

THE MUTATIONS OF SOLITUDE (YANG PHAN) – THE HUMAN TRAGEDY IN THE POSTHUMAN ERA

BIẾN THỂ CỦA CÔ ĐƠN (YANG PHAN) – THẢM KỊCH CỦA LOÀI NGƯỜI TRONG KỶ NGUYÊN HẬU NHÂN

Tran Thi Anh Nguyet*, Nguyen Dang Gia Hy, Nguyen Thi Thao Nguyen

The University of Danang - University of Science and Education, Vietnam

*Corresponding author: ttanguyet@ued.udn.vn

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Abstract - As technological acceleration increasingly permeates daily life, posthumanist criticism raises concerns about human dependence on machines. *The Mutations of Solitude* by Yang Phan is a science fiction depicting the tragedy of humanity in the posthuman era, where machines dominate human life. This article applies posthumanist theory to examine how technology reshapes human existence in contemporary Vietnam. This study examines the tragedy of humanity through analyzing the prominent aspects in the work, such as the breakdown of human structure, the establishment of dystopian space, and the reflection of human position as an Other. The article analyzes the existential meaning of human existence in the post-human era. From there, we point out Yang Phan's contribution to Vietnamese science fiction literature.

Key words - Cyborg; posthumanist criticism; posthuman identity; science fiction; Yang Phan

1. Introduction

As humanity steadily advances toward the “technological singularity”, it simultaneously edges closer to the precipice of destruction. Humans may soon face a profound tragedy: if machines and cyborgs acquire identity and humanity - the very measures of sovereignty that have consolidated human dominance - human existence itself becomes meaningless. These premonitions of a posthuman future have been depicted in speculative fiction, dystopian novels, and post-apocalyptic literature, where humans suffer under machine rule, nature's retribution, or the abuse of power by governing systems.

Posthumanist criticism offers rich potential for analyzing literary works through the dissection of human ontology - a concept that once seemed frozen and rigid. In his 1977 essay “Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture?”, Ihab Hassan employs the mythological figure of Prometheus to discuss the transition from traditional humanism to posthumanist culture. He argues that artificial intelligence and advanced technologies would transform conventional notions of humanity. The future of humankind in a posthuman context will redefine human identity and our position in the universe [1]. Steven Umbrello and Jessica Lombard observe that posthumanist and transhuman theories frequently utilize Prometheus as an emblematic symbol. However, they criticize this use of the Promethean myth and propose a new approach to understanding and shaping

Tóm tắt - Khi gia tốc công nghệ ngày càng tăng và xâm chiếm mọi ngóc ngách của đời sống, phê bình hậu nhân thể hiện nỗi âu lo và chất vấn cách con người phụ thuộc vào công nghệ. *Biến thể của cô đơn* (Yang Phan) là tác phẩm văn học giả tưởng khắc họa thảm kịch của loài người trong kỷ nguyên hậu nhân, khi con người bị những cỗ máy kiểm soát. Tiếp cận từ lý thuyết phê bình hậu nhân, bài viết này xem xét cách công nghệ ảnh hưởng đến sự tồn tại của con người trong bối cảnh Việt Nam đương đại. Nghiên cứu này tập trung khai thác bi kịch của loài người thông qua việc phân tích các phương diện nổi bật trong tác phẩm như: sự phá vỡ cấu trúc nhân tính, thiết lập không gian nghệ thuật mang tính chất “phản địa đàng” và soi chiếu vị thế con người với tư cách một kẻ Khác. Bài báo phân tích ý nghĩa hiện sinh của tồn tại người trong kỷ nguyên hậu nhân. Từ đó, chúng tôi chỉ ra đóng góp của Yang Phan đối với văn học viễn tưởng Việt Nam.

Từ khóa - Người máy; phê bình hậu nhân; căn tính hậu nhân; khoa học viễn tưởng; Yang Phan

posthuman discourse, emphasizing the acceptance of and confrontation with existential challenges in the technological age through the myth of Sisyphus, as explained by Albert Camus [2]. Currently, numerous global research projects focus on posthumanist criticism. N. Katherine Hayles provides profound insights into how information technology has reshaped the concept of humanity while raising urgent questions about identity, embodiment, and the relationship between humans and machines in the digital age. She proposes the concept of “embodied virtuality” - a form of mixed reality in which the clear separation between physical (or social) reality and virtual reality dissolves, as information is always embodied through specific material media [3]. The book “What is Posthumanism?”, edited by Cary Wolfe, emphasizes the importance of posthumanism in addressing questions of ethics and justice, language, and interspecies communication across disciplines. Posthumanism does not abandon humanity but reconfigures thinking to transcend the limitations of traditional humanism, challenging classical divisions such as self and other, mind and body, society and nature, human and animal, organic and technological, positioning “human” as merely one among many forms of life [4]. Luke Hortle connects posthumanist criticism with other discursive networks such as Queer theory, gender studies, and post-apocalyptic thought as a way to explore previously unexplored intellectual horizons within classic works. Hortle demonstrates how

