



Unknowable Futures and Posthuman Consciousness in Anton Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*

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Abstract

This research study tends to explore how Chekhov's plays, *The Three Sisters* (2012) and *The Cherry Orchard* (2006) deal with the idea of posthumanism, challenging our traditional understanding of what it means to be human. The characters in these two plays are in constant fear of what the future holds for them. The characters in these plays are unable to grasp evolution, progress, and the crucial role of nature and environment in shaping their life experiences. According to humanism what distinguishes human beings from machines, animals and other non-human entities is that human beings occupy a natural space, they are exceptional, central and essential to the world. Posthumanism disagrees with this notion and challenges man's authority as the privileged being in the world. Althusser in *For Marx* (2005) claims that the central status of man is reduced to 'ashes' (p. 229). Posthumanists argue that the human being of the twenty first century is no different from animals, machines and other non-human entities. This research study highlights that the rise in capitalism, technology, advancement and science has turned human beings into mere machines struggling for a future that overshadows and ruins their present. The constant fear of an unpredictable future gives birth to existentialist crisis and makes the lives of the characters in the play intolerable, lonesome and miserable. Furthermore, this study argues that human beings are not the only significant beings in the world and the future is unpredictable, hence, cannot be controlled.

Keywords: Existentialism, Posthumanism, Humanism, Unknown, Non-Human Entities.

Introduction

In Anton Chekhov's, *The Three Sisters* (2012) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), the characters are threatened by an unpredictable future that continually interrupts their present life. In this research work, the

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capitalist aspects in the plays are also highlighted under the guidance of Karl Marx's "A Working Day" (2010). In a capitalist society where science and technology have advanced to the extent that human beings have lost their essence in the universe and have become soulless machines, the major characters in this modern play suffer from existentialist and social crisis. Posthumanists reject and challenge the myth of humanism because of the rise in capitalism and the advancement in science and technology. They believe that human beings have lost their centrality in this world and are reduced to the level of machines, animals, and other non-human entities.

Posthumanism suggests a shift towards understanding non-human agents, the environment, and technological forces as significant in shaping human existence. This paper aims to explore how Chekhov's plays engage with such themes, specifically focusing on the breakdown of human exceptionalism, the fluidity of identity, and the uncertain futures faced by his characters. By drawing on the work of key posthumanist thinkers like Haraway (1985), Braidotti (2006), Hayles (2010), and Wolfe (2010), this study analyzes how Chekhov's characters reflect the decentering of human subjectivity and engage with non-human elements, such as nature and societal structures.

There is a continuous urge in the characters of this play to secure their unpredictable future, to save and conserve for the time to come. Human beings are in a never-ending struggle to make living sustainable; they are so obsessed with their future needs that they even forget to worry about their present. Present has become something that does not exist, what needs security and attention is the impending and fearsome future. Characters like Irina are unhappy and discontented with their present life, there is a continuous urge to leave the present and jump into an unknown future where they hope that their hearts will be filled with happiness and contentment. Irina pleads with his sisters for a better place to go, which shows that she does not feel at home at her own homeplace. Later in the play, she realizes that her dream of moving to Moscow, to a future that would prove beneficial for her, was nothing more than a mere foolishness.

Capitalism steals away the rights of labors to live, Marx (2010) in "The Working-Day" says, "It usurps the time for growth, development, and healthy maintenance of the body. It steals the time required for the consumption of fresh air and sunlight" (p. 672), it leads to emotionlessness and desensitization. Human beings in the previous ages used to comprehend the timeline in three possibilities i.e., past, present

and future, but now, new technology in the present century has limited and conditioned their notion of time. There is no past, present is almost non-existent and the sword of unknown futures is hanging over posthumanity. In *Waiting for Godot* (2011) and *Endgame* (2016) by Beckett, the characters are imprisoned in a world where time and space do not change, there is useless repetition of language and their condition remains the same i.e., miserable and pathetic. The characters are waiting for something or someone to come and rescue them out of their misery and helplessness, there is a hope that they will be saved in the time to come i.e., future.

