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# Rethinking Cyborg: Identity and Practical Optimism in Okorafor's Death of the Author

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## Abstract

*This article rethinks the concept of the cyborg in Okorafor's Death of the Author by examining the impacts on identity through technological transformation, and practical optimism by More's transhumanist philosophy. Rather than interpreting the cyborg as merely a human-machine hybrid, my research reconceptualizes it as a technologically enhanced subject by which identity is continuously reshaped through voluntary self-modification and adaptive assimilation. The analysis of this article focuses on the protagonist, Zelu, whose transition from a partially paralyzed woman to an exoskeleton-assisted individual exemplifies the more's transhumanist idea of morphological freedom and further demonstrating that technological transformation and assimilation becomes a means of reconstructing identity rather than compensating for physical limitation. This transformation challenges conventional notions of disability, embodiment, and selfhood by presenting technology as an extension of human agency. Furthermore, the article employs More's principle of practical optimism to examine how this text envisions technological progress as a catalyst for female autonomy, resilience, and self-determination. Zelu's ability to reclaim control over her body, creativity, and life despite social, physical, and institutional constraints illustrates an optimistic model of empowerment grounded in human enhancement rather than victimhood. By integrating the concepts of morphological freedom and practical optimism, this study argues the cyborg as an evolving posthuman identity that transcends biological limitations while affirming women's capacity for self-directed transformation. Ultimately, this article demonstrates that Okorafor's this text advances a transhumanist vision in which technological assimilation functions as a liberating force that reconstructs identity, expands human potential, and imagines an optimistic future founded on autonomy, adaptability, and continual self-evolution.*

***Keywords***: *Cyborg, death of the author, identity, morphological freedom, practical optimism, technological transformation, transhumanism, women autonomy*

## Introduction

### Reconstruction of identity and technological assimilation in literary world

Developments in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, cybernetics, and digital technologies have increasingly blurred the boundaries between the biological and the technological, challenging traditional notions of what it means to be human. As technology becomes deeply integrated into

everyday life, it not only enhances human capabilities but also reshapes perceptions of identity, embodiment, and agency. These developments have inspired contemporary literature to explore the complex relationship between technology and humanity, presenting imaginative narratives that question existing assumptions about the future of human existence (Hayles, 1999).

Cyborg has become one of the most influential figures in literary and cultural studies. Originally understood as a hybrid of human and machine, the cyborg has evolved into a metaphor that represents the fluid relationship between technology, identity, and society. Rather than depicting a loss of humanity, contemporary interpretations increasingly present the cyborg as a symbol of adaptability, transformation, and the reconstruction of selfhood. The cyborg challenges rigid distinctions between the natural and the artificial, encouraging a reconsideration of identity as dynamic rather than biologically fixed (Haraway, 1991). Growing significance of the cyborg is closely associated with the emergence of transhumanism, a philosophical movement that advocates the use of science and technology to enhance human capacities and improve the quality of life. Unlike dystopian perspectives that regard technological advancement as a threat to humanity, transhumanism views technological innovation as an opportunity for continuous growth, self-improvement, and human flourishing. It argues that biological limitations should not restrict human potential and that individuals should have the freedom to determine the future development of their own bodies and minds (Bostrom, 2005).

Within transhumanist philosophy, More's concept of morphological freedom offers an important framework for understanding technological transformation and identity. Morphological freedom refers to an individual's right to modify or enhance their body through technological means according to personal choice and autonomy. More argues that human beings should possess the liberty to reshape themselves physically and cognitively without unnecessary social or political restrictions. This perspective shifts the understanding of identity from a fixed biological condition to an evolving process of self-determination. Technological transformation, therefore, becomes an expression of personal freedom rather than a rejection of humanity, enabling individuals to redefine themselves according to their aspirations and changing circumstances (More, 1993).

Concept of identity has similarly undergone considerable transformation in contemporary literary studies. Earlier approaches often regarded identity as stable and determined by biological or social categories such as gender, race, and culture. However, contemporary scholarship recognizes identity as fluid, negotiated, and continuously reconstructed through social experiences, cultural interactions, and technological engagement. The increasing influence of digital technologies and scientific innovation has further reinforced the understanding that identity is not inherited but constantly shaped through personal choices and evolving environments (Hall, 1996). Literary texts increasingly reflect this perspective by portraying characters who reconstruct their identities while adapting to technological and social change. These changing conceptions of identity are particularly significant in contemporary speculative fiction, where technological innovation frequently becomes a means of empowerment rather than oppression. Instead of portraying technology solely as a source of alienation, many contemporary writers present it as a tool through which marginalized individuals challenge social inequalities and redefine their positions within society. Female characters, in particular, are increasingly represented as active participants in technological transformation, using knowledge, creativity, and innovation to resist patriarchal limitations and assert their autonomy. Such representations suggest that technological advancement can facilitate personal agency and create new possibilities for self-realization (Butler, 2004).

