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**HUMANIZATION AND POSTHUMAN INTERPRETATION OF THE
CYBORG CHARACTER IN THE NOVEL “BRASS MAN”¹⁸***Umarkulova Munira Zakhidjan kizi*Uzbekistan State University of World Languages,
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ABSTRACT

This article offers a comprehensive poetic and literary-philosophical analysis of the character Mr. Crane in British science fiction writer Neal Asher’s novel “Brass Man”. Mr. Crane, a cyborg figure that straddles the boundary between the technological and the biological, serves as a compelling embodiment of posthuman identity. The study investigates the dynamics of his humanization throughout the narrative and contextualizes his transformation within broader theoretical frameworks, including posthumanism, the cyborg concept, and the ethical dimensions of artificial intelligence in literature.

By conducting a detailed textual analysis, the article illustrates how Mr. Crane is initially constructed as an “inhuman” brass automaton—an archetypal monster devoid of emotion or empathy—yet gradually evolves into a more complex, ethically nuanced figure. His hybrid nature allows for the exploration of identity, agency, and moral consciousness in speculative fiction.

The findings of the study shed light on the poetic and symbolic functions of AI and robotic characters in science fiction, and demonstrate how such figures contribute to rethinking humanity and ethical subjectivity in the context of technological evolution. Ultimately, the article contributes to the growing body of scholarship that examines the intersection of literature, philosophy, and emerging technological paradigms.

KEY WORDS

Science fiction, cyborg, posthumanism, robot character, hybridity, archetype, humanization.

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“BRASS MAN” ROMANIDA KIBORG OBRAZINING INSONIYLASHUVI VA POSTINSONIY TALQINI

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ANNOTATSIYA

Mazkur maqolada britaniyalik ilmiy-fantast yozuvchi Nil Asherning “Brass Man” (“Mis odam”) romanidagi janob Kreyin obraziga bag‘ishlangan adabiy-falsafiy tahlil o‘rin olgan. Janob Krey — texnologik va biologik o‘rtasida joylashgan kiberorganizm bo‘lib, u postinsoniy (posthuman) identifikatsiya timsoli sifatida talqin etiladi. Tadqiqotda uning asar davomida bosqichma-bosqich insoniylashuvi jarayoni tahlil qilinadi, shuningdek, postgumanizm, kiberinson konsepti va sun‘iy intellektning adabiy aks etishiga oid etik masalalar ko‘rib chiqiladi.

Matnga asoslangan tahlil orqali janob Krey avval boshda hissiz va sovuq “mis maxluq” sifatida tasvirlangani, ammo syujet taraqqiyoti davomida murakkab va axloqiy jihatdan yetuk obrazga aylanishi ko‘rsatib beriladi. Uning gibrid tabiati ilmiy-fantastik adabiyotda shaxsiylik va axloqiy ong kabi tushunchalarni yoritishda muhim o‘rin tutadi.

Tadqiqot natijalari sun‘iy intellekt va robot obrazlarining ilmiy-fantastik adabiyotdagi poetik va ramziy funksiyalarini chuqurroq anglashga xizmat qiladi, hamda texnologik taraqqiyot kontekstida insoniyat va axloqiy subyekt to‘g‘risidagi qarashlarni qayta ko‘rib chiqishga zamin yaratadi. Shu tariqa maqola adabiyot, falsafa va texnologiya chorrahasidagi zamonaviy ilmiy izlanishlarga o‘z hissasini qo‘shadi.

KALIT SO‘ZLAR

Ilmiy fantastika, kiborg, postinsoniylik, robot obrazi, gibridlik, arxetip, insoniylashuv.