The family of Irina in *The Three Sisters* (2012) comes of people “who despised work” (p. 159), she hopes that their life can become happy and comfortable if they work, work and work all day. She believes that work is the only thing that could end boredom and unhappiness that looms over them. She urges everybody to learn to work as it would change their life and bring happiness. Irina lives her life in a fool’s paradise where she loves to imagine her perfect future working in Moscow destroying the comfort and beauty of her own present. She realizes later on in the play that she does not want to work because she cannot work and she feels tired of looking after the domestic chores. When she finally realizes that she is never going to get rid of her present and move into the future that she has always dreamed of, she becomes hopeless and sorrowful.

Through a careful analysis of *The Three Sisters* (2012) and *The Cherry Orchard* (2006), this paper demonstrates that Chekhov's works not only reflect but also anticipate posthumanist concerns about the collapse of human-centered narratives. These plays underscore the instability of human identity, the role of non-human agency, and the ever-present uncertainty of the future.

Literature Review

The intersection between posthumanism and literature has garnered significant scholarly attention, particularly in the works of playwrights and novelists who address themes of human limitation, environmental crisis, and the decentering of the human subject. Chekhov’s plays, *The Three Sisters* (2012) and *The Cherry Orchard* (2006), provide a rich ground for exploring these concerns. Both plays reflect the disillusionment of characters confronted with forces beyond their control, highlighting the breakdown of traditional humanist narratives and the emergence of a more fluid, uncertain understanding of the human

condition. This section reviews key theoretical frameworks within posthumanism and how they relate to Chekhov's works.

The terms 'Humanism' and 'Posthumanism' cannot be studied separately, these two terms must be studied together in order to develop a clear and better understanding. Badmington (2011) in his critical article has provided a vivid contrast between humanism and posthumanism, he defines humanism in the light of Descartes' *Discourse on the Method* (1637),

the human being occupies a natural and eternal place at the very center of things, where it is distinguished absolutely from machines, animals, and other inhuman entities; where it shares with all other human beings a unique essence; where it is the origin of meaning and the sovereign subject of history; and where it behaves and believe according to something called "human nature". In the humanist account, human beings are exceptional, autonomous, and set above the world that lies at their feet. (p. 374).

Capitalism takes away the time for growth and development from human beings, it has taken away the very essence from human beings that made them 'human'—different from machines, animals and other non-human entities. In contrast to humanism, Badmington (2011) brings in posthumanism, a term that

emerges from a recognition that 'Man' is not the privileged and protected center, because humans are no longer—and perhaps never were—utterly distinct from animals, machines, and other forms of the 'inhuman'; are the products of historical and cultural differences that invalidate any appeal to a universal, transhistorical human essence; are constituted as subjects by a linguistic system that pre-exists and transcends them; and are unable to direct the course of world history towards a uniquely human goal. (p. 374).

Human beings of the present times have lost their centrality and essence in this universe. Human beings have surpassed the level of humanity and entered into the world of posthumanity. Human beings have now become what Haraway (1985) believes them to be, "cyborgs". Badmington (2011) further goes on to say that posthumanism arises from the "impossibility of humanism", human beings have now been emptied of the essence of humanity.

Alaimo (2012) begins his article “Sustainable This, Sustainable That: New Materialisms, Posthumanism, and Unknown Futures” by quoting Graham (2008), “mornings in the unknown future. Who shall repair this now? And how the future takes shape too quickly. The permanent is ebbing. Is leaving” (p. 03). The idea of sustainability and permanence is in itself flawed that nothing stays the way it has been is the very basis of historical evolution. Further, Alaimo (2012) has argued in his article that the human beings of twenty first century are busy “conserving this, conserving that”. Capitalism and modernism have turned human beings into blind machines who are busy conserving resources for an unknown future rather than devoting their energies and attention to the present. Those who are in power conserve for their own privileges depriving the powerless of the resources that they need for their present use. Furthermore, Alaimo (2012) goes on to argue that climate change movements have already excluded animals and other non-human entities from the so called “universal space”.

