

# Breaking through the Barriers: Examining Human Enhancement in Fantasy

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## Abstract

Fantasy is the most celebrated form of genre of all times. The term is derived from the Greek word phantasia which is known as a 'process of making something visible'. Fantasies help to foster wonder, beauty, mystery etc. into young minds. The outcomes of fostering these elements are inculcating an imaginative and creative mind-set among young individuals. The trope found in a majority of them is that they transcend the individuals from a mundane reality to an alternative reality: a parallel eccentric world that negates the conventions, restrictions or anything that inhibits many sorts of liberties temporarily. It is basically a utopian concept that helps anyone to levitate from the harsh realities of mundane life. For the young adult community their fascination towards fantasy is commendable due to factors such as imagination and creative innovation invested by the creators. Be it fiction, movie or any other types of virtual user interface this entertainment genre has never fails to bring out surprises.

The scholar's paper will analyse fantasy in animation films that improve human enhancement.

**Keywords:** Fantasy, Magic, Miracle

## Introduction

Fantasy can be a powerful agent of change, renewal, and liberation. This paper analyses the depiction of protagonists as eccentric trans-human characteristics in select animation movies. As the paper focuses on movies for the younger generation, the term fantasy is examined in terms of how human enhancement is achieved in animation movies using terms such as "fictional miracle" and Don Ihde's notion of "techno fantasy."

Moreover the paper also analyses how "technofantasy" and fictional miracles get incorporated into animation movies in order to bring out an incredible visual treat to young minds. The selected protagonists are as follows:

- Elsa (Frozen, 2013)

Jennifer Lee and Chris Buck are the directors of the film. The film's protagonist Elsa, who is also the queen of Arendelle, is based on Danish author Hans Christen Anderson's character Snow Queen from his 1844 fairy tale The Snow Queen.

- Dracula (Hotel Transylvania, 2012)

GendyTartakovsky is the director of the film. The film's protagonist, Count Dracula, is based on Irish novelist Bram Stokers' novel Dracula.

- Rapunzel (Tangled, 2010)

Byron Howard and Nathan Greno directed the 2011 film. The plot of the film is based on the

German fairy tale of the same name, which was written anonymously. It first appeared in the collection *Children's and Household Tales*, which was published in 1812.

Fantasies come in a variety of forms. This paper discusses the genres of mixed fantasy and magic fantasy. Mixed fantasy is appropriate for children and young adults. It combines fantasy and realism in varying degrees and proportions. While magic fantasy abounds in its depiction of the machinations of magic and its involvement in everyday life.

Fantasy can blur the line between the real and the unreal with the help of magical realism. As a matter of fact, the incredibility of fantasy is justified, and the domain of imagination is broadened. This adds to the atmosphere beauty of the film. The fantasy genre has never failed to capture the imagination. What makes it more exciting is the narrative from a different point of view.

Coleridge's term "willing suspension of disbelief" is evident in these films. Though these films transcend logic and reason, human enhancement is credited for this. The film's brilliance lies in the justification of its innovation. Fantasy is praised for its ability to defy logic and reason, and it contains every solution to the impossible. The film's magical realism technique not only makes the impossible possible, but it also breaks down the strenuous and rigid walls that limit thinking outside the box. The paper analyses character acquired with supernatural powers. The paper compares and contrast trans-human body of the character from the movie and from the narrative literature.

The films chosen examine the necessity of trans-humanism. These films serve as a symbol to demonstrate that the predicament of trans-humanism as a catalyst for the extinction of humanism is incorrect. The films also demonstrate that human enhancement is not harmful to human civilization or the environment.

## **Objectives**

- To demonstrate the conflict that has emerged regarding trans-humanism by comparing and contrasting the characters of film and narrative literature.
- To demonstrate how the fantasy genre can support human enhancement.

## **Hypothesis**

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that trans-humanism does not endanger human civilization. The paper attempts to investigate and conclude how fantasy films attempt to persuade the benefits of trans-humanism. This also demonstrates why the fantasy genre contains elements of impossibility that never cease to amaze its audience. This also demonstrates how humanism's barriers can be overcome, as many films have proven to be the prototype for many of life's advancement and development.