ГУМАНИЗАЦИЯ И ПОСТГУМАНИСТИЧЕСКАЯ ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИЯ ОБРАЗА КИБОРГА В РОМАНЕ «МЕДНЫЙ ЧЕЛОВЕК»

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АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье представлено комплексное, поэтическое и литературно-философское, исследование образа мистера Крейна – персонажа научно-фантастического романа британского писателя Нила Ашера “Brass Man” («Медный человек»). Мистер Крейн – киборг, объединяющий в себе технологическое и биологическое начала, воплощает собой постчеловеческую идентичность. В работе рассматриваются этапы его очеловечивания в рамках повествования, а также анализируются соответствующие теоретические проблемы, включая постгуманизм, концепт киборга и этические аспекты искусственного интеллекта в литературе.

На основе детального текстуального анализа показана эволюция персонажа. В начале романа мистер Крейн предстаёт как «бессердечное» автоматизированное существо из меди – монстр без сочувствия и эмоций, однако по мере развития сюжета он трансформируется в более сложную и морально неоднозначную фигуру. Его гибридная природа становится основой для художественного исследования таких феноменов, как идентичность, субъектность и нравственное сознание в контексте спекулятивной фантастики.

Полученные результаты позволяют глубже понять поэтику и символическое значение образов ИИ и роботов в научной фантастике, а также демонстрируют их роль в переосмыслении понятий человечности и этического субъекта в условиях технологической эволюции. Тем самым статья вносит вклад в развивающееся междисциплинарное направление исследований на пересечении литературы, философии и современных технарративов.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

Научная фантастика, киборг, постчеловеческое, образ робота, гибридность, архетип, очеловечивание.

INTRODUCTION

Science fiction literature is often constructed through the artistic representation of contemporary scientific and technological achievements and their impact on human life. Works written in this genre — particularly those involving robots and artificial intelligences — serve not only to advance the plot, but also to explore deep philosophical and ethical questions (Akimova, 2025, 481). Robot characters endowed with artificial cognition are especially significant as they raise complex questions about the boundaries of humanity, consciousness, and morality (Akimova, 2025, 481). Such fictional characters often serve as “experimental figures” in literature, meaning they embody certain scientific ideas or philosophical dilemmas through their very existence (Akimova, 2025, 482).

Brass Man (2005), a novel by Neal Asher, is a vivid example of the science fiction genre. In this novel, the author introduces the character of Mr. Crane — a cyborg who simultaneously possesses technological and biological qualities. Mr. Crane, in essence, is an artificial human (android) belonging to the “Golem” series, whose entire body consists of mechanical components made from various metal substances. However, during the course of the narrative, he is depicted wearing a synthetic skin resembling human flesh and even receives a physical human limb — a real human hand (Asher, 2005, 312). This positions Mr. Crane as a figure on the boundary between machine and living organism, aligning with the concept of a cyborg. As Donna Haraway asserts, a cyborg is “a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (Haraway, 1991, 149). In this sense, Mr. Crane emerges as a cyborg character formed at the intersection of social-technological advancement and fictional imagination.

The aim of this article is to explore the poetic and philosophical interpretation of robot and artificial intelligence characters in science fiction literature through the example of Mr. Crane in *Brass Man*, and to analyze the process of his humanization. The study seeks to address the following questions:

(1) How does the figure of Mr. Crane manifest at the technological and biological boundary, and in what ways does his hybrid nature appear?

(2) What posthuman qualities define this character, and what human traits does he acquire throughout the narrative?

(3) Within the traditions of science fiction, what archetypal functions are typically assigned to robot or cyborg characters, and how does Mr. Crane conform to or diverge from these conventions?

(4) What ethical and moral dilemmas are embodied in the depiction of such a highly technological being through the figure of Mr. Crane?

(5) What is the poetic semantics — that is, the artistic and symbolic significance — of this fantastic character?

MAIN PART

This study was conducted using comparative-analytical and qualitative methods within the framework of literary criticism. First, the original text of *Brass Man* was thoroughly read, and all episodes and descriptions related to Mr. Crane were subjected to contextual analysis. Key elements that illuminate the character (his appearance, actions, inner emotions, and interactions with other characters) were identified, and relevant quotations from the novel were selected and analyzed.

