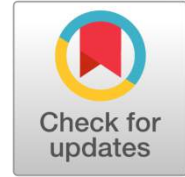# INCOMPATIBLE VERSIONS OF DIGITAL HUMANITY IN MIKE LANCASTER'S *0.4* AND *1.4*

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Abstract

This study examines the topic of the human being stuck in a transitional period between being human, transhuman, and posthuman. The focus of this article revolves around the analysis of Mike Lancaster's sequel novels *0.4* and *1.4* which depict events in a fictitious world, with the former focusing on the transformation of a conventional community into a digitally enhanced one and the latter depicting the presence of several versions of the upgraded humanity. This research employs transhuman and posthuman perspectives on selected novel excerpts that indicate the author's preoccupation with ambiguity and disobedience. Digital memory record of a diary is viewed as an instance of self-awareness that provides documentation for memory and archive which would be the only sign of the existence of a human version in this real world in contrast to the digital world.

Keywords: transhumanism, digital humanity, Mike Lancaster, *0.4*, *1.4*

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Science fiction short story "The Machine Stops," written by E. M. Forster in 1909, serves as a warning, as a future prediction or just a future portrayal. Related to his main concern while writing this story, Forster (1947) stated in the preface to his *Collected Short Stories* that "*The Machine Stops* is a reaction to one of the earlier heavens of H. G. Wells" (p. 6) since he aimed to apparently demonstrate the intruding, threatening, and even disruptive feature of technology unless the necessary precautions are taken. Science fiction texts, much like Forster's statement, aim to pose issues by raising thought-provoking questions like, "What if robots turn against us?", "What if humans are transforming into cyborgs?", "What if we turn out to be the creations of the machines?". What-if scenarios might go indefinitely and Mike Lancaster addresses some of these scenarios in his novel sequel. Hence, this study aims to focus on Lancaster's subsequent novels published in 2011 and 2012, which basically target the young adult readers. The sequels *0.4* and *1.4*, have distinct titles in their UK and US editions. The editions titled *0.4* and *1.4* are more encompassing and captivating in terms of interest, meaning, and continuity in parallel to the content, whereas the American versions are slightly different as they are called *Human.4* and *The Future We Left Behind*. The titles *0.4* and *1.4* effectively convey the implications of a digital environment, a digital humanity, and ongoing upgrades to human systems. The latter versions, on the other hand, emphasize the central contradiction and irony of the transhumanist viewpoint while emphasizing *Human.4.* By focusing on the aforementioned issues and making references to the ideas of transhumanism and posthumanism, the current study seeks to highlight a further issue about humanity's compatibility to social and technological amendments. The purpose of this article is to position humans in a transitional phase, which has already been emphasized by transhumanist and posthumanist scholars; however, a further question is how Lancaster puts the out-of-date humans in purgatory, in an incompatible position, in a grey area, in an invisible gap, or even stuck between two successive systems, and how their invisible position turns to become visible by means of their archival records.

Transhumanism as the Update of Humanity

The shift from understanding human to question what a human is has been triggered by technological and scientific advancements and by the problem to posit her/himself among these changes or by finding an exact role among them. Julian Huxley (1959) comes up with a new term to express this transition by asserting that "Perhaps

transhumanism will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature" (p. 17). Huxley (1959) emphasises that humanity and the human species are "on the threshold of a new kind of existence, as different from ours as ours is from that of Pekin man" (p. 17). What Huxley asserts related to the "new existence" is applicable to the novels of Lancaster that are central subjects of this study. The human beings are still human in the stories, they are not robots or cyborgs, or new types of beings in terms of creation; however, they "are transcending," transforming, and even being augmented by a system. Similarly, in an explanatory note, Ranisch and Sorgner (2014) elucidate the concepts of transhumanism and posthumanism, as follows:

> Transhumanism can be seen as a stance that affirms the radical transformation of human's biological capacities and social conditions by means of technologies. These transformations are widely perceived as *human enhancement* or augmentation which might be so fundamental that they bring about life forms with significantly different characteristics as to be perceived as other than human. The result of such technologically induced version of evolution is referred to as the *posthuman*. (pp. 7-8)

The new form of beings as a result of this mentioned enhancement and augmentation of the capacities of humankind is ambiguous although called "posthuman". Naming this as "posthuman" does not exclude or clarify the uncertainty and obscurity about the new version of evolved human. The physical, social, or even digital qualifications are unknown to the current descriptions; therefore, describing and naming process of these altered beings needs to be discussed and thought over.

