
CRYONICS, POSTHUMAN SUBJECTIVITIES AND POSTANIMALITY IN “HYPNOJEN”

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Abstract: This article seeks to analyse the story, “Hypnojen”, employing critical and philosophical posthumanism to illustrate how its narrative depicts posthuman subjectivities. Satyajit Ray’s “Hypnojen” is a story in *Professor Shonku* series that revolves around the scientist Alexander Craig and the mysterious effects of the substance called hypnojen, which is a hypnotic invention, a gaseous element, that maneuvers human cognition. In addition, this analysis also focuses on how Ray envisages the concept of “cryonics” as an extension of posthuman agency. Cryonics is the idea that the preservation of bodies or brains at low temperatures can be revived in the near future with the development of scientific technology; Craig’s desire to get revived after death and dominate the world by utilizing hypnojen, delineates a technofied entanglement that resonates with Ray’s thematic concerns that dwell upon an ambivalence— to embrace technology or to animadvert it. The analysis further situates cryonics within the broader framework of *necropolitics*— a concept given by Achille Mbembe to refer to a kind of power-politics that determines who should live and who should not. This redefines traditional boundaries of life, death, and consciousness that invite rethinking regarding technology and its ethical implementation. This cryonic drive to extend life beyond nature-given limits reflects and reveals how (mis)use of technological in(ter)vention might lead to a new form of autocracy. The story also posits *postanimality* that repositions animal agency and its consciousness, placing animals into a non-hierarchical order defying anthropocentrism. The narrative terrain also exposes the disintegration and reconstitution of, to use Haraway’s term, “humanimal” that refers to the shared identity, where humans and animals (or machines) are intertwined. Such interplay exposes a contact zone that provides a critical site where human ethics, AI agency and “postanimality” intersect under posthuman conditions, where polemics regarding politicization of science and its nexus to “necropolitics” continues to evolve.

Keywords: *critical posthumanism, philosophical posthumanism, necropolitics, AI agency, contact zone, humanimal, postanimality*

The term *posthuman* first gained theoretical prominence through Ihab Hassan, who used it in his 1977 essay “Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture?” and later elaborated on it in *The Postmodern Turn* (1987). Hassan discerned in contemporary Western culture a profound “revisionary will,” one that was, as he put it, “unsettling/resettling codes, canons, procedures,

beliefs—intimating a post-humanism?” (qtd. in Ferrando 25). For Hassan, this “pattern” did not merely signal another iteration in the familiar chain of “posts”—postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism—but rather pointed to a deeper transformation. The language of “posts,” he suspected, was running out of conceptual breath. Postmodernism, if followed to its logical conclusion, seemed to destabilize its own foundations and gesture toward a condition that exceeded it—what he called *Posthumanism*: “On some deeper level of its transformations, it still reaches for something larger, something other, which some call posthumanism” (Ferrando 25).

As with most emergent paradigms, *Posthumanism* resists singular definition. Rather than a fixed conceptual framework, it is a cluster of interrogations about what it means to live and think in an age where the human can no longer be imagined as autonomous or self-contained. Pramod K. Nayar distinguishes between its ontological and critical dimensions. Ontologically, Posthumanism describes a condition many already inhabit, as human bodies are increasingly “chemically enhanced, surgically altered, or technologically augmented” in ways that blur the line between the organic and the mechanical (Nayar 13). In its critical form, Posthumanism examines the cultural discourses that have historically privileged the human above other forms of life, exposing how such hierarchies have justified exclusion, exploitation, and even extermination. As Nayar explains, posthumanist critique “draws attention to those representations and discourses in which... the human species has exterminated animals, marginalized certain kinds of human bodies...” (13–14). Peter Mahon identifies “humans + tools” as posthumanism’s fundamental unit of analysis (2). He explicates by expanding on the concept of *distributed cognition* that underscores how thinking itself is not tethered only to a biological brain but extends across networks of interaction involving humans, technologies, and environments. Cognition, in this view, is not an isolated mental act but a distributed process, rather co-created with artefacts, touchscreens, or even something as simple as a pen. These material agents “act” more than assist thought; they actively participate in storing, transforming, and transmitting information. The mind, then, is not a bounded space but part of a larger cognitive ecology, a dynamic exchange that dissolves the rigid borders between human memory and its material extensions (Mahon 4).

