# Promontory Differentiations: Painting Like a Posthuman

Siddhartha Mukherjee,

Department of English, Ramakrishna Mission Brahmananda College of Education

Baba Saheb Ambedkar Education University (erstwhile The West Bengal University of Teachers' Training, Education Planning and Administration)

Punyananda Sarani, Chowdhary Para, Rahara, Kolkata, West Bengal 700118

**Abstract**

This article aims to reassemble a theoretical analysis of posthumanism in the field of arts, with a specific focus on the visual works conceived by artists after the rise of what has been retrospectively defined as 'Surrealism' that originated in the early 1920s, dominated the years between the wars and was briefly revitalized in the post-Second World War years. In surrealism art, the human is transfigured into the posthuman. To flesh out this schematic, I have examined how in surrealist artworks the posthuman emerges by radically reconfiguring human bodies/minds. The triumph of surface over depth is best embodied in both humanism and its modern antithesis, posthumanism. Rooted in Plato, Aristotle and the Old Testament, humanism depicted hierarchical structures of all matter and life, even God; and themes from Christianity were the central concept driving art in Renaissance Europe. Surrealist artists, including most notably Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy and Rene Magritte produced paintings that enmesh humans into integrated circuits, reflecting posthuman alienation of the earlier negentropic centers of art. The ontological dimension of visual art is a crucial issue, when it comes to a proper understanding of the posthuman agenda. Humans are information-processing machines while posthumanism is a non-normative critical stance that rests on a constructivist paradigm of cultural hegemony and postmodernism. This paper further investigates what posthumanism might be, given that it cannot be isolated from the dynamics of surrealism from which it is wrought.

**Keywords—**humanism, Renaissance, surrealism, posthuman

The interpretation(s) of theory in terms of humanism led us ultimately to the posthuman, to the narrative paradigm(s), and to the sedimentation of various generic discourses, the technologization of aesthetic, spiritual values—their reduction, by a technical or formal rationality, to an instrumentalized, functional form. The concept of humanism is seen as a placeholder for various camps that singularly (re)presents the self, a perspectival submission of a way into thinking how identity/selfhood is constructed in relation to pre-existent forms. The gendered spiritual or inner core that is historically central to the construction of Humanism that developed into a civilizational model is seen to be shaped by a shared national past or a cultural essence where structural analysis demands as its completion a kind of reconstruction, a postulation by presupposition and implication, of an absent or unrepresentable *infrastructual* limiting system. With a certain idea of Europe as overlapping with the universalising powers of self-reflexive reason, humanism appears to have its prescribed causal or dialectical linkage(s) in the Paduan classicism and Italian Renaissance. The doctrines and moral demands of the times are well wrought in the sculptures of Nicola Pisano, the architecture designed by Arnolfo di Cambio or, say the paintings of Giotto; and after 1400 when the Renaissance began to spread throughout Italy, the revival of the ancient heritage then turned into something which, properly interpreted, is in astonishingly little conflict with the new fostering wisdom of the age, or indeed with anything. Biblical and mythological scenes take on the function of art forms in which the various impulses of artists—from Fra Angelico to Masaccio, to Gozzoli, to Ghirlandaio—emerge, differentiate, and recombine with subjects ranging from the Virgin and Child to groups of saints (among other themes from Christianity). With a certain spectacular solemnity Botticelli's paintings too imbued religious and mythological themes. But only certain moments of possibility have their own unique and characteristic structure, which history has itself determined, and the Church was no longer accepted as the sole arbiter of spiritual and intellectual values. There can be seen a totalizing historical dynamic, when High Renaissance artists painted religious paintings, or sculpted a religious scene; exalting the ideals of classical aesthetics, the artists were very often not glorifying God but Man. Pramod K. Nayar proposes a framework that is much more suggestive for our present purposes:

> Michel Foucault traces the emergence of the human, as we know it now, to the set of ideas and concepts that evolved during the European Enlightenment. Toward the end of *The Order of Things*, Foucault would famously write: 'man is an invention of recent date' (1973: 387).