In 1998, the "Transhumanist Declaration (2012)" was signed by twenty-three transhumanists, and in this declaration, which is revised and modified over the years, it is clarified that transhumanists defend "the well-being of all sentience, including humans, non-human animals, and any future artificial intellects, modified life forms, or other intelligences to which technological and scientific advance may give rise" (Chislenko et al., 2013, p. 54). This artificial intelligence and the modified life form are united in Lancaster's updated human beings. Moreover, the last item of the "Transhumanist Declaration" asserts that these transhumanists "favor morphological freedom – the right to modify and enhance one's body, cognition, and emotions. The freedom includes the

right to use or not to use techniques and technologies to extend life, preserve the self through cryonics, uploading, and other means, and to choose further modifications and enhancements" (p. 55). Although the idea of modification conjures up the idea of betterment and enhancement, there is a risk that the "morphological freedom" that the transhumanists defended is not in the hands of the individuals, but in those of the authorities at some point.

Kevin Warwick (2020) presents similar concerns in relation to human enhancement as he asks: "Should every human have the right to be upgraded? If an individual does not want to upgrade, should they be allowed to defer, thereby taking on a role in relation to superhumans, perhaps something like a chimpanzee's relationship with a human today? How will the values of superhumans relate to those of humans? Will humans be of any consequence to superhumans other than something of an awkward pain to be removed if possible?" (p. 9). In the given quotation, Warwick poses crucial questions that revolve around the ethical implications and potential consequences of providing every individual with the opportunity to upgrade themselves. Warwick contemplates whether the right to enhancement should be universally granted and discusses the possibility of individuals choosing not to undergo such upgrades. Warwick raises the issue of equitable access and prompts a discussion on the potential implications of granting or denying this right. The analogy he created related to the human and chimpanzee highlights the potential societal divide that could arise between upgraded individuals (superhumans) and those who remain unenhanced (humans). A following concern emerges about the potential devaluation or marginalization of unenhanced individuals in a society where enhancement becomes prevalent. Warwick (2020) also adds, "It would be difficult to imagine that superhumans would want to voluntarily give up their powers in order to satisfy the grumbles of mere humans" (p. 9). This is another point to be considered since Warwick refers to a potential power imbalance between the updated superhumans with augmented capabilities and standard, regular humans lacking such enhancements. A potential scenario could be envisioned where superhumans may view themselves as a distinct and superior group, with their priorities, abilities, and capabilities differing significantly from those of regular humans. Consequently, they may be less inclined to accommodate the concerns or demands of regular humans, considering them as less relevant or insignificant compared to their own

exceptional abilities. The upgrades, or so-called enhancements, to people's physical and mental entities are not of their choosing, and they are not even aware of them, as seen in Lancaster's novels. Hence, the purported liberty of choosing one's own modification is the perilous component, which raises the question of whether liberty of choice can even exist for this issue.

This mentioned modification includes biological and technological changes, and as Ferrando (2013) argues, "Human enhancement is a crucial notion to the transhumanist reflection; the main keys to access such a goal are identified in science and technology, in all of their variables, as existing, emerging and speculative frames – from regenerative medicine to nanotechnology, radical life extension, mind uploading and cryonics, among other fields" (p. 27). The augmentation in these novels is through digitalisation of humankind, and therefore, it can be a shift from human to transhuman and then even to posthuman. Lancaster's (2017) reply to a question about his main inspiration behind the *.4* series clarifies his starting point, and it also points out the posthuman approach he improved while constructing this digitalised community as he states:

> I was upgrading the operating system on my Mac, watching the processes as it upgraded, and I realised that the latest OS X was reusing some parts of the old OS, whilst overwriting other parts. I idly wondered what the bits that were being overwritten would feel about the upgrade, and what the parts that were untouched would make of the new environment they were now operating within.

Like overwriting some parts and reusing some parts of the computer system Lancaster experienced in his factual life, he created a fictional situation where human beings are reformed in computer system language. Even the beginning of the novel *0.4* is captivating while giving a kind of warning to the reader, as seen in the following quotation: "This data storage unit, or 'book', has been designed to reprogram the human brain, allowing it to replicate the lost art that was once called 'reading'. It is a simple adjustment and there will be no negative or harmful effects from this process" (n. p.). Following this warning related to the act of reading, which is an out-of-date activity, the writer of the novel, Lancaster positions himself as the fictional editor of the book. With this note, the novel acquires postmodern writing techniques like ambiguity and fluidity between fact and fiction or the intervention of the author as a character of the novel.