## **Trans-humanism**

Trans-humanism, also known as "beyond the human," is a modern expression of ancient and transcultural aspirations to radically transform human existence on a social and bodily level.

## **Methodology**

This paper analyses fantasy through the lens of trans-humanism. The paper brings a compare and contrast analysis of the characters and their inspirational sources. The paper also brings forth how the characters and the fantastical elements give visual pleasure to the young adults and children. Stephen Lilley writes in his book *Transhumanism and Society*:

"Trans-humanity is about emancipation and transcendence through science, engineering, and technology." (vii)

Trans-humanists argue that even the possibility of enhancement is achieved genetically or cybernetically. In fact, it is a brave human condition because it is viewed as a plan to change the future. It arose from the uncertainty crisis in the tech industry and empowers the use of the most advanced scientific and technological discoveries. assist and guide ordinary people improve one's physical and cognitive aptitudes. It is therefore secular, rationalist, and self - reliant in nature, as it has been concerned with the attainment of personal fulfillment. In a trans-humanist world, seeking perfection through body enhancement is viewed as an attempt to meet a community's standards, which are largely impossible in nature.

Moreover it arises as a consequence of post-modernity. Therefore the crises of post- modernism have been responded positively with the emergence of trans-humanism. It is also an outgrowth of humanism. Trans-humanists till date believe that the goal of the trans-humanism project is to achieve happiness. Trans-humanists strongly support the modern social system. Trans-humanists envision an optimistic future in all aspects of life. As a result, they place a premium on science and technology in order to better humanity. To the extent that it seeks to alleviate misery and anguish, the trans-humanist commitment to the benefit of humanity is admirable.

English biologist and philosopher Julian Huxley in his 1957 essay titled Trans-humanism has coined the term. In his essay, he claims that the human species has the ability to transcend if they so desire. It will not be sporadic, but continuous. Not to a few individuals, but to the entire human civilization. Human beings can realise new possibilities and potential in their existence as a result of this. The other path that trans-humanist ethical thinking takes is toward greater cooperation, even altruism or benevolence. James Hughes, Nick Bostrom, and others are well-known proponents of trans-humanism.

Transhumanism, according to James Hughes, is a direct result of the radical democratic tradition. Trans-humanists, like democratic humanists, want to create a global society in which all people, regardless of their physical characteristics, can participate as equal citizens, control their own affairs, and achieve their full potential.

The World Transhumanist Association (WTA) claims that science and technology will have a significant impact on humanity in the future. They envision the possibility of expanding human potential by overcoming many of human civilization's limitations and involuntary factors. The trans-humanist movement is essentially a continuation of the 1770s Enlightenment Project in mediaeval Europe. In other words, it is a techno-utopian intellectual movement that has a dynamic impact by advancing and improving human conditions.

## **Literature Review**

The debate over trans-humanism is a fertile ground for both philosophical and theological inquiry. Transhumanism is not merely a techno-utopian optimist's vision. Established religions, too, had begun to engage trans-humanism as a scholarly debate by the first decade of the twentieth century.

Julian Huxley's essay "Transhumanism" provides an overview of what he believes future humanity could and should look like, as the human species will be at the cusp of a new kind of existence. Francis Fukuyama, on the other hand, has a pessimistic view of trans-humanism, calling it the "world's most dangerous idea."

Transhumanism and its Critics is essentially a book about the debate over trans-humanism. This book provides the key concepts for analysing the paper. This paper's argumentation framework is

supported by referring to the opinions of both parties who support and oppose the concept.

In his essay "In Defense of Posthuman Dignity," Nick Bostrom explains why there is an apprehension of trans-humanism: it is an intermediary stage to post-humanism, and then in post-humanism, it may pose a threat to ordinary human beings, triggering great harm to the entire civilization. According to Ted Peters in his essay "Transhumanism and Posthuman Future: Will Technological Progress Get Us There?"- Trans-humanism is based on doctrine of progress. The framework of the doctrine of progress is that something is better than it is now and promises to be even better in the future (231).

Max More's perspective on trans-humanism in his article "True Transhumanism: A Reply to Don Ihde" is a reply to Don Ihde's article titled "Of Which Human are we post?"- He aims to clarify misconception associated with it. This fear is seen in the films chosen. As a result, the films reflect the slow progression of human enhancement.