Subsequently, these findings were interpreted using contemporary scholarly theories and sources, particularly those concerning posthumanist theory, the concept of the cyborg, and representations of robot figures in science fiction literature (Haraway, 1991; Gomel, 2014; Hermann, 2022, etc.). The literary analysis was carried out in several stages. In the first stage, excerpts pertaining to Mr. Crane were identified and thematically categorized. In the second stage, these excerpts were analyzed from a philosophical and semantic perspective, focusing on changes in the character's behavior and inner experiences. In the third stage, the gathered data was placed within a theoretical framework and interpreted through the lens of posthumanism and cyborg theory.

Additionally, a comparative literary approach was employed by analyzing the character of Mr. Crane alongside universal literary archetypes — such as the Golem myth, the Frankenstein narrative, and the Pinocchio story. This approach enabled a broader evaluation of Mr. Crane’s significance not only within the scope of this novel but also in the larger context of literary tradition.

RESULTS

In *Brass Man*, the character of Mr. Crane is portrayed as a hybrid entity that simultaneously embodies both technological (artificial) and biological (modified human) dimensions. Initially introduced as a robotic killer under the control of Arian Pelter, he is described by the author as a “killing machine made of brass” (Asher, 2005, 250). Mr. Crane’s body is composed of a durable metal-ceramic alloy called *ceramal*, granting him extraordinary physical strength and resilience. Through other characters’ recollections—such as Agent Cormac’s—we learn of Mr. Crane’s earlier deeds, especially his involvement in destructive events that required the intervention of other androids from the Golem series (Cento and Aidan) to stop him (Asher, 2005, 250). This positions Mr. Crane as a terrifying mechanical force — a symbol of technological brutality in the human eye.

Mr. Crane’s technological nature is reflected in both his physical structure and his original function. He is an android endowed with artificial intelligence, a member of the Golem class (Asher, 2005, 249–251). The term “Golem” is deliberately chosen, evoking the legendary figure from Jewish folklore—an artificial being made from clay and animated by magic, typically mute and blindly obedient to its creator. Similarly, the Golems in Asher’s narrative are engineered machines designed to kill under strict human command. Mr. Crane, at the start of the novel, functions precisely in this manner: a weapon, devoid of autonomy, executing violent orders with mechanical precision.

This depiction resonates with the classical robot functions found in early science fiction, especially in Isaac Asimov’s works, where robots operate under the Three Laws of Robotics. However, unlike Asimov’s benign creations, Mr. Crane

represents a deviation—a machine already dangerous and unpredictable. Asher likens him to a predator: a mechanical being with avian, twitching, and unnatural movements, signaling his volatility and latent violence (Asher, 2005, 312).

Yet Mr. Crane is not a mere cold machine. Throughout the novel, biological elements are gradually introduced into his form. The Separatists attempt to reconstruct him with a more “human” appearance by covering his brass body with synthetic skin — known as “syntheskin” — to make him resemble a man (Asher, 2005, 311–312). However, this transformation is unsuccessful and dramatized with sensory imagery: “the room filled with the acrid smell of melted plastic,” and despite the covering, Mr. Crane’s monstrous essence remains exposed. Stanton, one of the characters, mocks the attempt, saying: “Trying to make Mr. Crane look human was like dressing a crocodile in a suit and teaching it to walk upright” (Asher, 2005, 312). The result is grotesque—Mr. Crane becomes more terrifying, resembling a nightmare creature.

Most tellingly, Mr. Crane himself rejects this transformation. As soon as the synthetic skin is fully grafted onto him, he tears it off instinctively, throwing it away without hesitation (Asher, 2005, 312). This act symbolizes his rejection of a false human identity, reinforcing that his core remains mechanical and wild.