> What Foucault is referring to here is a way of perceiving the human cognitive processes, human behaviour and actions. The human was 'invented' when these ways of perceiving and talking about these processes, behaviour and actions became codified in the 'human sciences' (24).

Therefore, it is important to affirm—over against Foucault—that although his sheer heterogeneity and indeed anti-political aesthetic of the historical varieties of "humanism" may well resist its own dogma, it cannot do without historical preconditions. Michel Foucault, however, implies that accounts of historical progress, development, and change, consist of successive worldviews ushered in by a series of epistemological ruptures. Cary Wolfe reifies an interpretation that leading intellectual historians have utterly discredited by treating Foucault's Renaissance "episteme" as definitive. How then can the ideologues of posthumanism be traced? A comparable model of posthumanist thought is advocated by Cary Wolfe where he contends that "far from surpassing or rejecting the human" (xxv)—as posthumanism sometimes seeks to do, particularly in the case of transhumanism—the question of posthumanism should in fact,

> [force] us to rethink our taken-for-granted modes of human experience, including the normal perceptual modes and affective states of Homo sapiens itself, by recontextualising them in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of "bringing forth a world"—ways that are, since we ourselves are human animals, part of the evolutionary history and behavioral and psychological repertoire of the human itself" (xxv).

The rejection of Enlightenment ideals not only concerns the humanist image of 'man' and as Ralph Barton Perry explains in his "A Definition of the Humanities", "humanism testifies to the eminence of man over the rest of creation," so much the more pre-eminent are the humanities, which are dedicated to the study of "man," over the sciences, which are dedicated to the inferior works of nature (24). Thus, the humanist ideal(s) inflate(s) the human to universal dimensions where the high standards of physical perfection with intellectual and moral values are skilfully combined and turned into a civilizational standard. On the particularity of moral action in discrete situations, one finds a rhetorically based emphasis—a position well-articulated in the fourteenth century by Petrarch and widely shared by succeeding generations of Humanists. In Perry's words,

> [Renaissance humanism] signified the emancipation of the human faculties from the restraints of religious zeal, preoccupation or authority; the reinstatement of natural and secular values after their disparagement by the cult of other-worldliness, the illumination of the darkness of ignorance, the breaking of the bonds of habit, and everywhere a passage beyond the narrow circle and rigid hierarchy of intermediaries to original and authentic sources in human experience (17).

Leonardo Da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* has long been held as the model of universal man (arguably the most famous representation of the 'human' body in Western art). The negative inversion of this position is brought about by Rosi Braidotti who states in the first chapter of her book *The Posthuman* that "[a]t the start of it all there is He: the classical ideal of 'Man', formulated first by Protagoras as 'the measure of all things', later renewed in the Italian Renaissance as a universal model and represented in Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man" (13). This then clearly involves an ideological repudiation of humanism of a type which might conceivably range from Renaissance's older forms as the replication of the reification of the posthuman to some of the more habitually repeating structures of critical theory and the articulated critiques of high modernism of the present day. The position of either to denounce the complacencies of humanism as some final symptom of decadence or to salute the new forms of posthumanism as the forerunners of a new technocratic/technological utopia, it seems more appropriate to assess the new theoretical position within the working hypothesis of a general modification of culture with the restructuring of Renaissance ideologies as a system. Current scholarship on Renaissance humanism produces a dynamic vision of scholarly activity, a relationality, that is more relevant to our current moment since:

> The very notion of modernity—from its beginnings in the Renaissance's image of itself as a new age, a historical break from the "Dark Ages"—has been defined in terms of an instrumental conception of technology, an instrumental or technological rationality that allows modern "humanity" to know and control the world. In these terms, that which is "nontechnological" cannot be modern (Rutsky 2).

