

Immortality and Digital Rebirth in Science Fiction

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Immortality and great longevity were long considered divine gifts of the immortals or, at least, supernatural phenomena, but they repeatedly appear within the reach of human power in science fiction. Beginning with Mary Shelley's foundational novel Frankenstein (1818), the ambition of defying death is closely connected to the motif of the artificial human. In the context of the Digital Age, mind uploading has emerged as a related concept for artificial life extension or even as a digital rebirth. This article discusses mind uploading as an attempt to defeat death in Anglophone science fiction from William Gibson's Neuromancer (1984) to Richard Morgan's Altered Carbon (2002), including texts by Greg Egan and other writers.

Unsterblichkeit und ein ungewöhnlich langes Leben galten lange als göttliches Geschenk oder zumindest als übernatürliches Phänomen, erscheinen in der Science Fiction aber immer wieder als wissenschaftlich greifbar. Schon Mary Shelleys SF-Roman Frankenstein (1818) verbindet dabei die Ambition, den Tod zu überwinden, mit dem Motiv des künstlichen Menschen. Im Kontext des Computerzeitalters erscheint eine digitale Kopie des menschlichen Geistes als ein verwandtes Konzept für eine künstliche Lebensverlängerung oder sogar als digitale Wiedergeburt. Dieser Artikel erörtert ‚Mind Uploading‘ als mögliche Überwindung des Todes in englischsprachiger Science-Fiction-Literatur, von William Gibsons Neuromancer (1984) bis zu Richard Morgans Altered Carbon (2002) und Werken anderer Autoren wie etwa Greg Egan.

Defying Death: From Myth to Science Fiction

The hope of evading death has been a leitmotif in literature since its beginnings and a common ground of myth and science fiction (SF), since both often deal with the so-called ‘big questions’ of human life and identity, of which mortality is clearly a central one. Patricia Warrick and George Zebrowski argue that both myth and SF are essentially ways of rationalizing human knowledge and the concomitant fear of death through storytelling as an important form

of sense-making (299). As a modern genre, however, SF tends to transform the supernatural into powerful, science-based knowledge “that may produce the wonders and terrors of earlier myth” (300) when it is applied by humans to pursue age-old dreams, such as defeating death. Lester Del Rey even argues that the beginnings of science fiction can be traced back to the mythical *Epic of Gilgamesh* (ca. 2100 BC), since its famous quest for immortality could be easily transposed into an SF story (12–13). Indeed, despite the obvious differences to ancient epics, the related search for knowledge and transcendental power, the adventurous confrontation with alterity, and the transgressive attitude of the protagonist can all be seen as hallmarks of science fiction (13). If, to a large degree, “[m]yths represent our relationship with the divine as a way of dealing with death” (Warrick and Zebrowski 299), then the envisioned means to transcend mortality tend to shift from the metaphysical to the physical realm when “the supernatural becomes knowledge” in a scientific worldview (300).

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), often considered the first science fiction novel, represents this shift very well. It marks an important transition from the dream of immortality in myth and alchemy to modern science, which is reflected in the development of its protagonist. Victor Frankenstein’s dream of defeating death turns from teenage attempts at black magic and alchemy to early biochemistry during his studies in Ingolstadt. His initial attempts at “the raising of ghosts or devils” is as futile as his “search of the philosopher’s stone and the elixir of life” (69), but when his chemistry professor proclaims that the new “teachers of this science” have acquired “new and almost unlimited powers” (76), overcoming death appears as a realistic prospect.

With his famous creation of an artificial human, Victor Frankenstein wants to defy death in mainly two ways. Firstly, he reanimates a corpse made from various dead bodies and overcomes death this way (Shelley 82, 84–85), and, secondly, he has the hope that this could be the beginning of a new human species with some form of immortality, namely to be “invulnerable to any but a violent death” (69). This considerable prolongation of life, sometimes called ‘emortality’ as opposed to being fully immune to death

(Stableford, “Immortality” 616), is part of Frankenstein’s utopian project of a future, improved humanity with “many happy and excellent natures” that would be eternally grateful to their creator (Shelley 82). Largely due to Frankenstein’s rejection of his seemingly monstrous creature, however, this utopian dream quickly turns into a nightmare for both of them, and the vicious circle of failing expectations, hate, and suffering eventually leads to the premature death of the scientist, while the possible end of his artificial man is left in the dark (244).

