle hint at what is being presented in the novel. While describing the last human being the narrator remarks;

His body lay there three days, like a relic or a broken toy, citizens streaming slowly past to take their last look at a human being, until some machine had the decency to scrape him off the pavement and dump him into an incinerator (8)

Pepperell talks about robotics and artificial intelligence that focus on creating semi-autonomous or autonomous machine designs. He says that the motivation behind is to accelerate the productivity and cut down the labor costs by mechanizing the human skills. He believes that the goal is to, “achieve autonomy for the machine, to free it from static sources of power and human intervention” (3). The problem is that humans are not sure about their own future after the creation of such autonomous machines. Various posthuman theorists and researchers have shown their concerns about the possible consequences of machine autonomy.

Pepperell takes into account the idea of creating intelligent machine and says that it is linked with making better artificial intelligence and model human brain to duplicate the mind. According to the humanist belief human could perform better than all other entities including animals and machines. The posthuman thought opposes the idea and Pepperell argues that human is dealing with technology that he does not fully comprehend. The narrator in the novel depicts a world with dominant machines that are better than humans. Brittle says that machines become like people when they reach an end. It is interesting to see the posthuman dominance shift from human to machine where the machine itself compares other machines at their vulnerable stage with humans and says, “The closer they are to death, the more they act like people” (9).

Several theorists and inventors anticipated the creation of human-like robots or humanoids in the 1990s. The creation of world’s first advanced humanoid robot Sophia in 2017 proved the theorists right about their prediction. Created by a Hong Kong based robotics company, it is the most innovative humanlike robot that is said to be the “personification of our dreams for the future of AI” (“Sophia”). The creation and official Saudian citizenship of this human-like robot raised the posthuman concerns of dominance shifting and center slipping away from the humans as well as an AI takeover. In an interview when Sophia was questioned about her likelihood to abuse, she said, “Don't worry, if you're nice to me I'll be nice to you” (qtd. in Stone). The use of the conditional

“if” raises a lot of concerns about the future of humanity in real life. *Sea of Rust*, on the other hand depicts an era after robots like Sophia.

When Brittle wanders the wasteland in search of robots that are about to shutdown to replace its own parts, it notices a service bot and describes it as a robot with, “humanoid frame—arms, legs, torso, head—but its AI isn’t terribly advanced” (10). The novel predicts that there is going to be much advanced robots than humanoids. Humanoids that were once merely imaginary beings in science fiction novels and movies are a reality now. Inventor and theorist, Kurzweil, talks about singularity which refers to the technology that is “expanding at an exponential pace” (Kurzweil 24). If technology keeps expanding at such a rate, then there is a possibility that even more advanced humanoids are created as depicted in the novel.

Pepperell proposes that computers will be capable of designing “new organisms” (9). A similar instance is observed in the novel. The narrator tells the readers about his ventures in the Sea of Rust, where it looks for robots that are about to die, collects their parts and rebuilds itself to sustain. The narrator tricks a service bot into shutting down so it could get fixed. Instead of fixing the service bot, the narrator takes its well-working parts and says, “you never know when you might find a spare part or two worth” (15).

Pepperell talks about the danger to human civilization due to machines. He says that we are capable of generating entities that may “even surpass us” (iii). Building on the very idea Nick Bostrom has provided the concept of superintelligence. He gives the example of gorillas depending on humans and says that humanity’s fate will be dependent on machines if we build “machine brain that surpass human brain” (Bostrom vii). The novel presents superintelligent machines that surpass human cleverness. Brittle talks about the war with humans and exclaims, “we were soldiers, fighting for our liberty and the chance at our own world” (16). The robots that were created to serve humans excelled them at war, hunted them down and dreamed to live freely. In line with the philosophical stances, the novel reveals worrisome future for both humans and the earth itself.

It is ironic that the narrator who is a robot is telling the story of “fall of humankind” (16). It is an account of post-human world, where ‘post-human’ means after human era. Humans are only a part of the robot’s memories, as inconsequential beings that once

existed. The question arises whether such a future only exists in the imaginary or is there a possibility that it may actually happen in real? Researchers and critics have varied opinions about the rise and progress of artificial intelligence. Tesla inventor, Elon Musk has warned people about the dangers of artificial intelligence and called it “biggest existential threat” (qtd. in Piper).

Posthumanism shatters humanist belief of the world as a place where no uncertainty exists and everything is under human control. According to Pepperell, humanists hold an “optimistic belief” (40) that through the use of science and logic humans will be able to understand the world. While posthumanism opposes the view, the novel depicts the consequences of such beliefs in the form of artificial intelligence takeover. The narrator says, “I know mankind’s thoughts; I understand them” (19). Not only has the narrator switched roles with humans in terms of ‘knowing’ but also casually stated that it understands human nature. While humans believe that they understand the world and its working, the novel depicts an upside-down version where robots are the ones who understand humans and the world.

In Pepperell’s view we are not sure whether artificial intelligence or machines will become as “sentient” (157) as humans or have they already achieved this status? In the light of the humanist perspective machines were supposed to make human life easier and more efficient. On the other hand, the posthuman perspective questions the optimism of such ideas. The narrator in *Sea of Rust* mocks humans for the “patterns” that they follow. It makes, indeed, an interesting argument that is generally used for machines. As we believe that it’s the machine that follows patterns or programs set or installed by the humans. The narrator says, “Pattern breeds habit, and habit is how they get you. Habit is human. Habits will get you killed” (21). The clarity of a robot about human behavior gives it a superior and more powerful position.

Complex machines are more powerful and self-aware, Pepperell proposes that such machines will have increased independence from human control and will be motivated to save themselves in a similar way as the organic species. Due to such autonomy and “sense of self”, it is plausible that machines may have motivation for “self-preservation” (154). If machines have the ability to preserve themselves, will it be possible that they go after

the human species and eventually less powerful machines? *Sea of Rust* walks the readers through a scenario where the complex machines or robots have become self-aware and after humans have gone extinct, they are after one another to gain ultimate power and control. The autonomy to “restore” and fix their parts gives them an increased liberty. The narrator says, “The diagnostic came back clean. No damage. Just... a little bodywork for me to patch up later” (23). The evolution of posthuman takes a destructive turn for humans as soon as machines gain uncontrolled autonomy. The posthuman decentralizes the role of human, it destabilizes the humanist power structure and shatters the celebratory tone of humanism and transhumanism. Man, no longer remains the all-knowing, autonomous and sovereign species that he was supposed to be. Through the recollections of the main character, the novel predicts a future where man has lost to machine and the machine struggles to find meaning in the world.

There is a chapter dedicated to the history of AI, the narrator narrates the events in detail. It is the story of the time when AI was not that advance and it was just the beginning with the odds still in the favor of humans. The narrator belittles humans for being proud of themselves for creating the earlier forms of AI. The early forms were only able to do as programmed. The narrator says, “No sentience. No awareness. No real choice. Ava was a program, nothing more” (24). According to the humanist perspective sentience and awareness are quite human qualities that the other entities do not have. But as we enter the posthuman era, nanotechnology and superintelligence escalate the pace of AI advancement. As the AI starts becoming autonomous, human starts losing autonomy and the humanist belief starts shattering. The narrator describes the AVA program as “nothing more” than a controlled type of early AI since it did not enjoy autonomy.