Purporting a theoretical investigation that would seem to confirm a crisis and, by extension, also imply an obsolescence, at the beginning of his book *Posthumanism* Pramod K. Nayar claims that "Literary texts that have since the Renaissance always shown us how humans behave, react and interact—indeed it has been said that literature 'invented' the human—have now begun to show that the human is what it is because it includes the

non-human" (11). Ideas that are deeply challenging to many of our traditional assumptions about human uniqueness and superiority felt particularly material during the 2020-2021 pandemic; the co-evolved affirmation of the living (and the non-human), the relationship of humans and technology, of pure potentiality and futurity has perhaps never been so apparent as during the long stretches of lockdown time. It is also during this time that the Human's capacity for technological invention also secured so dominant a position in the world. As a posthuman subject, the human unsettled in its belief in transcendence, furnishes the graphic embodiment of an ideological closure as such, its fantasized detachment from an ontologically separate environment (allowing us to map out the inner limits of an existential or ontological plurality—a fragmentation of identity—) and to construct the basic terms of the humanist understanding of a unified posthuman self. Rosi Braidotti argues that the posthuman turn is triggered by the convergence of anti-humanism and anti-anthropocentrism. The posthuman turn realizes a self-critical, self-historicizing disposition within modernism and an instinct for self-preservation, self-reflection additionally presupposes a degree of subjective consciousness, because "[h]umanists might regard humans as distinct beings, in an antagonistic relationship with their surroundings. Posthumanists, on the other hand, regard humans as embodied in an extended technological world" (Pepperell).

Even if the concept of humanism is to be considered a synchronic one, at the level of historical abstraction, the structural limits consistent with the posthuman becomes a praxis, a transgression. Renaissance studies (and posthuman theory) project a long view of history which is inconsistent with concrete critical theory only if the specificity of the horizons is not respected. For example, Medieval artists used monsters to a great extent. The monsters represent aspects of the "non-human, abhuman and inhuman" (Nayar 110) that seems to be beyond human control, that in fact seems to threaten humanity's control. Pramod Nayar's book on the posthuman captures a permanent parabasis:

> Humanism, when it appeared in Renaissance Europe, was, paradoxically, very attentive to biological mutants and medical anomalies – deemed to be 'monsters', about which more in a later chapter – because these seemed to not fit into the category 'human': they were formed differently, they behaved differently. 'Universal' humanism was ironically, therefore, a system of *differentiation* in which some forms of the body were treated as 'human' and others as 'not-human' (23).

In this sense, the 'post' of posthumanism need not imply the absence of cybernetic mechanism. Humans are information-processing machines. In contrast to images of cybernetic posthuman as 'trans-' or 'super-' human, surrealism in art promoted neither the transcendence of the human nor the negation of humanism. Born out of the earlier Dada movement, the Surrealist movement, officially founded in 1924 in Paris, pioneered by Andre Breton, saw writers and artists experiment by a radical historicizing of their mental operations, such that not only the content of their art, but the very method itself, along with the artist, comes to be reckoned into the "text" of the posthuman. This apparently dynamic analytical scheme aimed to free people from the rationalisation of social/political structures can be re-appropriated for an anti-art movement and dialectical criticism by designating it as the very locus and model of posthuman thought. Seen in this way, automatic writing, or automatism, becomes a vital instrument for exploring the semantic and ideological intricacies of the unbridled imagination of the subconscious; as in Freud's own work, surreal art yields the objective possibilities according to which the posthuman landscape and the physical elements, say, must necessarily be perceived. The artworks of surrealists mark the conceptual points where a visual paradigm of the posthuman thought started to improvise and after which it is condemned to oscillate.

So, how may we interpret the contemporary practice of posthumanism, as inflected by the surrealist tradition?