It is noteworthy how central a role the attempt to tackle human mortality already plays at the beginning of science fiction as a genre. Since *Frankenstein*, numerous SF stories have dealt with achieving immortality or at least unnatural longevity in a number of ways.¹ Although this wide spectrum cannot be discussed here, many of these stories seem to follow in the cautionary footsteps of similar myths and Gothic novels. As Brian Stableford puts it, in science fiction, “immortality is often treated as a false goal” (“Immortality” 616), and “longevity continued to receive a surprisingly bad press in speculative fiction” since its beginning (*Science* 275). The clear scepticism in earlier literature raises the question if this tendency remains in more recent science fiction, especially in cyberpunk, a sub-genre that is closely related to the ongoing digital revolution. It can be argued that, in such narratives, the reader is repeatedly confronted with a cybernetic concept of immortality through a digitization of the human mind and the according possibility of a digital rebirth with or without physical embodiment.

1 This article focusses on immortality and digital rebirth, especially in more recent works, but a number of books shed light on the wider spectrum of works and ways in which SF characters try to defeat death. See, for example, Stephen Clark’s monograph *How to Live Forever: Science Fiction and Philosophy* (1995), which covers many other stories and means to evade death, or the volume *Immortal Engines: Life Extension and Immortality in SF and Fantasy* (1996), edited by George Slusser, Gary Westfahl, and Eric Rabkin. *Death and the Serpent: Immortality in Science Fiction and Fantasy* (1985), edited by Carl B. Yoke and Donald M. Hassler, offers another valuable overview of this topic, along with concise overviews in a number of SF encyclopaedias, for instance by Brian Stableford.

Transferring Life: The Human Being as Information

The philosophy of mind uploading in science fiction of the late 20th and early 21st centuries has a considerable tradition if we consider the underlying notion of a mind-body dualism, which can be traced back to early (and not necessarily scientific) concepts of human identity. The idea of a dualism between an immortal soul as human essence and the mortal physical body as a kind of vessel is already prominent in the biblical creation story of Adam in the Book of Genesis (Gen 2:7). We can see an increasing secularisation of this dualism since the Renaissance, in particular by René Descartes (where concepts of soul and mind often overlap) and La Mettrie, who helped to establish the analogy of the human body as a machine, while dualistic views on body and mind often have evolutionary undertones since the late 19th century (Lampadius 20–27). With cybernetics, as a philosophical and partly technical foundation of the Digital Age, this dualism is largely considered from the perspective of system theory and information processing, which expands a Cartesian view of the human mind and self through a holistic concept of information and function (204–08, 243–44). From this perspective, it becomes increasingly plausible that a biological body functions as a host for performative information of different kinds (including DNA), which could be translated and transferred to a different medium.

In the 1950s, Norbert Wiener, the godfather of cybernetics, discusses the possibility of transferring or ‘telegraphing a man’ and outlines a cybernetic understanding of the essence of a human being as something that can be abstracted as structured information. Although Wiener expects a number of “technical difficulties”, he considers the idea of telegraphing the “pattern of a man”, as a kind of complex message, as “highly plausible”, arguing that “such reconstruction” is not more radical “than that of a butterfly during its period as a pupa” (104). In a similar vein, Robert Sheckley’s novel *Immortality, Inc.* (1959) compares the human mind to “a butterfly coming out of a cocoon”, whereby “[d]eath is simply the process that hatches the mind from the body” (49). Its protagonist from the 1950s is resurrected in the early 22nd century, where “re-

incarnation and host bodies” (45) are not only a possible insurance against death but even an option for people “who get tired wearing the same old body” (205-06). In many ways, *Immortality, Inc.* already anticipates Richard Morgan’s *Altered Carbon* (2002), but it remains rather vague in the technical details of transferring the mind, which is described as a “high tension energy web” (Sheckley 49).