- Transhumanism is about operational excellence rather than achieving Utopian perfection
- Transhumanism is responsible for improving nature's "mindless design," not with securing perfect technological solutions.
- Transhumanism embraces morphological freedom rather than mechanisation of the body.
- Transhumanism is about endeavouring to shape fundamentally better futures rather than agency that specializes futures.
- Critical rationalism, rather than omniscient reason, is central to trans-humanism.

Michael La Torra tries to claim in his essay "Transhumanism: Threat or Menace? A Response to Andrew Pickering" that trans-humanism is neither a threat nor a menace. Trans-humanism is not a threat or a danger. It promises a bright future that will benefit both current and future generations.

Don Ihde's concept of technofantasy is discussed in order to demonstrate how films use it to evoke wonder and incredibility. Trans-humanism, according to Ihde, is a utopian concept. This is validated in this paper discussion because many of the superhuman elements depicted in films are impossible to induce in current reality. Thus, trans-humanism appears to be a promising process. This could support Richard Dyer's assertion of Utopia, as the concept emphasises many solutions to the problems of today's world.

The comparison between the characters in the film and those in their respective sources has sparked a debate about the benefits and drawbacks of trans-humanism in the pages that follow.

#### 1. The Snow Queen v/s Frozen



Illustration by Koivu, Rudolph titled "The Snow Queen."(1940)

Anderson portrays the Snow Queen in the fairy tale as an evil dark witch. She conjures up a magical mirror that magnifies the ugly and evil while shrinking the good and beautiful. This magical mirror had the ability to distort one's perception of the world. She casts a magical spell on the protagonist Kai, freezing his heart, causing him to change his mind. This causes a change in his behaviour. The magical spell is broken thanks to the other protagonist Gerda's warm tears that seep into his heart. The mirror grain that had previously controlled him fades from his vision.



Elsa in Frozen

The creators of the film portray the protagonist Elsa in a positive light. She is born with the ability to create and manipulate snow and ice. She has the ability to transform any destination into a winter wonderland. Her sister Anna and she spent the majority of their childhood inside the fantasy world. Fear had rendered her vulnerable and uncontrollable. This all started when Elsa accidentally struck Anna on the head with her power as a child. Anna's memory of Elsa's secret magical power was wiped away with the help of trolls. She began hating herself and couldn't embrace her identity as a trans-human from that point forward, and she began to distance herself from her sister. She volunteered to withdraw from social situations. Due to her uncontrollable rage, the former once again directly freezes the latter's heart when they were young ladies. This leads to deterioration of Anna's health and turns into an ice statue.

When she is exposed, she flees like a coward, leaving her kingdom in anarchy and jeopardy. This gives her freedom from shackled fear and completely changed her outlook. An Ice castle for herself, Olaf, the talking snowman, and a Yeti are some of her manifestations. Later, when she saves her kingdom from the eternal bleak winter, she not only earns the trust of her subjects but also reunite with her sister. Anna is saved from the spell that has turned her into an ice statue by her tear. Once she overcomes her fear, she gradually gains control of her power.

## 2. Dracula v/s Hotel Transylvania



Bela Lugosi in Dracula (1931)

Dracula in Bram Stoker's Dracula is an immortal vampire who is cut off from human civilization. He is known as King Vampire. He has obtained enhancement as a trans-human. He possesses a wide range of abilities. He has a long life ahead of him. He has withstood the passage of time. His physical body has been frozen as a result of his transformation. He has a distinct charm that draws women to him. As a mortal, he mastered the black arts and Alchemy. Even after death, he continues to remain in his trans-human state because his identity is recognised through a human body. He possesses the strength of twenty strong men. Furthermore, he possesses numerous illusionary abilities, allowing him to manipulate anything he comes across. He casts no shadows or reflections. He has the ability to defy gravity. He has the ability to vanish and reappear at the same time. He has the ability to transform into various body types. He has the ability to turn any mortal human into an immortal vampire. He can only prey on mortal humans in particular. He can only keep going in this manner. He is more active at night and, despite being immune to sunlight, he is weak during the day



Dracula in Hotel Transylvania

In the film, Dracula isolates himself and his daughter from human civilization. Unlike his traditional portrayal, he only drinks substituted or synthetic blood because he claims that modern human blood

is too fat for his taste. He runs a hotel that also serves as a safe haven for marginalised non-human creatures who are threatened by humans. He despises humans under the guise of their murder of his wife due to the myth that they are predators to human civilization. He has a trans-human body in the film. His supernatural abilities include the ability to freeze any living creature into a stone statue, transform into a bat, control human minds, and hypnotise them.