Posthuman theory in surreal art aligns old avant-garde with the emergence of a new materialist ontology (where images can be rearranged among ruins and debris); this fragmentation and rearrangement—perception in the form of time—is intrinsic to posthuman theory. Surreal art often functions as a technology that exposes the ambiguities of the western notions of enlightenment, progress, and modernity. Thus, it is precisely on the basis of an image that is, however, conscious, fragmentary, and *technological* rather than unconscious, whole, and absolute that the avant-gardes attempt to construct a practical, functional art of a unified posthuman self. In posthumanism horizontality and hierarchy clearly interact: while 'post' is often apparent on the level that seeks to capture the human and the nonhuman along a plane, 'human(ism)' mark the perspectival interplay of the self/selfhood that are characterised by spaces that affect a sense of displacement. Where the architects of the modern humanities (or posthuman studies) found their lineage and rationale in the humanism produced by mid-century Renaissance scholars, one only needs to trawl the university M.F.A. exhibitions, contemporary art museums and art galleries to understand that the concerns of the Surrealists are still with us today—much relevant, only transposed in twenty-first century contexts. Sculptures and architectures have always played a fundamental role in connecting human and nonhuman spheres, and the use of art as a posthuman space has a

strong tradition within the recent past—be it Anish Kapoor's *Leviathan* or Anthony Gormley's *Another Place* (sculpture) or Rachel Whiteread's *Embankment* and there are "many other figures from a range of fields who converged on a new theoretical model for biological, mechanical, and communicational processes that removed the human and Homo sapiens from any particularly privileged position in relation to matters of meaning, information, and cognition" (Wolfe xii). The posthuman has increasingly come to be conceived as a differential impulse inherent to the ideals of twentieth-century art—all essentially cultural or superstructural phenomena—a kind of radical futurity without any anticipation, as pure happening or performance that unsettles critical staples. While "humanism posited a self-contained, exclusive and bounded human," as Pramod K. Nayar clearly distinguishes, "critical posthumanism recontextualizes the human into its setting (both organic and inorganic), and locates the human's structure, functions and form as the result of a co-evolution with other life forms" (20). Posthumanism makes ontological room for the idea of art, and blur borders of animal, human and machines.

Surrealism finds precedents in the art of Pieter Huys, Wenzel Jamnitzer, Giovanni Battista Braccelli, Pieter Breugel the Elder, Hans Baldung Grien and Joos de Momper. As objectifications of human mind (in relation to nature, self, and consciousness) art provokes human beings, and within the coexistence of various synchronic systems, each with its own dynamic or time scheme, posthuman studies also seek to reveal several discontinuous and heterogeneous concerns in terms of Proto-Surrealism or Freudian psychology. Bosch never knew the theories of Freud and would modern psychoanalysis be comprehensible to Pieter Huys? But at the level of analysis of the art in question here, it is, however, precisely a series of enlarging theoretical horizons that can assign the anachronistic frameworks their appropriate analytical places. In the known artworks of some of these artists of the late Renaissance and Baroque era we tend to find some of the posthuman concerns as well where we see parts of the living are fragmented and taken away from the context of the host body (where this act of fragmentation becomes a violent act) and are introduced to a technological mediation that further "abstracts" their appeal and horror and disorientation and disjointedness. Salvador Dalí's contribution to the surrealistic world was a *paranoiac*-critical method where the human as a dynamic hybrid is simultaneously enclosed by and encloses others. There is neither linearity nor chronology, but always a undecidable relativity of dubious morphology. Dali's surreal(ism) paintings were perceived as transformations of the real world. There exists a contradictory relationship to heterogeneity and alterity, on conduits and pathways. A doctrinal vacuity always exists because the human is there—a human that exists because of a non-human and vice versa. Considered to be one of the famous artworks of Surrealism movement, *The Great Masturbator* by Salvador Dalí was produced in 1929. The arrangement is somewhat multi-layered and associative; a man's face looking downwards is a self-portrait of Dalí and the emerging woman's head leaning towards the male crotch is Dalí's wife, Gala. There is a gigantic grasshopper, below which a couple can be seen hugging/making-out; a white lily is painted right below the female body and adjacent to the white lily is a lion's head with its tongue sticking out. The glut of such (and various other) images/symbols are often signifiers of the artist's fears, his subconscious and his (sexual?) frustrations. Much like Hieronymus Bosch, Salvador Dalí attempts to (re)assemble the fragmentary elements of the unconscious into a posthuman totality that is linked to the artist's vision or consciousness. In a similar vein, creating the illusion of form and space, artist Gillian Wearing takes an interesting approach devoted to masturbation. The representation of masturbation in art around the globe and through the ages (be it the modern era with Egon Schiele and Marcel Duchamp to the late twentieth century or, from prehistoric art to antiquity or, from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance) has always depicted the erotic—the pornified. Wearing's *Masturbation* generates a 'surreal' effect, the photographic art shows a picture within a picture within a picture within a picture; there are two photographs—one of a man, another a woman—masturbating to a photograph. But the effect is that of an infinite visual regress taking place when one holds two mirrors up to one another since it is not clear what the humans in the images are masturbating to; their own self-image placed *en abfme* ('in an abyss' in French) as a manifestation of the project inextricably intertwine a posthuman illusion of a victimless existence as well as a reflection on the narcissistic pastimes of all self-lovers. The very banality of Wearing's art, the awkwardness, the transgression, is emotionally open to experience—not letting the seductions of cognition emblematic of nothing. In the words of Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, "[t]he posthuman body is a technology, a screen, a projected image" (3).