While posthuman themes have become commonplace in science fiction specifically in English, they are less prevalent in Bengali literature. An exception is Satyajit Ray’s *Professor Shonku Series*, first introduced in *Byomjatrir Diary* in 1961, inviting renewed critical engagement with Ray’s imaginative prefiguration of the posthuman condition. Ray’s speculative fictions in “Shonku Series” anticipate many posthuman concerns: “xenotransplantation”, “symbiogenesis”, “new materialism” and so on. Among his many stories from “Shonku Series”, this story entitled “Hypnojen,” for instance, can be (re)read as prolegomena to the debates on cryonics, addressing some of the ongoing discourses on *necropolitics*, and *postanimality*.

The story opens with an intriguing letter asking Professor Shonku to come to Norway from a

mysterious man named Craig, who claims that Shonku will meet “a celebrated and world-renowned scientist” (Ray 32). Alongside Shonku, two other eminent scientists—John Somerville and Hector Papadopoulos—receive similar invitations. From its outset, the narrative establishes an ambience of mystery and speculative science, one that gradually unfolds into cryonics through a distinctly transhumanist lens. Whereas “posthumanism” critiques the centrality of *homo sapiens*, *transhumanism* retains it. It subscribes to the idea of a human “essence” that can be perfected or enhanced by integrating technology. As Mahon observes, transhumanism “aims at enhancement, improvement, and in some versions, the overcoming of biology” (233–35). Its goal is not to decenter the human but to ameliorate it by pursuing immortality, superior intelligence, and physical optimization through biotechnological means. In this sense, transhumanism remains anthropocentric, seeking to transcend human limits without abandoning human centrality.

Shonku recalls, with a sense of disbelief, that “Alexander Craig was the owner of a diamond mine based in Brazil; he apparently died in 1913” (Ray 31). Believing this to be a mere coincidence of names, Shonku soon realizes that the man he meets in Norway is indeed that same Craig who is somehow alive, though barely. However, the disclosure by Craig that he shares a birthday with Napoleon Bonaparte, 5 May 1821, implies he is already over a hundred and fifty years old. When Shonku and his companions encounter him for the first time, Craig lies on his deathbed, too weak even to lift himself or speak. Albeit, in a striking gesture of human defiance against mortality, Craig employs his creation, Odin, to temporarily restore his vitality that enables him to converse. As Craig recounts:

I’ve brought up Odin with my own hands... Among his many other abilities, he has this capacity to revitalize an ailing person for a brief period so that the person is able to normally converse with his friends... Due to my own scientific capacity, I was able to extend my longevity three times. But this time it is proving impossible. (Ray 37–38)

This scene transforms the curious meeting into an unsettling encounter with technological resurrection, depicting the sight of human beings dependent on the machinic agent(s), Odin, (as later revealed by Craig himself), and connotes Ray’s critical posthumanist critiques. *Critical Posthumanism*, according to Nayar, involves “the radical decentering of the traditional sovereign, coherent and autonomous human” to reveal how humanity is always already “constituted by and constitutive of multiple forms of life and machines” (11–12). This perspective dismantles the humanist over-emphasis on human exceptionalism, and recognizes the human as part of a broader, entangled network of biological and technological agencies. In this web, humans coexist and coevolve with animals, plants, and machines rather than standing apart from them. Critical posthumanism also interrogates ableism and redefines life beyond the normative human body, embracing both “non-normative” material bodies and nonhuman existences as integral to our shared ecology of being. It is also here that Ray’s story transfuses

with the scientific concept called *cryonics*. As Minerva defines it, “Cryonics is the act of preserving legally dead individuals at ultra-low temperatures, in the hope that they can someday be revived using future technology” (1). Craig’s obsession to transcend death mirrors the aspirations that underlie transhumanist thought, that is, the desire to overcome biological limits through biotechnological invention. Craig’s reflections on mortality reveal the psychological origins of his quest. After the death of his only companion, his dog, Craig became consumed by the inevitability of his own demise:

“Then one day when I’d crossed the age of sixty, . . . , my one and only companion, my dog, died. The thought then dawned on me—one day I too will die. . . I began to wonder if through an artificial process, with the help of science one can increase one’s longevity. . . my invention cannot keep anyone alive for an indefinite period. . . We cannot make a human life indefinite. . . His death is inevitable. But a dead man can be revived at least once.” (Ray 40–41)