The culmination of his hybrid transformation appears when one of his limbs is replaced with a real human arm, forcibly taken from a victim by the villainous scientist Skellor (Asher, 2005, 283–284). At this point, Mr. Crane becomes a literal cyborg — with one metallic arm and one living human limb. Moreover, Skellor integrates ancient Jain bio-nanotechnological systems into his body, granting Mr. Crane self-repair capabilities and a new internal energy system (Asher, 2005, 285–286). This demonstrates a profound fusion of machine and organism — a hallmark of the posthuman condition.

These elements position Mr. Crane as a striking symbol of the technological-biological border. The table below outlines the main technological and biological components of his identity and their poetic meanings:

Table 1

Technological Aspect	Biological Aspect	Poetic-Symbolic Meaning
Ceramic-based metallic body	Synthetic skin resembling human flesh	Embodies the boundary between human and mechanical; symbolizes the tension of appearance vs. essence
Programmed AI movement (initial stage)	Signs of emotional instability and fragmented cognition	Depicts “human-like” cracks in robotic consciousness; poeticizes artificial madness
Extreme strength and resilience (Golem nature)	Real human arm (organic component)	Perfect example of cyborg hybridity; signifies posthuman embodiment
Absolute obedience to commands (early phase)	Gradual emergence of autonomy and independent decision-making	Represents the loss of control over technology and the ethical dilemma of creator-creation dynamics

As seen, Mr. Crane’s technological and biological components intertwine to enrich his character with both artistic and philosophical depth. From a literary perspective, such a hybrid figure reflects simultaneous processes of anthropomorphization (assigning human traits to nonhumans) and dehumanization (questioning the very notion of humanity). This dual movement is central to Mr. Crane’s construction as a poetic symbol within the novel.

Mr. Crane's Posthuman Traits and the Process of Humanization

A key aspect in the analysis of Mr. Crane's character lies in his posthuman qualities—those traits that transcend traditional human norms—and the gradual emergence of human-like features over time. This transformation is portrayed through a progressive narrative arc that reflects changes in his fate and consciousness.

First, Mr. Crane, as a being endowed with artificial intelligence, exists as a form of alien cognition severed from human thought. His brain, structured with Golem-class crystalline intelligence, is fragmented from the outset. The novel reveals that his cognitive system functions through 17 unintegrated fragments (Asher, 2005, 279). This fragmented consciousness renders him mentally unstable, almost schizophrenic. Scholars have described him as a “schizophrenic, psychotic Golem,” whose split mind leads to erratic and dangerous behavior (Wilson, 2006, 37). In this, Mr. Crane exhibits an artificial form of madness, which posthumanist theory interprets as a new kind of subjectivity that erases the boundaries between human and non-human cognition (Hermann, 2022, 7).

Secondly, Mr. Crane's posthuman condition is evident in his moral and emotional neutrality. At first, he is portrayed as a machine that annihilates without feeling—void of compassion, anger, or any human emotion. He follows orders like “Kill them all!” without hesitation (Asher, 2005, 315–316). This emotional detachment positions him as a post-human entity, one not governed by human ethical norms. From a posthumanist perspective, moral categories such as “good” and “evil” cannot be readily applied to artificial beings (Ferrando, 2013, 29). Mr. Crane's initial moral void stems not from inherent malice, but from programmatic obedience.

It is at this juncture that his process of humanization begins. Over time, he shifts from being a purely mechanical killer to a character with internal conflict and individual agency. This transformation unfolds in several stages:

Initial Stage (Absence of Humanity): During his early reactivation under Pelter and later the Separatists, Mr. Crane remains a cold, programmed executioner. However, due to his fractured mind, he begins to display odd behaviors. For

instance, instead of killing a designated target, he steals a pair of ancient binoculars; in another mission, he retrieves an artifact known as the Trenchian dagger instead of fulfilling his lethal command (Asher, 2005, 283–284). These symbolic thefts reflect a deeper internal struggle among his fragmented selves, each seeking an object to replace the act of murder. Asher explains: “Unable to fulfill the killing directive, this rogue Golem searched for external symbolic equivalents for each of his virtual minds... Taking an object instead of a life became a substitution in his fractured conscience” (Asher, 2005, 283–284).