### 3. Rapunzel v/s Tangled



East German stamp's 1978 Illustration: "Rapunzel and the witch."

Rapunzel is a fairy tale character named after an edible herb called rapunzel. During her pregnancy, her biological mother consumes the herb cultivated by the sorceress. As a result, she gains the herb's properties and has long hair with high tensile strength. Even after her hair is cut off, the herb's properties remain in her body. She heals the prince's blindness after he falls into thorny shrubbery to her tears.



#### Rapunzel in Tangled

Rapunzel is endowed with transhumanistic abilities through her hair in the film. This was delivered to her via a magical flower. Her biological mother nearly died while she was still a baby inside the womb. As a result, the flower saved her mother's life, and the flower's properties were passed down to the child. This flower served as an antidote to Gothel's ageing. Rapunzel is kidnapped by Gothel, who becomes her custodian. She keeps herself hidden from the rest of the world. Gothel makes use of the energy released by Rapunzel's hair. She concocts lies in order to imprison Rapunzel, claiming that the world outside their home is a dangerous place for a pure-hearted person like her to live and survive. Eighteen years of confinement caused her to develop depression symptoms. She is coerced into suppressing her desire. This also causes her to conceal her identity.

The arrival of Eugene, a thief who hides inside the tower from the vigilance of royal guards and his criminal associates, marks a watershed moment in her life. Eugene serves as a portal of opportunity



for her freedom. As her hair glows in the dark, she was able to heal Eugene's injury and save them from the trapped tunnel using her trans-humanistic power. Finally, when Eugene cuts off her long tresses, Gothel is no longer able to survive as before because all of the energy from them has been expended. Eugene is able to overcome his death thanks to her tears. With the help of the flowers on the ceiling, she also gets a glimpse of her past life. Furthermore, the tensile strength of her hair is so strong that it can support a person of any weight. The analysis explains why trans-humanism is still a contentious issue. .

Trans-humanism in art is never called into question. Art can promote creativity in other areas of life as well. As a direct consequence, art can be considered the most promising medium for demonstrating the positive aspects of this concept. It guarantees acceptance from the wider population through its creativity.

### **Trans-humanism through techno fantasy**

Trans-humanism, as defined by Nick Bostrom, is a way of thinking about the future predicated on the idea that the human species in its current form does not represent the end of our evolution. Trans-humanism, according to Robert Pepperell, is the end of humanism. He believes that humanism will eventually collapse due to its inherent moral failure, which has been emphasised by movements such as feminism, queer, anti-slavery, animal rights, and so on.

As per Don Ihde's essay "Of Which Human Are We Post?" the concept of technofantasy is critical the films. Magic is encoded in technofantasy. It is essentially a Utopian concept. Fantasy films thrive on magical thinking. This concept breaks via the barriers of human limitations, resulting in human enhancement. The trans-human body has the potential to assist as a prototype for many human augmentations in the real world. As a result, film as an art form is a driving force for human advancement.

Elsa's power in Frozen allows her to create a snowy wonderland. She plunges her kingdom into a never-ending winter. She creates an ice castle. She discards her royal robes in favour of a blue gown, which symbolises her liberation from the clutches of paternal administration. The lyrics of the song "Let it go" are essentially her rebirth after years of self-isolation and fear. She makes Olaf the snowman and Yeti, both of which come to life. She customises a cloud for Olaf so that it can persist even in the sweltering heat of summer. The love she has for Anna breaks the curse that has frozen the latter into an ice statue. . During her coronation period, she lets out power that freezes the nearest object due to her lack of control over her power. As seen when she was attacked by the guards in her ice castle, her transhumanistic ability is a component of her defence.