As Minerva attests, this cryonic faith is not without limits:

Most people who make arrangements for cryonics hope to ‘die’ at an old age and be revived in a future where medicine is so advanced that the disease that caused them to die can be fixed. . . Cryonics by itself can only provide life *suspension*, not life *extension*. That is, it can only temporarily suspend the processes that normally cause ageing, and these processes resume immediately upon revival unless additional steps are taken to halt them further. (45)

However, the distinction between suspension and extension underscores the central irony of Craig’s transhumanist desire: even as it seeks immortality, it must rely on the potential technologies not yet invented. Craig’s desire to extend his life beyond death, in addition, resonates with what Robert Ettinger terms as *suspended animation* that refers to “a standstill in the life processes of the body. It is a stasis that can be imposed and removed at will, and the subject is regarded as alive at all times. In some simple life forms suspended animation can be produced simply by drying, and reanimation by moistening them again” (12). When Craig dies, another attendant Thor leads Sonku, Somerville and Papadopoulos to the room where his “master will live again” (Ray 46). Sonku narrates:

Craig lay on the table—senseless and lifeless. His head was now covered with by the helmet, which had seventeen electrodes protruding from different directions. . . Many more tubes were visible from two sides of the temple. . . twelve areas of the skin were penetrated by pins. . . I’ve no knowledge of what liquid was exactly being passed into his body drop by drop, through a tube inserted into his nose. . . we were left with no doubt about Craig’s ingenious scientific mind.” (Ray 60-61)

Craig's implementation of cryonics drive exerts beyond self-preservation. His "human" servitor, Nils, for instance, is another depiction of his experiments with revival. When Papadopoulos inquires about his age, Nils replies, "'Eighty-three,' adding that 'Last year on the 7th of December, I died. My master brought me back to life'" (Ray 43). This deixis in the text portraying Odin revitalizing Craig and Craig reviving Nils after his death, exposes the technological entanglement of human subjectivity as both Craig and Nils are someone who cannot be considered as a purely biological being but is aided with techno-medical means that definitely set them as someone who cannot be called human but "posthuman". This uncanny feeling is adequately captured when, after the first death of Craig, Sonku and his fellows are invited for the dinner, Sonku recalls:

At exactly 8 p.m., Nils emerged to tell us that dinner was ready...The fellow who was serving us also looked very ancient; but none of us dared find out the length of time he had been serving Craig. I could not have digested the food, ..., had I known it was being served by a dead man, resurrected. (Ray 47)

To execute his "ultimate mission" (Ray 48), Craig constructs two AI beings, Odin and Thor, who function as extensions of his will. These creations, which might be termed *autobots*, embody the transhumanist desire to merge intelligence with machinery as Craig makes it clear that "Odin and Thor... both do most of my work" (Ray 37). Like Odin, who temporarily restores Craig's vitality without "batting his eyelids" (Ray 45), both figures blur the boundary between the animate and the artificial. Ray underscores this ambiguity through Shonku's observation that the word "'man' wouldn't be correct" to describe Odin, who is instead referred to as a "creature" (Ray 36), as Sonku later in addition remarks about Odin:

I looked straight at his [Odin's] eyes for five minutes at a stretch. It's not possible for anyone to look at you in such a state for that long. I feel he is a mechanical being i.e. a robot. I've a similar experience with a robot once before. (Ray 45)

Thor, another of Craig's robotic attendants, acts like a doppelganger to Odin in his uncanny stillness, who too is "devoid of any eyelids" (Ray 62). His mechanical precision becomes evident during the experiment designed to revive Craig, where he performs preprogrammed instructions: "taking four steps forward and standing behind [Shonku and Somerville], [he] rise[s] up his hands to a certain level" (Ray 62). The implication is clear: should Shonku or Somerville commit any error, Thor would smash them with his hammer instantly. The scene portrays the precarious relationship between human and machine, a relationship governed by obedience, power, and latent threat. Thor and Odin are not mere tools, rather they are manifestations of a technological will that can both (pre)serve and destroy. When Craig revives again, he delivers a verdict on the intelligence of Thor and Odin:

'I do not need Thor or Odin any more,'... 'You both [Shonku and Somerville] will replace

them. There's a limit to intelligence in a mechanical being. You both have the intelligence. You will follow my orders. You will become attendants to the man who is going to rule over the people of this entire world.' (Ray 65)

His declaration exposes a fundamental paradox in his transhumanist aspiration: on one side, Craig's robots symbolize the human dream of crafting artificial intelligence capable of emulating life; on the other, his rejection of them reveals an enduring belief in the superiority of human cognition that again affirms anthropocentrism. Ray delineates this moment to question transhumanist creed, that is, the conviction that intelligence, whether biological or mechanical, can be fully instrumentalized. By showing Craig's desire to replace machines with human subordinates, the narrative hints at a deeper level: that even as humans create autonomous machines, they remain haunted by the fear of losing control over their own inventions. Odin and Thor thus stand as double-edged symbols: not only as testaments to human ingenuity, but also to its potential for tyranny and self-destruction. There is one more reason to it, that is, "Hypnojen" cannot work on non-biological life forms, which becomes obvious later in the story.

Craig's "ultimate mission" of global domination culminates in his "Hypnojen" project which is a fusion of necropolitics and totalitarianism. When Shonku, Somerville, and Papadopoulos intrude into Craig's library, they encounter a revealing symbol of his imperial fantasy: "an enormous world map. And certain areas of this map were marked by small coloured flags stuck with pins... the pins were fixed on all the capitals of each country" (Ray 50). The scene evokes the imagery of colonial cartography, where Craig's ultimate mission is clearly deciphered: by deploying "hypnojen", Craig reimagines himself not merely as the scientist that "no other scientists [can] match" (Ray 54), but as "the singular ruler of the world" where "rest of the world would live under his thumb" according to his own will and this "would be made possible with the help of this 'Hypnojen'" (Ray 51). 'Hypnojen' is described as a "vaporous element or gas" capable of penetrating human bodies through respiration. Craig has clearly mentioned the two methods to disseminate the hypnojen and its outcome:

...[If] released over a city... through pipes or tubes and... by throwing a bomb from a plane... The bomb ... would automatically release the gas in all directions, seconds before hitting the ground... When a particle or a molecule from the gas enters a person's body through his breath, the person comes under a spell of hypnosis for the next twenty-four hours. One bomb would be enough to hypnotize the total population of a city like London or New York for an entire year. And the advantage is that the bomb will not otherwise destroy the city in any way. If one gets to control the mind of the people then where's the trouble in ruling over them? (Ray 51–52)

The details regarding hypnojen vividly sketches an underlying necropolitical drive: Craig's urge to convert scientific mastery into absolute control over human existence. Achille Mbembe's

concept of “necropolitics” unravels the ideological core of Craig’s ambition. As Mbembe contends:

The ultimate expression of sovereignty largely resides in the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die. To kill or to let live thus constitutes sovereignty’s limits, its principal attributes. To be sovereign is to exert one’s control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power. (66)

In this terrifying vision, ‘Hypnojen’ becomes a biotechnological weapon for psychic colonization—a means to annihilate free will without shedding blood. Craig’s dream is not of mass destruction but mass submission, a world rendered docile through chemical domination. Therefore, Craig’s “Hypnojen” becomes a necropolitical act that enables a technocratic extension of sovereignty into the very domain of biology and consciousness. His project “Hypnojen” functions as both a metaphor and mechanism for the domination of life itself. Within the framework of necropolitics, “death can be represented as agency. For death is precisely that from and over which [one has] power. But it is also the space where freedom and negation operate” (Mbembe 91–92). It is quite obvious that Craig’s technological sovereignty does not incorporate the conventional politics of killing. His experiments in cryonics suggest a deeper necropolitical paradox: the will not only to decide who dies, but also to reverse death itself. In this sense, his cryonic and hypnogenic ambitions converge into what might be called a “technopolitical necropower”—a system where the control of death, consciousness, and memory all become functions of the same authoritarian will. Craig’s attempt to merge necropolitics with transhumanist ethos thus transforms him into a figure who asserts his “necropower” on the threshold between life and death, body and machine, freedom and hypnosis.