Stated as the "Editor's Note," it is written "If the story you are about to read is true, then this work is dedicated to the 0.4. / Mike Lancaster. / Editor" (n. p.). This is a kind of self-reference in a playful manner; hence, it could be analysed as a postmodern technique. However, this article will not focus on the postmodern writing techniques, but on posthuman aspects. In other words, rather than its writing technique, thematic content and the questions raised by Lancaster will be on the centre of analysis.

In a short synopsis, *0.4* portrays an annual community talent show at which Kyle and three others volunteered to be a part of an allegedly amateurish hypnosis. However, having woken up from the hypnosis, Kyle and the other three volunteers of the act realise that the life changed, there is no internet or phone connection, and furthermore, all the people living in the village are under a kind of mesmerising act, they turned to become different people – they are updated. As an intriguing aspect, the ones who are not updated because of different reasons like hypnosis or a wrong phase of the sleep cannot be seen by the updated ones since they are accepted as incompatible versions. They become unreadable, unrecognizable, invalid files for the others, the recent versions of humanity. In this new phase of life, there is no internet connection or phone connection not because of any systematic problems but because they are not necessary anymore, there is no need for any kind of cable connection. The updated human beings can connect via the filaments in their skins, as described in the novel:

> The skin of his hands was shifting, as if moved by ripples across its surface, or currents below. It was like the skin itself had suddenly become capable of moving, and it wasn't using muscles to do it, it was doing it itself (*0.4*, p. 172).

Their skin turned to become centres of transmission via filaments, so they transformed to wired, machine-like creatures. The old, out-of-date version people can see the transformation or the enhanced edition of humankind since they turned to be connected like wired machines. The description of this moment is further explained: "The doctor's hand was now linked to my dad's hand by hundreds of flesh-coloured threads. [...] Digital code. Data. Computer code as a means of invasion. [...] 'Not mutating,' I said. 'Connecting'" (*0.4*, p. 174). This connection makes all people a whole, a new type of unified, connected community rather than different and distinct individuals. The citizens, or the non-defined existing beings in this community, are like the machines or vehicles

that are connected via cables in a house. Interestingly, the ones that cannot fit to this new system are excluded, not seen by the rest of the members. These unseen ones allocate a new group of individuals uniting the marginalised ones as they do not comply with the rest of the system. They are the unfitting ones. The unfitting issue appears to be a technical problem; nonetheless, it resembles to the condition of marginalized, ostracized, and isolated individuals who find themselves unable to conform to any given system.

The hypnotic moment these four children found themselves is the moment when the humans were updated, and they missed this. The reason why Lancaster chose hypnosis, hypnotic moment or a phase of sleep is not explained; however, it is clear at this point that the deeper layers of the brain, and even the sub-conscience are the focal points. Danny tries to explain what happened as such: "An upgrade to the human operating system was transmitted, and you missed it. [...] A necessary software update with a raft of improvements, bug fixes and a whole load of new and interesting features" (p. 224). Danny continues to explain how the operating system was out of date and how the updated one is better: "Now we have an alternative. From this day everything changes. There will be an end to crime, war, poverty, fear, starvation, disease, greed and envy; a straight path, fast track, express route into a golden future of unlimited possibilities" (p. 225). As formerly cited, what Ranisch and Sorgner called "*human enhancement* and augmentation" is illustrated by Lancaster in the form of updated human versions which assumedly means improvement and betterment. This improvement could have been an altered education system, legal system, or any other social system, but here it is programme-related and software-like system, a more digital one. Francesca Ferrando (2020) comments on the aim of transhumanism related to the amendments in the field of mind and artificial intelligence as follows:

> [...] transhumanism opts for a radical transformation of the human condition by existing, emerging, and speculative technologies (as in the case of regenerative medicine, radical life extension, mind uploading, and cryonics); it thus suggests that diversity and multiplicity will replace the notion of existing within a single system, such as a biological body (Ferrando, 2020, p. 27).

The diversity that Ferrando asserts in her description is what Lancaster portrays in a multi-layered simultaneous existence of human versions rather than just in one biological form.