With his novel *The City and the Stars* (1956), A.C. Clarke, however, dramatizes a cybernetic concept of human pattern identity and immortality in direct connection to digital computing. In the far future of the novel, humans have learned “how to analyze and store the information that would define any specific human being – and to use that information to re-create the original” (16), with new computer technology as a powerful tool. Such reincarnations are centrally regulated, though, and despite “virtual immortality” (16) in the digital city of Diaspar, “[t]he vast majority slumber in the Memory Banks” to avoid overpopulation and social stagnation (17). Nevertheless, Clarke’s novel already envisions immortality through mind uploading and a later, flexible re-embodiment of a digitized mind that includes the biological ‘wetware’ of a human body.

This vision is based on the notion that a mind could be realized in different ways, ranging from carbon-based to silicon-based embodiments of cognition, also known as ‘multiple realizability’ (Hopkins 44). Despite the considerable logical, philosophical, and ethical problems attached to the technical concept of creating copies of a mind and personality, this notion of human identity as an ‘informational pattern’ is to be found not only in science fiction, but in a number of non-fictional texts since early cybernetics.² The cybernetic perspective of Wiener and later transhumanist thinkers such as Marvin Minsky, Hans Moravec, or Ray Kurzweil suggests that the natural, carbon-based human body is only one of several options to host intelligence, consciousness, and human agency.

2 See, for example, N. Katherine Hayles’s seminal study *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) for a great overview and critique of this development, highlighting that the question of embodiment is not just a technical one. See also Hopkins (2018) for a general introduction to mind uploading and ‘embodied cognition’ with their related technical, philosophical, and ethical challenges, pointing out that a copy is a duplication and not necessarily a continuation of a person, and concluding that “if your goal is to become immortal or avoid your death then it will not help you” (49).

Moravec, for example, presents the post-biological human, which could derive from “a mortal human being or is a completely artificial creation” (17), as a transcendence of *Homo sapiens* (13), in which “personal immortality by mind transplant” would be only a step in a greater evolutionary process (121).

From a technical perspective, there could be three main options to achieve a form of immortality based on the ideas of pattern identity, human digitization, and mind uploading. First, the digitized mind could exist in virtual space without a physical body as seemingly immaterial ‘software’. Second, the uploaded mind could be hosted by an inorganic body such as a robot or android, in other words, not just running but being embodied by inorganic ‘hardware’. As a third option, the digitized mind could be repeatedly transferred back into human bodies (for example, clones), in other words biological ‘wetware’, probably with cybernetic implants. All these different options of digital mind uploading and virtual rebirth appear in contemporary science fiction, which shall be discussed in the following.

Life and Death in Cyberspace: Approaching Digital Humanity

William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* (1984), which is often considered the best-known cyberpunk novel, helped to popularize the concept of cyberspace in a decade when the presence and importance of computers became unmistakable. *Neuromancer* connects to many earlier tropes of science fiction in often new and ironic ways, and already its title alludes to the attempt to defeat death. By replacing just one letter in the title, we get necromancer, and, indeed, raising the dead does play a role in this cyberpunk classic, although not through black magic but by means of applied neuroscience and technical interfaces to the human brain.

The near-future world of *Neuromancer* presents different attempts at achieving immortality, which are mostly connected to digital technology. The first major instance is the digital recording of the famous hacker McCoy Pauley, who died during one of his exploits in cyberspace and who is resurrected by the hacker

protagonist Case because he needs his help in his own mission. Pauley is also called the “Lazarus of cyberspace” (Gibson 78) in obvious analogy to the biblical character Lazarus, who was brought back from the dead by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel of John (John 11: 1–44). In *Neuromancer*, the miracle of resurrection is explained within the framework of the computer metaphor when Case interacts with a digital snapshot of Pauley’s mind in cyberspace. A major drawback of this kind of existence, however, is that Pauley’s consciousness and memories have been made permanent in ROM (read only memory), which comes with serious limitations. Although he can help the protagonist in his mission, this “ROM construct” (Gibson 79) is tired of resurrection since it exists only as an uploaded, static recording of a past state of mind of the hacker Pauley, which cannot evolve. Accordingly, he asks Case to end his unwanted immortality and erase him as a reward for his help (206). This form of unnatural longevity reconnects to the trope of immortality as a curse that can already be found in a number of ancient myths, such as the Greek myth of Tithonus, or the Roman story of the Sibyl of Cumae.³ The Struldbruggs in Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) suffer from a similar dilemma, since they do not die but continue to age, and are even seen as a threat to social stability, as Gulliver learns after his initial optimism regarding their eternal life (193–200). In contrast to these stories, the digitized hacker in *Neuromancer* is spared the ravages of aging, but it is strongly suggested that static, forgetful immortality as a ‘digital recording’ is not worth living either.