Fernandez (2016) in her article “Posthumanism, New Materialism and Feminists Media Art” gives Hayle’s (2010) definition of posthumanism, “the deconstruction of the humanist subject and the attributes normally associated with it such as free will, self-determination and mastery” (p. 275). An unknown future awaits human beings where they will be turned into machines, and human mind will work as ‘pure data’. Posthumanism shares some of the aspects of new materialism as it deals with the interrelations between biological, technological, human action, social and environmental processes. Fernandez (2016) further goes on to say that “New materialists argue for complex entanglements of chemical, biological, geological, social and cultural processes that shape both organisms and environments” (p. 276). The goal of new materialists is to find out the ways in which matter ‘consolidate or disrupt the power relations.’

Posthumanism has detached us from our natural capabilities and our experience of self, our consciousness is socially constructed. In the introduction to his book *Globalization and the Posthuman*, Haney II (2009) writes that “Posthumanism refers to the human-technology symbiosis. Many people, especially scientists, see the biology-machine interface as a positive development, but many also fear the possibility of its irreversibility damaging and possibly catastrophic effects on the human condition, particularly from invasive technologies” (p. 02). On the one hand, no matter how much progress in science and technology has been made, human beings have to return to their human self to sleep, eat, and talk. On the other hand, machines do not need sleep, food, or a companion to share their happiness and sorrows.

Braidotti (2006) concludes his article “Posthuman, All too Human: Towards a New Process Ontology” by saying that a “modest witness” accepts the techno-present without becoming a victim to its brutal nature; yearning for creativity and depth in a fast paced “infotainment-consuming culture” (p. 16). Twenty first century human beings should benefit themselves from the advancement in technology but at the same time, they should not let modernity, capitalism, new materialism, and posthumanism turn them into non-human entities. Little deeds of humanity, interaction with nature, self-recognition, and soul searching are the basic necessities that can keep our human spirit intact and alive. Braidotti (2006) furthermore says that the refusal of “hegemonic positions” in this techno-present world is possible by “modesty” and a “strong imagination”.

The oncomouse is the “techno-body” (1997) that has been used in laboratories for experiments regarding breast cancer; Haraway is another posthumanist who believes that she has a sort of kinship with this “transgenic animal”. She develops her association with the animal by calling her “my sibling (...) male or female, s/he is my sister” (p. 79). Haraway claims that this transgenic animal is a Christ like figure who sacrifices him/herself for the cure of breast cancer and saves the precious lives of hundreds of women. Many other animals are used as laboratory devices on whom scientific experiments are done in order to find cures and save human beings from various diseases. According to posthumanists, these transgenic devices are not different from human beings; they sacrifice themselves for the welfare of human beings.

Haraway's (1985) understanding is foundational to posthumanist thought, proposing the concept of the cyborg—a hybrid figure that transcends the boundaries between the human and the non-human. Haraway's work critiques the rigid distinctions between nature and culture, human and animal, and advocates for an understanding of identity that is flexible and interconnected. In Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*, the characters experience a fragmentation of identity, caught between their desires for change and their inability to act, mirroring Haraway's notion of the cyborg as a hybrid being that resists fixed identities. The sisters' lives are shaped by external social, economic, and environmental factors, much like Haraway's cyborg, who exists in a world of hybrid identities.

Haraway in her book *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* (1991) talks about the position and stability of women under the shadow of capitalist patriarchy. Haraway argues that advancement in technology and science

has benefitted patriarchs, but women have faced marginalization and disappeared from the field of “visible social agents”, patriarchy has eaten away women as cannibalists. Haraway’s cyborg creates awareness in the mind of the readers about the new technological societies being shaped who highlight the “issues of gender and sexual differences” and discuss the issues of social injustice and survival. Twenty first century is an age of informatics and it has given birth to the questions of power relations, feminist power-struggle, and political and ethical resistance.

Hayles (1999) explores the impact of information technology and cybernetics on the concept of the human subject. Hayles’ argument that human subjectivity is increasingly entangled with technological systems aligns with Chekhov’s depiction of the characters in *The Cherry Orchard* (2006) who are unable to control the forces that shape their futures. The play’s characters are caught between nostalgia for the past and the harsh realities of economic and social transformation, mirroring the posthuman idea that identity and agency are increasingly shaped by external systems beyond individual control.