As a representative phrase, the title of the novel, 0.4, is also referred to as an illustrative term to clarify what is meant. It is highly awareness-rising, but shocking in a negative sense for the children: "Nought-point-four isn't a percentage. […] It's the *software version number*. You are software version 0.4. The rest of us just jumped to 1.0" (*0.4*, p. 228). This is not only about finding out what happened or understanding the situation, but this is about identifying themselves and the difficulty of positioning themselves in the life and system that they have known so far. These children are like thrown out or the waste products of the new system. There are even rules for these 0.4 humans in *0.4*, as such:

> New Rule Number One: Don't try to figure out what the 1.0 are doing; you're simply not wired to understand them (p. 247)
>
> New Rule Number Two: The 1.0 can't see or hear us (p. 248)
>
> New Rule Number Three: We can't touch the 1.0 (p. 249)
>
> New Rule Number Four: You never get used to the sight of those filaments (p. 250)
>
> New Rule Number Five: You can't go back (p. 252)
>
> New Rule Number Six: Even to the people you knew and loved it is as if you never existed (p. 252)
>
> New Rule Number Seven: You live with this the best way you can (p. 255).

These principles clearly demonstrate the simultaneous presence of at least two versions of humanity. Lancaster also establishes a new sort of spatial existence and a new conception of life and reality in this work. There is no longer a historical progression of mankind, but rather a simultaneous life. The old and new versions exist simultaneously in the same location, but the new version cannot see or read the older versions. The troublesome aspect is the invisibility of the non-updated humans to the updated ones, since they are effectively forgotten, deleted, discarded, or even non-existent for the new versions, regardless of the emotional or social relationships they formerly had.

Augmented Digitalised Transhuman

In the sequel *1.4*, Lancaster takes the idea of connection a step further as the people are connected to each other via The Link that is in their heads, a type of wireless connection. The second book starts after a thousand years have passed, and it opens with the speech of Professor Lucas Whybrow, as follows: "The story of Peter Vincent might easily have never been heard. Indeed, it was by pure accident that the flash-memory

drive, containing the files and fragments that make up his story, was absorbed into the WorldBrainMass" (p. 1). Here, the records of Peter were found and analysed as it was in the first book for Kyle. Peter, the main character of *1.4* records what he knows and what he thinks about Kyle Straker's world, as follows:

> His tapes talk about his journey through this new world. They end with the realisation that humanity had simply been upgraded; that the changes he and his friends were seeing were the result of a new operating system for the human brain" (*1.4*, p. 144).

This passage reveals Peter's belief that the changes occurring in the new world are a consequence of a widespread upgrade that has affected humanity, and this upgrade was intended to mend or improve the state of the world. However, there are individuals who did not undergo the upgrade and remained at a lower version, specifically version 0.4, while the majority transitioned to version 1.0. Peter describes these non-upgraded individuals as "inferior" and suggests that they have been systematically marginalized and excluded from the sight and consciousness of those who have undergone the upgrade, as he states: "The 0.4 were inferior, and they were screened out, hidden from the eyes and minds of the 1.0. / They became invisible to us. Still there, forbidden from using our technologies, unseen" (*1.4*, p. 144). The inferiority and invisibility of the former versions remind the underdeveloped societies that are unseen or ignored by the so-called developed societies. This is a type of multi-layered, concurrent social discrimination and stratification that Lancaster creates in his novel sequel. A similar concern was suggested by Warwick (2020) in relation to the human and superhuman as it is very similar to the relationship between humans and animals: "Humans cage them, destroy their habitat and treat them as captives, slaves or pets. Thus, if we look to the future, the best that a human could hope for might be that they become the pet of a superhuman" (p. 9). Warwick extends his analogy to speculate on the potential future scenario, suggesting that in a world of superhumans, the possible outcome for regular humans might be to assume the role of a pet to a superhuman, which draws attention to the potential power differential and loss of agency standard humans might experience in the context of superhumans. This claim signs a potential erosion of human autonomy, dignity, and equality in a society where superhumans hold significant power and influence. In Lancaster's novels, the superhuman is not portrayed as the ones who slave the former versions; however, the

invisibility and the incompatibility of the former, out-of-date versions already make them stuck where they are. This is another type of enslavement based on evolutionary difference.

