
**BEYOND THE MALE BODY: POSTHUMAN MASCULINITY IN
ANCILLARY JUSTICE AND INFOMOCRACY**

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ABSTRACT

The idea of Masculinity in American literature was always associated to male body and concepts of control, autonomy, and dominance. However, contemporary posthuman fiction challenges the old ways by reconstructing masculinity that goes beyond human body. This article looks into the ways in which Ancillary Justice and Infomocracy reimagine masculinity in a world of technological advancement. These texts present masculinity in its fragile form rather than glorifying it. In Ancillary Justice, the protagonist Breq, once a part of a huge ship, disrupts the idea of selfhood, making masculinity difficult to place within the narrative. In Infomocracy, power shifts from body to informational networks, where authority not vested in one individual but is distributed across different. In the light of posthumanist theory, this article argues that masculinity in these novels are not erased but transformed. It becomes disembodied, and destabilized, and suggests that masculinity is not entirely gone but is diffused into abstract forms. The article attempts to find out how posthuman masculinity is presented in both literary texts, and its role in determining masculinity. This changing dynamics between the idea of masculinity and physical form can be better understood by applying posthuman frameworks. It also offers the perspective that even though posthuman narrative seems to dissolve gender binaries, it also reveals how it exist subtly in technological realms, indicating that masculinity is not entirely erased but reconstructed in less visible forms.

KEYWORDS: American literature, Masculinity, Posthumanism, *Ancillary Justice*, *Infomocracy*.

INTRODUCTION

Physical body has always been a base of human identity. There has been a relationality between biological sex, and socially constructed gender, reinforced through performances repeated by society. Masculinity has been evolving and adapting to its new environment, but in a subtle manner. American literature has witnessed a lot of drastic shifts, especially when it comes to gender binaries. While earlier literary pieces establish traditional ideals of masculinity, contemporary fiction portrays its limitations too. Human body is less visible in a world of technological advancement. The emergence of artificial intelligence questions the traditionally established masculinity. In today's world, masculinity cannot be defined or understood in terms of biological aspects. Posthuman fiction combines human existence with technological experience. This entanglement complicates the old notions of identity and agency as subjectivity is no longer embodied in a single body but distributed across different entities. When identity becomes networked, these attributes no longer fit the criteria. Contemporary American literature not only portrays this shift as speculative fiction; it reflects anxieties emerging in society regarding the elimination of stable identities in virtual world.

Posthuman narratives not only draws technological futures but also redefines the human boundaries. The relationship between body and identity is destabilized through such texts. This shift offers a critical assessment of masculinity. The ideal masculinity in American literature has always been represented through masculine male body, agency, rationality, and control. The American man as an embodiment of dominance and self-sufficiency. However, contemporary American fiction, especially speculative ones redraws this identity which was primarily rooted in a male body. In science fictions, such as *Ancillary justice* and *Infomocracy*, masculinity is not confined either to a single body or a gender. The subjectivity is no longer unified, it is spread across different forms and information networks. Hence, it is important to study texts such as *Ancillary justice* and *Infomocracy* for understanding how masculinity is not only questioned but redesigned and redefined by placing them within posthuman frameworks.

Destabilizing Gender

N Katherine Hyles' Posthumanist theory provides a new perspective, that is Posthumanism is a condition in which "information loses its body" (Hyles 2). Identity of an entity is no longer

determined by physical structure, it is something which can be transformed and distributed across different networks. This deconstruction of physical structure reconfigures gender identity, which used to be depended on biological traits. Donna Haraway, through her "Cyborg Manifesto" proposes the idea that a hybrid subject can transcend binaries: "The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world" (Haraway 150). This new perspective questions the stability of masculinity as something fixed and rigid, and suggests that gender is fluid and technologically mediated.

This perspective also aligns with Judith Butler's theory of Performativity, which states that gender is not inherited but constructed through repeated social acts. "Gender proves to be performative... constituting the identity it is to purported to be" (Butler 25). This notion becomes even more significant when combined with Posthumanist context that is, if the body itself is absent, then gender performance has lost its platform. Masculinity once bore by physical male body has become an abstract notion, and is destabilized in posthuman narratives.

This change, forces us to rethink the idea of masculinity, or rather complicates it. The notion of masculinity, for decades, has been using male body as an anchor, but now, when physical body is no longer a significant tool, can it be fragmented? This article intends to discuss how posthuman American fiction destabilizes masculinity by separating the identity from sex and gender. Posthuman fiction goes beyond and reconstructs the identity through artificial intelligence, distributed consciousness, and powered networks. By doing so, such narratives put forth a new statement that masculinity is not an inherent trait but it's a fragile characteristic constructed by.