Idea of practical optimism further strengthens this perspective by emphasizing resilience, adaptability, and constructive action in the face of uncertainty. Rather than relying on idealistic hope, practical optimism encourages individuals to confront challenges with confidence and actively create opportunities for positive change. Within speculative fiction, this outlook is reflected in characters who embrace technological transformation to overcome social barriers, reconstruct their identities, and shape their futures. Practical optimism therefore highlights empowerment as an active process achieved through determination, innovation, and self-directed action rather than passive expectation (Schneider, 2001).

**Statement of the problem**

Although *Death of the Author* has been examined from perspectives such as posthumanism, disability, feminism, and Afrofuturism, limited scholarly attention has been given to the novel through More's transhumanist philosophy. Existing studies have not adequately explored how the interconnected concepts of morphological freedom, technological transformation and assimilation, and practical optimism collectively reshape the understanding of the cyborg, reconstruct identity, and promote women's autonomy. This gap limits a comprehensive understanding of the novel's engagement with technology and human enhancement. Therefore, the present study applies More's theoretical framework to investigate how *Death of the Author* rethinks the cyborg, reconstructs identity through technological transformation, and represents women's empowerment through the principle of practical optimism

**Significance of the study**

This research delves into the intricate interplay between cybernetic organisms, fractured identity, and women's autonomy in Okorafor's *Death of the Author*, analyzed through a transhumanism lens. The text presents a complex narrative where Zelu, a disabled Nigerian American writer, creates a science fiction text titled Rusted Robots. This work within a work introduces Ankara, a robot protagonist in a post-human future, whose journey intertwines with Zelu's own, blurring the lines between creator and creation. By examining this dual narrative, the study explores that Okorafor challenges traditional notions of authorship and identity, particularly concerning women in technologically mediated societies. The research aims to illuminate that the text portrays the autonomy of women navigating complex intersections of gender, disability, and technology, contributing to broader discussions in transhumanist and feminist literature.

**Research Objectives**

1. To reconceptualize the cyborg in *Death of the Author* through More's concept of morphological freedom by examining technological transformation and human–technology assimilation.
2. To examine the reconstruction of identity in *Death of the Author* by analyzing how technological enhancement reshapes embodiment and posthuman subjectivity.
3. To analyze women's autonomy in *Death of the Author* through More's principle of practical optimism by exploring technology as a catalyst for empowerment, resilience, and self-determination.

**Research Questions**

1. How does *Death of the Author* rethink the cyborg through More's transhumanist philosophy by portraying technological transformation as a means of reconstructing identity and advancing women's autonomy?

**Critical and Theoretical Foundations**

Literature review begins by examining existing scholarship on *Death of the Author* and the broader body of criticism on Okorafor's speculative fiction, with particular attention to the themes of technology, identity, and social transformation. It then reviews the theoretical and critical perspectives on the cyborg, emphasizing its evolution as a posthuman figure and its significance in contemporary literary discourse. The review further explores transhumanist scholarship, focusing primarily on More's concept of morphological freedom and its relevance to technological transformation, human-machine assimilation, and the reconstruction of identity. In addition, the review considers critical studies on women's empowerment, agency, and practical optimism to demonstrate how technological mediation contributes to female autonomy and resilience. By synthesizing these interconnected strands of scholarship, the literature review establishes the conceptual and critical foundation for analyzing *Death of the Author* while identifying the research gap that the present study seeks to address.

Evolution challenges traditional boundaries between the natural and the artificial, creating new perspectives on identity, existence, and human potential. While this integration strongly aligns with More's transhumanist principles, particularly the ideas of perpetual progress and self-transformation, which encourage individuals to actively shape their own evolution through technological enhancement, it also raises complex ethical and philosophical questions, reflecting tensions between technological advancement, personal autonomy, and responsibility (Sorgner, 2010, p. 42). This demonstrates that transhumanist ideals expand human capabilities, provoke reflection on the construction of selfhood, and explore the adaptation of identity in technologically mediated contexts. By engaging with these debates, the study reveals the intricate balance between empowerment and constraint, offering a theoretical foundation for understanding the transformation of humanity in technologically advanced futures.

