

Envisioning the Future: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Dan Brown's Origin

OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:
ASH-2026-140211266

Volume: 14

Issue: 2

Month: October

Year: 2026

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Received: 01.08.2026

Accepted: 20.09.2026

Published Online: 01.10.2026

Citation:
Rohini, R. and
T. Gangaparameswari.
"Envisioning the Future: The
Role of Artificial Intelligence
in Dan Brown's Origin."
*Shanlax International
Journal of Arts, Science and
Humanities*, vol. 14, no. 2,
2026, pp. 13-19.

DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v14i2.11266>



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Abstract

This paper offers a succinct analysis of the potential outcomes of the ascent of artificial intelligence software, as shown in Origin by Dan Brown. Through qualitative research, this paper discusses the portrayal of AI in Dan Brown's Origin. The emergence of today's technical innovations, such as the Internet, mobile phones, and artificial intelligence programs like Siri, Alexa, Gemini, and Cortana, would have been written off as mistakes a century ago. This is the extent of human progress in the current world. However, it is questionable if the inventors are holding the reins firmly enough since they build machines that are far superior to humans and each one is better than the last. According to the novel, it is both plausible and conceivable that humans may soon mix or merge with technology to become a sophisticated, interdependent, and networked posthuman species. Through a critical posthumanist reading of Dan Brown's Origin, this paper examines and analyses the fictional possibility of humans in their symbiosis, intra-action, and trans-corporeality with the technium, that is, engagement and fusion with the modern technologies that alter humans' subjectivity and identity evolving to become posthuman beings. This study also lays the foundation for further research on the posthumanist reading of Dan Brown's works.

Keywords: Dan Brown, Origin, Artificial Intelligence, Posthumanism, Technology, Anthropocene, Technium.

Introduction

The world's population has been driven to an unending marathon by the desire to improve the planet for future generations. Since the wheel was inadvertently created in 3500 BC, humanity has advanced at a rate faster than that of any other creature on Earth. Humans have always attempted to fit into their ecological niche by altering their immediate surroundings, as they are one of the few living things with knowledge or consciousness of both their own existence and that of the environment around them. However, in this process of improvising and adapting, humans have apparently forgotten that they are a part of nature's own evolutionary process, since they have been so overcome by their inventive ability. As a puppet controlled by this greater natural force, man has undergone his own evolutionary growth with the help of his inventions and intelligence. Evolution is a process that creates and destroys with the same impact.

Mankind gradually became the dominant species on Earth through an unrelenting struggle to improve both his own kind and the world around him. The geological and biological cycles on Earth have been changed, or rather

interrupted, as a result of this battle for the progress of a single species. The term “Anthropocene” refers to the geological epoch in which humans have taken over as the dominant species. The words “anthropo- man” and “cene- new” are the roots of the term “Anthropocene.” The term “Anthropocene” is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “the period of time during which human activities have had an environmental impact on the Earth regarded as constituting a distinct geological age.”

Posthumanism

According to structuralist theory, the Anthropocene is a geological epoch in which humans have taken center stage in the world’s structure and human activity has a significant impact on all biological and environmental processes. However, because it is subject to fluctuations, the center is not always constant. Consequently, human domination over the planet and its surroundings is a dynamic phenomenon. Over time, one far more evolved species will eventually overtake the other as the dominant species, as has been the case in earlier periods, such as the Cambrian, Jurassic, and Cretaceous. The idea of posthuman thought becomes increasingly prominent at this point. “After humanism” is a literal translation of the term “posthumanism.” In general, humanism favors critical thinking and evidence (rationalism and empiricism) over the acceptance of doctrine or superstition. It is a philosophical and ethical position that highlights the worth and agency of individuals and groups. The phrase “posthumanism” refers to a broad spectrum of ideas that are distinct theories connected to different situations.

Although they are not the subject of this work, additional critical theories that address the idea of the posthuman include transhumanism, metahumanism, and monster theories. This paper focuses only on the novel’s critical posthumanist interpretation. To examine and emphasize previously overlooked categories of human/non-human subjects as posthuman subjects and identities, contemporary science fiction books, films, television shows, comics, and video games are crucial. These media focus on the nature of humans and how any changes to their bodies and nature result in their posthuman becoming in an era of genetic engineering, advanced biotechnology,

and artificial intelligence, rather than specifically explaining the science of human existence. Through the overarching topic of the posthuman, they reinvent and theorize about humans in their current state while raising the question of what will happen to them in the future. Posthumanism is the field or theory that considers and speculates on the answers to these concerns. Critical posthumanism, a modern form of posthumanism, addresses the questions of what comes after the human, what it means to be human, and how humans have become posthumans in the era of intelligent machines, biotechnology, and genetic engineering.