Erasure of Masculinity in *Ancillary Justice*

The idea of masculinity is unstable when there are multiple forms to subject as Rosi Braidotti says, "The posthuman subject is a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity" (Braidotti 49). Ann Leckie in *Ancillary Justice* presents the protagonist Breq, an artificial intelligence that once controlled thousands of ancillary bodies. This distributed consciousness challenges the idea of a single gendered self. The novel makes use of a different linguistics structure where the Radchaai language uses a single pronoun(she) for everyone, irrespective of biological sex. This deliberate use of language erases distinction between genders and also set the readers free from their own expectations constructed around the traditional idea of gender. When Breq says, "I don't know what gender you are." (Leckie), It reflects her inability to differentiate between genders since masculinity becomes unreadable in

posthuman linguistic system. Leckie states that masculinity is not only a social construction but very often enforced through language structures. When language stops to differentiate genders, masculinity becomes fragmented. Breq's identity is not defined by biological sex, gendered acts, and physical appearance but by reminders of past. "Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals" (Kimmel 5).

According to Hyles "the body is no longer the ground of identity" (Hyles 3) and has been proved through Breq. Her consciousness can be transferred and divided, going beyond the idea of self. "I was a troop carrier. I was Justice of Toren. I was one hundred and twenty soldiers." (Leckie). The fragmentation experienced by Breq, because once spread across in many bodies is now reduced into one. "I had been thousands of bodies... Now I was only one" (Leckie). A new form of subjectivity is introduced here, a subjectivity that resist traditionally attributed categories of identity. "I didn't feel anger. I didn't feel anything the way humans did" (Leckie). Masculinity, which relies on understanding and continuity is incompatible now. Identity is fluid, distributed, and posthuman.

Networked power and Transformation of Masculinity in *Infomocracy*

Ancillary Justice focus on destabilization of body where as *Infomocracy* investigates suggestions of networked identity and power of information. "Information is power, and power is everything" (Older). Set in a near future, *Infomocracy* narrates the story of a micro democracy governed world, controlled by a global system called "Information" which oversee data flow and political transparency. "Protocol is how technological control exists after decentralization" (Galloway 7). Here, power is not rooted in physical strength or individual dominance, "No one governs alone anymore" (Older). Traditionally associated traits of masculinity have no role here, in fact power is derived from the access and control over information. Authority is decentralized and is spread across networks.

Older's narrative is a prime example of what Manuel Castells calls as the "network society", where "power is exercised through networks" (Castells 469). This changes the foundation of identity and agency as "Everything is visible. Everything is recorded" (Older). Characters in this novel functions within a system which prioritize data and algorithmic governance, individuals are only a part of a larger system. Masculinity, is no longer associated with a male body but to a position within information system. As power becomes distributed, systemic, and abstract, the idea of masculinity is destabilized.

Traditional characteristics of masculinity is not eliminated but transferred. It subtly exists within technological systems rather than in individual bodies. "People are known by their

data as much as by their bodies" (Older). This goes hand in hand with Butler's idea that power operates through repeated structures rather than innate traits.

At the same time, the novel emphasises the limitations of this transformation in a subtle way. Gender is fragmented. However, it is not ultimately erased. Power based hierarchies exist, and masculinity has been outmoded. The transformation of masculinity from concrete to abstract indicates the transition from traditional to posthuman. Masculinity was inseparable from the male body in American literature, but in posthuman fiction, these traits are reconstructed within technological and informational boundaries. As Haraway points out "we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids" (Haraway 150). Posthuman subject is hybrid and doesn't have a fixed identity. Masculinity, as something rooted in stability cannot be visible here. But masculinity doesn't simply vanish, it is diffused into many abstract forms. Control over systems and access to information becomes new forms of power.

Even though destabilized, masculinity lingers within posthuman narratives. "Technologies are not neutral; they are deeply implicated in the production of gendered identities" (Balsamo 3). This can be understood with "posthuman patriarchy", a system where patriarchy is infused within technological frameworks. Although posthuman fiction challenges the foundations of masculinity, it also reveals that it can be transformed and transferred. It is not eliminated, rather finds new forms of expression within technologies. Posthuman masculinity exists in transformation.

CONCLUSION

"Posthumanism names a historical moment in which the decentring of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatics, and economic networks becomes increasingly impossible to ignore" (Wolfe 15). Contemporary American fiction reimagines masculinity by separating its traditional connection to male body and rebuilding identity within posthumanism. As Sherryl Vint notes "Science fiction's engagement with artificial intelligence frequently exposes the instability of the human as a category" (Vint 45). Posthuman narratives doesn't just criticise traditional masculinity, but reveals its dependency on conditions that are no longer available in the modern world. Identity becomes fluid and distributed and masculinity lose its stability. According to Mark B N Hansen, "In networked media environments, subjectivity is distributed across technical systems rather than located in individual bodies" (Hansen 112). In the posthuman perspective, masculinity is not tied to a male body, it exists within circuits, codes, and networks. As Hables Gray noted "Cyborgs are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism" (Gray 13).

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