Medical technology offers profound opportunities for healing and restoration, yet it also introduces complex ethical and philosophical dilemmas as enhancements evolve beyond therapeutic purposes. While advancements aim to improve human health, they increasingly open pathways toward elective modifications that surpass natural human capacities. This tension underscores the dual nature of technological progress, reflecting the transformative potential of innovation alongside the risks it entails. The study emphasizes that navigating these developments requires careful consideration of safety, accessibility, social inequality, and the broader implications for human identity and autonomy (McNamee & Edwards, 2006, p. 104). They critically explore the reliance on advanced medical technologies challenges traditional definitions of humanity, raising questions about identity, autonomy, and the balance between natural capacities and technologically enhanced possibilities.

Advancements in science and technology offer more than solutions to immediate problems, they present pathways for fundamentally reshaping human existence. While these innovations expand human capabilities and challenge traditional limitations, they simultaneously raise

complex ethical, social, and philosophical questions about identity, autonomy, and the balance between progress and responsibility. The study emphasizes the transformative potential of technological enhancement, illustrating that pursuing new possibilities for human evolution involves navigating both opportunities for growth and the challenges posed by profound change. These considerations highlight the delicate interplay between empowerment, ethical constraints, and the long-term consequences of innovation (Bostrom, 2005, p. 34). The core beliefs and aspirations driving the transhumanist movement, demonstrating technological evolution can redefine concepts of identity, capability, and the future of humanity. The article provides a strong theoretical foundation for research on transhumanism.

Science and technology redefine long-standing notions of humanity and the limits of human potential, offering new pathways for enhancement and transformation. While these innovations expand human capabilities and open opportunities for progress, they also generate profound ethical, moral, and philosophical dilemmas related to identity, autonomy, and societal stability. The study emphasizes that navigating these developments requires careful consideration of both benefits and risks, illustrating that technological evolution simultaneously empowers and challenges individuals and societies. These dynamics underscore the delicate balance between opportunity, ethical responsibility, and the long-term consequences of innovation (Porter, 2017, p. 118). The relationship between bioethics and transhumanist thought, demonstrating the technological integration shapes contemporary debates about the future of humanity. The article provides a theoretical basis for understanding the promises and challenges of a transhumanist future.

Individuals living with internalized technologies, such as pacemakers and defibrillators, experience shifts in embodiment, agency, and self-perception. While these devices can empower by enhancing capabilities and sustaining life, they also introduce constraints and moments of tension that challenge continuity and coherence of identity. The study emphasizes that adapting to technologically augmented bodies require continuous negotiation between human agency, mechanical intervention, and social environments. This complex interplay illustrates that identity is dynamic, reshaped through personal experience, interactions with technology, and social contexts, highlighting the multifaceted implications of bodily technological integration (Oudshoorn, 2020, p. 34). The experiences of individuals living with embedded technologies, offering insight into the effects on autonomy, self-understanding, and social belonging. The chapter provides a critical perspective on the human-technological interface and the ongoing reconstruction of identity in augmented bodies.

**More's Transhumanist Stance and Rethinking of Cybernetic Organisms**

Present study is grounded in the theoretical perspectives of More's transhumanist philosophy, particularly his concept of morphological freedom, which provides a comprehensive framework for examining the evolving relationship between technology and human identity. More's theoretical propositions challenge conventional understandings of the human body as a fixed biological entity by emphasizing the individual's autonomy to embrace technological enhancement and self-directed transformation. Within this framework, the study employs the concepts of morphological freedom, technological transformation and human-machine assimilation, and practical optimism as complementary analytical lenses for interpreting the narrative of *Death of the Author*. These concepts facilitate an exploration of how the novel reimagines the cyborg as a site of identity reconstruction while portraying technological

advancement as a means of empowerment, agency, and the creation of transformative possibilities.

**Morphological Freedom**

Morphological freedom is a fundamental concept within transhumanist philosophy that refers to an individual's right to modify, enhance, or transform their physical and cognitive capacities through technological means according to personal choice. It is grounded in the principle that human beings should possess autonomy over their own bodies and should be free to determine the form and function of their biological existence without unnecessary social, political, or cultural restrictions. Rather than viewing the human body as a fixed or final state, morphological freedom recognizes it as an evolving entity capable of continuous development through scientific and technological innovation (More, 1993).