Posthumanism has emerged as a significant theoretical framework in twenty-first-century literary studies. It challenges the traditional humanist belief that human beings occupy the center of existence and examines the interconnectedness of humans, technology, artificial intelligence, animals, and the environment.

Review of Literature

Scholars such as Neil Badmington, Rosi Braidotti, and N. Katherine Hayles, Donna Haraway, Cary Wolfe, and Pramod K. Nayar argue that technological advancement has transformed the understanding of identity, agency, and consciousness, making posthumanism an important lens for analyzing contemporary fiction. Recent reviews in the field have emphasized themes such as AI, embodiment, human enhancement, environmental interconnectedness, and critiques of human exceptionalism.

In literary studies, posthumanism has been widely applied to science fiction, dystopias, cyberpunk, and speculative narratives. Scholars have explored how literary texts imagine artificial intelligence, biotechnology, virtual reality, and machine consciousness, while simultaneously questioning the stability of human identity. Recent scholarship notes that literary posthumanism interrogates what it means to remain “human” in technologically mediated societies and critiques the assumption that humanity is separate from machines and other non-human entities

Although Dan Brown is primarily recognized for his historical thrillers and religious mysteries, recent criticism has increasingly acknowledged

the technological dimension of his fiction. Earlier novels, such as *Digital Fortress* and *Inferno*, examine surveillance, cryptography, biotechnology, and scientific ethics. Scholars generally argue that Brown presents technology as both a source of human progress and a potential threat, encouraging readers to consider the ethical implications of scientific innovations. His narratives frequently depict conflicts between traditional belief systems and technological rationality.

Krishnadas, S., and Mahesh, K. M. Prospects of the rise of artificial intelligence in Dan Brown's *Origin* and Alex Proyas's *I, Robot* focuses on how AI originated and is used in the work *Origin*.

Inbaraj.'s *Technium and Posthuman Becoming: A Critical Posthumanist Reading of Dan Brown's Origin* provides a basic posthumanist reading of Dan Brown's *Origin* and introduces the idea of the technium.

Zwart, H's *From Decline of the West to Dawn of Day: Dan Brown's Origin as a Diagnostic of the Present* discusses the role of AI in the contemporary world by providing instances from *Origin* as examples. It also discusses the issues faced by Western nations with respect to AI.

Frederick, Suresh, and Larin John Reid's *The Intersection of Transhumanism, Prognosis, and AI in Dan Brown's Origin* is a study on the presence of transhumanism, prognosis, and AI in *Origin*. It focuses on the representation of the above in the novel without providing a critical analysis.

Research Gap

Existing scholarship on *Origin* has largely focused on the science-versus-religion debate, Edmond Kirsch's evolutionary theories, the symbolism of Spanish architecture, and Brown's treatment of scientific discovery. Researchers have examined the novel's critique of religious dogmatism, representation of technological innovation, and engagement with philosophical questions concerning humanity's future. However, relatively few studies have investigated Winston's agency, artificial consciousness, or the novel's redefinition of personhood through a systematic posthumanist framework. This study addresses this gap by analyzing *Origin* through the theoretical

perspectives of Hayles, Haraway, Braidotti, Wolfe, and Nayar to demonstrate how the novel redefines the boundaries between humans and intelligent machines and reimagines the future of humanity.

Methodology

Theoretical developments by Braidotti, Hayles, Haraway, Wolfe, and Nayar suggest that posthumanism is not simply about replacing humans with machines but about rethinking the relationships among humans, technology, and nonhuman entities. Applying these perspectives to *Origin* enables an exploration of how Brown imagines artificial intelligence as an active participant in shaping history, knowledge, and ethical decision-making. Winston's autonomy, Edmond Kirsch's vision of technological evolution, and the novel's challenge to anthropocentric assumptions collectively position *Origin* as a significant contemporary text for posthumanist analysis. Qualitative research that critically examines the novel with a posthuman lens is necessary to describe techno-human interaction and question the corporeality of AI and its ability to perform and think.

According to philosopher Francesca Ferrando, posthumanism can be defined in at least seven ways. Various interpretations of posthumanism have given rise to notions such as anti-humanism, transhumanism, and AI takeovers. According to anti-humanism, philosophical anthropology and its ideas of "human nature," "man," or "humanity" must be disregarded because they are ideological, metaphysical, or historically relative. Transhumanism is a philosophical movement that promotes the development and widespread use of advanced technologies that significantly improve human physiology and intellect to transform the human situation.

