

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the significance of misanthropy in contemporary speculative fiction, using *Walkaway* by Cory Doctorow and *Autonomous* by Annalee Newitz as examples. By analysing the novels' response to the context of the Anthropocene and liquid modernity, it is shown that misanthropy arises from a sense of powerlessness and existential fear in the unseating of anthropocentrism. *Walkaway* and *Autonomous* construct transhuman and posthuman subjectivity, respectively, to investigate the potentials and limitations of the human being. In doing so, they reflect fears and desires for the future, and demonstrate the role of hope in its construction. *Walkaway* shows a transhuman techno-utopia as an escape from the existential fear that drives its misanthropic vision of bodies as disposable and minds as unreliable. *Autonomous* presents a bio-entrapment view of existence, and suggests that artificial intelligence is an ideal unattainable by humans. Both types of misanthropy provide valuable insight into our current context, collective psyche, and the issue of responsibility, and demonstrate the necessity of a more balanced approach to human existence that includes embodiment, affective intelligence, and the entirety of Earth's systems.

Keywords

Misanthropy; Anthropocene; Anthropocentrism; Posthumanism; Transhumanism; Dystopia; Utopia; Science Fiction; Desire; Fear; Hope