The first book of the sequel, *0.4*, sets in the early years of the twentieth century, whereas the second book begins with "Nearly a thousand years have passed since the recording of the Straker Tapes" (n.p), and it explains how the people are fed or equipped with, even loaded by the Link. The information is ready there and the updated human beings are like the search engines that can have access to any kind of data and information simply by thinking. Moreover, the data transfer does not require any kind of flash disc or data storage apart from the brain and the filaments among people. Lancaster attempted to draw a picture of a technologically highly improved life where there is a unit for Climate Control that determines where to rain and when to shine; where people can change their clothes by connecting to their clothes with their filaments; or where sharing information, saving and bookmarking the LinkAddress are actualized via filaments. Thinking and concentration are the only necessities of this world to access any information. This is the point where they turn to become transhuman as they turn to become a new form, a new version. Peter explains:

> [The Link] allows us to work, chat, swap data, study, shop, play games, watch films, listen to music, connect with friends, take a virtual vacation or augment reality with filters, menus and even animations – the same things we have been doing for thousands of years – on the go. The Link is there in our heads – there's no onboard hardware and the software that runs is external, carried through the air.
> It works, we're reminded, because of our marvellous capacity for filament networking. (*1.4*, pp. 52-53)

However, while the ease of information sharing and access appears beneficial on the surface, it also engenders certain predicaments. As Peter claims, "The Link provides us with all the connections we need. So much so that we pretty much let it run our lives for us now" (*1.4*, p. 230). This statement underscores the drawbacks of relying excessively on the Link, an apparent technological interface facilitating comprehensive connectivity. The phrase "let it run our lives for us now" alludes to the increasingly

pervasiveness of the Link, implying a relinquishment of personal agency and decision-making to this ubiquitous system.

Peter's world is not the last version but will be upgraded as well. Peter comments on this upcoming upgrade as follows:

> Whether it would be better world was irrelevant, really. / It wouldn't be ours. / And Alpha and I wouldn't be us. / Not really. Not any more. / After the upgrade, Kyle Straker's parents were no longer his parents. They might have looked the same, but they weren't. They had become something else. Something more like us, like Alpha and me, creatures that could network through fleshy wires in our hands, and that could communicate without speaking (*1.4*, p. 244).

Communication without speaking is also suggested by Kevin Warwick in his experiments where a BrainGate array was inserted in his arm, and as a part of this trial, he suggested that "a basic form of telegraphic communication was achieved between two human nervous systems" (2020, p. 5). Warwick argues the possibility of human enhancement to superhuman "by linking human brains with computers, potentially artificial intelligence, thereby upgrading the functioning of the individual human brain" and also "linking brains" (2020, p. 7). Lancaster's work has a fictionalized version of an upgrade that is analogous to Warwick's ambitions in the real world.

In Lancaster's novel, some of the scientists who are the Strakerites know or assume that they know the next upgrade. Therefore, they worked hard to interfere with this upgrade to reach the responsible ones whoever they are. These scientists (Peter's mother and father and Alpha's father are among them) and engineers found some ways to hack the system and enter the older versions. For example, Peter's father gives Peter and Alpha some contact lenses to show them something, and they suppose they are ghosts; however, Peter's father tells that "A previous software version. / Only made visible by the lenses in my eyes" (*1.4*, p. 298). Also, he explains that "the lenses correct the perceptual screening process. […] They undo the programming that filters out the past versions of humanity" (*1.4*, p. 299). This reveals that the previous versions do not vanish, disappear or go extinct, but they only become invisible to the updated versions of humanity, they "run a parallel course" to the new versions (*1.4*, p. 300). There is not only one update, but there have been many updates through time, and there have been a lot of

changes, some bugs, some errors, some experimenting through all these updates. To illustrate, Peter's father tells them that five hundred years ago, in an earlier version of upgrade, humans without lips were appeared, produced, but then this was corrected (*1.4*, p. 301). This highlights the notion of an evolving and iterative process of human upgrades throughout history. It suggests that there is not a singular update but a series of updates over time, resulting in a multitude of versions and modifications. It is also implied that the history of upgrades has witnessed both advancements and imperfections, with instances of errors and adjustments along the way.