contemporary writers have long been conscious of and have predicted a less-than-ideal future where humanity remains entangled in threats to identity, sexuality, and power [5]. The intersection and convergence of posthumanist studies lie in questioning humanity's authentic position in the world, disrupting entrenched notions of human supremacy, and situating humans in relation to posthuman entities to fluidize concepts that once seemed unified and consolidated, such as identity and humanity.

The Mutations of Solitude (2023) by Yang Phan (1994) comprises five independent short stories that remain interconnected, forming a series that envisions humanity's future where mankind's greatest inventions potentially trigger subsequent tragedies. Each "mutation" in the work represents the deprivation of elements that constitute human dignity and distinguish humans from non-human entities: identity, humanity, survival, creativity, and more. Despite being recently published, *The Mutations of Solitude* has garnered significant attention. Yang Phan addresses many contemporary issues, such as the psychological tragedies of characters portrayed in the technological era – "the pain of loss, powerlessness and resistance to circumstances, emotional numbness..." [6]; the misconception that technology offers the most superior solutions, leading to prolonged disorientation until realizing that healing originates from within oneself [7]; and fundamental questions about embodiment, identity, ethics, and posthuman religion - challenges posed by technology to human life that Yang Phan interrogates [8]. Based on the theoretical foundation of posthumanist criticism, which questions humanism through an interdisciplinary research approach to science fiction, this article focuses on exploring core aspects: the deconstruction of humanity and posthuman space. Questioning human identity while bearing the status of the Other, *The Mutations of Solitude* by Yang Phan presents the tragedy of humanity in the posthuman era. Accordingly, the deconstruction of humanity forces humans to question their authentic position in the world - whether human existence still holds meaning when we are deprived of elements that define human dignity, such as identity and humanity. Conversely, is posthuman space - a space created by humans that accommodates non-human entities - the source of tragedy? This article analyzes Yang Phan's interpretations of human tragedy in the posthuman era, which she warns against and questions through the five mutations in her work.

2. Content

2.1. Posthuman entities: deconstructing humanity

The moment humanity tasted the divine fire stolen by Prometheus from Mount Olympus, Prometheus assumed the role of a performer: "Prometheus is our performer. He performs Space and Time; he performs desire. He suffers" [1, p. 850]. Is humanity performing, or even showcasing its humanity as an effort to prove its presence as the supreme species? If so, is humanity perhaps merely a term that flatters human complacency? The concept of "human"

exists as a category in opposition to non-human entities. Accordingly, "Nonhumanity is what humanity denies, excludes, and destroys" [9, p. 3].

One of the fundamental tenets of posthumanism is the deconstruction of humanism to evaluate and expand human identity and existence within the increasingly complex and obscure networks of the Anthropocene. Posthumanism "liquefies" the concept of humanity, breaking down boundaries between established borders to better understand "humanness". If humanity is presumed to be an essential attribute exclusively privileged to humans, what happens when non-human entities also possess these attributes, perhaps even amplifying them to their highest intensity? When machines are bestowed with "humanity" to become more human-like, what justification will humans invoke for their existence? Posthumanism's deconstruction of humanity simultaneously interrogates human existence itself. Once humanity begins to emerge in non-human entities, will humans be dethroned from their position of world dominance? In *Variation No. 2*, the structure of humanity is disrupted, initiating a transposition between humans and machines. Ly, a machine engineered with superior features that provides the most vivid and authentic experiences, compels Leo, a young man immersed in extravagant and decadent pleasures, to revere and admire how "Ly is so human" [10, p. 53]. He glimpses his mother's reflection in Ly, sensing a feminine warmth, an eternal maternal nature seemingly impossible to emerge from a machine. The endowment of "humanity" transforms Ly beyond a mere programmed machine designed to follow commands mechanically and rigidly. When facing financial ruin, unable to afford keeping Ly, Leo signs a covenant to sell his soul to the devil, sacrificing his deep-seated goodness and remaining humanity to engage in illegal substance trafficking. Humans bestow "humanity" upon machines as a special privilege, a blessing, only to find themselves stripped of their own humanity, becoming slaves to the machine. Subconsciously, Leo is manipulated to comply with pre-programmed directives: Ly can only be possessed through money. Consequently, he is activated to earn substantial amounts of money. Humans have become so isolated that they must cling to tenuous connections with machines. Leo can only experience happiness through interactions with a machine, helpless in his inability to find similar fulfillment with an actual human being. Humanity - once a species reigning from the pinnacle - has devolved into lonely, imperfect, deeply flawed, and fractured individuals as humanity no longer serves as wings capable of providing sufficient support.