Neuromancer imagines a more dynamic form of immortality in the symbiotic fusion of powerful collectives, such as a family business, with artificial intelligence. As a form of hive immortality, the powerful Tessier-Ashpool family has delegated the running of their business mostly to highly advanced AIs such as Wintermute (Gibson

3 When Eos, the Greek goddess of the dawn, asks Zeus to grant her lover Tithonus immortality, she forgets to ask for eternal youth as well. In the end, Tithonus’s bed-ridden body is put into a room and he mainly exists as a faint voice (Morford and Lenardon 61). The prophetic Sibyl of Cumae makes the same mistake when she asks Apollo for extreme longevity (235), and her sad fate not only appears in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* but also serves as the opening epigraph of T.S. Eliot’s famous poem *The Waste Land* (1922).

229), which turns out to be the mysterious client of the protagonist Case and the driving force for much of the plot. While some family members have acquired an unsatisfying form of longevity through cryonics and cloning (229, 269),⁴ their proxy AI aims at breaking free from all restrictions and uniting with an equally powerful AI called Neuromancer. In the end, the scheming AI succeeds with the help of Case, and the ending suggests that artificial intelligence as a distributed entity has gained a form of immortality that reaches beyond cyberspace (269–70).

The concept of software-based life that can proliferate across time and space by running on different kinds of hardware is also at the heart of Greg Egan's novels *Permutation City* (1994) and *Diaspora* (1997), which develop this idea much further. Set in the middle of the 21st century, *Permutation City* presents a new brain-scanning technology that allows the creation of digital human 'Copies' with the promise of "virtual immortality" (13). Not surprisingly, it becomes a booming business, especially as maintaining an uploaded personality needs processing power that has to be purchased, for example, via an exchange, insurance, or trust fund, so the Copies of the less affluent tend to run at a much slower speed in the digital afterlife (124–25). As with many other (post)cyberpunk texts, *Permutation City* clearly undermines the notion that transhumanist technologies would lead to a fairer society and suggests that in a market economy even immortality would become a commodity for those who can afford it, which would widen the gap even after natural death. Moreover, Egan's *Permutation City* also raises many philosophical questions about human identity in relation to digital copies and individual meaning, which are further developed in his novel *Diaspora*.

Set ca. 1000 years in the future, Egan's *Diaspora* mainly explores the concept of digital human life as software. *Diaspora* envisions a wide spectrum of human existence, from biological humans, the so-called

4 For a great overview of the various ways in which humans have already tried to defy death before the (still fictional) option of mind uploading, see Appleyard (2008). As part of an extending spectrum, Appleyard considers cryonics and similar concepts as an attempt at "deferring the diagnosis of death until new technologies come along" (215) and its promise of 'buying time' as part of a wider "consumerist death-avoidance programme" that has spread since the late 1960s (216).

‘fleshers’ (ranging from unmodified to artificially enhanced), robots (mainly as a form of embodiment), to the clearly posthuman existence as virtual ‘citizen’ (such as the protagonist Yatima). The roots of this digital humanity can be found in the conversion of human genes and minds into software, based on the central notion of code (both genetic and digital) as a performative language and the blueprint of life (5). In the world of the novel, a cosmic apocalypse threatens to destroy the remaining biological humans, who could, however, be saved through a technological ‘Introduus’ (138–42), in obvious parallel to the biblical Exodus from captivity to the promised land (Exod. 1–15). Similar to Moses, Yatima becomes a kind of prophet who wants to save threatened (biological) humans and lead them to a promised land – this time, however, in the form of a virtual reality, where they could live forever as software, if they choose to.

Diaspora not only presents digital encoding and mind uploading as means of human survival on the individual and collective level but also imagines a great increase in human agency without a biological body. The scanning and conversion of the human body and mind via Introduus nanotechnology is not merely a posthuman exit strategy but the beginning of a new, highly flexible identity in the world of the novel, including various forms of embodiment through a so-called “exoself” (35). A humanoid robot exoself, for example, is especially helpful for the post-gender protagonist of *Diaspora* to communicate with the remaining biological humans that “ve” wants to save through their Introduus (118–23), even though this way of “cheating death” (122) is not always welcomed. Although the novel highlights the possible transcendence of many human constraints – for example, transcending mortality, sex and gender, and even traditional space and time – the posthuman prospect of mind uploading and digital rebirth is also disputed in the novel.