More develops the concept of morphological freedom by arguing that technological advancement should be understood as an extension of human liberty rather than a threat to human identity, individuals should have the freedom to employ emerging technologies to improve their physical, intellectual, and emotional capacities if such modifications contribute to their personal well-being and aspirations. He rejects the belief that biological limitations define the essence of humanity, maintaining instead that self-directed enhancement represents a natural continuation of human evolution. From this perspective, technology becomes a means of expanding human potential rather than replacing or diminishing human values (More, 2013).

Morphological freedom is inseparable from the principle of individual autonomy. Human beings should be able to decide whether they wish to preserve their natural biological form or pursue technological enhancement, provided that these decisions do not infringe upon the rights of others. This emphasis on personal choice distinguishes morphological freedom from deterministic views of technological development. Instead of presenting technology as a force imposed upon individuals, More argues that technological transformation should remain a voluntary process guided by rational decision-making and informed consent. Such freedom enables individuals to construct identities that reflect their evolving needs, experiences, and aspirations rather than remaining confined by inherited biological conditions (More, 1993). Central implication of morphological freedom is its redefinition of human identity. More contends that identity should not be regarded as a static characteristic determined solely by biological inheritance but as a dynamic process of continuous self-creation. As technological innovations reshape the relationship between the human body and technological systems, individuals gain new possibilities for expressing and reconstructing themselves. Consequently, technological enhancement does not signify the loss of humanity but demonstrates humanity's capacity for creativity, adaptability, and self-determination. Identity, therefore, becomes an evolving construct shaped by conscious choices and technological opportunities rather than immutable biological boundaries (More, 2013). Morphological freedom also provides an optimistic vision of the future by emphasizing the transformative potential of science and technology. Rather than perceiving technological progress as a source of alienation or dehumanization, More views it as an opportunity for individuals to overcome physical limitations, expand their capabilities, and pursue more fulfilling lives. This perspective encourages a positive engagement with technological innovation while maintaining respect for personal autonomy and ethical responsibility. Consequently, morphological freedom serves as a valuable theoretical framework for examining literary representations of technologically

transformed characters, particularly those whose identities are reconstructed through technological assimilation and self-directed empowerment.

**Technological Transformation and Assimilation**

Technological transformation and assimilation refers to the process through which technological interventions reshape human existence by integrating technological systems into the body, mind, and everyday life, thereby enabling individuals to reconstruct identities that have become fragmented or fractured by biological, social, or cultural limitations. Rather than treating identity as a fixed and immutable essence, this perspective understands the self as fluid and continuously evolving through technological engagement. Technological assimilation therefore signifies not only the incorporation of technology into the human body but also its acceptance as an integral part of personal identity, allowing individuals to negotiate new forms of selfhood and agency in response to changing technological realities (More, 1993). More argues that technological development should not be perceived as an external force that threatens human identity but as an instrument through which individuals can consciously expand their capabilities. He maintains that human evolution is not confined to biological processes; instead, it can be intentionally directed through scientific innovation and technological intervention. From this perspective, technology functions as a catalyst for personal growth, allowing individuals to transcend biological limitations and explore new possibilities for intellectual, physical, and emotional development. Rather than replacing humanity, technological transformation enhances the human capacity for adaptation and self-improvement, reflecting the transhumanist commitment to continual progress (More, 2013).

A central aspect of More's philosophy is the belief that technological assimilation should occur through individual choice and rational judgment rather than coercion. He contends that people should have the freedom to decide the extent to which they integrate technology into their lives, ensuring that technological enhancement remains an expression of personal autonomy. Assimilation, therefore, is not merely the physical incorporation of technological devices into the human body but also the acceptance of technology as a meaningful component of everyday existence. As individuals increasingly interact with intelligent systems, biomedical innovations, and digital environments, technology becomes an extension of human agency rather than an external mechanism of control (More, 1993).

Technological transformation encourages the continuous reconstruction of the self. Human identity is not regarded as a fixed biological essence but as an evolving process shaped by conscious choices, lived experiences, and technological opportunities. The integration of technology into the human condition expands the possibilities for self-expression and enables individuals to redefine themselves according to their aspirations. Consequently, technological assimilation does not erase individuality; instead, it provides greater freedom to construct identities that reflect changing personal, social, and cultural realities. This understanding reinforces the transhumanist view that human beings are active participants in their own evolution rather than passive subjects of technological change (More, 2013).