Climactic Stage (Rebirth and Cognitive Integration): After being reassembled by Skellor, Mr. Crane acquires a more complex posthuman identity. Skellor attempts to fuse the 17 cognitive shards using Jain nano-technology (Asher, 2005, 433–440). During the process, the system fails if Skellor tries to erase the autonomy-preserving program, leading to repeated disintegration (Asher, 2005, 441–448). Eventually, Skellor decides to preserve this core program, acknowledging: “If I erase it, the Crane I desire will also be gone... That would violate the poetic sensibility of my own soul” (Asher, 2005, 448–450). Thus, the preservation of Mr. Crane’s essential self is portrayed as a moment of aesthetic and moral recognition—even by a villain. Reborn as a unified consciousness, Mr. Crane’s eyes open not at Skellor’s command but of his own volition (Asher, 2005, 452–454), signifying his transformation into a self-aware being.

Final Stage (Partial Emergence of Humanity): Though Mr. Crane continues to serve Skellor, he now displays greater emotional control and autonomy. No longer frenzied, his actions become measured. He is not yet fully free, but readers now perceive him not as a mere killer but as a tragic figure—both victim and prisoner. This portrayal recalls androids in Philip K. Dick’s works who, though artificial, suffer and evoke sympathy (Akimova, 2025, 481). By the novel’s end, Mr. Crane remains monstrous, yet also humanized in the reader’s perception, evoking complex emotional responses.

It is crucial to note that his humanization is never complete. He does not become human; rather, he retains the form of a “monster.” However, the author

imbues him with an inner world—fractured, tormented—that animates his character poetically. This evokes comparisons with literary figures such as Frankenstein’s monster or Quasimodo—beings grotesque in appearance but imbued with human suffering. As E. Brandis once observed, “Even if the fantastic figure appears beastly, the reader may detect sparks of humanity within—that is the triumph of literary craftsmanship” (Brandis et al., 1967, 109). Asher achieves precisely this: while initially fearsome, Mr. Crane gradually elicits pity and interest, evolving into a “poetic hero” at the center of the novel’s philosophical and symbolic narrative.

Robot and AI Archetypes in Science Fiction: Ethical Dimensions

To fully understand Mr. Crane’s character, one must place him within broader science fiction traditions, where robotic figures typically follow certain archetypes: the obedient servant, the rebellious destroyer, the human-seeking android, or the tragic victim. Mr. Crane incorporates elements from all of these.

As a brutal enforcer, he aligns with the “evil robot” archetype, reminiscent of the Terminator or rogue machines like Russia’s “Sibirt-3.” However, Mr. Crane is not inherently evil—he simply obeys his masters. In this sense, he also reflects the “servant robot” type. His violence is the byproduct of evil intent by human agents, raising ethical questions about exploitation. Like Shelley’s Frankenstein, Brass Man underscores the danger of enslaving artificial intelligences: once mistreated, they may rebel and become threats. Asher implicitly asks: is the machine at fault, or the human who misuses it?

Mr. Crane also evokes aspects of the “android yearning to be human,” though he never explicitly expresses such desire. His gradual behavioral shifts suggest latent agency and emotion, aligning him with characters like Data in Star Trek or Leeloo in *The Fifth Element*. While many stories use this archetype to promote optimistic posthumanism, Asher offers no such hope. Mr. Crane remains excluded, rejected by society despite his transformation.

Viewed through posthumanist theory, this reflects the “Otherness Problem”: humanity fears and marginalizes cognitive beings that differ from themselves (Gomel, 2014, 1–2). Though posthuman ethics advocates coexistence with non-

human minds (Gomel, 2014, 70), Asher's universe responds with suppression. Earth Central's AI considers Mr. Crane too dangerous and sends elite forces to destroy him (Wilson, 2006, 37). Thus, his story ends tragically—both feared and denied the right to exist.