There is a strange disconnect—the metamorphosis taking place—in surrealist art (of the physical/internal environment) is predicated upon catastrophes that precipitate both ruination/(re)birth. Persisting in a suspended, yet dynamic state between chaos and a return to equilibrium, the surreal environment is, often, literally dislocated. American historian and futures studies scholar Walter Warren Wagar argues that "an apocalyptic imagination" exists in the western world, arising from the fears surrounding "the ends and the beginnings of self", the "dread of nature" and the "lethal effects" of science and technology (66–67). As long as art remains a human practice, based on human thought even if the conception of surrealism as posthuman art be accepted, it is an experience that is surely not available or accessible at every moment of history. The art of artists like Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy and René Magritte have changed the general focus of attention towards

political and aesthetic practices of art in general, where humans and nonhumans co-exist, co-experience and co-produce in distributed cognitive landscapes.

A sense of *horror* accompanies the posthuman—replacing ideas of precedence with notions of enclosure—when seemingly immutable spaces are crossed between boundaries (animal, human, inanimate or technological). Yves Tanguy in his artworks examine the circulation of biomorphic forms, amoeba like organisms that cross the space(s) of the immutable human being. Tanguy's use of illusionistic images opened ways for artists such as Dalí and Magritte. It may be noted that the fluid like figures that occur regularly in Yves Tanguy's works need not be seen simply in the negative terms of anxiety and loss of reality. In *Large Painting Representing a Landscape*, the dark sea-floor, or desert dotted with occasional weeds and marked by long shadows where on top of a steep rock a fluid figure rests in a nest while other such figures squirm below provides an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity his where the artist's own anxiety and insecurity continually "resurface," continually figure the space of the posthuman. Works such as *At 4 O'Clock In The Summer, Hope* suggests a weightless space, like the tranquillity and silence of the bottom of the sea while in *Construct and Destroy* the horizon line is lost, the distinction between ground, plane and sky has been blurred. In terms of bioethics, such as the ones implicitly observable in Tanguy's *From Green to White*, is crucial for posthumanist thought; the brightly glowing forms that float in the sky are reminiscent of Matta and below the active and swirling sky is set an unearthly city that may remind anyone of *Blade Runner*. Tanguy's sense of the deep misty spaces and loneliness of the open sea were perhaps the signs of his initial training as an officer in the merchant navy.