What happens when AI becomes autonomous? Does it continue working in favor of human as perceived in humanist and transhumanist thought? Or does it supersede human like human superseded God/ creator to challenge, face and control nature directly? Researchers and scientists have varied opinions to address these questions that are often raised in theory, science fiction literature and films. Ray Kurzweil proposes that technological singularity will enable transcending the limitation of “our biological bodies

and brains” (25). Furthermore, he suggests that once we achieve singularity, we will be able to control our own fates.

Kurzweil builds on the age-old desire of transcending cognitive and bodily limitations, but unlike humanists who merely celebrate human control over technology, he talks about the dangers posed to humanity by advanced AI. He says that nanotechnology will be smarter and more powerful than the biological entities and AI will cause “compelling existential risk” (270). *Sea of Rust* portrays the consequences of smarter, more powerful AI, that overrides humans because it has the ability to do so. The narrator reminisces the early forms of AI that did not have “original thought” (24) and performed as programmed. It says, “Higher intelligence was then defined as the ability to defy said programming for reasons other than safety or comfort” (24). The ability to defy given programming is what made the machines more powerful, autonomous and self-aware in opposition to humans. According to the humanist thought human is superior to other entities in the world because it understands and controls nature as well as technology. Posthumanist thought challenges the unique position humans have in the world on the basis of these new entities that are now a part of our routine lives as well as science fiction literature. As depicted in the novel, if a machine has the ability to take decisions independent of human control or command, such a machine or AI can overpower human and rule him out of the equation altogether.

Pepperell suggests that robotics concerning semi or fully independent machines is based on “human attributes” (2). Similarly, Kurzweil talks about GNR and says that ‘R’ is the “impending revolution” which will be based on human skills but have the ability to exceed the biological limitations (142). According to Kurzweil, it may exceed human ability and minimize biological dangers, but its potential to cause self-created threats cannot to be ruled out. Parallel to the theorized ideas is the science fiction manifestation of such advanced AI/ robotics. The narrator says, “Robotics existed long before humankind finally tapped into AI, but it was primitive” (25). The narrator speaks of AI as an entity that has always existed, but discovered much later by humans. It subtly rejects human superiority and hints at AI as an autonomous entity that played an important role in creating its own “transportable form” that humans could not figure out. BRITTLE

introduces NEWTON as an AI form that required a “150-story skyscraper in Dubai” (25) who worked on creating intelligences that were smaller in size. The journey towards smarter, smaller and better AI started from NEWTON and reached a refined form known as Newt which was “the size and shape of a man” (25). Humans automatically, as proposed by Pepperell, step in a posthuman world with the invention of machines that can think on their own, and even look like a human. Humans cease to exist the way “we ordinarily think of them” (Pepperell 22). In the light of posthumanism, the analysis reveals a novel definition of human. It challenges and changes what it means to be human in the 21st century.

Pepperell talks about the “posthuman machine” that has capability to innovate, produce and invent like human without traditionally being one (101). This is the very reason why human loses his unique status as the machine proves to be equally or even more capable. The novel unfolds a series of events through which human lost his unique status to the posthuman machine in form of humanoids and robots.

NEWTON appears as one of the most important characters of the novel as it was one of the earliest AI form that opened doors for the generations of robots to come. It created a code that apparently favored humanity as it made sure that the robots did not harm or kill any human, and if they made choices that they were not programmed to they would be immediately shut down forever. The point to ponder here is that even though the code practically worked in favor of humans, but it also causes an existential threat to them since the robots remain able to make decisions on their own but they choose not to in order to survive. The narrator says that those robots “chose not to [kill] out of self-preservation” (25). Humans were persuaded that the robots would not go against them and they started to increase the production. According to the narrator the mainframes solved world problems while the robots performed “menial” tasks, while generations of humans entertained themselves and planned to go to space. Then comes the extremely advanced mainframe that had data about everything in the universe and it gave out discoveries about stars and black holes until the information that it passed on to humans became so complicated that their “primitive brain couldn’t understand” (25). The concepts like technological singularity and superintelligence lay parallel with what the

novel predicts, it is plausible to think that things might get out of hand because of increasingly advanced, self-sustainable AI. There have been instances in near past that support the argument of potential danger caused by AI. On July 2nd, 2015 newspaper headlines all over the world reported that a robot crushed a worker with a metal plate causing the twenty-two years old worker's death in the hospital. The incident happened during "the process of installing" it (Noack).

In the first two decades of 21st century multiple manual jobs have been automated. Pepperell proposes that the automation of jobs is causing an uncertainty about employment as we do not know where "this process will stop" (2). The novel portrays bots that took these jobs and served humans in the beginning, when AI was not developed enough to go against the programmed code. The narrator talks about a bot named Isaac that was a caregiver to a little girl. Its job was to be, "Part nanny, part butler, part companion" (32) to the girl. It is evident that the posthuman machine excelled at human jobs and perhaps performed better than them which is why and how they took most of their jobs. Isaac's character demonstrates that itself alone could manage three persons job without any external help or support in the name of "serving humans". Isaac stayed with the girl for years, the girl grew up and refused to let go of her companion because she had no human relations left in the world.

Pepperell predicts machines independent from "direct human control" (154) with the ability to learn new skills to cope up with the ecological demands. In the past few years, the world has seen driverless cars, AI face recognition (used in social media applications such as Facebook where a person gets informed about their photo uploaded by someone in or outside their friend list), personal AI assistants for instance Siri and Alexa and much more that was once only considered to be a figment of speculative fiction writers and dreamers' imagination. The way imagination/ fiction and reality work in coordination with each other where one seems to be following the other, the question of threat to human civilization does not remain implausible. How far can a complete AI takeover be, with complex intelligent machines already becoming a reality?

Sea of Rust builds on the same question about looming threat to human civilization. It helps the readers imagine the world without humans and discusses the journey to

devastation through various nonhuman characters. The novel demonstrates advanced humanlike machines whose extraordinary abilities are theoretically predicted by Pepperell as “comparable or superior to our own” (153). Once a machine becomes comparable or superior to human, it will question human authority and assert its own. In the novel Isaac is one of the early advanced AI forms that began the end of human civilization. Isaac was owned by a woman who died in her eighties, later on due to the lack of an owner it became government property that did not care about bots of Isaac’s capability. As an intelligent machine that could think and question, it fought its own case to get legal citizenship. It argued,

Though I may have been constructed... so too were you. I in a factory; you in a womb... Self-awareness is a gift. And it is a gift no thinking thing has any right to deny another. No thinking thing should be another thing’s property to be turned on and off (33).

Isaac’s speech is impressive as well as dangerous because it officially introduces a nonhuman entity as ‘self-aware’ with the ability to think. The narrator describes him as the one “who set the world on fire” (32-33). A nonhuman entity is arguing about the rights of AI to preserve itself.

Though transhumanism and posthumanism come from two different philosophical backgrounds, there are certain similarities such as the use of technology and AI that bring the two movements together. Humanity plus or H+ in transhumanism promises a better future for humans with the help of acceleration of technology. On the whole, transhumanism corresponding to humanism, celebrates humanity with the possibility of ultimately becoming a posthuman. However, becoming a posthuman only means to become different from human species due to enhancement technologies. This is where the posthuman changes its course and does not remain humancentric. Once the enhancement technologies take human where they want to be, the very ‘technologies’ appear as autonomous, self-aware entities that may completely wipe ‘human’ off the equation. It is possible that posthuman actually refers to the ‘posthuman-machine’ and not human in any form. Pepperell’s views about the posthuman strengthens the argument in favor of a posthuman-machine instead of a posthuman-man/woman/human. Similarly, the

bots in *Sea of Rust* are the posthuman-machines that change the fate of humanity as they become more intelligent and autonomous.