**Practical Optimism**

Practical optimism is a philosophical principle within More's transhumanist philosophy that advocates a realistic yet constructive approach toward human progress by emphasizing rational

action, resilience, and continuous self-improvement. It is founded on the belief that individuals possess the capacity to overcome limitations and improve their lives through informed choices, scientific innovation, and responsible technological advancement. Rather than encouraging passive hope or idealistic expectations, practical optimism promotes purposeful action in confronting challenges and creating opportunities for personal and social transformation. Within literary studies, this principle can be extended as an interpretive framework for understanding women's autonomy, highlighting how female characters actively resist oppressive structures, reconstruct their identities, and exercise agency through determination, knowledge, and technological engagement (More, 1993).

Practical optimism as one of the guiding principles of transhumanist philosophy that combines confidence in human potential with a realistic awareness of the challenges accompanying technological and social development. He argues that meaningful progress is achieved neither through pessimism nor through unrealistic optimism, but through a balanced perspective that embraces innovation while recognizing ethical responsibility. According to More, technological advancement should not be regarded as an inevitable threat to humanity but as an opportunity to improve human capabilities and expand individual freedom. Practical optimism therefore encourages individuals to adopt a constructive mindset that supports innovation, adaptability, and rational decision-making in pursuit of a better future (More, 2013).

Human beings are capable of directing their own development by embracing scientific knowledge and technological innovation to enhance their physical, intellectual, and emotional capacities. However, these possibilities become meaningful only when individuals actively participate in the process of transformation rather than remaining confined by fear, uncertainty, or conventional assumptions. Practical optimism therefore promotes resilience, adaptability, and self-determination by encouraging individuals to perceive challenges as opportunities for growth and advancement instead of insurmountable obstacles (More, 1993).

A significant aspect of practical optimism is its emphasis on individual agency and autonomy. More contends that human beings should act as active participants in shaping their futures rather than passive recipients of technological change. By exercising rational judgment, creativity, and personal responsibility, individuals can employ technological innovation to improve their quality of life and realize their aspirations. In literary interpretation, this principle provides a productive framework for examining women's autonomy by demonstrating how female characters negotiate restrictive social conditions, reclaim control over their lives, and redefine their identities through purposeful action. Practical optimism thus becomes an analytical lens through which women's empowerment is understood not as passive liberation but as an active process of resilience, self-determination, and transformative agency.

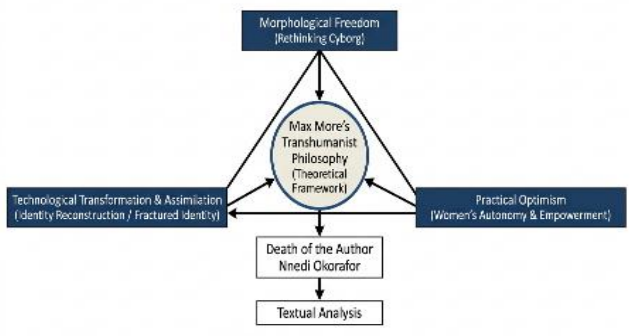


**Figure:** *This Figure is Representing More's Concepts, within the Circle of Transhumanism, Showing Link with Tittle of the Article*

**Discussion and Analysis**

This section examines *Death of the Author* through the theoretical perspectives established in the preceding framework to investigate how the novel reconceptualizes the relationship between technology, identity, and human agency. The analysis begins by exploring the concept of morphological freedom to demonstrate how the narrative rethinks the cyborg as a figure of self-directed transformation rather than technological dehumanization. It then examines the processes of technological transformation and human-machine assimilation to illustrate how technological engagement reconstructs fragmented identities and reshapes the characters' sense of self. Finally, the discussion analyzes the principle of practical optimism to explore how the novel represents women's autonomy, resilience, and empowerment through purposeful action and technological adaptation. By integrating these interconnected concepts, the analysis demonstrates that *Death of the Author* presents technological advancement not merely as a mechanism of enhancement but as a transformative force that enables identity reconstruction, challenges conventional understandings of the cyborg, and envisions more inclusive and empowering futures.