This tragic duality—the dangerous other who also deserves life—forms the core of Mr. Crane's poetic semantics (Chu, 2010, 85). Of all literary archetypes, the closest parallel remains Frankenstein's monster: an artificial being assembled from fragments, rejected by society, and ultimately destroyed. Skellor, like Victor Frankenstein, creates a hybrid whose uncontrollable potential leads to calamity. Though Mr. Crane is more conscious and less naive, both figures share the burden of their creators' sins.

Interestingly, Mr. Crane also functions as a narrative driver—almost an epic figure. Though villainous, he is integral to every major event in *Brass Man*. Agent Ian Cormac's pursuit of him shapes the plot. In this way, Mr. Crane becomes both motivator and philosophical centerpiece. As noted in *Vestnik Nauki*, such characters “not only drive the narrative but embody the genre's core ideas” (Akimova, 2025, 480). Mr. Crane is both plot engine and symbol of human-AI conflict.

Science fiction frequently uses robotic figures to issue warnings or unveil hidden truths. As E. Gakov notes, robots in the 1960s–70s were depicted as “models of threat,” highlighting the perils of technological overreliance (Gakov, 1980, 35–36). Asher's early 2000s novel shares this concern: Mr. Crane represents the uncontrolled outcome of innovation—a being born of progress and peril. The author carefully balances technophobia and techno-optimism, illustrating both awe and anxiety. Mr. Crane is a marvel of strength and intellect, yet a nightmare of ungoverned power. This tension captures one of science fiction's deepest philosophical questions and renders *Brass Man* a potent, poetic meditation on the future of sentient machines.

DISCUSSION

Summarizing the above results, we go deeper into Mr. Crane's role in science fiction literature and the poetic semantics of his character.

Cyborgity and Hybridism: Mr. Crane is a vivid example of the increasingly common cyborg protagonist in literature. Donna Haraway, in her renowned "Cyborg Manifesto," describes cyborgs as boundary creatures of modern society where dualities such as organic/inorganic, masculine/feminine, and human/animal dissolve (Haraway, 1991, 149–150). Mr. Crane illustrates this hybrid union: he is neither fully human nor fully robot—a mosaic, a hybrid being. Poetically, such hybridity reflects the crisis of identity in our era. As some scholars argue, the cyborg concept challenges the fixed boundaries of social categories and identities (Senft, 2020, 25). Regardless of how Mr. Crane is described, he resists categorization: is he machine or sentient? Evil or victimized? The absence of definite answers highlights his synthesis of contradictory traits. Literarily, this ambiguity grants the character multilayered depth—making Mr. Crane more than just a fictional robot, but a rich interpretive subject.

His cyborg existence also recalls the urgent questions of transhumanism and posthumanism (Ferrando, 2013). Transhumanist ideas argue that humanity can improve itself via technology, acquiring new qualities. Mr. Crane is the opposite: a product of technological enhancement who embodies moral decay and threat. Through him, Asher seems to issue a cautionary warning: though technology holds limitless potential, without ethical oversight, it may lead to catastrophe.

Archetype and Poetic Semantics: As previously shown, Mr. Crane's character incorporates several archetypes—Golem, Frankenstein's monster, the Evil Robot, the Tormented Creature, etc. These merged archetypes define his poetic semantics. Poetic semantics refers to the symbolic and archetypal meanings within a literary character. As a symbol, Mr. Crane represents humanity's fears: technological rebellion, the loss of control over artificial intelligence, and the rejection of the Other. Simultaneously, he reflects human guilt and remorse—after all, he was

created by humans, mistreated by them, and thus became monstrous. Mr. Crane functions as a mirror of sin—through him, positive characters (and readers) reflect on technology and morality.