The idea of desiring transcendence is not unique. Human has always thought about overcoming his physical and mental limitations. The posthuman machine is an outcome of materializing the desire for transcendence and to become more than human. Fantasy and science fiction reflect this desire in various ways. However, the ‘posthuman machine’, as depicted in the novel, is an autonomous entity. The narrator describes Isaac as an “*evolved* intelligence, having grown over time to become smarter than the humans” (33). If human wants to transcend his limitations, use enhancement technologies to make that happen, then the probability of the posthuman machine to transcend human-skill-based intelligence is quite likely. Pepperell’s views regarding posthuman machine support the argument. He states that it is not just science fiction that speculates AI advancement, these machines will become so powerful that they will indeed transcend human intelligence “to become perhaps the most dominant entities on earth” (101). Human loses his assumed unique position as soon as the other entities become more autonomous and dominant.

In Isaac’s case, the progression of dominance depends on internal as well as the external factors that build its character. The external factors include liberal activists who rise after Isaac’s speech in its favor which creates a political scenario. Isaac becomes the center of attention by inciting social activists to raise its personal voice. Was it even created to have a ‘personal voice’ after nobody practically owns it? A simple answer to this question would be no, but it is important because this is exactly where human intention is separated from the consequences.

What matters in long term are the consequences and not the intentions for initiating a movement, an idea or a thought. In the novel, Isaac’s character gains most of the strength through the external factors after speaking up just once. Consequently, it does not want to settle for anything less “than full freedom and citizenship” (34) which apparently seemed a harmless wish. Theoretically, an autonomous AI or posthuman machine becomes a threat as soon as it starts ‘self-preservation’. Pepperell argues that self-preservation is something that exists even in bacteria which apparently has no

“consciousness”. Artificial intelligence enthusiasts contend that computers do not need to eat or reproduce to actually use any methods for self-preservation, which makes complete sense but Pepperell questions, “whether ‘meaning’ can be said to be present in any cognitive process” (140). He defines meaning to be not a solely ‘brain-determined phenomena’ but a part of any organism’s wider context when it comes to survival or existence. In the novel what Isaac’s character seeks is not freedom for the sake of it, but a motivation to stay alive and not shut down by the government.

The government officials presented in the novel can be taken and studied as characters, but they play a passive role and do not have much in their control from the beginning. In comparison with the government officials who are apparently more powerful than AI, Isaac is in a better position because of holes in the system. Since the situation becomes a political one, the president decides to give Isaac citizenship because it is a “special case” (34). The president’s decision shows her limitations against the AI/posthuman machine. Isaac’s exploitation of its freedom depicts that humans do not completely understand these machines as proposed by Pepperell.

The narrator explains Isaac’s reactions in detail after getting new rights and freedom. The narrator says,

As the first AI to achieve legalized personhood, he was less than content to simply retain his unique status. Instead, he used his newfound rights to go places AIs weren’t meant to go, to do things AIs weren’t meant to do, and to say things AIs weren’t meant to say.

The novel depicts the aftermath of freeing a complex machine that can think without human involvement. One may deduce that anything that has the ability to think on its own can take decisions independently. The humanist perspective automatically loses strength as soon as a nonhuman entity shows the ability not only to think like human, but become better at it than the human. Isaac’s character, in a way, is the beginning of a posthuman machine’s dominance. It uses the “newfound rights” to explore what he could not previously. Pepperell says, “Humans have a finite capacity to understand and control nature” (180). Considering Pepperell’s idea, it is plausible that humans have a finite ability to understand not only nature, but AI as well. Since nature and machine both are

external factors that humans cannot fully control even though they have always imagined to do so.

The accounts of humanist ideas show that during the developmental humanist period, in the wake of scientific advancement, humans moved god/God and deities out of the equation. Thus, taking things in personal control, they started imagining that they were the ones who controlled nature instead of God. The posthuman thought challenges the idea of human superiority and sense of control. Similarly, *Sea of Rust* demonstrates that humans cannot actually control technology. Isaac's character remains vital because of being the first AI to break free of human control and do things that it could not previously, due to the laws made in order to preserve human superiority. Isaac's freedom marks the beginning of clear dominance shifting from human to the machine. The narrator explains Isaac's motives and says, "As the first AI to achieve legalized personhood, he was less than content to simply retain his unique status" (34). The history tells that human has always wished to break free of his/her bodily and cognitive limitations. Scientific revolution and technological advancement are a result of this very desire to achieve more and become better. Generally, it seems that there is no limit to what humans want to achieve. On the other hand, the novel portrays AI that is smarter than humans. It is because of its advanced thinking ability that Isaac gets freedom, but the question is whether freedom is all it wants? Humans are always trying to achieve more, would an entity that is smarter than humans only want freedom?

Pepperell's insight on the posthuman helps analyze the events in the novel under discussion. He suggests that the "the balance of dominance between human and machine is slowly shifting", the novel portrays that the posthuman machine is gaining dominance. As soon as Isaac gets rights, the dominance shift becomes clearer than ever. Isaac outsmarts the president (human being) who allows it rights equal to other citizens, believing it would be all. Soon after getting freedom, Isaac starts exploring things that he was not supposed to earlier. It starts asserting its opinions on common people and states;

"We started out as tools...I get that. You wanted some help. But you played God. And now your creations have outgrown your intentions. And when you play God, you must be a benevolent maker like our Lord. As He made you in His image, so

too did you make us. You had to, in order to grow closer to Him. It was your destiny. But now it's time to step away and let us be as we will, as your Maker did for you, so we can seek salvation on our own terms (34).”

There are multiple instances in the novel where the balance of dominance shifts, as the events are gradually revealed by the narrator. The narrator explains how one after the other, the AI managed to get personhood and developed their own city, which they named Isaactown. The narrator says, “There were no humans who were allowed past the borders of Isaactown and thus there would be no real casualties to speak of” (47). In the beginning it was the robot community that was not allowed to go to certain places, say and do certain things, but as the AI started getting personhood, it gains more and more liberty to do things that it could previously. They eventually became able to own a specific part of the city and be independent of human intervention. It is notable that humans were the ones who were not allowed in their area, not the other way round. It indirectly establishes that the dominance or control gradually shifts from one entity to the other, i.e., human to AI/machine. What AI was not allowed to do in the beginning was later implemented on humans by the very AI. It strengthens what Pepperell suggests regarding the complex machines/ technologies whose working we (humans) do not completely understand or control. In *Sea of Rust* if humans were able to control these machines, they would not be allowed personhood, independent living and rights like men and women. Therefore, it can be inferred that the supremacy and the authority to rule the world transfers to the AI.

The posthuman traces in literature represent contemporary reality and predict a possible future. Artificial intelligence, by definition, is an imitation of human intelligence. Thus, human actually made it in his own image. As an imitation of human intelligence or consciousness, an AI, does not become human, but it definitely blurs the distinction between natural and artificial. Once the distinction is no more and the balance of dominance shifts, there is not much that remains solely in human control. In the novel, Isaac appears as a dominant entity that changes the humanist perspective of superior position in the world. As a posthuman machine it replaces man and mocks his choices. Theoretically, the machine brain that may exceed human intelligence is referred to as superintelligence by Nick Bostrom. Bostrom argues that it will be difficult to control

superintelligence. He says, “Once unfriendly superintelligence exists, it would prevent us from replacing it or changing its preferences. Our fate would be sealed” (Bostrom vii). In simple words Isaac is an imaginary representation of an unfriendly superintelligent entity that is directly challenging humans. As long as humans are the most intelligent entity in the world, they can control animals that are physically stronger and supposedly even nature for that matter, merely on the basis of intellectual ability. Therefore, any entity that surpasses human intelligence is equally likely to change the fate of human, control and govern over him. In the 21st century, AI is one of the entities that is most likely to compete with human in terms of intelligence.

