

BECOMING THE POSTHUMAN: THE DESTABILISATION OF THE SUBJECT IN THOMAS GLAVINIC'S *NIGHT WORK*

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Abstract. *The paper provides an insight into the destabilisation of the subject and the emergence of the posthuman condition in the novel Night Work (Die Arbeit der Nacht, 2006) by Austrian writer Thomas Glavinic. The first part briefly discusses previous analyses of the novel and the definitions of posthumanism as an umbrella term for a heterogeneous theory dedicated to the questions of what follows after the re-consideration of the humanist ideals and after decentring the human. The posthuman is interpreted as non-fixed, in the state of constant reconstruction as opposed to the humanist subject's fixedness and integrity. The analysis examines the 'uncanny' setting of the novel and the power of survival in the face of death, which becomes the protagonist's point of demise and divergence from consciousness and rationality. The urban environment devoid of all organic life replaces the Other applied traditionally to other humans. The Sleeper as the nightly doppelgänger and the filming of the environment further add to the transgression of the boundaries between material and immaterial, the living and the non-living, the real and the dreamlike/artificial, and ultimately determine the protagonist's posthuman existence in the state of 'becoming' rather than 'being'.*

Key words: *Austrian literature, horror, the uncanny, posthumanism, subjectivity, Thomas Glavinic*

1. INTRODUCTION

Within recent scientific and popular discussions about the Anthropocene, a term popularized by the Dutch chemist Paul J. Crutzen, both new and old strands of thought which oppose the humanist and anthropocentric tradition have been brought to attention. The Anthropocene refers to the age in which human impact on the environment has reached a point that it threatens to destroy both the environment and humans themselves (cf. Pearce 2007, 44). Haraway (2016b, 35) argues that the times of Anthropocene are "the times of

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multispecies, including human, urgency: [...] of unprecedented looking away". The discussions are consequently marked by an equally strong sense of urgency and willingness to re-examine the perspectives taken on the position of the rational subject and its dynamic relationship to the organic and non-organic environment alike. The humanist tradition and the techno-scientific progress have significantly influenced the shaping of humans, who have been deemed the measure of all things, as well as the shaping of the natural world. The starting point of the new posthumanist theoretical stances is the idea that a postanthropocentric worldview and the decentring have become a necessity, in addition to a re-examination of the prospects of our future in light of numerous crises caused by humans. Haraway (1997, 44) asserts that our current time "churns out expectations of nuclear catastrophe, global economic collapse, planetary pandemics, ecosystem destruction, the end of nurturing families, private ownership of the commons of the human genome, and many other kinds of silent springs". The crisis, therefore, belongs to one of the key discourses of the late 20th and early 21st century and is found in contemporary art and literature, which represent the current state of affairs, and participate in the formation of public opinion. Hayles (1999, 21), for instance, points out that literary texts are not merely "passive conduits. They actively shape what the technologies mean and what the scientific theories signify in cultural contexts" and in the context of crisis, they often stand for the idea that "stability is a desirable social goal".

It is precisely in the literary visions of posthuman future that one often finds the destabilisation of the existing relations and the birth of new kinds of hybridity and/or forms of life, based on the deconstruction of the long-established dichotomies. The novel *Night Work* by Austrian writer Thomas Glavinic presents a vivid episode in the life of its protagonist Jonas and the disintegration of his personality in contemporary Vienna. This city has mysteriously become desolate and has inexplicably transformed itself into a place inhabited by a sole survivor of an unknown catastrophic event. The causes of the extinction of all life have remained unclear. It is unknown whether it is all indeed a reality or just a dream, a hallucination, or maybe even life after death. Previous studies have investigated this aspect of the novel. Landau (2016) points out that there are multiple ways to interpret Jonas' situation. For instance, it could be understood as a) a nightmare or a dream, especially owing to a frequent motif of falling; b) madness, ascribed to numerous pills, lack of sleep, and the protagonist's paranoia; c) a drug-induced hallucination; or d) as being in or in front of the entrance to Hell after dying.