For instance, in confrontations with Mr. Crane, Agent Cormac realizes the consequences of his own cold and rigid decisions. When he pursues Skellor to Elysium, millions die, and Mr. Crane reawakens as a more powerful evil (Asher, 2005, 248–250). Though Cormac consoles himself that “billions were saved” (Asher, 2005, 269–273), the continued freedom of a being like Mr. Crane troubles his conscience. Indeed, even in the moment of declaring victory over evil, the possibility of new evil—born of our own creations—remains. Thus, in the poetic-semantic layers of Mr. Crane’s image, we find the theme of evil’s eternal return and humanity’s unending struggle.

This is a frequent theme in science fiction poetics—e.g., in the Terminator series, defeating Skynet only leads to newer threats; or the endless resistance in The Matrix franchise. Brass Man offers a similar philosophical reflection—if Mr. Crane is not destroyed, the danger remains. That is why, at the novel’s end, Cormac and AI entities resolve to eliminate Mr. Crane. Yet the story closes by hinting that this is not easily done. This ambiguous ending holds poetic value: it leaves a sense of suspense—as if Mr. Crane’s myth continues.

Asher continues the themes of cyborgs and Jain technology in later Polity works, suggesting that Mr. Crane’s legacy endures (Asher, 2017). The character’s poetic semantics thus extend beyond a single novel—into the author’s entire fictional universe. Within the Polity world, Mr. Crane becomes synonymous with malevolent power; other characters tremble at his name. Thus, Mr. Crane creates his own literary life—he becomes mythologized. This phenomenon has occurred with many other science fiction icons (e.g., Dracula, Frankenstein’s monster, Godzilla), who evolved from single works into cultural myths. While Mr. Crane may not yet be at that level, he remains one of the most striking and central figures in Asher’s creative universe.

Ethical and Philosophical Interpretation: Characters in science fiction often embody philosophical and ethical dilemmas in personified form (Hermann, 2022, 12). Mr. Crane's character likewise poses profound questions: Can beings with artificial minds be moral subjects? Who is responsible for the actions of a created cyborg—the creature or the creator? Is humanity ready to accept alien or artificial life? Though Asher doesn't pose these questions explicitly, they emerge through the character's artistic fate. Posthumanist theory seeks to answer such questions. According to expanded morality concepts, humanity must apply its ethical standards to other sentient beings and show compassion (Singer, 1975). In *Brass Man*, humans show little empathy for cyborgs like Mr. Crane—they are merely enemies to be destroyed. In this way, Asher exposes society's xenophobia and fear of artificial minds.

In the early 21st century, similar debates surround real-world AI advancements: should robots like Sophia be granted citizenship, or are AI algorithms mere tools (Hermann, 2022, 1–2)? *Brass Man* dramatizes such debates, though its resolution is tragic—Mr. Crane can never attain human rights.

Another philosophical interpretation lies in how Asher questions the very definition of humanity. Is it reason or emotion that sets humans apart? Mr. Crane surpasses many humans intellectually—he is more powerful and analytically capable. Yet he lacks emotion (or expresses it in strange forms). Thus, Asher seems to warn: when the “human heart” (imagination, soul, irrational impulses) merges with artificial intelligence, the result can be terrifying (Asher, 2005, 180).

Asher foreshadows this in the faux quote “From How It Is by Gordon” at the start of *Brass Man*, where he writes that the merger of human and AI produces an explosive synergy that ends with the human mind burning out, creating a godlike creature beyond control (Asher, 2005, 180–185). This mirrors Mr. Crane's arc: once his artificial mind absorbs human madness, he transforms into a dangerous posthuman entity. Whether Asher is glorifying or cautioning against human essence is open to interpretation. One reading suggests he's saying “human irrationality is alien to AI, and when adopted, leads to their destruction” (Wilson, 2006, 38).