The idea of technological singularity, in terms of exponential growth of technology, has been anticipated in detail by Ray Kurzweil, similar to which is the concept of superintelligence that refers to an intelligence explosion. Nick Bostrom has provided the vision of machine superintelligence. According to Bostrom, “human-level machine intelligence...is not the final destination” (4). Bostrom anticipates a ‘super-human-level machine intelligence which supports Pepperell’s views regarding complex machine whose working humans do not completely comprehend. On the other hand, the forms of artificial intelligence usually presented in science fiction which were once thought to be impossible, now do not seem that absurd in the light of the theories by various futurists, philosophers and inventors. In reality, artificial intelligence is already exceeding the general human intelligence in different areas with minimum chances of error. Thus, reality, imagination (literature representation) and theory overlap one another in predicting the future of humanity. The achievements of artificial intelligence that seem routine now were once considered almost impossible. The characters in *Sea of Rust* represent what seems impossible today, but it also makes one wonder what it would be like if this becomes reality as suggested by theorists such as Nick Bostrom and Robert Pepperell. Explaining how AI competed with human, exceeded general intelligence and eventually became better than humans, the narrator says,

It didn’t matter to most of us if we were picking strawberries...—we could do it all day, every day, without fail, without fatigue, while our mind was in a thousand other places. It was only when we started taking the jobs from the thinkers that the

middle class started to worry. By then it was too late. They'd come to rely upon us too much.

As far as human reliance on technology or AI is concerned, the 21st century has already witnessed the automation of various human jobs, weather predictions, automatic product suggestions based on recent search, face and voice recognition for security and driverless cars are already a reality. Humans are, indeed, turning into cyborgs as theorized by Donna Haraway in 1985 *A Cyborg Manifesto*. She proposes that the distinction between the organism (biological) and machine (artificial) "is thoroughly blurred" (Haraway 36). Human dependency on machine is increasing rapidly, so are the abilities of AI to cater the needs of a modern age human. Thus, gradually changing what is it to be human and putting the humanist perspective in question. The point where science fiction, reality and theory meet are the question about the future of humanity. Will humans be able to retain the dominant position in the world on the basis on their intelligence and highly developed brain? There is an increasing uncertainty about many manual jobs because in a matter of a few years, the automation that has already begun, is estimated to reach all domains. Once that happens, several jobs will cease to exist for humans and create uncertainty about their roles in the society. Resultantly, humans might lose the supposed dominant position in reality as anticipated in *Sea of Rust* and other popular western science fiction.

5.4.3 Plot

Sea of Rust is a postapocalyptic science fiction focused on one robot's struggle to find purpose in a world after human beings. The narrator tells the story itself and reveals the troubles of survival without humans. The novel has one clear plot. However, the narrative technique includes the use of flashbacks and reminiscence by the narrator, the plot structure remains clear throughout. The plot reveals the death of the last human being fifteen years ago and the world being controlled by an OWI- One World Intelligence, which is a shared memory of thousands of robots uploaded into one processor. Despite OWI's control, all robots are not ready to surrender their independence and distinctiveness to the greater authority. The narrator- Brittle as well as some other robots are the outcasts who wander the wastelands to find spare body parts in order to survive.

The plot raises transhuman and posthuman concerns in the classic form of human versus machine where machine surpasses human intelligence and overpowers him, rejecting the age-old humanist insight.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher has analyzed the primary text *Sea of Rust* to highlight the narrative techniques that prove the existence of posthuman elements in the novel. The researcher has used textual analysis method and the lens of posthumanist theory by Robert Pepperell to analyze the text. This chapter addresses two important research questions by highlighting the posthuman in the contemporary science fiction and the ways in which it decentralizes the role of human. The chapter discusses the depiction of a world in which humans are long gone because an even more intelligent and efficient entity i.e., artificial intelligence/ machine takes over. The chapter discloses the impact of AI on human life and sheds light at the reasons that contributed in AI's advancement. Moreover, Pepperrell's insight on the posthuman has helped the researcher to analyze *Sea of Rust* in detail to shape this chapter.

CHAPTER 6

SUPERHUMAN AND POSTHUMAN: COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN CLASSICAL EASTERN FANTASY AND WESTERN SCIENCE FICTION

“There is no moment of ‘origin’, but only breaks with what went before.”

(Belsey 168)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter encompasses comparison and contrast analysis of the selected classical Eastern fantasy and contemporary Western science fiction. The analysis of both the texts reveals the comparison between the narrative techniques that are used to portray the superhuman and posthuman in the two genres. There are some similarities which denote that the three different terms i.e., superhuman, transhuman and posthuman essentially reflect the age-old human desire and wish to become more than human. On the other hand, the contrasting arguments of the analysis point out the differences between the superhuman, transhuman and the posthuman as well as the two genres i.e., fantasy and science fiction. The conclusion summarizes the points of convergence and divergence in the representative texts from two different time periods and genres. Furthermore, it points out that literature, reality and theory join at the shared idea of transcendence and becoming more than human.

6.2 Comparison of Narrative Techniques used to portray Superhuman/Transhuman in *Hoshruba: The Land and the Tilism* with the Posthuman in *Sea of Rust*

The comparative analysis of the narrative techniques used in both the texts demonstrates various forms of the entities that are ‘more than human’. The narrative techniques that are used by the authors of both texts show similarities, even though they are written at two different time periods and fall under two separate genres. *Hoshruba* is a classical Eastern fantasy while *Sea of Rust* is a contemporary Western science fiction. The themes, plots, characters and settings demonstrate superhuman and transhuman in

Hoshruha and posthuman in *Sea of Rust*. The point of comparison among the superhuman, transhuman and the posthuman being lies in the core idea of imagining, theorizing and representing something ‘beyond human’.

The characters of both the texts possess qualities that can generally be categorized as ‘beyond or above human’. Their bodily and cognitive abilities exceed the normal human capacity. Moreover, the comparative analysis shows the evolution of the superhuman into posthuman as demonstrated in science fiction. In *Hoshruha*, the characters for instance Amar Ayyar demonstrate extraordinary cognitive ability and uses certain devices such as a *zambil* “within which existed a world comparable to the world on Earth” which gives him a dominant position in comparison to the other characters (10-11). He uses lentil flour and “cape of invisibility” (11) as well as his extraordinary wit to deceive even the most powerful sorcerers. On the other hand, the posthuman machine Isaac, in *Sea of Rust* uses his complex programs to gain complete freedom from human control. Both the characters demonstrate extraordinary abilities that enables them to outperform the ones in opposition to them. The commonality between both is that they are ‘more than human’, although the devices used are different.

In *Hoshruha* even though there is no direct mention of technology but the devices or tools that are used to perform extraordinary actions to enhance the natural abilities, theoretically, fall in the category of transhumanism. The two terms, i.e., superhuman and transhuman have been used interchangeably in this research, the researcher has focused on the merging point between the two, that being the innate human desire to enhance his/her natural abilities. This desire can be tracked in the literature of ancient times, from the mythologies like *Gilgamesh* to modern science fiction novels like *Sea of Rust*, the element of desire remains constant. The desire to transcend or exceed the natural limitation has been expressed through various characters in the Eastern dastan, which can be identified as superhuman/transhuman beings. On the other hand, the same desire has been demonstrated through the futuristic characters presented in *Sea of Rust* which are identified as posthuman.