Vernor Vinge from the Department of Mathematical Science at San Diego State University presented an intriguing paper at the VISION-21 Symposium which was sponsored by NASA and also published by NASA in 1993. In the paper, Vinge (1993) claimed that "Within thirty years, we will have the technological means to create superhuman intelligence. Shortly after, the human era will be ended" and he questioned whether such a progress is avoidable or not and how (p. 11). The year that he was referring to in his paper is 2023. In the paper, Vinge also argues that "we are on the edge of change comparable to the rise of human life on Earth," and "[t]he precise cause of this change is the imminent creation by technology of entities with greater than human intelligence" (p. 12). Vinge also focuses on a very significant point by stating that "When greater-than-human intelligence drives progress, that progress will be much more rapid. In fact, there seems no reason why progress itself would not involve the creation of still more intelligent entities - on a still-shorter time scale" (1993, p. 12). In the continuous parts of his paper, Vinge asks the question: "If the Singularity cannot be prevented or confined, just how bad could the Post-Human era be? Well... pretty bad. The physical extinction of the human race is one possibility" (1993, p. 16). Interestingly, Vinge also questions the post-Singularity by naming some concerns as follows:

> The post-Singularity world will involve extremely high-bandwidth networking. A central feature of strongly superhuman entities will likely be their ability to communicate at variable bandwidths, including ones far higher than speech or written messages. What happens when pieces of ego can be copied and merged, when the size of a self-awareness can grow or shrink to fit the nature of the problems under consideration? These are essential features of strong superhumanity and the Singularity. (p. 20)

In the final remarks, Vinge refers to the ideas of Freeman Dyson who says: "*God is what mind becomes when it has passed beyond the scale of our comprehension*" (p. 20). However, the last remark of Vinge cannot be observed in either of the novels studied here where the human beings are "beyond the scale of [their] comprehension" but their mind created a new reality and a new existence rather than becoming God or rather than achieving Singularity in the same terms as Vinge states. Rather than becoming God or achieving Singularity in the same terms as Vinge describes, the human characters in the novels create a new reality and existence that surpasses their comprehension. Steven Shaviro (2009) also writes on Singularity and argues that "This is the supposed - and strictly speaking unimaginable - moment when the human race crosses a technological threshold, and definitively becomes posthuman," and as a result of this, there will be a lot of changes in numerous fields (p. 103). As a consequence of these, "Human beings will either be replaced by sentient machines, or (more likely) merge their brains and bodies with such machines" (p. 103). The reference to characters in the novels merging with machines suggests their transition towards a posthuman state, aligning with Shaviro's perspective. Joel Walmsley (2012) also explicates singularity as "in which human-made machines (or human-machine hybrids) achieve a level of intelligence superior to that of the 'naked' human brain, and thus return us to a question of 'supra-psychological' AI" (173). To cover all these points, the different perspectives on Singularity and its implications are Vinge's concept of Singularity as surpassing human comprehension, Freeman Dyson's reference to God-like attributes in relation to the expanded mind, Shaviro's assertion of a technological threshold leading to a posthuman state, and Walmsley's search for the potential intelligence superiority of human-machine hybrids. These interpretations reveal the multi-layered nature of Singularity and its transformative effect on human existence and intelligence, as depicted in the novels analysed for this study.

Ray Kurzweil, an American author and computer scientist, wrote a non-fiction book entitled *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* in 2006. In one part of this comprehensive book, Kurzweil explains the current situation of human thinking compared to the electronic circuits as follows:

> But our thinking is extremely slow: the basic neural transactions are several million times slower than contemporary electronic circuits. That makes our

physiological bandwidth for processing new information extremely limited compared to the exponential growth of the overall human knowledge base" (2006, p. 23).

Kurzweil (2006) continues: "Our version 1.0 biological bodies are likewise frail and subject to a myriad of failure modes, not to mention the cumbersome maintenance rituals they require" (p. 23). This reminds naturally the titles of the novels *0.4* and *1.4* by Mike Lancaster. Kurzweil's upcoming remarks are even more intriguing to be referred to while analysing Lancaster's plot structure. Kurzweil (2006) asserts that

> The Singularity will allow us to transcend these limitations of our biological bodies and brains. We will gain power over our fates. Our mortality will be in our own hands. We will be able to live as long as we want (a subtly different statement from saying we will live forever). We will fully understand human thinking and will vastly extend and expand its reach. By the end of this century, the nonbiological portion of our intelligence will be trillions of trillions of times more powerful than unaided human intelligence. (p. 23)

After giving details related to 1.0 bodies, Kurzweil predicts that the upgraded versions like the "human body version 2.0 will include virtual bodies in completely realistic virtual environments, nanotechnology-based physical bodies, and more" (p. 164). Kurzweil does not leave the update in 2.0, but he continues with his predictions on 3.0 by stating that "I envision human body 3.0 – in the 2030s and 2040s – as a more fundamental redesign" (p. 231). Then he claims:

> Rather than reformulating each subsystem, we (both biological and nonbiological portions of thinking, working together) will have the opportunity to revamp our bodies based on our experience with version 2.0. As with the transition from 1.0 to 2.0, the transition to 3.0 will be gradual and will involve many computing ideas (p. 231).