Research Problem

The main focus of this study is how posthumanist aspects are portrayed in Chekhov's plays *The Three Sisters* (2012) and *The Cherry Orchard* (2006). Particularly, it brings to light how Chekhov's portrayal of the human experiences counters the traditional cognitive skills of human beings and how non-agency is now progressively recognized. The posthumanist critique of human exceptionalism is reflected in Chekhov's characters, who live in uncertain futures shaped by forces beyond their control. This study aims to investigate how Chekhov's characters represent posthumanist concerns in the face of social and personal crises, as well as how his works foreshadow these concerns regarding human agency, identity, and the environment.

This study contends that Anton Chekhov's plays, *The Three Sisters* (2012) and *The Cherry Orchard* (2006) mirror key posthumanist concerns. By means of the hardships of Chekhov's characters who encounter social, personal, or environmental upheavals, the plays expose how humans are progressively shaped by forces outside their control, be they social, economic, or ecological, anticipating the posthumanist perspective that human agency is no more the dominant force in the world.

Research Questions

1. How do Chekhov's plays, *The Three Sisters* (2012) and *The Cherry Orchard* (2006) reflect posthumanist concerns about the decentering of the human subject?
2. In what ways do the characters in these plays embody the collapse of human exceptionalism, as seen through their interactions with non-human agents such as nature, society, and technology?
3. How do the themes of temporal uncertainty and the unknowability of the future in these plays mirror posthumanist ideas of an unstable, unpredictable future shaped by forces beyond individual control?

Research Methodology

The research method that this study follows is qualitative in nature and the data has been collected from primary and secondary resources available either in print or electronically. Anton Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* (2012) is analyzed critically in the light of critical theories provided by Marx (2010), Alaimo (2012), Haney II (2009), Hayles (2010), Braidotti (2006), Badmington (2004), Haraway (1985) and Schopenhauer (2022). It has been argued in the study that human beings have lost their centrality and essence in this universe because of the rise in capitalism and advancement in science and technology.

Constant fear of an unpredictable future gives birth to existentialist crisis and makes the lives of the characters in the play intolerable, lonesome, miserable and pathetic. In this research work, the capitalist aspects in the play have been highlighted under the guidance of Marx's "A Working Day" (2010). This research work also argues how capitalism and posthumanism have turned human beings into what Haraway (1985) calls "cyborgs".

Analysis and Discussion

The core of this study lies in a close textual analysis of *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*, approached through a posthumanist lens. The analysis explores how Anton Chekhov crafts narratives where traditional human agency is destabilized, and broader systemic and non-human forces begin to shape human experience. The aim is to identify how the themes of capitalism, alienation, and uncertainty reflect early articulations of what posthumanist thinkers later theorized.

In *The Three Sisters*, Chekhov's (2012) portrayal of the Prozorov sisters provides a nuanced view of human dissatisfaction and longing, but also a sense of alienation from the world around them. The sisters feel caught, desiring for a return to Moscow, however, they are helpless in the face of their present circumstances. They fail to understand that they cannot control their futures, and here, Chekhov (2012) portrays silence and inaction to show the collapse of conventional human value. This brings to light posthumanist ideas, in particular, the idea of human beings as fragmented, trying to control their destiny, but, being surrounded by forces beyond their cognitive understanding.

The idea of Haraway's (1991) 'cyborg' as a component of hybrid identity: neither completely mechanic nor completely humane, sets a crucial framework for a better understanding of the Prozorov sisters being 'stuck' somewhere between their future and past. The sense of powerlessness shown through their characters occurs due to the uncontrollable social changes happening around them where whatever old held value for them is being replaced with something new: 'uncertain times'. Almost similar to a cyborg, these sisters are present in a space where human value is no longer the ultimate force; they are now rather controlled by social and environmental forces that are beyond their understanding.