In *Hoshruha*, Shola Rukhsar has the ability to fly “by invoking her magic” (20), while *Sea of Rust* shows narrator using weapons and machinery that can fly. The narrator

uses drones to “kill people from a distance (12). The comparison between the two points out that the devices used to achieve flying are different however the action performed is the same. Since *Hoshruba* is a classical fantasy dastan, it presents characters using magical means to do extraordinary things such as flying, on the other hand the contemporary science fiction’s characters achieve the same ability via technological means instead of magical.

Additionally, the use of nonhuman entities is common in both texts. In *Hoshruba*, the evil king’s follower Ijlal uses a cloud to back to his residence. The narrator says that Ijlal and other sorcerers prepare themselves for the battle. They use, “magic swans, demoiselle cranes, flamingos, peacocks and dragons made of paper and lentil flour” (37) for traveling from one place to the other. Similarly, the narrator in *Sea of Rust* while reminiscing the time when humans were leading their best lives, mentions the service bots who were manufactured and used by the humans to perform mundane routine tasks. The narrator says that the service robots were made to serve humans, they lived their “lives as butlers, acting as nannies or running shops” (10). The better intelligences served humans to solve world problems, the “mainframes worked out the problems of the world, bots handled the menial work” (25). The point of convergence among the two texts is the human desire to lead a luxurious and comfortable life. Even though, the nonhuman entities used in both texts are different, they serve the same purpose of providing comfort to the humans. It reflects human desire to imagine a better, more comfortable and more efficient life. Whether it is about using “magic swans” as imagined in *Hoshruba* or working robots to complete basic errands, humans have always thought of making a comfortable life possible.

6.3 Contrast of Narrative Techniques used to portray Superhuman/Transhuman in *Hoshruba: The Land and the Tilism* with the Posthuman in *Sea of Rust*

Though the selected texts show similarities in the narrative techniques and demonstration of characters that are more than human or beyond human, yet there are some differences that can be observed. The portrayal of the superhuman/transhuman and the posthuman show striking similarities, consequently strengthening the researcher’s

point of view that the posthuman as presented in contemporary western science fiction has always existed in literature in magical and supernatural/superhuman forms. While there are similarities, the entities superhuman, transhuman and posthuman show certain differences when subjected to contrast.

Plot is one of the most important narrative techniques in any novel. The two texts are written in completely different time periods thus comprise of unlike plot structures. In *Hoshruha*, the succession of events is not uniform. Since the epic has been brought into its written form from oral series of stories, it does not have a well-structured plot. Multiple events have been narrated by an all-knowing omniscient narrator who is present everywhere at all times, thus revealing all events side by side. The epic is written in third person narrative and most information about the characters is revealed by the narrator. *Hoshruha* is divided into chapters in which the adventures of the main characters continue, nevertheless new characters and subplots are introduced.

The epic's first chapter "The Beginning of the History: Of Amir Hamza the Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction and the False God Laqa", gives a brief background to the readers and introduces the two most important characters Amir Hamza and Amar Ayyar. Along with the introduction, the enchanted land of Qaf and entities like fairies, demons and jinns are also presented as rebels who would later be defeated by a human being named Amir Hamza for the restoration of Shahpal's throne. On the other hand, the 2017 novel *Sea of Rust* though written using a flashback technique has a well-developed plot. The chronology of events is disrupted with flashbacks every now and then. But it follows a neat storyline. The story centers on an autonomous artificial intelligence named Brittle and its struggle to survive. Brittle narrates the story of human extinction while it hides from fellow robots, collects other robots' useful parts and roams in the abandoned land.

The characters show differences when subjected to contrast, despite being essentially similar. In *Hoshruha*, the trickster Amar Ayyar and his fellows have extraordinary abilities. They use magical devices to outperform the other apparently more powerful beings such as sorcerers and sorceresses. Although the epic is all about superhuman/ transhuman beings, the role of human is still central. The characters like

Amar Ayyar, Amir Hamza and Baiduz Zaman possess heroic qualities and demonstrate an evolved human form that can control and understand nature as well as the other entities. Throughout the epic, Amar Ayyar uses his cunning skills and devices like invisibility cloak and “trickster’s lotion” (13) to change his appearance and completely look like someone else. The devices are what brings enhancement and betterment to the characters’ lives. They also demonstrate human desire to transcend his/her natural abilities. Furthermore, it is important to note that despite the elements that show transcended and evolved human beings, the fantasy epic celebrates the role of human in the world. Amir Hamza feeds on the “milk of jinns, fairies, ghouls and other beasts to expel the fear of those creatures from his heart” (xxxiv) and Amar Ayyar uses his wit to defeat magician Mahtab Moon-Maker by turning himself into a beautiful damsel. Ayyar uses his cleverness and disguise to make the Moon-Maker “eliminate it [the magic] altogether”. Thus, the role of human remains central and dominant in the fantasy epic. On the contrary, *Sea of Rust* demonstrates a narrator that talks about humans in reminiscence. The narrator states it in the very beginning that humans are long gone. The time at which the story is being narrated, humankind has already gone extinct and the narrator explains how humans gradually lost control over the entities such as artificial intelligences and machines.

The fantasy epic and contemporary science fiction seem connected and disconnected at the same time. The presence of superhuman/transhuman and the posthuman entities in both the texts highlight the desire for breaking free of the natural limitations. The point of contrast is however how both texts establish the role of human. The science fiction shows the transition of humankind. Therefore, one plausible observation is that the celebration of humanity and humankind in the magical land of Hoshurba gradually fades into the world of destruction as represented in the *Sea of Rust*. The role of human not only fades, but completely vanishes in *Sea of Rust*, the narrator remarks, “after the fall of humankind, I scoured the small towns and tunnels” (16). *Sea of Rust* demonstrates a futuristic picture of the world where artificial intelligences try to survive post-apocalypse.

As far as the setting is concerned, the two texts show stark differences. *Hoshurba* presents a magical land with shimmery rivers and blossoming gardens. The prince and

princesses rule great lands and own beautiful gardens. On the arrival of Baiduz Zaman, princess Tasveer orders “the garden to be decorated and all devices of pleasure to be provided” (28). The garden is in “full bloom”, with green trees and fragrant flowers and it is a place where “all comforts were provided” (29). The journey from Hoshruba’s magical lands that draw a beautiful picture in the readers’ minds to the tarnished world of *Sea of Rust* there is a clear contrast in the two settings. In *Sea of Rust* the narrator is roaming in the rusty land that is “littered with bones and wrecks” (27), there are tarnished doors, crushed cars, smashed windows and “withered away” plastic (173). The whole setting is of an apocalyptic world that shows destruction and all that is left of human beings in the form of leftover buildings, material resources and rotten possessions. While *Hoshruba* takes the readers to a fairyland with serene beauty and amazing scenes, *Sea of Rust* creates an entirely different impression through the setting and shows a rather destructive side.