The narrative foregrounds another crucial dimension of posthumanist inquiry which is “postanimality” that reflects Ray’s textual praxis of *Philosophical Posthumanism*. As Francesca Ferrando writes, this strand of posthumanism “advocates a new understanding of the human, not as an autonomous agent endowed with transcendental consciousness, but rather an immanent—embodied and embedded relational—entity that thinks with and through multiple connections to others” (xi–xii). It introduces three central ideas—*post-humanism*, *post-anthropocentrism*, and *post-dualism*. Post-humanism, in this sense, pluralizes the human, replacing the singular “Man” of classical humanism with “human(s),” an inclusive term that acknowledges gendered, racialized, and marginalized identities historically excluded from the category of the human. Post-anthropocentrism dismantles the hierarchy that places humanity above other forms of life and challenges the assumption that humans are the measure of all things. Meanwhile, post-dualism rejects the oppositional binaries—human/machine, nature/culture, self/other—that structure Western metaphysics. It insists on fluid, relational ontologies in which distinctions blur and entities co-constitute one another. This shift in ontology dissolves the rigid boundaries that once separated the human from the nonhuman, situating both

within a network of mutual becoming rather than hierarchical domination. Postanimalism, as Tsz Man Chan explicates, is “particularly concerned with the revitalization of the long history of human-and-animal/animal-and-human relationships” (331). Within this framework, the definition of “the animal” is no longer tethered to its anthropocentric subordination. Instead, the animal is liberated from its position as the human’s “other” and becomes what Chan calls the “postanimal” (330)—an entity that exists beyond human-imposed binaries. In other words, postanimality signifies “the recuperation of the animal to a non-hierarchical order where the human does not emerge as the supreme standard for comparison or self-validation” (Krishna K and Sambhu R 4).

Ray’s story limns this repositioning through the figure of the black panther, one of the subjects of Craig’s “Hypnojen” experiment. Inside Craig’s laboratory is situated a space that contains a microcosmic zoo in which Sonku discovers an array of captive species, most of which are “insects or reptiles in nature” (Ray 53). Among them, the sight of a “black panther” standing motionless and captivated within a cage in the room is deeply unsettling. Its eyes are vacant, its power subdued; Sonku kneels down to observe “a terrible scenario,” realizing that “a ferocious animal of this nature could look so blank... This animal had become witless, as if he was waiting to obey someone’s orders; he was no longer in possession of his own power or his own mind” (Ray 53). A tag dangling from the creature’s neck bears a date from six months prior, suggesting the duration of its hypnotic subjugation. Later in the story, when Craig condemns Papadopoulos to death for cowardice, dictating that “a coward deserves only one reprimand” (Ray 65), he performs his first overt act of necropolitical power; however, this assertion of absolute authority is unsettled soon. The scene ruptures as “a huge roar” reverberates through the laboratory, and a panther with its “smooth, black, hairy body” shimmering in the spectral blue light, emerges into the space (Ray 66). The timing of this arrival is not accidental. Papadopoulos did not flee as informed by Nils but he, in a final act of courage, “headed straight towards the room located outside the zoo... [and] put [his] hand inside the skylight and spread the powder [H. Minus]” (Ray 68), stolen from Odin in the same night they trespassed into Craig’s library while leaving through the dark corridor, which is “the antidote to drive away the spell of Hypnojen” (Ray 54). What follows is a moment charged with moral and ontological significance. The creature, far from attacking at random, where Sonku and Sommerville also are present, directs its motion with discernible intent toward Craig himself, the man who had earlier deprived it of volition and consciousness. In this act of reversal, the panther defies scientific domination, reclaiming agency. It becomes an autonomous being capable of affective and ethical response—a sentient force that asserts its right to exist beyond human manipulation. The panther’s action dramatizes the collapse of anthropocentric hierarchy: the human, once sovereign, becomes the object of an animal’s moral agency. This moment profoundly resists anthropocentric epistemology, that is, the entrenched belief that animal consciousness must be comprehended only through the prism of human cognition. As Krishna K and Sambhu R substantiate in their discourses on

“postanimality”: “...animal consciousness have always been studied by recourse to human mental structures that are inextricably connected to arborescent linguistic models. By extricating animal consciousness from its humanistic baggage, postanimality attempts to capture the encounter of the animal with the human from a post-anthropocentric perspective” (5). The panther’s deliberate act, viewed through this lens, transcends instinctual behavior. It becomes a posthuman gesture—an ethical and ontological reassertion of agency that collapses the hierarchical divide between human and nonhuman forms of life. In confronting its oppressor, the creature not only enacts retribution but also redefines the boundaries of consciousness and compassion. The scene thus becomes a posthuman moment of revelation, compelling the reader to reconsider what it means to share a world of sentient beings whose capacities for resistance and emotion extend far beyond human comprehensibility.