Whatever the circumstances of the eradication of all organic life and the formation of the posthuman world in the novel may be, Jonas spends his time keenly exploring and desperately mapping its empty spaces in the time without/after humans. At the same time, he is seeking closure for his deeply personal relationships which failed and the solution to the issues of his crumbling sense of identity and to the horror of everyday life with no one else beside him in the Viennese post-apocalyptic world. Because of common, anthropocentric endeavours, not only does the surrounding world change, but the (last) human himself suffers from a disintegrative process as well, which ultimately threatens to transform the characteristics which make him human.

Night Work was first published in 2006, and although it is relatively new, it has already been the subject of several studies. The studies follow a variety of approaches. They have taken into account Jonas' sense of time and reality, loneliness, and isolation, but have also devoted attention to the aspects of the novel similar to dystopias and the robinsonade. Boeckl (2015, 126–127) defines *Night Work* as a "secular apocalyptic narrative" and a

“modern robinsonade”, which takes place in Vienna, instead of emphasising the relationship between the natural and cultural space. It elevates the idea of survival to a level of cosmic solitude and the search for its meaning. Stoiser (2013, 17) argues that the postapocalyptic setting of the novel implies giving new structure to the world; it imagines the formation of different kinds of existence and order, but not necessarily the end of the world itself. She compares the text to other similar literary works of the German-speaking world, in order to show which aspects of *Night Work* established the connection to the previous tradition and/or deviated from it (Stoiser 2013, 19–25). The texts she compares Glavinic's *Night Work* to include *Black Mirrors* (*Schwarze Spiegel*, 1951) by Arno Schmidt, *The Wall* (*Die Wand*, 1963) by Marlen Haushofer, *Grand Solo for Anton* (*Großes Solo für Anton*, 1976) by Herbert Rosendorfer, and *World Under* (*Welt unter*, 2002) by Yorck Kronenberg. Glavinic's novel is not unique in terms of its primary plot idea, as it builds on the existing tradition of writing about existential fears and solitude as an “anthropological diagnosis”, despite which one must still seek answers (Bartl 2014, 14, as cited in Standke 2014, 21). Based on these previous interpretations of the novel *Night Work* and the contemporary theories of the posthuman, we examine the disintegration of the wholeness of a rational subject in the context of re-structuring the world. Our aim is to show that the “cracks” in the human, represented by Jonas in the novel, result in a development which starts from the postmodern fragmentation of the subject and goes towards the emergence of a posthuman identity.

2. DEFINING THE POSTHUMAN

The fact that there is a range of different theoretical positions taken by contemporary posthumanist thinkers makes it difficult for one to form a single definition of this term. However, although the theory is heterogeneous, it is noticeable that posthumanist thought has definitely been gaining importance in recent years¹. Throughout the phases of its development, several key terms have been emphasised, from Donna Haraway's cyborg, prostheses and body upgrades, cognitive turn, and artificial intelligence, all the way to biopolitics, new materialisms, and ecocriticism (cf. Herbrechter 2016b, 62). As an interdisciplinary school of thought and an umbrella term, posthumanism generally implies the liberation from the chains of humanism by its re-interpretation (cf. Herbrechter 2016a, 13) and the re-examination of human central position in relation to the non-human. It is possible to describe it as a philosophical thinking about the future after humanity, both chronologically and figuratively, in terms of what comes after the dominance of humanism and anthropocentrism. The theoreticians of posthumanism ask the question about the future of the new species of humans or of a world in which the humans have been overcome or gone extinct, but most importantly, they highlight the discussion about “what has been omitted from an anthropocentric worldview” (Miah 2008, 77). While transhumanism, sometimes used as a partial synonym, builds its premises around the faith in progress and the possibilities of upgrading the human being, posthumanism nurtures a more sceptical attitude. It often warns of the dangers of irresponsible treatment of technology and environment and aims to discard “the dogma of human exceptionalism – an exceptionalism

¹ Stefan Herbrechter has analysed the number of search results in the central database of MLA for the term *posthuman** and has concluded that until 1990s there were merely five results, but since 2010 already over 700 (cf. Herbrechter 2016b, 61).

which is connected to various forms of mastery, including of gender, species, and matters” (Iovino 2016, 13).