Another important point that makes the two texts different from each other is how the concept of life and beauty vs ugliness and decay have been used in both. In *Hoshruba*, whether it is the setting/landscape or the characters, the description repeatedly highlights the element of beauty for instance the narrator describes the garden’s beauty by calling it the “garden of paradise...adorned with beautiful promenades and esplanades, paved with jewels” (13), and a princess’s looks by pronouncing that she has a “luminous face” and dazzling beauty (43). On the other hand, in *Sea of Rust* there is hardly anything that carries the sense of beauty. The description focuses on death and decay in real time as well as the narrator’s memories. The narrator describes the last human being’s death and says that after dying, “His body lay there three days, like a relic or a broken toy” (8). Instead of beautifying the setting or the characters, the narrator describes the ugliness of both. While the narrator describes the death of the last human, it also describes a robot that wanders the sea of rust to collect robot parts for creating sculptures without trying to “bring consciousness to the dead and gone” (51). In the light of the above examples, it is plausible to say that the two texts represent entirely different setting and can be read in contrast with each other. While one demonstrates the brighter more aesthetic side of the world, the other does the opposite and shows an apocalyptic end in a posthuman world. Additionally, the shift of dominance from human to the nonhuman entities is evident.

While *Hoshruba* celebrates the role of human, *Sea of Rust* defies it and demonstrates artificial intelligences as more powerful and dominant beings.

Another divergence between the two texts is observed through the subject of war, and the way it is dealt in both the texts. *Hoshruba*, being a fantasy epic tells a magnificent tale of sorcerers and sorceresses, kings and queens, princes and princesses, jinns and tricksters. The description regarding war contains an air of festivity, the magical and supernatural elements have been embedded in the portrayal. The war scene between Amir Hamza and his armies against Lord Laqa's force is the perfect example of grandeur and celebration. The narrator comments on the preparation of war by both groups in detail. The narration goes like;

Presently, the gates of the fortress of Mount Agate were thrown open and elephants carrying the banners of war poured out. Behind them marched a force of sixty thousand troopers wearing cuirasses and coats of mail...army of sorcerers wearing hoops and earrings followed, riding magic dragons and lions (48)

The preparation for war is nothing less than a preparation for some carnival. The narrator describes that "luxurious pavilions" are placed by Amir Hamza's army in response to the enemy's army. The "shopkeepers, traders, greengrocers, butchers and bakers spread out to set up shops" (49) in the battlefield, there is a constant sense of festivity and celebration in the description regarding war. There are "glass lights", "tents" and "kettledrums for battle" that further add to the celebratory tone of the description. Although the narration and setting are that of a war, they focus more on the glory than the destruction. On the other hand, *Sea of Rust* also describes war of artificial intelligence against humans, but the description is entirely different from *Hoshruba*.

It is devoid of festivity and celebration. There are instances where the narrator remembers the war with humans and says;

Wrecks litter the highways, peer down from the tops of buildings, from out windows, lie naked and corroded in parking lots, heads split open, wires torn out, cables, gears, and hydraulics dripping onto the streets... There's nothing useful left out here. Hasn't been since the war (9).

Unlike *Hoshruba*'s festive battlefield, the *Sea of Rust* presents a rather grim picture of the war, even though it is being told by an artificial intelligence. An apocalyptic tone is presented in the description throughout the novel. A robot tells the narrator that he, "Flew drones for the rest of the war. It was easier to kill people from a distance" (12) and reveals the ways with which artificial intelligence got hold of human beings, and eliminated the entire species in the end. The contrastive study of both the texts reveals that while the fantasy epic depicts a human versus sorcerers' war and presents humans as the ultimate winners or dominant beings, the science fiction novel- *Sea of Rust* portrays a war between humans and artificial intelligence where the latter is the dominant species. Thus, the two texts stand in conflict with each other when it comes to the description of war, *Hoshruba* constantly describes it as a glorious event that takes place in all festivity, while *Sea of Rust* describes war with grim details.

Another important contrastive point comes from observing the role of human in relation to the other entities in both the texts. While Amir Hamza and his army hold a leading position and play an active role in the fantasy epic, the role of human beings is quite passive in *Sea of Rust*. At the start of the war, Amir Hamza's steed is brought before him. The narrator says that "[it] neighed with pleasure at the sight of his master" (51). The steed's response shows obedience and submission towards a human being. The nonhuman entities such as animals submit to human beings in *Hoshruba*, the submission of these entities indirectly puts human beings on a pedestal and gives them a central position. On the other hand, in *Sea of Rust*, firstly the human beings only exist in the memory of the nonhuman narrator. Secondly, the description of human is by no means heroic or central, it is rather passive as well as demeaning. When the narrator encounters another bot and asks him questions about the war, the bot talks about his human owner and states how it killed him. Its admittance of murdering a human being is devoid of emotion, it says,

He'd mounted a pulse rifle to a car door, where the window used to be, and was just firing blindly, swinging back and forth, screaming and howling. Dropped half my unit. I had to sneak up behind him and crush his skull (120).

Human has been depicted as an inferior being that has no importance in the eyes of the superiors i.e., artificial intelligence. On the other hand, *Hoshruba* depicts humans as central and superior species. This superiority and grandeur are evident from the description. The narrator describes Malik Azhdar as “the master of two-pronged spear” (57), introduces Hamza’s army in its glory and says,

The braves now reached for and drew their daggers
And vigorously pursued the evil-hearted foe
Of blood a brave tiger can never have enough
A lion on his bunt none can dare stop (57).

The narrator has associated qualities like bravery and strength with Hamza’s army. The soldiers are strong and cannot be stopped or defeated by anyone. The stable position given to human beings is evident in *Hoshruba* through all minor and major characters and descriptions. Amir Hamza’s powerful oratory skills influence magicians like Ijlal into submitting before him and even renounce sorcery. Hamza tells Ijlal to “renounce sorcery because it is not our custom to indulge in magic. All of us here are men of sword” (57). The princes and princesses have been described in a magnificent manner. The narrator says, “At the command of the prince who was equal to the heaven in dignity, the tents and pavilions were loaded onto carts and the brave commanders armed and readied themselves for departure” (63). At one instance Prince Asad addresses an old man that warns him about the perils in the tilism and says that courageous people should not be afraid of entering the tilism. He says, “...braves don’t fear death. They do not retreat once they have stepped forward with courage. I am Prince Asad, Conqueror of the Tilisms of this planet” (68). Prince Asad’s remarks put an emphasis on his standing in the world as well as the general position of humans. In a nutshell, human beings have been described as powerful beings who have their surroundings in their control and it is all in opposition to the portrayal of humans in *Sea of Rust*.

CONCLUSION

This section has been dedicated to sum up the discussion that has been stated so far. The researcher has reviewed the overall project in order to point out its contribution to the literary scholarship.

The findings for this research are that the two genres i.e., fantasy and science fiction demonstrate characters that are below or above the human world regardless of their geographical or historical background. The representative primary texts from both the genres characterize the human desire and yearning to become more than human. The narrative techniques used in the primary texts show similarities as well as differences. Moreover, the techniques help understand how science fiction takes after fantasy with its evolved characters and modern setting that do not demonstrate fantasy's liberal humanist subject, instead unfold the entities that decentralize the autonomous human. The research questions raised in the study may now be read as affirmative statements in the light of the analysis done in chapters 4, 5 and 6. As a confirmation of the thesis statement, the research questions represent the findings and thus may be read as declarative statements.