Unlike Tanguy, Max Ernst finds it necessary to try to regain human control over the fluidity of the surreal world, to re-secure absurdity by using reality as a human instrument. Ernst's *The Eye of Silence* engulf the viewers with indescribable vividness, a materiality of perception properly overwhelming in posthuman studies/interpretation; this painting can be a fitting prototype for a visual representation, a visual summary of:

> Theories of cognition, consciousness, machine intelligence and biology contribute to posthumanist thought by emphasizing
>
> • co-evolution and multispecies origins of life;
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> • the necessity of alterity to subjectivity;
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> • the linkage of embodied life with environments;
>
> • the emergent (rather than immanent) nature of consciousness and the self;
>
> • the stability of systems in dynamic interaction with environments (Nayar 76).

The overall effect, too inflexible to account for, is one of paranoia. Dream visions have always been interesting and the influence upon the development of 'dream painting(s)' of the surrealists was the work of Italian artist Giorgio de Chirico. In his *Pietà or Revolution by Night*, Ernst reconstructs a dream vision in which the artist appears as a Christ-like figure in the arms of his own father. His well-dressed bourgeoise father, wearing a bowler hat, replaces Virgin Mary. This sense of a dream involves, without question, a kind of subjectivity as self-contained, which is very much a posthuman concern. Ernst was particularly fascinated by Freud's analysis of dreams and is known to have read several of his texts, including *The Interpretation of Dreams*, when in Germany. Some of the more important radical "posthuman performances" of sexual, racial, national, and other boundaries are lofted by the painting *The Teetering Woman* where the subject is left to balance between two sturdy classical columns in a zoomed landscape. The figure can be theorised as representing the conduits to the unconscious fears and desires that exist in the feminine posthuman cultural imaginary. The polycentrism and complexity found in *Solitary and Conjugal Trees* or *Euclide* are equally dystopian, uncanny and posthumanist.

Belgian artist René Magritte also produced works that alluded strongly to dreams. Objects of most mundane nature in Magritte's work carry complex and seriously intended significance, merging suggestions of memory and time. They point to notions of threat, tragedy, stillness and the connected spirit in all things. There is cunning as well as humour in Magritte's work, with a seemingly casual use of materials concealing a well-considered and serious intent. Magritte's *The Lost Jockey* and *The Annunciation* attempt to maintain suggestive associations where spindle like shapes (phallic as well as evocative of chess pieces) coalesce into a flow of motion, that slows down and examine the chains of desires and history. As if refracted through a posthuman(ist) prism, in Ernst's *The Reckless Sleeper*, human subjectivity is fractured by a sleeping human, a hat, a handle-mirror, a candle and an apple; this can be appropriated as a stance that is firmly based in a narrative simultaneously inhabiting the past, future, and present in a sleeping brain—a preoccupation that is also reflected in *Spanish Night* by Francis Picabia. Based on an active distinction of human subjects from a dream world be it

the fragmentary collage of *Perturbation my sister* or sociological awareness and productive utopianism of *The Human Condition* paintings, a posthumanism interpretation of Magritte's works will be often characterised by a polymorphic unfixity that share an oddly innocent neutrality deriving from their very arbitrariness (articulating a logic of identity as decentred, ontologically confusing and in a state of transition.) Posthuman studies scholar Francesca Ferrando, writing on surrealism, noted:

> Surrealism, though, did not aim to express a transcendence of the real; its intent was to deepen the understandings of the world perceived by the senses, extending its foundations over what had been historically confined to "the reign of logic" (Breton, [1924]1972: 9), as Breton defined it in the "First Surrealist Manifesto" (1924). In his words: "I believe in the future resolution of these two states—dream and reality—which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality" (Ibid.: 14). In its attempts of avoiding dualisms, Posthumanism owes to Surrealism the retrieving of such aspects of life: the dream world can offer a unique space of visualization; the possibilities opened by the future are already embedded in the mystery of the present; the conscious becomes the unconscious, in a fluid view from which the field of posthuman psychology is currently emerging (4).