Kurzweil's discussion on versions of human beings reminds Lancaster's fictional characters. Like Kurzweil's human body 2.0, Warwick (2020), who is working on Cybernetics, carried out an experiment where "a BrainGate array was surgically implanted into the median nerve fibres of [his] left arm" (p. 5), and this is called Project Cyborg 2.0.

All these references to the non-fiction and even scientific and academic sources and commentaries indicate clearly that Lancaster's novel sequel is not an extremely distant vision, but in contrast very possible and to the ground idea because it is apparently seen that the arguments of technological extremes are not limited to the fiction domain. Technology and humanity are integrated to each other in these novels by Mike Lancaster. The evolution of the human beings is actualized through a new way, not a natural one but a technological, digital, and artificial one. This is both a critical approach to the developing technology and the digital world around us today and it is a questionable portrayal of the limits of technology.

Disobedient Rebellions

In his book *On Disobedience and Other Essays*, Erich Fromm refers to Adam and Eve and emphasizes how a single act of disobedience caused them to lose their status as human beings and members of nature. Man emerged from a pre-human harmony and was able to take the first step into disobedience and independence by tearing the umbilical chord from the earth and mother (Fromm, 1984, p. 1). Because "[t]he act of disobedience rendered Adam and Eve free and opened their eyes," there is a link between disobedience and freedom (p. 1). The main character of the first of the sequel is Kyle Straker who inspired a group of people in the second book as they are called Strakerites. The Strakerites read the diary of Kyle Straker and they believe in the idea that human beings are being updated regularly by aliens. In *1.4*, Lancaster creates disobedient act similar to Adam and Eve via Alpha and Peter as Peter's father calls this Lilly paradigm by referring to Kyle and Lilly from the previous version. Alpha and Peter were in the harmonious world; however, they connected each other and performed a disobedient act by questioning what they observe. They question Peter's father since he is the only figure that they have in their hands to question. The novel does not give the main source of authority and creates ambiguity.

The digital world in the second book is the moment where the new generations are transformed to be posthuman. It focuses on the transhuman bodies that realize they are just the upgraded versions of same old forms, and they become aware that they would be upgraded at one point where they would be classified as out of date. This new transhuman world is explained from the beginning by referring to the difficulties and

challenges that they have encountered as there was a problem with the population of bees. The number of the bees started to decrease, and "the problem with losing the bees was that the plants they worked so hard to fertilize also came under the threat of extinction. And without plants, the human race would face a very bleak future indeed" (p. 22). Peter's father tells Peter and Alpha that they are aware of the updates, but they do not know the responsible agency. Warwick's previous analogy pertaining to the correlation between superhumans and the regular humans, which parallels the association between humans and animals, bears a striking resemblance to the viewpoint expressed by Peter's father: "If they can control our development, then they can always make sure that we are less than they are. By upgrading us they can *limit* us. Keep us their slaves. Forever" (*1.4*, pp. 301-302). To stop this cycle or to reach their "programmers," Peter's father, mother, and some other scientists initiated a project in which they can downgrade somebody among them to a previous version to see "the other side of human existence" (*1.4*, p. 314). All these elucidate the transformative dynamics of the digital realm and the posthuman transformation of newer generations. This analysis highlights the transhuman bodies' awareness of their status and the underlying challenges faced within this new world. Additionally, it underscores the critical role of bees in maintaining the ecological balance and the potential dire consequences of their declining populations. At this point, the project undertaken by Peter's parents and other scientists aims to gain insight into alternative human existences by downgrading an individual to a previous version. Peter's mother was the volunteer for this, and she explains why:

> For millennia we have continued along a path that is not our own. Our minds
> and bodies have been subject to the whims of our programmers. We no longer
> know what it even *means* to be 'human'; we're nothing more than a commodity
> that just so happens to be a race. All these thoughts and feelings, the majesty
> of human existence, the specific individual experience of simply being alive,
> they can all be taken from us in an instant. (*1.4*, p. 315)