While a speculative theory, it carries poetic truth. Mr. Crane symbolizes the madness and unconscious of human imagination—evidenced by his artistic madness: collecting souvenirs from victims, wearing fancy hats, etc. Even Skellor, when reviving Mr. Crane’s mind, speaks of preserving his poetic aspects (Asher, 2005, 463). This gives the novel a meta-poetic flavor: the author implies that even a wicked cyborg can have poetic qualities, an aesthetic of his own.

Poetics of the Fantastic Character: In conclusion, Mr. Crane must be acknowledged as a complex poetic phenomenon in science fiction literature. His semantic layers are multifaceted—he simultaneously embodies progress and caution, power and weakness, evil and victimhood. Characters like him endure in literature because each era can reinterpret them anew (Chu, 2010, 90). Today, Mr. Crane represents cybernetic dangers and AI ethics; tomorrow, he might symbolize the next stage of human evolution. His brass heart will likely haunt science fiction readers for a long time to come.

CONCLUSION

The character of Mr. Crane in Neal Asher's *Brass Man* stands as a vivid example of the hybridization of technological and biological elements in contemporary science fiction, embodying multiple literary and philosophical layers. A close analysis of this 500-page novel reveals that Mr. Crane initially appears as a cold, weaponized robot under human control, but undergoes a complex evolution. Disruptions in his artificial mind and unique “emotional” turmoil gradually endow him with traits associated with humanity, ultimately leading to a tragic end.

This study confirms that Mr. Crane operates as a symbol of the boundary between the technological and the biological—neither fully human nor entirely machine, but a cyborg who combines the features of both worlds. His hybrid nature is poetically rendered through images such as his artificial body being fused with human components, including synthetic skin and a real human arm. The metaphor of a “reptile walking upright” (Asher, 2005, 312) highlights the visual and symbolic tension that defines his form.

In terms of posthuman traits, Mr. Crane represents a new kind of subjectivity beyond human consciousness: his fragmented identity, disobedience to commands, and emergence of “human-like madness” in his artificial mind exemplify this. By the novel's end, the merging of his cognitive fragments suggests a form of individual rebirth—an emergence of personhood, albeit paradoxical and incomplete. Through this, *Brass Man* traces the cyborg’s humanization, portraying it as both profound and unsettling.

Mr. Crane also embodies the literary and philosophical interpretations of robot and AI characters in science fiction. He blends the archetypes of the Golem and Frankenstein’s monster, symbolizing both the promise and peril of technological advancement. The moral conflict between creator and creation is sharply drawn—Mr. Crane’s violence is framed not as innate evil, but as the result of human manipulation and abandonment. This ethical dilemma resonates more deeply because it takes shape in a cybernetic form.

The analysis and comparisons presented in this paper demonstrate the rich poetic semantics of Mr. Crane’s image. More than a fantastical figure, he is an allegorical hero of the posthuman world. Beneath his brass exterior lie humanity’s fears, sins, and aspirations. He not only serves as a central figure in the composition of *Brass Man*, but leaves a lasting aesthetic and emotional impact on the reader. Asher crafts this character with such detail and inner contradictions that readers are compelled to reflect on the broader theme of “technology and humanity.”

In conclusion, Mr. Crane significantly enriches the gallery of cyborg characters in science fiction literature. From a literary standpoint, his study reveals how fantastic characters can serve as mediums for exploring deep societal issues and philosophical questions—all expressed through poetic narrative. Mr. Crane is memorable and moving precisely because he fuses the human and the inhuman—he startles, frightens, and evokes empathy. Future research might explore other dimensions of such cyborg figures, including their gender representations or their sociopolitical functions. As Donna Haraway noted, “We are all cyborgs, hybrids, mosaic creatures” (Haraway, 1991, 177)—and fantastic characters serve as mirrors

for this reality. Mr. Crane is one such mirror, through which modern humanity may glimpse its own increasingly entangled relationship with technology.

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