In her study *How we became posthuman*, Hayles (1999, 3) defines the posthuman “as an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction”. She indicates that there is a tendency to give privilege to information rather than the material and to attempt to overcome the human nature – from the natural acts of birth and dying to the embodiment. Whereas the human(ist) subject is a fixed and clearly defined entity, the posthuman one is “decentred, ontologically confusing and in a state of transition” (Campbell and Saren 2010, 162). The posthuman condition is therefore to be interpreted as a “post-subject” position, which relies upon the transgression of the gap between the human and the non-human Other. The human has come to be interpreted as a bio-historical construct (Brajdoti 2016, 52–53) and the non-human Other is not only the Other in the human sense of a different class, race, or gender, but also “someone or something of a different species and organic status” (Domanska 2010, 124).

The connection between the posthumanist position and science fiction is particularly prominent, since, similar to satire, posthumanist narratives and art analyse contemporary issues in society, dislocating them both temporally and spatially. Therefore, it is not necessarily a visionary prophesying of the future, but a reaction to current events. The transgression of the boundaries between animal and human, animal-human and machine, and organic and non-organic, which was highlighted by Haraway (cf. 2016a) in *A Cyborg Manifesto*, had long been a matter of fantasy, but is nothing unusual in contemporary, real-life scientific discourse. The human wholeness falls apart in such an ‘uncanny’ reality, so the literary representations of the posthuman contain elements of horror as well, as “posthumanism is not concerned simply with the ‘future human’, but with deconstructing the human as an ancient concept” (Campbell and Saren 2010, 159). The novel *Night Work* contains the elements of both science fiction and horror. The theme of the last man on Earth is one of science fiction conventions, as it could depict a certain moment in the future or an alternate reality. Yet, at the same time, it is dominated by the atmosphere of terror, the primal fear of change and death and the destruction of human unity.

3. THE DESTABILISATION OF THE HUMAN SUBJECT

The introduction to the novel’s setting occurs through the protagonist’s awakening in an already familiar environment. At first, he remains unaware that it has become desolate and sends text messages to his love interest Marie (cf. Glavinic 2008, 1). The first pages of the novel already make it possible to detect Freud’s ‘uncanny’, defined as “that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar” (Freud 2004, 76). Freud developed this concept by analysing the classic Romantic novella *The Sandman* by E. T. A. Hoffmann, to which there are numerous references in *Night Work*. They depict the alienation and irrationalism of the protagonist which stem from the seemingly known. The space that Jonas inhabits is familiar and remains so throughout the whole plot of the novel; yet, one extraordinary detail such as the disappearance of all other life makes it terrifying. In a similar way, clarifying the term ‘unheimlich’, that is, ‘uncanny’, Freud (2004, 79) points out its double nature. On the one hand, it is something “familiar and congenial” and, on the other hand, “concealed and kept out of sight”.

Similarly, Vienna, where Jonas awakes, consists both of the usually observed streets, buildings, apartments, and famous sights and of the hidden nature of its existence *beyond* the existence of life itself. Jonas notices several times that it is not only humans who have disappeared, but the animals as well: "Something suddenly struck him: there wasn't even a bird to be seen" (Glavinic 2008, 5). Later, while wandering, he attempts again to determine, whether he is indeed alone: "He checked all the rooms. Not a living soul. No dog, no canary, not even a fly" (Glavinic 2008, 25). It turns out that he is not merely the last living member of his species, but that he also represents the last living being on Earth. Therefore, he ends up exploring the remnants of civilization.

In such a scenario, he could have felt like a powerful subject in the face of death of all other life, which he somehow managed to withstand; however, he slowly develops into the exact opposite. Canetti (1981, 227), in his study *Crowds and Power (Masse und Macht, 1960)*, examined the birth of power in the moment of an individual's meeting with death: "Horror at the sight of death turns into satisfaction that it is someone else who is dead. The dead man lies on the ground while the survivor stands". In a similar fashion, Jonas is at first depicted as powerful, demonstrated by his reveries about victory and survival: "Jonas had always wanted to brave some public peril. To win the laurels of one who had undergone some great ordeal. To be a survivor. To be a member of the elect. Now he was" (Glavinic 2008, 87). His wishes have come true mysteriously, but being the ultimate winner in a world without people is not much of a victory if there is no one there to observe it. He slowly begins to doubt if his thoughts and behaviour are at all the result of his own work, wishes, and free will. Namely, he starts to question the rationality of the last living representative of the thinking subject. Jonas asks himself the question: "What had impelled him to come up here? The view? Memories of Marie? Or hadn't he come of his own free will at all? Was he like a hamster on a treadmill? Were his actions determined by someone else?" (Glavinic 2008, 57). Yet, these questions seem outside the reality, in which there seems to be no other being who could influence or determine his actions.