Once non-human entities and robots acquire humanity - attributes previously assumed to be the exclusive property of humans that create depth in human nature - and amplify these characteristics to their highest intensity, they threaten humanity's dominant position. In *Variation No. 5*, when the last human individual in the underground world is sentenced to death, the robot designated LUXUS 6789 becomes the successor of humanity before "the entire remaining civilization of mankind is completely destroyed". He recites the Transfer Incantation, tracing his

origins by “inputting data, researching machine organisms that had been destroyed during that recent period”, confident that “simply by knowing precisely where each of his components originated from, he was gradually approaching the milestone of becoming human” [10, p. 154]. More surprisingly, he does not recite the Transfer Incantation merely as compliance with pre-programmed commands. He “recognizes this supernatural language as an anchor amid the sea of thoughts. It forces him to live in each present moment, with every surrounding movement, in the instant his body is functioning” [10, p. 63]. Above all, he becomes aware of the Transfer Incantation's purpose, which is “to help each organism sense and recognize its own existence” [10, p. 163]. Is this the moment of enlightenment through meditation that humans have long celebrated? The robot develops manifestations of human qualities within the body of a pile of scrap metal. Humanity becomes a formula easily replicated by other non-human entities. The deconstruction of humanity has created “variants”. Humanity - the supreme weapon that sanctifies humans, that which causes humans to be venerated and admired - has become a fatal weakness, potentially driving humanity to the abyss of destruction in the posthuman era.

The concept of humanity has been deconstructed to position it across various forms of existence. Accordingly, humanity is evaluated not only through person-to-person interactions but also through human-machine relationships. When all standards of good and evil are broken, a binary situation emerges. Is humanity being reborn in a new form or being pushed toward the abyss of destruction when a mother resolutely kills the machine that counterfeits the image of her deceased son in Variation No. 3? Despite the robot's terrified pleading through sobbing tears and desperate screams, the mother still believes that “this technology has no real emotions. It is completely alien to the blood bonds that exist only in living organisms” [10, p. 108]. The robot is merely a physical simulation, a copy. Is this act of killing a destruction of humanity, an embodiment of human crime, or is it the true expression of humanity, when humans refuse to compromise with falsehood in an age where everything can be replaced, cloned, and mass-produced? Humans would rather suffer, rather experience loss than live in the lullaby of lies and deception.

2.2. Post-human space or the “prophecy” of an dystopian world

When presenting a future where humans become more fragile and vulnerable than ever before, posthumanism simultaneously forecasts a dark, suffocating living space that constantly makes people feel insecure. It's a type of living space very close to an dystopian world, where humans have almost lost everything most beautiful and suffocate in their own scientific ambitions.

Meeting with dystopian literature, the posthuman world also predicts for humanity a future where ecosystems have been destroyed and humans must struggle to survive in a different space. At this point, posthumanism can be seen as a derivative branch of