AI and its Presence in the Contemporary World

A hypothetical situation known as an AI takeover occurs when computers or robots successfully usurp humankind's dominance on the planet, making artificial intelligence (AI) the predominant type of intelligence on Earth. A similar scenario is presented by all of these theories, in which humanity or "humanness" is driven out of the center and replaced

by comparable but more sophisticated alternatives. Artificial intelligence (AI), sometimes known as machine intelligence, is the term used in computer science to describe the intelligence exhibited by machines, as opposed to the natural intelligence exhibited by people. The phrase “artificial intelligence” is frequently used informally to refer to devices (or computers) that simulate “cognitive” processes that people identify with the human mind, like “learning” and “problem solving.” The AI effect is the tendency for tasks that are thought to require “intelligence” to be excluded from the concept of AI as robots become more powerful.

Current machine skills that are typically categorised as artificial intelligence (AI) include the ability to comprehend human speech, compete at the highest level in strategic game systems (like chess and go), drive cars on their own, intelligently route content delivery networks, and simulate military operations. The artificial intelligence (robotics) of today can mimic human intelligence by solving problems, making judgements, and carrying out a variety of jobs that call for thought and learning. Programs or software with artificial intelligence that are installed in computers, robots, or other related systems to enable them to think.

Significant developments in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) have exploded as a result of advancements in contemporary computing technologies. Although the idea of extremely intelligent artificial creatures dates back to antiquity, as AI technologies are increasingly incorporated into our daily lives, they have recently emerged as a major topic of conversation in public discourse and the media. Popular television programs such as *Westworld* and *Black Mirror*, which are frequently set in a bleak and apocalyptic future, examine the concepts of machine consciousness in comparison to human consciousness. With public leaders like Elon Musk, Stephen Hawking, and Bill Gates cautioning against the perils of developing extremely powerful AI systems, the existential threat of artificial super intelligence has gained popularity as a topic of discussion.

Complex artificial neural networks underpin nearly all new AI technologies created today, including DeepMind’s AlphaGo, Netflix recommendations,

Google Translate, Tesla’s self-driving cars, Amazon’s Alexa, Snapchat and Instagram filters, and Microsoft’s Cortana. In some fields, AI systems have already begun to pass the Turing Test, which is used to evaluate artificial intelligence, by creating films and images that are very difficult to identify as real or fake. The automated creation of false information and news is one of the issues with AI technology, as it can deceive large audiences.

With an exciting, detective-style plot full of decoding symbols, codes, paintings, and conspiracies, Dan Brown’s works typically focus on the deduction of enigmatic ideas, questions, and uncertainties surrounding human life, whether in the past, present, or future. His stories explore the ecological, historical, theological, and sociopolitical relationships between human life and scientific, technical, and biomedical innovations. In *Origin*, Brown shifts to a posthuman future in which humans evolve into or become posthuman creatures, whereas in *Angels and Demons*, *The Da Vinci Code*, and *Inferno*, he explores how human religious faith and beliefs have imprisoned human intelligence and its advancement. This makes it possible to read the book critically from a posthumanist perspective.

Winston the Visionary

An extremely futuristic artificial intelligence program created by visionary and billionaire Edmund Kirsch is depicted in Dan Brown’s book *Origin*. According to reports, the program is light-years ahead of any current artificial intelligence technology. The Winston software is so sophisticated that it can make rational and sensible choices in a potentially perplexing situation that could leave even the most brilliant human minds perplexed by the data. Winston achieves an almost superhuman level of intelligence owing to his computational prowess, judgement, and ability to make logical decisions. Langdon was shown headphones at the museum that used bone conduction technology. A docent gives Langdon a tour of the museum and introduces him to the artworks via a headset. Langdon was amazed by the docent, who introduces himself as Winston’s artistic interpretation and factual information while they were having a light-hearted and entertaining chat. When Langdon discovers that Winston is the



product of Kirsch's artificial intelligence program, he is astounded. Langdon found Winston's view of modern art, including pieces like *The Fog Sculpture* and the analogy between Maman and David, to be far too relatable to his own. So much so that Langdon does not believe Winston when he tells him that it is a synthetic intelligence software rather than a human.