Because of his rising doubts, Jonas eventually embarks on a mission consciously to leave traces of his existence behind, even though it seems more than obvious that it is a futile endeavour. The fears that haunt him can ultimately be traced to the state of being upset about one's own psyche (cf. Landau 2016). Jonas' psyche is falling apart and he attempts to leave "signs/traces as semiotically relevant damage" to houses and objects (Müller-Funk, 2011, 189, as cited in Krämer 2015, 56). These signs and marks represent the ultimate attempt to preserve his central position in the context of his surroundings: "Anxious to leave traces of his presence behind, he loaded a handcart with props and trundled them onto the stage of the Burgtheater" (Glavinic 2008, 50). Leaving traces behind is not an act of power; it is precisely an act of powerlessness and of the fear of the inevitable disappearance of Jonas himself as the last actor on the stage of human history. Jonas' existence can no longer be qualified as being, but rather as becoming – becoming unstable and becoming the last subject in the world in which the Other has turned into the ruins of a former civilisation. Müller-Funk (2010, 25, as cited in Stobbe 2016, 157) writes that Glavinic's novel evidently misses the Other, so that the places where one usually accesses the open are being closed and their boundaries lost. The Other consists of the non-organic world, with which Jonas is confronted, as the unique remnant of the organic life and the last instance of an anthropocentric perspective. This perspective fades despite his mapping the space of the previous order of things, and the boundaries indeed become unclear. Jonas observes the world and, unlike before when his view was distanced, now it is precise.

Krämer (2015, 54) interprets this as a demonstration of insecurity. His precise look emphasises the gap between the last subject and the world which does not care, whose existence remains permanent in spite of centuries of anthropocentrism. In the same way that the human subject became the central part of research in the 18th century, it can as easily disappear (cf. Foucault 1974, 462) and its position reveals itself as fragile and not particularly powerful in the higher order of existence.

The disintegration of the rational subject is followed by a changed relationship to one's own body. The dualism of mind and embodiment as well as the privilege given to the intellectual aspect of one's existence are deconstructed and lost in a renewed interest and discovery of the body. After cutting himself with a knife, Jonas discovers the materiality of his body and ponders:

He'd lived with this finger for thirty-five years without ever knowing what it looked like inside. He had no idea what his heart looked like, or his spleen. Not that he'd have been particularly interested in their appearance, far from it. But this bare bone was unquestionably a part of him. A part he'd never seen until now. (Glavinic 2008, 2)

The inner parts of his body, which he had never actually considered before, become a focus of his attention as the boundaries of the subject's cognizance and integrity become blurred. Moreover, this moment foreshadows the inevitably tragic outcome of Jonas' existence in a posthuman world. Instead of enjoying the power of survival bestowed upon him, it merely ends up prolonging his everlasting anxiety, and ultimately challenges his very existence as his physical and conscious self confronts a technologically mediated one.