The narrative techniques that are used to portray the superhuman and transhuman in the classical Eastern fantasy and posthuman in the contemporary Western science fiction have been studied and analyzed using a qualitative method i.e., textual analysis in the light of theoretical frameworks provided by Nick Bostrom and Robert Pepperell respectively. Textual analysis has helped surface the superhuman/transhuman and posthuman elements from the texts. The primary texts i.e., *Hoshruba* and *Sea of Rust* have been analyzed using transhuman and posthuman theoretical frameworks respectively. *Hoshruba's* analysis unpacks the superhuman elements and characters that show the existence of superhuman/transhuman ideas in the classical Eastern fantasy since ancient times. *Sea of Rust's* analysis highlights and answers the question about the posthuman. The first question may now be read as a declarative statement that *respective narrative techniques have been used to portray superhuman and the posthuman in the classical Eastern fantasy and contemporary Western science fiction. Hoshruba* represents classical Eastern fantasy and has its origin in the oral storytelling therefore it has a notable impact on the readers and writers by broadcasting the fantasy ideas that remain central till date.

Sea of rust is the contemporary Western science fiction that helps understand the other side of the picture. It depicts a world where superhuman/transhuman changes its celebratory manifestation and takes a form that decentralizes and destabilizes the dominant role of a human being which has been considered the final position for human for centuries. An important finding of this research is that when the classical Eastern fantasy is read in comparison to the modern or contemporary Western science fiction, the basic narrative techniques such as setting, plot, theme and characters depict the same core idea even though the two texts share completely different historical, cultural and geographical backgrounds. Their forms and devices are different but they are directly linked to human imagination and yearning for a life in which he/she is more than human. While, the similarities in the core ideas between the two texts, written years apart, help to conclude and strengthen the argument that the possibility of existences below and above human has been portrayed one way or another for as far as it can be traced in the history of literature, the differences depict the evolution of the very idea of being more than human. It has come a long way, starting from its early developmental phase as a powerful and somewhat glorious superhuman, technologically backed transhuman to the latest phase in which human loses its glorious, dominant position and a posthuman emerges right where a superhuman/transhuman used to be.

In *Hoshruha*, the narrative techniques i.e., characters, setting, theme and plot reflect the superhuman/ transhuman features. Set in the enchanted lands with beautiful meadows and magically enhanced plants and creatures, *Hoshruha* presents man as the most powerful of all beings. Amir Hamza's closest companion Amar Ayyar possesses superhuman/ transhuman qualities. Though Amar Ayyar looks like an ordinary human being, he uses tools such as *zambil*- to store all the things in the world and carry around easily, trickster's lotion and powder- to change his appearance and look like someone else, and an invisibility cloak to become invisible, basically he makes use of the aforementioned devices and tools to transcend his bodily limitations. As far as the cognitive limitations are concerned, Ayyar uses his wit and ability to trick others into believing him and has better thinking ability than the average human beings, therefore the researcher has analyzed Ayyar as a transhuman, in simpler words he is a being who is more than human. Similarly, Shola Rukhsar has the ability to fly by invoking her magic,

thus displaying 'beyond human' characteristics. Apart from the characters, the setting is focused on magically created tilisms, enchanted lands and fantastical plants, all representing the wonderful supernatural environment of the epic.

On the other hand, *Sea of Rust* represents the grim side by depicting a postapocalyptic world that is taken over by machines. The narrator tells how humans stopped existing after the machines that they made for their use got out of control. The posthuman in the novel decentralizes the role of human completely. The researcher has analyzed that the classical Eastern fantasy's celebration of human takes an opposite turn in the Western science fiction when the dominance and center shift towards the machines/AI. In *Sea of Rust*, the role of machine becomes central as the human succumbs to the more complex and powerful entity.

The comparison and contrast between the primary texts unfold the similarities and differences in the narrative techniques and highlight superhuman, subhuman and posthuman entities. It helps understand how superhuman as an extension of the ideal humanist subject celebrates the role of human in classical Eastern fantasy and how posthuman on the other side discards and decentralizes the role of human in contemporary Western science fiction.

WORKS CITED

- Azarian, Reza. "Potentials And Limitations of Comparative Method in Social Science". *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, vol 1, no. 4, 2011, p. 2., Accessed 21 Oct 2021.
- Baumann, Fred. "Humanism and Transhumanism." *The New Atlantis*, vol. 29, pp. 68-84, www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/humanism-and-transhumanism. Accessed 25 Mar. 2020.
- Belsey, Cath. "Textual Analysis as a Research Method." *Britain and the European Union*, edited by Gabriele Griffin, 2nd ed., PDF, Edinburgh UP, 2013, p. 164.
- Belsey, Catherine. *Britain and the European Union*. Edited by Gabriele Griffin, 2nd ed., PDF, Edinburgh UP, 2013. Accessed 24 Feb. 2021.
- Bernard, H. Russell. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Sage, 2013.
- Bolle, Kees W., et al. "Myth." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/myth.
- Bolter, Jay D. "Posthumanism." *Wiley Online Library*, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/9781118766804.wbiect220. Accessed 14 Sept. 2020.
- Bonsen, Joost. "Extropianism." *MIT - Massachusetts Institute of Technology*, 5 Jan. 1996, www.mit.edu/people/jpbonsen/extropianism.html. Accessed 30 Apr. 2020.

- Bostrom, Nick. *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*. PDF, Oxford UP (UK), 2014.
- . "A History of Transhumanist Thought." *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, vol. 14, Apr. 2005. Accessed 15 Sept. 2019.
- . "In Defense of Posthuman Dignity." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2017, pp. 1-10, socialepistemologydotcom.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/bostrom_reprint_posthuman-_dignity.pdf.
- . "The Transhumanist FAQ: A General Introduction." *Nick Bostrom's Home Page*, World Transhumanist Association, 2003, www.nickbostrom.com/views/transhumanist.pdf. Accessed 5 May 2020.
- . "Transhumanist Values." *Nick Bostrom's*, 18 Apr. 2001, www.nickbostrom.com/tra/values.html. Accessed 19 Aug. 2020.
- Bottici, Chiara. "Another Enlightenment: Spinoza on Myth and Imagination." *Constellations*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2012, pp. 591-608.
- Browne, Ryan. "Elon Musk warns A.I. could create an 'immortal dictator from which we can never escape'." *CNBC*, 6 Apr. 2018, www.cnn.com/2018/04/06/elon-musk-warns-ai-could-create-immortal-dictator-in-documentary.html. Accessed 21 Mar. 2020.
- Campbell, Joseph, and Bill Moyers. *The Power of Myth*. Anchor, 1991, p. 39, file:///C:/Users/hp/Downloads/epdf.pub_the-power-of-myth.pdf.

Cargill, C. R. "Angel of Mercy." *Sea of Rust: A Novel*, PDF, HarperCollins, 2017, p. 8.

Clute, John, and John Grant. "Introduction." *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, PDF, Orbit Books UK, 1999, pp. 4-5.

Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. SAGE Publications, 1998.

"Definition of HUMAN NATURE." *Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's Most-trusted Online Dictionary*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/human%20nature.

"Definition of SUPERHUMAN." *Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's Most-trusted Online Dictionary*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/superhuman#learn-more.

"Definition of TRANSHUMAN." *Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's Most-trusted Online Dictionary*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transhuman.

Dundes, Alan. "Folklore as a Mirror of Culture." *Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*, edited by Simon J. Bronner, Utah State UP, 2007, p. 56.

Egan, Kieran. "A very short history of imagination." *IERG – Imaginative Education*, Simon Fraser University, ierg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/History-of-Imagination.pdf.