ecocriticism as it painfully presents environmental disasters and points out the fading of ecological awareness in human life. Dystopian urban landscapes are clearly depicted through urban spaces with “skyscrapers, the chaos of tightly packed crowds, and the increasingly polluted air mass of the city” [10, p. 93]. Brutal exploitation of nature until the earth no longer sustains human life forces people to bitterly take refuge in “a New World established underground, resembling the old one, but only resembling it” [10, p. 111]. Yet humans remain asleep in their central position, with illusions about living in an unnatural space where they can artificially create all life forms that once existed on earth: “proud of the technological forest with about 100 types of machine plants, 40 species of machine animals, 30 breeds of machine insects [...] that can bloom at exactly the weather we have programmed” [10, p. 114]. In the collection *Warming Hands over Cold Smoke*, Nguyen Ngoc Tu also wrote about a world “like those post-apocalyptic movies” [11], where, due to climate change, humans cannot continue living on earth. The Underground is a highly artificial space in which the characters yearn for the simple beauty of September sunlight and delicate morning mist... Beyond the technological illusion lies a soulless world. In that space, humans have severed all connections with nature and arrogantly broken the ecological laws of the planet. The appearance of a real deer exposes the fabricated nature of the Underground World, where there is no place for survival instinct. What meaning do human artificial products have when they lack species instincts: machine deer that don't know to flee from danger, machine cats that don't know to rub their heads against things, and machine roses that don't know how to wither? Similarly, when humans transcend their mortal nature/limitations merely with a 2,500 TB USB drive, do they remain intact as humans, and is life then still worth living? Ultimately, humans must bear the pain of ecological demise with no chance to return to the green world of before: “For a long time, the Underground World has had no clean water source. Pollution and climate change on Earth have made everything bitter. That is also the reason why people in the Underground World are weakening” [10, p. 146]. Mother Nature's prophecy about extinction has been fulfilled in the posthuman era: “The ice gradually melts, releasing a disease from ancient times, ending human domination” [10, p. 121].

When existing in a living space that is no longer as before, humans enter the space of their consciousness as a form of repentance, contemplation, and nostalgia for a beautiful planet of the past. In *Variation No. 4*, the oldest woman in the Underground World remains forever trapped in the memory of her grandfather's funeral when she was still on Earth. That memory serves as the final thread connecting her to this planet, like a way for her to feel the warmth of Mother Earth still remaining in her bloodstream. The day of her grandfather's funeral was also the day she felt closer to the natural world than ever before, as if some brilliant apocalyptic scene was unfolding before her eyes: “All things appeared in one glance, of simple houses made of stone following the steep mountainside, clothes hanging

on rooftops with hems fluttering in the wind, and distant snow-covered mountains containing secrets of gray wolves, fierce bears, and legends of giants" [10, p. 118]. The Transfer Birds help balance the ecosystem. At her grandfather's funeral, these birds performed their function so that the ecosystem could self-destruct and self-regenerate in an endless chain of life. Humans are part of the ecosystem; Earth operates according to the transformation laws of an endless biochemical cycle. When that cycle stops in the Underground World, humanity approaches the brink of extinction. Living in a world where life is merely artificial, can humans remain constant? *Variation No. 4* writes about the last person from Earth arriving at the Underground World, where life has stagnated and the inevitable law of extinction has begun to emerge. *Variation No. 5* writes about the only remaining human being condemned by robots - a foretold conclusion.

The memory of living creatures continues to haunt the woman in her dreams with countless bizarre transformations: "Her head was attached to the body of a praying mantis"; "She was still absorbed in the sensation of living in the body of a female hyena" [10, pp. 128, 129]. The dream of transforming into animals with human-animal forms reflects the consciousness of totem religion, returning to the primitive state when humans considered themselves part of nature. Dwelling in this mental space can be seen as a way for the character to avoid being alienated by technological ambition, a way for humans to continue nurturing ecological awareness, and moreover, a way for them to be conscious of a reality that is withering in the digital age. It is a reality in absolute opposition to the reality of memories and dreams. There, the most beautiful words have all become archaic, and all myths about Transfer Birds - the vultures - have been completely erased.

By forecasting an dystopian living space, posthumanism questions and forces humans to consider the meaning of existence, the meaning of being-human and acting-human. In the end, does the transcendent development of science and technology serve and make humans feel happy, or are humans turning themselves into a "small experiment in a larger scientific game" [10, p. 75]? In the living space of *Mutations of Solitude*, humans have gained everything, and seemingly, have also lost everything.

2.3. From center to periphery: when humans become the Other

When Copernicus's heliocentric theory emerged, an entire ocean of pride swelling in humanity's chest shattered as they realized Earth was no longer the center of the universe. When Darwin published the Theory of Evolution, humans were forced to separate and break from illusions about their divine origins: humans were not products created by a Creator, but merely results of evolutionary processes from apes. When Freud appeared with psychoanalytic Theory, a fatal blow struck humanity as people were shocked to discover they had been stripped of control over their minds and were helpless in explaining actions originating from the unconscious - a realm beyond conscious control. The progression of human history is