4. THE EMERGENCE OF THE POSTHUMAN SUBJECT: DEATH, TECHNOLOGY, AND METAMORPHOSIS

The atmosphere of being trapped develops into a feeling of being haunted by a nightly doppelgänger. One morning, Jonas finds an image "tucked between the bread bin and the coffee grinder. It showed him asleep" (Glavinic 2008, 62). The Sleeper haunts him and at the same time, as his uncontrollable doppelgänger, intrigues him, although he is aware that it is, in fact, the same person. The dialogue of "self and the double" has come to represent in contemporary fiction "a desire to be reunited with a lost centre of personality" and it determines "the situation of the self in relation to the dominant notion of 'reality' and 'human identity'" (Živković 2000, 120; 124). Freud (2004, 86) spoke of the doppelgänger as of an insurance against the destruction of identity, the denial of the power of death and the fight against extermination. The Sleeper is known to the self, yet he is also out of its control and thus appalling, as he points to the state in which one's self has paradoxically become the Other in relation to itself. Jonas has fear of death and of the things that precede him. His identity does not crumble in the sense that it entirely ceases to exist as human. He is rather an example of a haunted subject, "haunted by what comes after it just as much as by what comes 'before' it, [it] can never be fully present to itself. It always has someone or something else, an other, coming after it, in the punned senses in that phrase of succession and pursuit" (Callus & Herbrechter 2012, 246; cf. Derrida 2008). Jonas' existence is caught in an empty space between the past and the future and it shows an interposition, a hybridisation of existence within blurred boundaries. According to Kristeva (1982, 3), the horror and abjection arise in the process of facing as well as distancing one's self from its

surroundings, but especially in the contact with death: "There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border" and "it is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva 1982, 4).

Jonas is the ambiguous one, whereas the primal fear of death awaits and observes him from the other side of the camera: "The Sleeper was sitting there like a dead man. Little by little, as if in slow motion, he raised his right arm. Extended his forefinger. Pointed at the camera. Froze" (Glavinic 2008, 160). This flirtation with death beyond his power of control, which is part of what he calls the "night work", is what Jonas finds the most disturbing. The Sleeper takes a knife and threatens to transgress the line between the living and the non-living: "The only thing Jonas didn't care for was the way he brandished the knife near his throat. Having nodded as though in confirmation of something, the Sleeper moved out of shot" (Glavinic 2008, 227). Using video recordings, the Sleeper provides signals showing the loss of boundaries between different aspects of the psyche, but also of new forms of organic and non-organic existence.

The loss of identity in the context of the dehumanized environment, with no living beings other than the one increasingly interpreted through the medium of technology, reveals both the conditions of existence in contemporary society and the abysses of the postmodern subject (cf. Standke 2014, 21). As an outcome of the development of technoscience, the blurred boundaries between the technological and the human, the living and the non-living, the natural and the artificial, the 'born' and the 'made', destabilise the traditional concept of interdependence and conditionality of body and mind as the fundamental bases of identity (Živković 2012, 36). The human memory, in this case, becomes externalised and stored onto a computer memory. Jonas notes that a "recording had been made by a machine with no human witnesses around" (Glavinic 2008, 213). The information stems from a seemingly non-anthropocentric, technological position and the video recordings serve as a confirmation of his own existence and the existence of an objective and rational reality (cf. Forsbach 2014).

The cameras follow him to point to the fact that he is the centre of power, but are rather to be interpreted as a method of control and domination (cf. Foucault 1995, 191). Instead of making Jonas aware of what remains unobservable to the human eye and or an objective phenomenon, it rather seems that the technology further emphasises the combination of the external, non-human, disinterested gaze with a deeply human or even pre-human subconscious fear of the changing boundaries. Benjamin (2008, 37) writes that "clearly, it is another nature which speaks to the camera as compared to the eye. 'Other' above all in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious". As Jonas rewinds the recordings of the city and the Sleeper, a different perspective emerges. He observes the same and different his own self, so the recordings and the photographs become an ideal example of [post-]subjectivity as hybrid fragments, which can be re-arranged and altered. He ponders whether he should re-examine the objects related to the Sleeper's odd behaviour (Glavinic 2008, 113), but he only finds that: "this was where what he'd seen on the tape had occurred, so it belonged to the place. But the place had sloughed it off – no vestige of the past clung to it. [...] Just a memory. A void" (Glavinic 2008, 204). The memory belongs to the immaterial world of the Sleeper and thus dematerialises the existing spaces, transforms them into an empty sign in a world without humans who used to determine the meaning.