Derrida’s concept of *animot* corroborates the post-anthropocentric critique in this respect that dismantles the rigid binaries separating “the human” from “the animal.” The neologism, coined by Jacques Derrida in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008), encapsulates both the multiplicity of animal life and the ambiguity of its relation to language. Derrida contends that Western philosophical traditions have historically reduced this multiplicity to an impoverished abstraction—“The Animal”—as if all nonhuman beings could be subsumed under one singular, homogenous category. This essentialist distinction, which posits humanity and animality as two separate and oppositional orders of existence, obscures the vast diversity of living forms and their varied modes of perception, communication, and being. To speak of “The Animal,” Derrida argues, is already to silence animals—to deny their plurality, their alterity, and their irreducible difference (Calarco 13–14).

In replacing the essentialist term, The Animal with *animot*, as Calarco explicates, Derrida encompasses three things:

- (1) In line with the points about reductionism just mentioned, he wants to recall his readers to the plurality and rich multiplicity of animal life. When spoken in French, *animot* sounds like the plural word for animals, (les) *animaux*. So, rather than speaking of a general animal or animal-ness, the word *animot* reminds us that animals are plural and irreducibly unique. The *mot* (which means word) in *animot* refers to two additional aspects of the question of the animal that Derrida aims to bring to our attention.
- (2) With a focus on the word, Derrida calls on readers to reconsider how language and the ability to see and name things have been used throughout the tradition to differentiate human beings from animals. Animals have often been characterized as entirely lacking in language and human beings as universally having the capacity for speech. But, for Derrida, having a language and using words are a more complex matter than that. Language is by no means a transparent tool for gaining access to reality, and it is not fully within human control (we receive it from others as we grow up within and become a competent member of a speaking culture). Conversely,

animals do not simply “lack” language, nor are they unresponsive automatons who react in a simple and mechanical way to their environment. (3) With this more complex conception of language in place, Derrida does not go on simply to suggest that human beings and animals have the exact same relationship to language. In other words, he does not seek to “give language back” to animals; rather, he tries to think about animals existing outside of human language in a way that does not imply privation or lack on the part of animals. (15)

However, Derrida’s intention is not to “restore” language to animals, as if they had been unjustly deprived of it, but to reimagine the relation between humans and animals beyond the logic of lack. He invites us to think of animal existence as inhabiting a realm *outside* human language without assuming that this exteriority signifies inferiority or absence. In this sense, *animot* becomes a philosophical gesture toward ethical humility—a call to encounter animal alterity without the impulse to master or translate it into human terms. This proposition resonates with the moment in Ray’s narrative where Sonku refrains from imposing human language upon the panther. Instead of interpreting the creature’s actions through anthropocentric standpoint, he observes its consciousness and agency as phenomena that exist autonomously, outside the domain of the linguistic matrix of humans. Thus, the panther embodies a form of being that cannot be reduced to the human lexicon—a reminder that sentience, emotion, and ethical response are not confined to the species that speaks, but are shared across the living continuum. So, analogically the Black Panther here functions both as a *postanimal* and *animot* in a Derridean sense.

Necropolitics, as earlier discussed, need not always manifest in a purely destructive or oppressive form; it can also operate as an ethical strategy for the preservation or to save life. This ambivalence is vividly depicted in this story when Shonku prevents Craig from activating the switch that would have released the disabling gas. As the panther prepares to avenge against Craig, Sonku recounts the situation:

“When ... Craig’s hand was moving towards the switch to release the gas and disarm us as well as the tiger, I ran to him and pulled the mask off his face. And in that instant the panther leaped on him... I heard Craig’s piercing scream.” (Ray 67)

By swiftly removing Craig’s protective mask, Shonku enables the panther to strike—a moment that simultaneously enacts justice and restores moral equilibrium. Shonku’s act is deliberate: he wields intellectual and ethical judgment to let Craig perish in front of the very creature he had enslaved. In this morally charged scene, one death becomes necessary for the survival of the many. Mbembe’s necropolitics as “not only about killing; it is also about making life differently, managing death so that life can endure” provides the theoretical key to interpreting this scene (66). Death, as theorized in necropolitics, is not the antithesis of life but “the constant matrix of political order... the ordering of death is, paradoxically, a way of sustaining life” (Mbembe 89).