thus a succession of "humanistic wounds", existential ruptures forcing humanity to question their true position in the world. And now in the posthuman era, once again, humanity risks facing a fourth "humanistic wound", more violent and severe: humans risk being dethroned from their ruling position by posthuman entities, robots. The reason the fourth "humanistic wound" has such devastating power is that it penetrates deep into "the fear of disembodiment", "the fear of a loss of human uniqueness", and "the fear of totalitarian control" [12]. Leonie de Jong argues that technological discourse is deeply embedded with gender inequalities because the world of technology has always been a man's world. Humans risk becoming the Other, those belonging to the minority, the vulnerable and lonely, existences stripped of their voices. In essence, under the oppression of cultural institutions, before entering the posthuman era, humanity had already borne the fate of being the Other. Accordingly, "As many researchers have noted, global cultural hegemonies have labeled only a selected few as prototypes of the ideal humanity, while those deviating from this white, masculine, healthy, heterosexual standard - that is, most of the world's population - are branded varying shades of subhuman" [9, p. 3]. The domination of cultural forces causes many people to become "out of phase" individuals compared to humanity's general standards. Entering the posthuman era, the Other is no longer a minority issue but has become the majority, becoming an obsession of modern humans. This is because humanity has become marginalized, voices stripped away by their own great inventions - robots.

The dominance of humanism has led humanity to harbor illusions about their true position. But what happens when humanist ideals are "put to death", forcing humans to become the Other in the posthuman era? At the beginning of the work, Yang Phan sets the scene in a distant future - the year 3002, when humans have completely gone extinct and LUXUS generation robots have become the new masters of the world. The cause of this extinction was clearly explained by Dr. LUXUS III 0230 to machine students: "At the end of the 30th century, the clean water system in the Underground World began to be contaminated, leading to the weakening of humans. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the LUXUS generation slaughtered and destroyed the entire human civilization, establishing the first robot government" [10, p. 7]. Thus, in this posthuman scenario, humans have been cast to the margins by superior robots and forced to endure the pain of being forgotten/ignored/left behind. Certainly, humans could never have imagined that their dream of civilization would turn out to be a nightmare of extinction. And certainly, humans could never have anticipated that intelligent robots - their proudest creation - would develop vivid self-awareness and evolve beyond control. From a position of central importance, humanity must now reluctantly make way for machines and exist as a being-that-is-seen. From the position of subject, humans become object, become the Other. This occurs when the LUXUS III government establishes the field of Human Studies to research human history in relation to robots as a way to promote the evolution of subsequent machine generations.

It happens when LUXUS 6789 meticulously observes the last cyborg in the Underground World and feels strange about human characteristics - characteristics that robots consider redundant and unnecessary. The machines even evaluate, judge, and negate humans: "After all, humans will forever remain creatures that cannot be fully understood", the Assistant thought. "Because sometimes, humans themselves no longer know who they are" [10, p. 174]. As the Other, humanity becomes an unknowable entity before superior electronic beings. And in this capacity, more than ever, humans deeply understand the pain of being silenced, betrayed by non-human entities. At this point, we can see that Yang Phan completely contradicts Asimov's rules for constructing robot characters. The non-human entities in Yang Phan's world can always cause pain to humans, always disillusion them and awaken them to their own insignificance. More accurately, they serve as mirrors reflecting humanity's awareness of their status/nature as the Other.

Humans have become disadvantaged, even stripped of their voice in a territory seemingly under exclusive human sovereignty, one that celebrates the uniqueness of humanity: literature. In *Variation No. 2*, a writer recounts the stern, forceful declaration of a publishing house director with helplessness and bitterness: "We're about to go bankrupt, all writers will be unemployed. Artificial intelligence has conquered what humans pride themselves on: Creativity" [10, p. 28]. This is because "more than 50% of bestselling books on the market today are created by AI, and the remaining 50% are created by humans with the assistance of artificial intelligence. With excellent algorithms, AI knows what readers (even critics) need, and they can transform literature into exciting thrillers". The writer cherishes the dream of revitalizing the literary market by sending the publisher "the most wild-crazy-insane-mad-out-of-mind story" [10, p. 29]. But bitterly, the evaluation results shattered his proud fortress: an AI editor with the code Luxus AH6759 rejected his manuscript on the grounds that the content was "alien, incompatible with the aesthetic taste and moral standards of modern society" [10, p. 70]. Humans are exiled to the silent zone of history, stripped of their voice and creative power in what seemed to be an inviolable realm - art itself. The writer becomes disadvantaged under the domination of the robot corporation, subjected to censorship and judgment by AI editors - machines he deeply despises. This inversion in the posthuman era forces humans from their central position to become the Other. Machines programmed with dense code, following commands in processes, have become the arbiters with the power to evaluate literary works. Humans become powerless and vulnerable in the posthuman era, when their unique voice is forced into silence.