Stobbe (2016, 159) also asks whether one should interpret the Sleeper as ‘a surrogate of the Other’, which replaces the missing people and opens new horizons/boundaries as a reaction to the ‘day work’ falling apart. When the doppelgänger appears, the boundaries between dream and reality, insanity and lucidity are lost, and the subjectivity is questioned in terms of the perception of the outside world. He leads conversations with himself, which become real in the temporal gap between what used to be and what allegedly is: “He had spoken those words an hour ago, and now they were happening, happening again. At this moment they were becoming something that was happening, that was having an actual effect on the present” (Glavinic 2008, 109). Different moments merge and grow apart and Jonas’ existence becomes determined by the camera’s memory, decentred and dispersed, but constantly fluid, especially in his dreams.

What if the world without humans may be a dream; perhaps his dreams, actually, refer to reality in some way. His dream about an animal metamorphosis begins with joy because he finally saw another living being – a bird, but the bird is miserable and angry “as if Jonas were to blame for all that was happening to it” (Glavinic 2008, 247) so it changes into:

a hedgehog’s head on the body of a millipede one and a half metres long. The millipede curled up and scratched its face, which metamorphosed into that of a man. The human millipede gasped, its tongue protruding as if it were being throttled. Its countless little legs were flailing madly, and pink foam oozed from its nostrils (Glavinic 2008, 247).

The ways in which Jonas was to blame for what had happened to the bird are more than one: the bird could have been literally affected by human behaviour, if analysed from an ecocritical perspective; more broadly, it could also stand for the future of humankind and the destruction of organic life per se. Finally, it could be read as the representation of Jonas’ strivings stripped down to the level of nothingness, devoid of future and of any hope. The subsequent forms – an eagle and a dog – also demonstrate the nature of man and his relationship with the environment; yet, that is not the end of the metamorphosis. He meets both of them eye to eye and concludes that they have known each other for a long time. The eagle, as the authority and power, and the dog, a human companion, obedient to human masters, remind the last human representative under what dire consequences the stance of his species had brought the world. As the world around him changes, he and his humanity change with it as well and are inseparably tied together in the evolutionary chain. The second instance of the metamorphosis appears again in his sleep, in which he observes the changes happening to his face and head:

He acquired a different creature’s head every second. One moment he would be standing there with a bear’s head, the next with the head of a vulture, a dog, a pig, a stag, a housefly, a bull, a rat. Each metamorphosis took only the blink of an eye to complete. Head followed head in swift succession (Glavinic 2008, 302).

Through metamorphosis, his life is a constant becoming and one can notice in this line of succession what comes before, but also what is yet to come after humans (cf. Campbell and Saren 2010, 152) since he ontologically becomes non-human and eventually posthuman in the continuous state of fluidity.

An encounter with his changing identity as well as with his double implies that he might be observing himself outside of his own living body and outside of the status of a living subject. As he is seemingly the only living character in the novel, it appears that Jonas’ status is determined in advance; but, as the novel progresses, his character grows rather

smaller and more frightened (cf. McLary 2015, 21) until he finally faces the possibility of his own death as anticipated through many references to dying. In the end, he voluntarily plunges from the tower of Vienna's cathedral, the Stephansdom, which represents a scene that has been compared to E. T. A. Hoffmann's novella *The Sandman* (cf. Landau 2016). The words from a musical box, which Jonas reminiscence as "La-le-ly, only the man in the moon's watching you" (Glavinic 2008, 152), are also an allusion to the sandman. In Hoffmann's story, he stands for a wicked creature who throws sand into the eyes of children and then carries them away to the moon to feed them to his own children. Whereas the posthuman in Hoffmann's novella is to be identified through the character of the human machine Olympia, Jonas' path to insanity does not involve an automaton hidden in plain sight; the automaton is replaced through a camera and a vivid dream mode.

Apart from the metamorphosis, Jonas dreams of his family as though they were his own age, "his dead young grandmother had patted his cheek and muttered 'UMIROM, UMIROM, UMIROM' – at least, that was what it had sounded like to him" (Glavinic 2008, 45). It turns out that 'umirome' is an "effective remedy for sleeping sickness" (Glavinic 2008, 332), but the word is actually quite reminiscent of death in many ways, that is, it bears certain resemblance to the (Serbo-)Croatian verb *umiremo* – 'we are dying'. Some of his other dreams include more explicit visions of death and of skeletons, as in the following: "A bound skeleton lay on its back on the ground. Both feet in a single oversized leather boot. It was being slowly dragged across a field by a lasso tied to the saddle of a horse whose head could not be seen. Only the rider's legs were visible" (Glavinic 2008, 124). As though it constantly foreshadows his downfall and suicide, death is a pervasive leitmotif of the novel and a result of the "existential crisis, for which there is no answer other than erasure" (McLary 2015, 22). Suicide essentially reads as the inevitable consequence of Jonas, while the Sleeper constantly diverges and merges as both the killer and the victim within the split self of the posthuman existence.