'Nomadic subject' is an idea introduced by Braidotti's (2006) that refers to a self that is in a constant flux, the Prozorovs can also be seen in the light of this idea. On the one hand, they desire of their return to Moscow, on the other hand, their lives are stuck in a never-ending cycle of uncertainty, this shows the disconnection between their wishes and the constraints they are faced by. Their characters show a longing for something that is inaccessible, an idea that shows Braidotti's (2006) concept of 'posthuman subjectivity' that identity is ever changing, influenced by external forces and never completely achievable.

In *The Cherry Orchard*, Chekhov (2006) highlights the importance of non-human entity through the strong symbolic existence of the 'orchard'. The cherry orchard itself holds a primary space in the text, like a living being that represents not just nature, but also the external bodies that cause disorientation in the conventional system of order. Lopakhin the play decides to cut the orchard down, his action symbolizes the victory of the idea of progress and economic evolution over the more humane, emotional associations of the elite class. This also highlights a crucial element of posthumanism that human beings are no longer responsible

for change; social factors, nature, and other non-human forces now have power over them and influence their lives.

The play also depicts the continuous struggle between the conventional, elitist order and the rising system that follows capitalist ideas. The cherry orchard becomes metaphorical in this scenario by being both a source of aesthetic pleasure and nostalgia, whereas, also representing the past that must be compromised for financial stability and progress. This showcases Hayles' idea of 'posthuman subjectivity' that emphasizes that human beings are progressively interconnected with several systems: social, ecological, and technological, that lie far beyond their control. This powerlessness is evident in the characters in *The Cherry Orchard* as they stand helpless against the destruction of their ever-loved orchard; showcasing the broader idea of humanity's fading ability to control or write its own destiny.

Wolfe's study (2010) on animals and systems theory provides another significant lens through which *The Cherry Orchard* may be interpreted. Wolfe claims that human beings need to rethink their connection with non-human animals and ecological systems, and also must understand that they are a part of the broader, interconnected system. In the play, the cherry orchard represents not just a piece of land but a complex web of ecological, economic, and emotional connections that are torn apart in the name of progress. Ranevsky and Gayev and other characters are unable to see the orchard beyond its emotional value, highlighting their failure to recognize the interconnectedness of their world.

Furthermore, another significant approach to posthumanist thought is the acknowledgment of non-human entities: how animals, nature, and technological systems play crucial roles in influencing human lives. In *The Cherry Orchard*, the orchard itself becomes a non-human entity, representing the power of nature and financial progression that goes far beyond human desires. Wolfe has argued in *What is Posthumanism?* (2010) that posthumanism as a theory counters the hierarchical difference between human beings and all other forms of life, highlighting the interconnection of all beings. argue that posthumanism challenges the hierarchical distinction between humans and other forms of life, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all beings.

The devastation of the orchard in *The Cherry Orchard* is metaphorical in the sense that it shows the diminishing state of control that human beings thought they had over nature and environment. Ranevsky and Gayev,

associate with the orchard as a symbol of their past; in doing this, they become are blinded to the fact that nature and the societal forces are far beyond the control of human beings. Wolfe's arguments illustrate an understanding of how Chekhov's works under study engage with the concept of humans not separated from the world they are surrounded by.

The setting in *The Three Sisters* portrays the restrictions laid upon the characters by the environmental forces. The town where they live depicts a physical as well as a symbolic constraint on their wish to go far away to Moscow; this emphasizes the role of non-human factor in influencing human life experiences. Furthermore, the play also portrays a posthumanist consciousness that humans are not alienated or isolated entities anymore, but are constantly interconnected with other powerful factors, social, environmental, etc. that shape their existence.

Both the plays revolve around the adverse impact of the rise in capitalism on human lives. The characters' lives are reduced from the level of aristocracy, an economy that was land-based, to essentially capitalist system driven by economic forces. The playwright has critiqued the doom of traditional values and the rise of economic systems that restrict human transactions to mere transactions in his play. By standing helpless against the destruction of their orchard, these characters represent the fall of conventional social order and the incoming of a society led by capitalism. The posthumanist critique of human exceptionalism is reflected in the characters' resistance to change, as they fail to recognize that they are part of a complex system made up of both humans and non-humans.