**Rethinking the Cyborg through Morphological Freedom**

Morphological freedom is an important idea in transhumanist thought which means that human beings have the freedom to change or improve their bodies with the help of technology. According to More, morphological freedom gives individuals the right to modify their physical form if it helps them live a better and more capable life. It means that the human body should not always remain limited to its natural condition because modern science and technology can help people overcome physical weaknesses and create new possibilities. This concept suggests that humans can reshape their bodies through technological support in order to gain independence, strength, and mobility.

Life changes greatly after when zelu loses her job as a creative writing teacher. Before this moment she is already living with the limitations of her disability because the accident in her childhood leaves her unable to walk. Losing her job makes her feel frustrated and uncertain about her future, but at the same time it pushes her to focus seriously on writing. She begins working on the science-fiction story she has been imagining for a long time, a story about rusted robots and a technologically changed world. After the novel is published, it quickly becomes popular and spreads across many countries. Within a short time Zelu becomes a famous public figure and is invited to different media platforms where she talks about her novel and her personal journey. During this period, she also decides to undergo a medical procedure to adopt an exoskeleton that allows her to stand and walk again. When she starts appearing in public while walking with these metal legs, the media becomes very interested in her unusual appearance: “The media had started calling her the ‘African cyborg’ which she rather liked.” (Okorafor, 2025, p. 176). This line clearly shows that Zelu’s identity is connected with technology. Word cyborg is used for a person whose body works together with a machine. In Zelu’s situation, the exoskeleton becomes the mechanical support that allows her to walk even though she is physically disabled. Because people see this visible combination of body and technology, the media starts to describe her with the term “cyborg.” This description reflects the idea of cybernetic organisms, where technology becomes an important extension of the human body and helps a person overcome natural physical limits.

As a creative writing teacher, Zelu often feels frustrated while checking her students' assignments. Many students no longer rely completely on their own thinking and imagination. Instead, they use artificial intelligence tools to generate their writing. Zelu easily notices that the language sounds mechanical and lacks real creativity. Even though this disappoints her, she still has to read the assignments carefully and give proper feedback because it is part of her job and source of income. While reading such work, she feels that the writing looks less human and more like something produced by a machine: "Like a robot attempting to be creative and getting the very concept of what that means all wrong. And she'd had to read it closely enough to give this student proper feedback" (Okorafor, 2025, p. 9). This moment shows that human activities are becoming closely connected with machines. In daily life people already depend on technology for many routine tasks such as using smartphones for communication, computers for work, and digital tools for learning. In the same way, students rely on AI to complete their assignments instead of using their own creative ability. This situation reflects the idea that humans and machines are gradually working together in everyday life, which represents the growing presence of cybernetic interaction.

After losing job, Zelu feels uncertain about her future and decides to live in a hostel where she can stay alone and think about her life. During this time she quietly begins to work on a new idea that she does not share with anyone, not even with her family. She starts writing a science-fiction novel about rusted robots and their strange world. Day by day she focuses on this project while living a simple and private life in the hostel. When the novel is finally published, it quickly gains attention and spreads across the world. As the book becomes famous, her family members also become curious and want to read it. However, instead of looking for printed copies, they choose modern digital forms to access the story: "Amarachi had preordered the electronic version on her phone. And Uzo and Bola had preordered the audiobook" (Okorafor, 2025, p. 91). This detail shows that reading habits have changed because of technology. People no longer depend only on printed books or libraries to read literature. Instead, they use digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, or audio platforms to access stories quickly and easily. In this way human activities become closely connected with machines, even in simple routines like reading. Quotation therefore reflects that everyday life is increasingly shaped by technology, where machines assist human actions and gradually become part of normal human behavior, which supports the idea of cybernetic interaction.

During one of media interviews after becoming famous, Zelu talks about her long struggle as a writer. She explains that before this success she had written several novels, but all of them were rejected by publishers. For many years her writing does not receive recognition, which makes her journey difficult. This time, however, she decides to try something different. Instead of choosing traditional themes, she writes a science-fiction story about a future where rusted robots exist and humans no longer control the world. The novel surprises readers and quickly becomes popular because its theme feels new and different from common stories: "So you killed off all of humankind and gave robots the spotlight" (Okorafor, 2025, p. 183). This line highlights that modern imagination is increasingly shaped by technology. In earlier times literature often focused on themes like politics, romance, social life, or human relationships. However, in the present age people are deeply connected with technological systems, so stories about machines, artificial intelligence, and robotic worlds attract more interest. So, the quotation therefore reflects that technology has entered human thinking and creativity. Even literature begins to imagine worlds where machines play central roles, which indirectly supports the idea that human life.