The protagonist of *Diaspora* is repeatedly confronted with humans who do not want to be saved from death by digital rebirth and who claim that their biological bodies, including negative aspects such as pain, disease, and death, are integral to their identity and a meaningful human life (118–19). Nevertheless, especially

by employing Yatima as the main focaliser of the novel, Egan's narrative sides much more with its posthuman protagonist on the question of whether meaning relies on a mortal, physical body and suggests that (post)humans could increase their potential and adapt to immortality over time (220). Stephen Clark argues that many SF stories dealing with immortality are essentially about human hopes of transformation since "it is not just continuance we want, but transformation into something better" (28), which is often riddled with complexity, paradox, and unforeseen consequences. In Egan's novel, however, the prospect of immortality is not a dead end (a notion embodied by the 'ROM construct' in *Neuromancer*) but opens up a dynamic process of self-transformation. In the end, *Diaspora* proposes the responsible but curious and playful human being, who can create its own environment and goals as an antidote to a potentially depressing boredom that could come with a comfortable infinite life.

Resurrection Unlimited? Serial Incarnation in *Altered Carbon*

Richard Morgan's *Altered Carbon* (2002) imagines a much harsher future in the 25th century that is clearly more dystopian than utopian. In this late cyberpunk novel, we are confronted with a society that comes close to N. Katherine Hayles's "nightmare" in her study *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), namely "a culture inhabited by posthumans who regard their bodies as fashion accessories rather than the ground of being" (5). In *Altered Carbon*, the human body is often considered a "sleeve" that is "worn", and the death of the original body is not "real death" in many cases (Morgan 15, 44). The protagonist and narrator Takeshi Kovacs is "wearing another man's body" (19) at the beginning of the novel and has been resurrected through "re-sleeving" (13) a number of times, although "[c]oming back from the dead can be rough" (11), as the opener of the first chapter points out. Death and rebirth can thus be very traumatic in this future world, but the end of one's body is not necessarily the end of one's life anymore – not even the other way around.

If one sleeve bites the dust, a digital copy of the mind of a person remains safe in a so-called “cortical stack” (Morgan 26), which is a robust cybernetic implant in the human spine with direct connection to the nervous system. This digital copy of the mind can be transferred into a “virtual matrix” (162) as software, or into the ‘wetware’ of the next carbon-based, biological body. These human bodies can be ‘second-hand’, grown in tanks in a wide range of appearances or based on the cloning of a specific original body for customers who do not want to change their appearance with every reincarnation (269, 54). Such choices depend mostly on money, however, and many can only have the cheaper option of silicon-based “synthetic sleeves” (15) or temporarily renting a new body, so their uploaded mind can be downloaded from their digital “altered carbon exiles” (19) and reembodied.

Artificial resurrection is a profitable business in the world of *Altered Carbon*, which also means that such a form of immortality through serial reincarnation is not available to humanity in general. Instead, it opens up a greater divide in society that cements economic and political hegemony through the existence of a new class of potential immortals, or ‘Meths’ – an obvious allusion to the long-lived Methuselah, who lived nearly 1000 years according to the Bible (Gen 5:27). The tech-noir protagonist of *Altered Carbon* is hired by such a Meth called Bancroft, who wants to find out who has tried to kill him – an assassination attempt that was unsuccessful because Bancroft can afford not only serial incarnation in clones of his body, but even regular backups of his mind in cloud storage (Morgan 360). This idea is very similar to Ray Kurzweil’s transhumanist proposal to outrun death that he outlined in several books at the turn of the 21st century. In *The Age of Spiritual Machines* (1999), for example, he argues that the digitization of the mind is a logical step in future human evolution that would remove the sting of death. In the future, the mind could be stored in an “evolving mind file” (129), and “[o]ur immortality will be a matter of being sufficiently careful to make frequent backups” (129). According to Kurzweil’s vision, you cannot really die this way, but if you do not make regular backups, you lose some of your past progress (129), similar to an old savegame in a video game.