Most of the characters in *The Three Sisters* by Chekhov (2012) feel discontented and unhappy with their present life. They destroy their present by desiring for a future that would provide them with a chance to begin life anew. Vershinin says, "I often think: what might happen if we began life anew, and did it consciously? If one life, already lived through, had been, as it were the first draft, the other, the final copy! Then each of us, I think, would try above all things not to repeat himself" (p. 155). They create a castle of false hopes and what they fail to realize is that such bright future does not exist for any of them. Vershinin is a married man with two young daughters but he wishes for a new life where he would get a chance to keep away from the institution of marriage. His situation proves his extreme dissatisfaction in an existentialist world where he is surrounded by emotionless machines in the garb of human beings.

Chekhov's (2012) characters live in a world where the idea of a rational, self-determining individual, a core belief of humanism, no longer holds true. They speak, dream, and hope, but their actions rarely change anything. In *The Three Sisters*, the longing for Moscow becomes a symbol not of future movement, but of existential paralysis. Similarly, in *The Cherry Orchard*, the failure to save the orchard despite repeated warnings illustrates a deep disconnect between desire and consequence. These portrayals reflect what Althusser (2005) called the reduction of the myth of man to ashes, where the traditional image of man as the center of meaning and action is undone. Chekhov (2012) does not present characters who shape history, but rather those shaped by it—trapped in systems they cannot name, and often do not see. This erosion of human centrality speaks directly to posthumanist concerns, where identity is no longer stable or sovereign, but contingent, relational, and deeply entangled in economic, social, and ecological forces.

Although Andrei is surrounded by his family and friends yet he feels lonely to the extent that he feels afraid to express himself to his own wife and his three sisters because his family and friends seem stranger and colder to him than the real strangers, "I must talk to somebody, but my doesn't understand me, and I am afraid of my sisters somehow, I'm afraid they will laugh at me, make me ashamed" (p. 165-66). In a capitalist society, a person cannot exist on his own, his existence and reality are dependent upon other people—how people see him becomes his sole reality. He is afraid of being laughed at, like many other characters in the play, he also wishes to go to Moscow—a place of new hopes, new opportunities, a new future that awaits him. He believes that in Moscow, they know nobody and nobody knows them, still they shall not feel alienated but their own home makes them feel lonely and isolated. Human beings keep blathering about nothing in particular all their lives in fear of a moment's silence, silence makes them feel lonely.

Posthumanists argue that man has lost his essence and he is no more the center of this universe or perhaps he never was. Haraway (1985) has not used the terms "posthumanism", "posthumanist" or "posthuman" in her "A manifesto for cyborgs: science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980's", but she has presented her argument on how human being has transformed into a "hybrid cyborg." Badmington (2011) states "Humanism, Haraway noted, has always relied upon form and fierce distinctions between human and animal, organism and machine, and physical and non-physical" (p. 376) but science, technology, capitalism,

feminism and other related studies have challenged and shaken the imagined castle of “humanism”.

Posthumanists further argue that man is no different from animals and other non-human entities, in a capitalist society where man is made to work like a machine or an animal, the distinction between human beings and non-human beings/entities blurs. Irina in the play despises her present life and wishes to be an animal so that she could work like an animal like all the other human beings who are already working like animals and machines, “Next to being a man, it’s better to be an ox, it’s better to be a common horse, if only you do some work, then be a young woman who wakes up at twelve o’clock, has coffee in bed, and dresses for two hours.... Oh, but that’s dreadful!” (p. 143). Modern man living in a capitalist society despises comfort, he wants to join others in the blind race to nothingness—a race that would eventually lead into existentialist crisis because capitalism and modernity have transformed human beings into “cyborgs”.

Nature in Chekhov’s (2012) work is neither passive nor picturesque. The orchard, the seasons, and the landscape carry symbolic and emotional weight. They speak, in a metaphorical sense, of histories that outlast human efforts to control or interpret them. This foregrounding of the non-human—though subtle—resonates with Haraway’s (1991) rejection of anthropocentrism and her call for recognizing interconnected forms of life and agency. In this context, the orchard’s fall is not just economic loss but an erasure of a living, memory-bearing entity.