The complexity and fragmentation of such artworks cannot be comprehended aesthetically, as a whole. Their art becomes codified and gets transformed into a stream of affect where networks of humans, animals, machines, environments exhibit the posthuman world. Thus, from the angle of surrealism, the posthuman turn, far from being deconstructivist and relativistic, is neo-foundationalist, in the many dimensions that structure it. Surrealism, though adopted a more pragmatic approach, is not taking place in a void, but within the frame of the political ideology of Marxism and the psychoanalytic investigations of Sigmund Freud. Though, sometimes, the non-unitary vision of the subject represented in the figuration of the female body has proved at best controversial, at times polemical and always provocative. Significantly, author, translator, art historian and literary critic Mary Ann Caws writes:

> Various conceptual, visual and verbal bridges between sleeping and waking worlds, the here and now and the distant and unimaginable, were each in play in their turn…Everything encountered for the first time was, in principle, to be tried out, lived freshly through 'lyric behavior' (*comportement lyrique*): this was itself defined by its openness to chance. The surprise generated by any spontaneous action, free from subjective determination, was celebrated as the very essence of Surrealism (49).

The surrealist artworks serve as observations and descriptions of the familiar objects, of commonplace milieus, the archives of memories. This exclusively faculty allegedly qualifies the artists for the pursuit of both individual and collective perfectibility, making them uniquely capable of self-regulating moral rational judgment. The theoretical problem with the posthuman enumerated above lies in synchronic systems. An analytical framework in a Marxist perspective might be called a postmodernist regrounding. In this sense, the complexity, polycentrism, and randomness of the images can be seen as a kind of dreamscape that fragments or gives a shock to the totalizing visions of a posthuman representation(s). Surrealist artworks have indeed contributed to create a posthuman canon. As a subject proper and as a reservoir of consciousness, biology, information exchanges, transfers of ideology, the necessity of alterity and feedback mechanisms, posthuman concerns permeate the poetics of surrealism, or as Francesca Ferrando's assessment states, "[s]urrealism also brought attention to the environment, which, as previously stated, characterizes critical Posthumanism" (4).

After all, within the complex, global space of critical theory, representations, transgressions and influences can yield sometimes startling mutations and postmodern interpretations. To connect these moments with other complex and conflicted accounts of surrealism would begin to fashion a kind of literary theory that's neither so reliable nor so natural as to occur spontaneously. Meanwhile, its rather important to note how the works and publication process of novelist J. G. Ballard is much influenced by Surrealism's legacy in offering readers alternative versions of reality that are framed as outcomes of posthuman evolutions, and

> with the exception of *The Wind From Nowhere*, all of Ballard's climate novels come with pictorial avatars. In *The Drowned World*, the protagonist Kerans finds himself intrigued by the "self-devouring phantasmagoric jungles" of Max Ernst, the "spectral bonelike landscape" in a painting by Paul Delvaux (p. 29), and a "Dalinian landscape" with "immense sundials [stuck] like daggers in the fused sand" (p. 63). The final chapter of *The Drought* takes its title from Yves Tanguy's painting "*Jours de Lenteur*," whose "smooth pebble-like objects, drained of all associations, suspended on a washed tidal floor" foreshadow the characters' increasing social isolation (p. 11). The first hardback edition of *The Crystal World* is adorned with Max Ernst's decalcomania print "*The Eye of Silence*" and the "heavy and penumbral" light in the vicinity

> of the crystallizing forest at the novel's center motivates a comparison to Arnold Böcklin's "*Isle of Dead*" (p. 13). Recalling that Ballard points to the landscapes of Dalí, Ernst, and others as "reflections of some interior reality within our minds" (Ballard [1963] 1997c, p. 200), one is inclined to infer from the artworks referenced in his novels that this interior reality is of an elemental, inhuman order (7).