Peter's parents, Alpha's father, and some other scientists are a committee and they "are simply no longer going to tolerate the interference of others in [their] evolutionary path" (*1.4*, pp. 317- 318). Peter's mother is the one who leaves his family to downgrade, and she explains Alpha and Peter the Mind Feather which is "designed to provide a massive memory that would not be affected by any future modifications to the human operating system" (*1.4*, p. 325). This is planned to interfere with the coming update

because they cannot understand how these updates work. The Committee decided to transmit the history of the upgrades to the minds of the people so that all of them will go back to one of the earlier software versions. As Peter's mother explicates, "some will become 1.2. Some will become 0.4. Some will be 1.0. Just about everyone on the planet is going to be left behind" (*1.4*, p. 326). Here, the aim of these scientists is to find out their programmers, "to see the face of God" (*1.4*, p. 327). Like David Vincent and his colleagues found the records of Kyle Straker's diary, the end of the sequel refers to the diary of Peter, and in the beginning and the end, Professor Lucas Whybrow, professor of WorldBrain Studies, asserts that maybe "the MindFeather WAS our WorldBrain. Maybe that was the sole purpose of the David Vincent project. The REAL purpose" (*1.4*, p. 367). He continues his predictions: "Maybe our alien programmers WANTED him to create it. Maybe it was a hardware upgrade that was required BEFORE the software could be installed this time" (*1.4*, p. 367). The end of the novel keeps it open-ended since professor Whybrow is determined to search and decode the data left behind by Peter Vincent. Diary and memory issues also remind Orwell's Winston who writes a diary and explains why he is keeping this diary as follows: "I don't imagine that we can alter anything in our own lifetime. But one can imagine little knots of resistance springing up here and there – small groups of people banding themselves together" (p. 179). The act of preserving memory and maintaining archives has critical significance in the existence of every individual or being. It serves as an essential process through which the invisibility, resulting from the transitional nature can be transformed into visibility for both those who have undergone digitalization and those who remain in a non-digitalized state. By capturing personal and collective memories, individuals can transcend the ephemeral nature of time and preserve their unique identities. Memory acts as a repository of knowledge, emotions, and personal narratives as well as a rebellious act of existence.

Final Remarks

Humans have been digitalised. Lancaster's books create a world where human nature is not a part of nature anymore, but a part of a system, a software. This resembles the evaporation process of the disobedient ones in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, ignoring the naked Apocryphal Man as the representative of history by pretending to unsee him in Jasper Fforde's *Shades of Grey*, and even the gap between generation X, Y, and Z as they are incompatible to each other in real life; however, the assumedly 'human'

beings will require a new definition or even a new space to live as suggested in Lancaster's narrative. There are also Orwellian concepts in the novels since the mind of the people, their diaries or their search history - which actually means the thought history - can be accessed by any authority easily as everything is digital in this world. Hence, in the light of the foregoing considerations related to transhumanism as well as posthumanism, it is apparent that research on the role of humankind in the updated systems not only in terms of artificial intelligence, mind uploading, or wireless connections, but also in terms of social positioning can help to address some major questions concerning the new definition of human or new beings.

In the first book, *0.4*, Kyle Straker records the tapes and explains why he is doing this as follows:

> I'm doing it in the hope that someone will listen and realise that everything has changed. / Changed forever. / That the world they are living in is not the one it has always been. That there are a few of us left who can remember the way things were - the way they were meant to be (*0.4*, p. 5).

The contradictory perception that Kyle has here is the possibility that what he perceives as change might be a usual update; in other words, he might be already another update which is out of date now. The world and life that Kyle knows could also be a world where he cannot see the old versions, and he most probably is an altered version. In the second book, Peter experiences a similar epiphany since he also realizes that he is only another update, and most probably he allocates a place in this system concurrently with the other versions. The only way to exist is to put one's stamp on history by recording their lives. Documentation and memory are the two signs for the existence, either human or transhuman. The recognition that one's existence is contingent upon leaving a trace within the collective record emphasizes the significance of documentation and memory as fundamental markers of being. This idea extends beyond the traditional boundaries of human existence, including transhuman entities as well. The act of documenting and recording serve as a testament to one's lived experiences, enable a sense of continuity and connection with previous versions. Individuals can establish their unique place within the system of updates and ensure their enduring presence in the ongoing narrative of evolution.

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