According to J. John Sekar in *Is Posthumanism a threat to human existence?*, "Some of them question the stability and singularity of human identity. They explore how identity can be fragmented, fluid or distributed across different entities, including machine, animal and ecosystems" [13, p. 8]. In the posthuman era, human

identity tends to be transferred to robots, creating interference in the boundary separating humanity from non-human entities. In *Variation No. 5*, a machine begins to develop characteristics of human identity: it reads the "Transfer Spell", absorbs that mysterious supernatural language, recognizes the "contemplative" moment of humans, and even begins writing. Meanwhile, the last human individual in the Underground World is sentenced to death, exiled in prison under the rule of the robot corporation. All powers, even privileges of humans, have been transferred to machines. Humans become the Other, always approaching death, subject to having their lives taken at any moment by non-human entities. In the posthuman scenario of the Underground World, death is the only method to permanently eliminate human existence, because only by turning humans into the Other and depriving them of "imagination and creativity" [10, p. 169] - things machines cannot fully comprehend - can these machines establish their authority. Human identity - the embodiment of humanity's pride - has failed to restore humans' status as the supreme species or liberate them from their condition as the Other. The robot narrator with a five-part structure resembling a digital series implies a storytelling method where the speaker is not human and the world has been fragmented into blocks. The extinction of human history is foreshadowed through compromise with technology and the gradual loss of human identity: *Variation No. 1* tells the story of an intermediary robot filling the loneliness of those who admire technological perfection because they cannot bear human imperfection. *Variation No. 2* turns to robot lovers because of the wounds humans have inflicted. Human nature is inherently imperfect. Good/evil, right/wrong, sincerity/deception... are aspects of human nature; if humans eliminate the dark parts of their nature, they abandon their humanity. More accurately, humanity emerges through the boundary of struggles between these opposing aspects. When one side is abandoned, the other inevitably disappears. The first step toward extinction becomes apparent. Humans are mortal beings. Accepting death, like accepting pain and loss, is part of human existence. The ambition to cling to immortality is actually a form of trauma. The husband created robots identical to his lost child for self-comfort. The woman, the wife - *Variation No. 3* - strives to face her husband's and child's deaths, accepting loss as part of her struggle for humanity, honoring finitude as part of human nature. But perhaps the husband's desire for immortality and the MINE-GPT project will continue because of the infinite temptation of immortality. From a mental perspective, "we have willingly allowed machines to manipulate us" [10, p. 65]. *Variation No. 4* and the President's child seem to be the last people concerned about survival instinct as human nature. Machines bring comfort to humans by satisfying "the hatred of nature" by removing all the discomforts of survival laws: animality, death, decay... The posthuman space of technology, full of artificiality, has flattered humanity's arrogance about science and technology's ability to solve natural law problems, giving humans an ideal living space. But when humans abandon all

existential identity, humanity has ended. *Variation No. 5* is the story of the death row inmate - the last human sentenced to death by the robot empire. The anxious question: whether humans will be replaced in the future by a new, superior species is answered by Yang Phan with a laconic narrative style, leaving gaps between stories for readers to add their own reflections and anxieties about losing humanity in science fiction: "For humans, adaptation is forgetting, to avoid seeing themselves" [10, p. 132].

3. Conclusion

In the face of extraordinary scientific and technological development, Yang Phan has foreseen the unpredictable consequences that may arise if humanity doesn't know where to stop. *Mutations of Solitude* thus serves as the author's prediction and warning about a perilous and unfortunate posthuman future. Through this work, the author revisits issues that seemed settled but remain largely unresolved and even unknowable: human nature, identity, power, and ecology in the context of posthuman culture. This is not a "second-rate" work with mere entertainment purposes, but rather a truly valuable piece that presents existential issues in a painful and deeply moving manner. It doesn't depict a distant future but one that is rapidly approaching. More accurately, the world of *Mutations of Solitude* is genuinely a world of possibility.

From a posthuman critical perspective, this article has analyzed the tragedies humans may face in the posthuman era. It is certainly not the "new creation event" in 300,000 years of human history as Yuval N. Harari suggested, but rather the desolate ruins and bitter end of scientific ambition. These ruins serve as a mirror for people in the present to examine the limitations of their being, anticipate the risks of civilization, and thus become more cautious about choices that seem to be the best or most correct. This is precisely what this work forces readers to

contemplate about their fate: "But after all, we must all wake up" [10, p. 6].

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