Shonku's action, analyzed in alignment with this perspective, represents a moral calculus of governance—an “ordering of death” that reestablishes ethical balance by allowing justice to emerge from within the very site of domination. In deciding not to protect Craig, Shonku assumes the role of the sovereign who “exercises reason when deciding on the exception: to let live or to kill” (Mbembe 97). This act of annihilation, that is, letting Craig face the consequence of his hubris, transforms necropolitics from a discourse of extermination into what may be called a “salvific necropolitics”. Here, death functions as an ethical in(ter)vention, a necessary obligation ensuring the continuation of life and justice. Mbembe notes that “contemporary forms of subjugating life to the power of death (necropolitics) are deeply reconfiguring the relations between resistance, sacrifice, and terror... the notion of biopower is insufficient to account for contemporary forms of the subjugation of life to the power of death” (92–93). Shonku's decision embodies precisely this transformation: the shift from domination to moral resistance, from sacrifice as loss to sacrifice as survival. By executing Craig's death to become the site of retribution and renewal, Shonku turns necropolitics into an act of restoration as well as preservation—a paradoxical act where destruction becomes the precondition for justice, and death itself becomes the guarantor of life's ethical continuity.

This instance also makes “humanimal” conspicuous, a term used by Haraway who explains it as a conceptual space in which the human and the animal come “into each other” (HUMAN 0:10–0:14). In her reflections on *becoming-with*, Haraway reimagines coexistence not as a state of harmony but as an active, ongoing process of negotiation and response. As she writes, *becoming-with* gestures toward “the possibility of a new practice of living-with” (Haraway 92). This is a mode of entanglement defined by friction as much as by affinity—an ethics of shared vulnerability rather than domination. Shonku's relationship with the panther captures precisely this precarious balance between danger and respect. The two coexist within a space of mutual recognition that refuses both mastery and complete assimilation—an embodiment of Haraway's call to reimagine human-animal relationships as reciprocal rather than hierarchical. The setting of Craig's house, then, becomes a *contact zone*—not in the colonial sense of an encounter between colonizer and colonized, but as an ethical site where scientific power, human ambition, and nonhuman agency converge and contest one another. The term “contact zone,” as articulated by Mary Louise Pratt, initially described the “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (Ashcroft 62–63). Haraway later extends this concept to interspecies encounters, remarking that “encounters between species are always contact zones. They are fraught with histories of conquest and domestication, but they also open possibilities of recognition, respect, and response” (216). In Ray's story, the laboratory becomes just such a zone of negotiation: a space charged with both domination and empathy, where the human and the nonhuman confront each other under “humanimal” situations.

Ray's story of *Hypnojen* also registers what might be called "tech-anxiety"—a critical reflection on how far scientific innovation can be ethically justified. The story intertwines philosophical and posthumanist concerns, revealing the double-edged nature of technological progress. Through *Hypnojen*, Ray unearths the dark side of technoscientific praxis: the ambition to overcome mortality and master nature that ultimately culminates in domination and moral collapse. Craig's transhumanist experiment, especially his resurrection of Nils and of himself, collapses essential boundaries—between life and death, human and machine, subject and servant. In this sense, *Hypnojen* anticipates much of the contemporary debates in transhumanism and posthumanism, where the desire for transcendence exposes humanity's own ethical vulnerabilities. Critical posthumanism insists that "the human" is but one form of life among many—an awareness that philosophical posthumanism extends by deploying *post-anthropocentrism* and *post-dualism* which get extended and theorized through the concept of *postanimality*. This conceptual move re-replaces human beings not as masters of the biosphere but as participants in a wider network of life forms, accountable to the other non-human species with whom they share existence. Ray's narrative discourse thus becomes a site where scientific imagination collides with moral philosophy, revealing both the promise and peril of a world where technology challenges and determines the very meaning of being human.

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