

Carmen-Veronica BORBÉLY, Petronia PETRAR, *Our Heteromorphic Future: Encoding the Posthuman in Contemporary British Fiction*, ISBN: 978-973-595-78-5, 277 pages, 2014

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*Our Heteromorphic Future: Encoding the Posthuman in Contemporary British Fiction* (Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2014), bearing the signature of Carmen-Veronica Borbély and Petronia Petrar, is a most exquisite example of scientific research done within the area of the Contemporary British Novel. Besides the demonstration of the authors' thorough knowledge of the actual literary phenomenon within the Anglophonic space, their analytical prowess and courage in approaching the intricacies of the posthuman studies are no less than highly commendable.

The volume displays impeccable theoretical *connaissance* and writerly finesse. From the very beginning, the reader plunges into a text crafted in superb English, which manages to provide the necessary explanatory details without forgetting to maintain the main picture as clear as possible. The research turns out to be, according to the authors' statement, an attempt to advocate at the same time a "critical" and a "heteromorphic" version of posthumanism. Within the conflict between the transhumanists as and the bio-conservatives, the book finds the no man's land where one may still discuss the fading dichotomies between utopia and dystopia, organic and cybernetic, nature and culture, human and inhuman and what may even be called the human-transhuman-posthuman triad.

Lyotard's question whether it is possible to speak of a humanity at whose core lies the inhuman, provides an important point of departure for the volume

discussed. In relation to this aspect, Simon Malpas is quoted with a highly interesting view upon the relative character of the human itself: “what a particular culture thinks of as ‘the human’ is only ever the accepted construct of whichever genres of discourse happen to be the organising principles for that social group.”<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of constructs and accepted, mainstream discourse, Foucault comes to the reader’s mind and not at all accidentally, Lyotard’s vision of man’s finitude echoes the foreboding of the effacement of the human at the end of *The Order of Things*. However, it is Pepperell’s take upon the end seen rather as the end of the anthropocentric universe that is shared by Borbély and Petrar: it “is not about the ‘End of Man’ but about the end of a ‘man-centred’ universe or, put less phallogocentrically, a ‘human-centred’ universe. In other words, it is about the end of ‘humanism’, that long-held belief in the infallibility of human power and the arrogant belief in our superiority and uniqueness.”<sup>2</sup> Internalizing Clark’s ‘cognitive hybridisation’<sup>3</sup>, his depiction of ‘transparent technologies’<sup>4</sup> and N. Katherine Hayles’ research in the same direction is essential in the attempt to explain the mutual influence exerted by humans and technology.

Completing the theoretical framework of the volume, the part entitled ‘Fictionalising the Posthuman’ is a masterful encoding of the posthuman theories in the novels that either created utopias – Mary Shelley’s ‘Frankenstein’ and Aldous Huxley’s ‘Brave New World’ – or continued tracking the changes that could be divined from a vantage point that all the authors such as Margaret Atwood, Hari Kunzru, Martin Amis and David Mitchell shared. From a similar vantage point, Borbély and Petrar conducted a research which will undoubtedly become a main reference in the domain.

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Malpas apud Carmen-Veronica *Borbély* and Petronia Petrar, *Our Heteromorphic Future: Encoding the Posthuman in Contemporary British Fiction*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2014, p. 50

<sup>2</sup> Pepperell apud Carmen-Veronica *Borbély* and Petronia Petrar, *Our Heteromorphic Future: Encoding the Posthuman in Contemporary British Fiction*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2014, p.75

<sup>3</sup> Clark apud Carmen-Veronica *Borbély* and Petronia Petrar, *Our Heteromorphic Future: Encoding the Posthuman in Contemporary British Fiction*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2014, p. 71

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72