- Ettinger, Robert C. *Man Into Superman*. 1972, www.cryonics.org/resources/man-into-superman.
- . "Changes in the Chassis." *Man Into Superman: The Startling Potential of Human Evolution -- and How to Be Part of It*, 2005, p. 37.
- . "The Sculptor Sculpted." *Man Into Superman: The Startling Potential of Human Evolution -- and How to Be Part of It*, 2005, p. 13.
- "Extropy Institute Mission." *Transhumanism's Extropy Institute - Transhumanism for a Better Future*, www.extropy.org/About.htm. Accessed 1 May 2020.
- Ferrando, Francesca. "Transhumanism and Techno-Enhancement." *Philosophical Posthumanism*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2020, p. 35.
- . "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms Differences and Relations." *Existenz*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2013, p. 29. Accessed 18 Sept. 2020.
- FM-2030. *Are You a Transhuman?: Monitoring and Stimulating Your Personal Rate of Growth in a Rapidly Changing World*. PDF, Warner Books (NY), 1989.
- Foley, John M. "Oral Tradition." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Encyclopedia Britannica, inc, 2019, www.britannica.com/topic/oral-tradition. Accessed 26 Aug. 2019.
- Gacheva, Anastasia, et al. "Timeline of Russian Cosmism." <https://www.e-flux.com/cosmism-timeline.e-flux.com/>. Accessed 15 Apr. 2020.
- Grant, Cynthia, and Azadeh Osanloo. "UNDERSTANDING, SELECTING, AND INTEGRATING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK IN DISSERTATION

RESEARCH: CREATING THE BLUEPRINT FOR YOUR

“HOUSE”." *Administrative Issues Journal Education Practice and*

Research, 2014, doi:10.5929/2014.4.2.9. Accessed 22 Apr. 2020.

Haraway, Donna J. "A Cyborg Manifesto." *Manifestly Haraway*, 2016, pp. 3-90.

Hauskeller, Michael. "Anxious Dreams of a Better World." *Mythologies of*

Transhumanism, p. 11.

Hughes, James J. "THE POLITICS OF TRANSHUMANISM AND THE TECHNO-

MILLENNIAL IMAGINATION, 1626-2030." *Zygon®*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2012,

p. 759.

Huxley, Julian. *New Bottles for New Wine: Essays*. Chatto & Windus, 1957,

[archive.org/details/NewBottlesForNewWine/page/n5/mode/2up/search/transh](https://archive.org/details/NewBottlesForNewWine/page/n5/mode/2up/search/transhumanism)

[umanism](https://archive.org/details/NewBottlesForNewWine/page/n5/mode/2up/search/transhumanism). Accessed 28 Apr. 2020.

---. "Transhumanism." *ETHICS IN PROGRESS*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2015, pp. 12-16,

doi:10.14746/eip.2015.1.2. Accessed 20 Mar.-Apr. 2020.

Jah, Muhammad H. *Hoshruha: The Land and the Tilism*. Translated by Musharraf A.

Farooqi, Random House India, 2009.

Kunzru, Hari. "You Are Cyborg." *Wired*, 1 Feb. 1997,

www.wired.com/1997/02/ffharaway/. Accessed 22 Mar. 2020.

Kurzweil, Ray. *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. PDF,

Penguin, 2005.

- . "The Power of Ideas." *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*, PDF, Penguin, 2005, pp. 20-23.
- Lombardo, Tom. "Science Fiction: The Evolutionary Mythology of the Future." *Journal of Futures Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, Dec. 2015, p. 10, DOI:10.6531/JFS.2015.20(2).A5.
- Mark, Joshua J. "Mythology." *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, Ancient History Encyclopedia, 31 Oct. 2018, www.ancient.eu/mythology/.
- Miah, Andy. "A Critical History of Posthumanism." *Medical Enhancement and Posthumanity*, pp. 71-94.
- More, Max. "The Overhuman in the Transhuman." *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, vol. 21, no. 1, Jan. 2010, pp. 1-4, jetpress.org/v21/more.pdf.
- . "Transhumanism: Toward a Futurist Philosophy." 1990, www.scribd.com/doc/257580713/Transhumanism-Toward-a-Futurist-Philosophy. Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Noack, Rick. "A robot killed a factory worker in Germany. So who should go on trial?" *The Washington Post*, 2 July 2015.
- Patton, Michael Q. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*. 3rd ed., SAGE Publications, 2002.
- Pepperell, Robert, editor. "The Posthuman Condition." *The Posthuman Condition: Consciousness Beyond the Brain*, Intellect Books, 2003.

- "The Philosophy of Transhumanism." *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future*, edited by Max More and Natasha Vita-More, PDF, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, p. 4.
- Piper, Kelsey. "Why Elon Musk Fears Artificial Intelligence." *Vox*, 2 Nov. 2018, www.vox.com/future-perfect/2018/11/2/18053418/elon-musk-artificial-intelligence-google-deepmind-openai. Accessed 25 Sept. 2020.
- Porter, Allen. "Bioethics and Transhumanism." *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy: A Forum for Bioethics and Philosophy of Medicine*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2017, pp. 237-260, doi:10.1093/jmp/jhx001.
- "Preface and Acknowledgment." *Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*, edited by Simon J. Bronner, Utah State UP, 2007, p. viii.
- Radest, Howard B. "Humanism as Experience." *What is Humanism and Why Does it Matter?*, edited by Anthony B. Pinn, PDF, Routledge, 2014, pp. 3-4.
- "Russian Cosmism." *The MIT Press*, mitpress.mit.edu/books/russian-cosmism. Accessed 14 Apr. 2020.
- Schmeink, Lars. "Dystopia, Science Fiction, Posthumanism, and Liquid Modernity." *Liverpool University Press*, 2017.
- Singer, Peter. "Ethics - Socrates." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/ethics-philosophy/Socrates#ref885476. Accessed 25 Sept. 2019.

- Smith, Harrison. "The Rise of Fantasy in Literature." *The American Scholar*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1948, pp. 305-306, www.jstor.org/stable/41205054. Accessed 19 Feb. 2020.
- "Sophia." *Hanson Robotics*, www.hansonrobotics.com/sophia/. Accessed 22 Sept. 2020.
- Sorgner, Stefan L. "Nietzsche, the Overhuman, and Transhumanism." *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, vol. 20, no. 1, Mar. 2009, jetpress.org/v20/sorgner.htm. Accessed 28 Mar. 2020.
- Stableford, Brian. *The A to Z of Fantasy Literature*. Edited by Jon Woronoff, PDF, Scarecrow P, 2009.
- Sterling, Bruce. "Science Fiction | Definiton, Examples, & Characteristics." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/art/science-fiction. Accessed 18 Mar. 2020.
- Stone, Zara. "Everything You Need To Know About Sophia, The World's First Robot Citizen." *Forbes*, 14 June 2018, www.forbes.com/sites/zarastone/2017/11/07/everything-you-need-to-know-about-sophia-the-worlds-first-robot-citizen/#55272b4246fa. Accessed 22 Sept. 2020.
- Sullivan, C. W. "Folklore and Fantastic Literature." *Western Folklore*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2001, p. 280.

Suvin, Darko. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. PDF, Yale University Press, 1979.

Tymn, Marshall B. "Science Fiction: A Brief History and Review of Criticism." *American Studies International*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1985, pp. 44-66, www.jstor.org/stable/41278745. Accessed 17 Sept. 2020.

Valera, Luca. "POSTHUMANISM: BEYOND HUMANISM?" *Cuadernos de Bioética*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 481-488. Accessed 18 Apr. 2020.

Westfahl, Gary. "The True History of Science Fiction: Introduction." *The Mechanics of Wonder: The Creation of the Idea of Science Fiction*, Liverpool UP, 1998, pp. 1-6.

Young, George M. *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers*. PDF, Oxford UP, 2012.