Capitalism has developed the fear of unknown futures in the characters of this play; they are least worried about their present. The only thing that worries them is how best they can save and secure their future; there is a constant fear in the characters of being forgotten by the future generation. Future will be a new world where past will have no place—past will cease to exist in that world, the future generations will forget the present ones; this is fated to happen, nobody can change it. Today, what seems to be of high significance to people will be forgotten or erased or replaced tomorrow. Capitalism believes in the myth of creativity through destruction, past and present are to be destroyed in order to create a new world—future. Twenty first century is a world where nothing is taken seriously because no one worries about things happening in the present. On the one hand, some people are busy in destroying their present in hope of a bright future, and on the other hand, some people are busy destroying their present in fear of a shadowed future.

Posthumanism has detached us from our natural capabilities and our experience of self, and our consciousness is socially constructed. Haney II (2009) has provided two perspectives on posthumanism in the introduction to his book *Globalization and the Posthuman* he writes, "Posthumanism refers to the human-technology symbiosis. Many people, especially scientists, see the biology-machine interface as a positive development, but many also fear the possibility of its irreversibly damaging and possibly catastrophic effects on human condition, particularly from invasive technologies" (p. 02). Techno-scientific world has advantages as well as disadvantages; it has given birth to countless phobias and fears in people. No matter how much progress the world has made in technology and science, the existentialist condition of human beings would never change; there is a probability that it might grow worse in future. "And after a thousand years, man will be sighing the same: "Ah! how hard it is to live!" and meanwhile, exactly the same as now, he will be afraid of death and not want to die" (p. 171). Here is where the imaginary castle of a future filled with new fears or new hopes is shattered to little pieces. The myth of capitalism has reduced the myth of humanity to ashes, human beings have surpassed the level of 'being human' and entered into the world of posthumanity.

The major characters in this play come from people who "despised work" but now they think that work is the only solution that can end their miserable and pathetic life. They believe that work can put an end to their suffering; Tusenbach declares that he will work and in the coming twenty to thirty years, every single man and woman will be working. What he fails to realize here is that capitalism will rise in the coming years like a storm to such great heights that it will shatter the soul of human beings apart. Capitalism steals away the rights of labors to live, Marx says in "The Working-Day" (2010), it robs the body of time needed for development, growth, and proper upkeep. It takes away the time needed to breathe in sunlight and fresh air, thus it creates emotionless and soulless machines. Advancement in science, technology and the rise of capitalism has transformed the universally accepted notion of time and space in the present time. Human beings in the earlier centuries used to think of time in three entities i.e., past, present and future, but progress and new technology has limited and conditioned our notion of time. Capitalism has made people forget about eternity; they have begun to think in "measurable hours" in order to use labor-power more efficiently.

Most of the characters create illusions for themselves; to save themselves from their present, they prefer to dream about the future where they

assume that heaps of happiness await the upcoming generation. Although they would not be there to participate in that future world but they believe that it is through their own struggle and suffering that they can change the lives of their descendants by creating a new world for them. Vershinin in the play claims that the present generation can never find happiness because it is fated to work, work, and only work, and the coming generations would also have to bear the brunt of it. Tusenbach knows that Vershinin is living in a world of dreams and to bring him back to reality he tells him that the world will never change, life will always be the same no matter how much one tries to change it.

Towards the end of the play, one of the three sisters Olga asks the reason behind the ways of this world and mankind's suffering. Schopenhauer (2022) explains the reason behind this never-ending suffering of human beings in his essay "On the Suffering of the World",

like the children of a libertine, we come into the world with the burden of sin upon us; and that it is only through having continually to atone for this sin that our existence is so miserable, and that its end is death. There is nothing more certain than the general truth that it is the grievous sin of the world which has produced the grievous suffering of the world. (Schopenhauer p. 6-7)

Human beings suffer because of the crime of existence, Schopenhauer (2022) further goes on to say that it is the fate of human beings to suffer and because there is no end to this suffering so human beings must regulate their expectations accordingly. No matter how much science and technology progress, no matter how much human beings struggle to change their fate, in the end, they will stand defeated. Human beings have desires and wishes but the sudden fulfillment of all those desires and wishes will eventually lead humanity to boredom. If this world had not been the way it is now—a world of suffering and torment, "man would either die of boredom or hang themselves" (p. 02).