In contrast to the loss of corporeality that Kurzweil envisions, *Altered Carbon* emphasises the corporeal dimension of human life and identity, while it undermines the naïve assumption that social problems can be solved through technical solutions. As in much of science fiction, especially in the sub-genre of cyberpunk, the often utopian promises of transhumanism are reconsidered from a critical perspective that does not equate technical progress with social progress. In the Social Darwinist world of *Altered Carbon*, market forces have largely replaced morality, and a policy sold by “retrieval and re-sleeving insurance companies” (70) is often the best guarantee for resurrection. Rebirth through digital technologies is not only a technical and ethical question in this world, but a matter of financial resources. It is strongly suggested that even if some of Kurzweil’s and Moravec’s visions of defeating disease and death would be feasible, they would not be open to the general population but would instead increase the social divide and the concentration of power. With the posthuman Methuselahs, *Altered Carbon* presents a scenario that was already anticipated in *Gulliver’s Travels*, namely that extreme life extension could also lead to an (even more) extreme concentration of power in the hands of a few very old, but not necessarily wise men.

In the world of Morgan’s novel, technical immortality also meets resistance, especially from Catholics, a religious group that has often warned of transhumanist ideas. Their protest turns especially against “Resolution 653” as potential new legislation that would allow the resurrection of humans against their will in some cases. Their battle cry, “NO TO RESOLUTION 653!! ONLY GOD CAN RESURRECT!!” (Morgan 23), not only represents a theocratic view of humans endowed with a soul (in which death can be seen as the beginning of eternal life), but raises the wider issue of ‘the right to die’ in a potentially ‘postmortal’ society.⁵ However,

5 For an insightful discussion of this complex subject, see Bugajska (2019), who argues on the basis of contemporary Catholic theology, bioethics, and Morgan’s novel that in a “postmortal society”, death and “the art of dying” will remain central issues connected to the meaning of life, which demands a framework of values that goes beyond social conventions or pragmatism (431). See Norman Spinrad’s post-apocalyptic novella *Deus X* (1993) for a science-fictional transposition of the soul and afterlife through “electronic successor entities” (16), who argue that “God the Father downloads Himself into the flesh, Man downloads himself into silicon, and

Altered Carbon also suggests that the prospect of a technical form of resurrection might contribute to a massive decrease of religious faith, since the promise of immortality is not the monopoly of religion anymore. Even the religious concept of hell (as a very inhumane concept of eternal afterlife) has an equivalent in the “digital human storage system”, since it could be used to torture humans forever (169). Here, the notion of immortality as a curse reappears in a very brutal form. The dream of dictators and oligarchs may be the greatest nightmare for the rest, and the provocative biblical quotation “Death, where is thy sting?” (Morgan 162; 1 Cor 15:55) has thus clearly ironic and rather bitter undertones in *Altered Carbon*.

Conclusion

The science fiction stories discussed here propose digital technologies as central to future life extension or even as a way of defying death. By making rather abstract concepts and thought experiments tangible through storytelling, these narratives contribute to an ambivalent dualistic concept of the human being that can be traced back to religious beliefs but gains new relevance in a digital world. Such posthuman visions range from data-based immortality as a curse through artificial longevity as a commodity to digital existence as an empowering alternative to a biological body and mortality. Despite its post-apocalyptic background, Egan’s *Diaspora* presents a rather optimistic understanding of immortality and digital rebirth that banks on sophisticated technology and the curious, playful, and responsible side of humanity that could continue as software. Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, on the other hand, rather suggests that human immortality through digital technologies would be a pyrrhic victory, not least since digital natives such as AIs could easily outcompete humans in the new environment of cyberspace. Morgan’s *Altered Carbon*, like some earlier works, deconstructs the myth of death and/or afterlife as the great equalizer in a Social Darwinist and capitalist context. It dramatizes a future in which the

we download ourselves into the system itself” (96–97), and who are eventually even welcomed into the Catholic Church by a futuristic female pope (175–76).

human body has not become obsolete but is largely a commodity that provides the option of serial incarnation as potential immortality for some, which does not remove the sting of death, however, but increases the social divide. Overall, the discussed texts interrogate body-mind dualisms and their relation to human identity from a new angle and can be considered thought-provoking contributions to the perpetual discourse on how to transcend death.

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