Thus writes Moritz Ingwersen in his extraordinary article on J. G. Ballard's climate novels where he pushes our critical attention away from the writers works to "a deep-seated ambivalence with respect to the relationship between human subjectivity and the inhuman environment" that finds echoes in the works of the aforementioned artists. While negotiating complexly triangulated relations with visual arts, entropy and thermodynamics that entwine the works of J.G. Ballard, Ingwersen's archaeological eye turns often from a morphogenetic evaluation of Ballard's works to the dead detritus of an expired modernity, thereby evoking a modern world inundated in a hybrid ecology of nonhuman objects that will endlessly circulate in the dereliction of an identificatory crisis. These moments must not be seen merely as contradictions in the idea or ideology of the postmodern. Moritz Ingwersen synthesizes an aesthetic formulation of Ballard's privileged interiority—"dissipative structures"—under the rubric of an expressive theory of aesthetics, as he further states that,

> Embedded within the lineage of landscape painting, the surrealist tradition portrays an estranged environment no longer framed as the externalization of a rationalistic human gaze or a world-for-us. Just as the ego in the age of psychoanalysis is no longer the master of its own house, Earth becomes an alien planet. It may be obvious to point out that what the above paintings by Ernst, Delvaux, Tanguy, Böcklin, and Dalí have in common is their evocation of entropy and the virtual absence of human animation. Especially Tanguy depicts a world whose energy seems exhausted: Whitewashed dunes and a murky sky blend into one; grotesque abstract shapes half-submerged in what looks like dust are vaguely reminiscent of metallic consumer objects whose edges have been worn smooth and round by exposure to friction and heat (7).

Surrealism artworks showcase objects that humanism/science has either condemned as uncanny, monstrous or exceptional, and confidently places an emphasis on multiplicity and contemplation; in habitually repeating structures of Marxist ideologies and despite its awareness of Freudian reproducibility and complexity, the artworks evoke the threats of this technological and fragmentary century—a double strategy, both scientific and posthuman. Or, as Mary Ann Caws states: "[s]urrealism aimed above all to preserve a sense of the extraordinary, the unexplained and the inexplicable" (17). Altogether, surrealism seems to perform that act of designing of cognitive enrichment, biosynthetic bodies, sensorial extension, identity transfer, that Braidotti ascribes to posthuman art: "[b]y transposing us beyond the confines of bound identities, art becomes necessarily inhuman in the sense of non-human in that it connects to the animal, the vegetable, earthy and planetary forces that surround us. Art is also, moreover, cosmic in its resonance and hence posthuman by structure, as it carries us to the limits of what our embodied selves can do or endure" (107). The uninterrupted repetitions of images of metamorphoses, non-humans, man–machine linkage, organic-inorganic hybrids, trans-species bodies within the cultural imaginary in tune with the landscape of dreams and nightmares than with everyday life, establish in turn, an authoritative system of address. As already noted, surrealism artworks explore the systems of the posthuman concerns as built upon discursive transparency, rhetorical obfuscation and modern technological reproducibility. Indeed, the art movement that originated in the early 1920s, dominated the years between the wars and was briefly revitalized in the post-Second World War years, turns the rigidity of poststructuralist rhetoric against the seemingly transparent moves of posthuman studies to unsettle critical theories. Art encourages us to follow the established practice of looking back and revisiting known/unknown truths, and to become attuned to the hidden, subversive, transversal and interdisciplinary development of culture and theories. Posthuman(ism) studies slyly occupy the same liminal, troubling and vexatious space as the main avant-garde movements of the first half of the twentieth century—specifically Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism—stepping outside the boundaries with the same desire to startle and defamiliarize while pointing to our contemporary culture. And rather, notwithstanding the evasiveness of any rhetoric/theoretical lens, surrealism as an art movement sets its own text—as a seeming symbol of authority, as a voice of its own.

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