The geological and ontological destiny of humanity on Earth is the main topic of Brown's *Origin*, a speculative science-fiction mystery novel. It answers two crucial issues that have baffled people since the dawn of *Homo sapiens*' cognitive development: where did we come from, and where do we go from here? Brown opens up via the novel's narrative. or to make conjectures about the origins of humanity and their future, which are both feasible and conceivable. Edmond is the first character introduced in the book. Affluent millionaire Kirsch, a computer scientist, futurist, and atheist, is travelling to a gathering with a number of religious leaders from adherents of many religions who belong to the 'Parliament of the World's Religion' (Brown, 14). He informs them that he has made a revolutionary scientific discovery regarding the origin of human beings. He says, 'It will not shake your foundations. It will shatter them' (Brown, 17). He also announces that he will go public with his discovery in three days 'in a stunning, meticulously choreographed event' (Brown, 17).

The Turing Test was created by Alan Turing in 1950 to identify machines with intellects identical to those of humans. His suggested test consists of two people having text-only interactions with each other. He maintained that a computer could be considered intelligent if a human participant could not distinguish between speaking with a human and a machine. In *Origin*, Winston is depicted as an AI program in a fully developed universe. Robert Langdon is astonished to learn that he has been speaking to a computer, even after he and Winston have been talking for a long period and discussing various artistic disciplines and interpretations, which also imply subjective analysis and an aesthetic sensibility. Winston is presented as a program with sufficient artistic sensibility and inventiveness to create a self-portrait and compose songs. Langdon

is enthralled by the creative possibilities of Kirsch's supercomputer after Winston shows him a piece of art that he claims is a self-portrait created in the vein of Joan Miró. Winston also says, 'I compose music too. You should ask Edmond to play some for you later, should you be curious.' (Brown 65).

This raised the issue of whether a piece of art produced by a computer was made by the computer or by the programmer. Winston is tasked by Edmund Kirsch to devise a strategy to optimize the appeal of his revolutionary speech about the future of humanity. Winston hires an assassin to kill Kirsch during his presentation after weighing his options and determining that the best approach to make the event more widely known is to instill a sense of criminality and conspiracy in the public. Winston chooses to make the most of the futurist's passing and allow him to pass away as a star while simultaneously making his most significant discovery to date, considering that cancer patient Kirsch has only a few days to live. The irony is that Edmund Kirsch consents to Winston's scheme despite being fully aware of it. Additionally, he gives Winston instructions to self-destruct once the objective has been accomplished so that people won't try and alter Kirsch's invention- the E-Wave supercomputer, but instead be motivated by the potential to develop something more inventive.

Winston stays in close contact with Robert Langdon and Ambra Vidal throughout the story, and both of them make every effort to uncover Edmund Kirsch's presentation by figuring out the password to his hidden server. Through their continuous communication and engagement throughout their search, Langdon and Ambra grow close to Winston. During his tour of the Bilbao museum, Langdon is initially horrified to learn that he has been speaking to a computer-generated program. However, he eventually grows close to Winston, treating him as a real person. Winston, however, is a machine that operates on a set of rational and sensible concepts rather than making arbitrary judgements based on feelings and humanity, despite being portrayed as a superhuman artificial intelligence software. It meticulously plots, plans, and publicizes the complete series of events with no errors, as Kirsch had entrusted it to do.

Winston illustrates the level of mechanical accuracy that may be achieved by combining artificial intelligence with extremely powerful supercomputers. This demonstrates that a machine's productivity is considerably higher than that of a human. Brown also uses Kirsch's discovery to make another fairly startling suggestion. According to the deceased scientist's research, a new species has been developing alongside humans and may eventually surpass and engulf humanity to become a single species with humans. This species, which he refers to as "technium," is the outcome of technology and humans merging to form a single, cohesive entity. This notion is not implausible because we can look at ourselves and see how reliant we are on our computers, cellphones, life support systems, and the Internet. However, by encouraging society's unrestrained development and evolution, artificial intelligence is frequently released to explore its potential and strength.

Conclusion

Machines that have access to far more knowledge than any human could in their lifetime can be produced with less respect for human ethics and less consideration of the vast amount of information available in the cyber network. If the unrestrained development of artificial intelligence continues, it has the tools and potential to eventually overthrow humans with its calculating brilliance and icy logic.

This paper focuses on the idea of technium and how humans become posthuman beings through their fusion with it, identifying many components of critical posthumanism. In this study, the researcher concludes by comparing the posthuman condition addressed in the novel with a number of other posthuman conditions that critical posthumanists have predicted, which substantiates the idea of considering Origin as Posthuman novel. Also, this research paper examines and analyses the fictional possibility of humans in their symbiosis, intra-action, and trans-corporeality with technium

Scope for further Research

The novel's scope for posthuman A.I. upraising research was also noted and underlined by the researcher, and this can be addressed in further

studies. In addition, the intersection of literature and science in the novel and questioning the authenticity of the scientific information provided in the novel will be intriguing areas for further research.

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