Towards the end of the play, Irina realizes that her dream of moving to Moscow for a perfect life was "just foolishness" (p. 199). The rise in capitalism, advancement in science and technology have given rise to existentialist crisis, the theorist Lyotard (2010) also argues that capitalism and advancement in technology can have a disastrous dehumanizing impact on human beings, Tchebutykin says that the world is nothing but a huge void, and the existence of human beings is also a delusion. Capitalism has turned human beings into machines; humanity has lost its essence—its centrality. Human beings of modern times have

lost the purpose of life, monotony hovers over humanity. Andrei in the play sums up the condition of human beings; life for human beings is nothing but a continuous chain of repetition and boredom and relationships of all sorts are devoid of sincerity. This also has an adverse impact on children and the younger generation, they adopt this behavior and continue to live a life of boredom, never breaking the chain.

Modernity, capitalism, technology, and science have given birth to existentialist crisis and unknown phobias. Capitalism has turned human beings into blind soulless machines that are busy conserving resources for an unknown future rather than devoting their attention and energies to their present. Vershinin tells the three sisters that their life would not change in Moscow, they would not find happiness anywhere, this also puts an emphasis on the non-existence of happiness in the world; human beings may continue to long for happiness but they shall never have it. Braidotti (2006) suggests human beings to accept the techno-present as modest witnesses, “without falling victim to its brutality” (p. 16). On the one hand, no matter how much progress in technology has been made, human beings are still different from machines, because they have to return to their human self to sleep, eat and talk. On the other hand, machines do not need sleep, food or a companion to share their sorrows or happiness. Small deeds of humanity, self-recognition, interaction with nature and soul searching are the basic necessities that can keep us from becoming posthuman beings

Chekhov's (2012) work invites reflection on how human life is not isolated but deeply entangled with other forms of existence: social systems, nature, memory, and time itself. In both *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*, characters live within layered environments that resist their control: the decaying estate, the passing seasons, and the quiet but constant presence of non-human entities. These plays demonstrate a change in our perception of the self, viewing it as a person molded by the environmental forced rather than as a fixed or superior entity. Chekhov (2012) clearly shows in *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* that relationships with people, places, memories, and even uncontrollable things are how identity is formed rather than formed in a vacuum. This is in line with the theories of thinkers like Cary Wolfe, who reminds us that we are always a part of bigger systems, and Haraway (2010), who talks about "staying with the trouble"—learning to live in the messiness of life. Change does not always appear to be progress in Chekhov's world. Rather, it is about accepting our limitations, learning to coexist, and letting go of the notion that people are inherently superior beings.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, many of the concerns that contemporary posthumanist thinkers bring to attention are highlighted in Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*. Chekhov provides more than just a depiction of Russian society through their hardships; he also helps us consider how people fit into a world that is changing all around us. Chekhov provides us with more than just a depiction of Russian society through their hardships; he also helps us consider how people fit into a world that is changing all around them. His plays challenge the notion that humans are in charge at all times and instead emphasize how our surroundings: including social structures, the natural world, time, and even silence, shape who we are.

His characters' anxieties, aspirations, and shortcomings mirror the same issues that posthumanist academics investigate: what happens when we are no longer at the center of everything? What does it mean to live in a world where we have to share space with nature, machines, and invisible systems in addition to other people? Chekhov's (2012) plays demonstrate that this is a universal problem that people face, not just a contemporary one.

The collapse of the cherry orchard signifies the end of a world based on human arrogance and dominance, not just the loss of land. The sisters' incessant talk of Moscow is more than just a fantasy; it is a yearning for an unattainable goal, an uncontrollable future. Chekhov does not offer easy answers and in showing his readers lives caught in the middle of change, he invites them to rethink their place in the world. His work reminds the readers that they are not alone, not separate, and not always in charge, and maybe that is where a new kind of understanding begins.

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