5. CONCLUSION

The novel *Night Work* by Thomas Glavinic presents a seemingly familiar vision of a postapocalyptic future. Nonetheless, it poses numerous questions. In accordance with contemporary thoughts of posthumanist scholars and the arising need to re-examine the status of the humanist subject along with the 'cracks' within it in times of changing and increasingly blurry boundaries, Glavinic shows an utterly personal as well as a universal transgression of the oppositions which create feelings of horror in the contemporary subject.

We may conclude that, above all, the protagonist's sense of reality in the moment of facing death is lost at the same time as his sense of personal and human identity. If he is unaware of the fact that it is he – the representative of the human – who died or is bound to die, then his lack of knowledge points to an alienation from reality and to the creeping crisis of identity, and, ultimately, death.

Jonas' identity breaks down at several levels and becomes hybrid: in his relationship with technology, with the surrounding organic and inorganic world, and in his dreams, especially in relation to the animal world once again it questions the human position within a wider context of organic existence. It is technology which accentuates this alienation, as the recordings make it increasingly difficult to distinguish between different realities as non-human, post-life realities and the so-called objective reality. The postanthropocentric

perspective subsequently emerges and forms a new hierarchical alternative to the human world, but not necessarily its end – rather a transformation and a search for new values.

Apart from the collapsing oppositions of matter and information, the organic and inorganic, human and non-human, Jonas' existence is primarily determined by the idea of death as one of the most unsurpassable aspects of materiality and fragility of human life. Death and the will to survive are the primeval driving forces of progress and of the human strivings to postpone the end. Jonas ends up being the example of the inevitability of an escape. His life which extends beyond the death of all other life forms seems to be a new beginning, although it is sombre. However, his death is eventually the proof of his (and by extension, our) inability to face the consequences of personal and deeply human acts in a time when it is of crucial importance to re-examine human behaviour and the position of the human in the world.

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POSTAJANJE POSTHUMANIM: DESTABILIZACIJA SUBJEKTA U ROMANU *RAD NOĆI* TOMASA GLAVINIĆA

U radu pružamo uvid u destabilizaciju subjekta i rađanje posthumanog stanja u romanu Rad noći (Die Arbeit der Nacht, 2006) austrijskog pisca Tomasa Glavinica. U prvome delu ukazujemo na prethodna tumačenja romana, ali i na definicije posthumanizma kao opšteg termina koji obuhvata više heterogenih teorijskih pozicija posvećenih pitanju: Šta će uslediti nakon preispitivanja humanističkih ideala i nakon decentriranja čoveka? Posthumano se u ovome kontekstu stoga tumači kao nestabilno i hibridno, a posthumani identitet je pri tome u stanju konstantne rekonstrukcije i tranzicije za razliku od određenosti/ograničenosti i celovitosti humanističkog subjekta. Međutim, posthumano je ujedno i rezultat prevazilaženja granica između ljudskog i neljudskog i postajanja postantropocentričnim. Analizu fokusiramo najpre na ‘začudnu’ atmosferu romana i na moć preživljavanja u susretu sa smrću, koja ubrzo doprinosi udaljavanju protagoniste od svesti i racionalnosti. Urbana sredina lišena organskog života zamenjuje Drugo u odnosu na poslednjeg predstavnika živih bića. Spavač kao noćni dvojniki i snimci grada dodatno naglašavaju prevazilaženje granica između materijalnog i nematerijalnog, živog i neživog, stvarnog i nestvarnog/veštačkog i određuju, naposletku, protagonistin posthumani identitet i egzistenciju kao ‘postajanje’ pre nego kao ‘biće’.

Ključne reči: austrijska književnost, horor, posthumanizam, subjektivnost, Tomas Glavinic