Prior to her exposure, she attempted to conceal her identity as much as possible. She conceals her power by wearing gloves. She is forced to remove her gloves in order to hold the sovereign and the sceptre during her coronation ceremony. In this scene, the tension that leads to her exposure is crucial. The scene in the room is heart breaking during her isolation period because the entire room is frozen due to her anxiety. This symbolically represents her sadness as a result of her isolation.

Finally, when she defrosts her kingdom, the entire snow melts into a million snow flake sparkle, adding visual appeal as well as complementing as a part of fantasy. Because her supernatural ability is manifested through blue beams, the colour blue becomes inextricably linked to her identity.

Dracula is dressed in a black suit and veil in Hotel Transylvania. The veil aids him in his transformation into a bat. In the scene where he is changing diapers for his daughter, the diapers float under his violet-coloured spell. In a scene where he hypnotises the pilot, it is shown how the pilot's eyes turn red, implying that he is under Dracula's control.



In Tangled, the healing incantation song begins with the lyrics "Flower gleam and glow, let your power shine....." and allows the hair to perform miracles. This brightens her hair and accelerates the healing process. During the process, her hair glows golden. The magical spirit of the flower grants her immortality. Gothel's ageing is reversed by direct contact with hair, and Eugene's injury is healed. However, when Eugene cuts her hair, it turns from blonde to brunette. Gothel's young, supple skin transforms into wrinkles and creases of old age at that instant. Rapunzel, on the other hand, carries the flower's healing properties; as she sheds tears, the flower glows on Eugene's skin and emits a golden aura. This aura takes the form of a flower, which represents healing and rejuvenation. This aids Eugene's recovery from the stab wound caused by Gothel. She was able to recollect her memories of being kidnapped from her parents through the aura of the flower prints on her ceiling.

The films successfully convey the positive aspects of trans-humanism. The characters are the epitome of humanity, and their enhancement only exists to serve to enrich and spread goodness in their surrounding environment. This is evident in Dracula's efforts to conceal Johnny's human identity. His consumption of synthetic blood once more demonstrates that the trans-humanism process will not endanger human civilization. Despite his hatred for humans because they murdered his wife, he still has humanity. Meanwhile, in the narrative literature, trans-humanism has been exploited. Characters from narrative literature represent the fear of the annihilation of human civilization. The evil witch, notorious vampire, and selfish sorceress are all devoid of humanity.

The exploration of trans-humanism in fantasy films provides insight into how humans might accept trans-humanism. The characters in the films were sceptical of their extraordinary identity and enhancement. As a result, technofantasy has enabled morphological freedom in fantasy films. This has resulted in a more comprehensive understanding of humanity.

Transhumanism is an advocate for the liberation of human life and civilization. This can be seen in the case of Elsa and Rapunzel once when they break free from their captivity.

## Conclusion

The paper emphasizes that human enhancement will never endanger both human civilization and the environment until it becomes a matter of self-greed and avarice. Because of their eccentricities, the protagonists in the films are estranged from society. Their inability to blend in with ordinary people is a problem that must be expected to deal with.

After analysing both films and their inspiration sources, it is clear that the narrative literature has more serious elements and a darker atmosphere in its plot. Meanwhile, the creators of the films have softened the nature of the characters and incorporated humour. As a result, when compared to narrative literature, the characters in movies become more adorable and amiable.

It is surprising how prevalent the theme of human enhancement is in narrative literature even before the development of global inventions that have made life better. It is not an easy task to strengthen human beings. This process will be the primary measure of the future of medical, scientific, and technological infrastructure. Much medical, scientific, and technological progress in the modern world has been accomplished by being inspired by myths and fantasy-based traditional folklore.

Fantasy can be interpreted personally. That is why it differs between individuals. However, it excites every human person because it lacks the rudimentary elements of the mortal world. Through "fictional miracle" and "techno-fantasy", the films were able to justify trans-humanistic characteristics in the protagonists. The trans-humanism process has proven to be suitable not only for medical, scientific, and technological aspects, but also for filmmaking. The advancement, development, and growth of technological procedures in the film industry are truly remarkable. The

paper also concludes with a discussion of how animation films can be used to improve human performance. Last but not least, the paper concludes how the discussion of human enhancement is possible even in films which do not attribute the characteristics of movies of sci-fi genres.

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