Being a celebrity, Zelu struggles with the idea of appearing in public while still living with her disability. She feels that her paralysis limits her presence and confidence, so she decides to undergo an operation to adopt an exoskeleton, which will allow her to walk. During the operation, she notices something unusual, instead of doctors giving her instructions directly, a machine provides the commands and guides her step by step. She realizes that technology is not only helping her body but also controlling parts of the surgical process, showing how machines have become central even in medical procedures: "Please press your fingers to the remote, the voice responded" (Okorafor, 2025, p. 127). This moment shows how technology has changed traditional human roles. In the past, doctors would directly instruct and operate with their hands, guiding patients personally. Now, machines assist and even take over some of these responsibilities, meaning doctors rely on technology to perform precise actions: "The AI is trained to read your every intention. It knows you. So just be you" (Okorafor, 2025, p. 135). This situation reflects the idea of cybernetic organisms, where human life merges with machines. Both Zelu and the medical team interact with technology in ways that extend human capability, showing that humans themselves are becoming connected with machines in their daily and professional routines.

After the operation of adopting exos, Zelu is finally able to walk like any other person. Her mobility gives her confidence and at the same time, her fame from the novel, rusted robots, has made her a popular figure on social media. She gains thousands of followers who admire her work and journey. However, adopting the exoskeleton and becoming publicly recognized as a cyborg brings criticism as well. Many people on social media comment that she is timid, weak, or unrealistic for changing her body instead of accepting her natural self. They judge her choices harshly, even though they do not know her personally. Amidst this criticism, her boyfriend's friend comforts her and reminds her to focus on what matters: "Plus, social media isn't the real world. This is the real world. So, Zelu…" (Okorafor, 2025, p. 195). This moment shows how deeply technology shapes human perception and social life. People often value opinions from online communities more than those around them in reality family, friends, or neighbors. The judgment Zelu faces online highlights how human interactions have become mediated through technology. This reliance on digital approval reflects the theme of cybernetic organisms, where human experience and social identity are influenced and even controlled by machines and technological networks, demonstrating how intertwined human life has become with technological systems.

Fame of zelu as the author of the rusted robot novel spreads worldwide and one day she receives an unexpected email. The message comes from Jack Preston, a billionaire and the owner of a private spaceship, offering her the chance to go to space. This opportunity is especially meaningful to Zelu because, as a child, she had dreamed of becoming an astronaut and exploring space. After her accident, her paralysis forced her to give up this dream, and she lived much of her life with this limitation. Now, with her achievements and advancements in technology, she finally has the chance to fulfill her childhood wish and leave the Earth: "If you want to do this, then that's the best thing for you right now. You want to leave the Earth, and this is your shot" (Okorafor, 2025, p. 209). This moment illustrates that technology can push human abilities beyond their natural limits. Traveling to space was once impossible for most people, and even more so for someone with a disability. Through advanced machines and technological support, Zelu can now achieve what her natural body could not. This reflects the idea of cybernetic organisms, where human life is enhanced and extended through technology, making the seemingly impossible possible and reshaping what humans are capable of achieving.

**Identity Reconstruction via Technological Transformation and Assimilation**

Within transhumanist philosophy, More introduces the idea of technological transformation and assimilation. This concept explains that humans gradually integrate technology into their bodies, habits, and everyday practices, and during this process technology does not remain only a tool outside the human body rather, it slowly becomes part of human life and identity. This transformation enhances human capability, but at the same time it may disturb traditional patterns of living. When human life becomes deeply dependent on technological systems, the natural structure of human identity begins to fragment. In this way, technological assimilation can produce a fractured identity where human practices, relationships, and experiences are reshaped by machines and digital tools. This process of fragmentation due to technological transformation appears clearly in the life of Zelu in Death of the Author.

When Zelu is staying in America for a short visit, she begins to notice many advanced technologies around her. One day she gets the opportunity to travel in a taxi that drives itself without a human driver. The car moves automatically and takes passengers to their destination without any human control. As she sits inside the vehicle, she observes how unusual the experience feels because there is no driver to talk to during the journey: “This was just a regular Sub turned into a self-driving car. A sort of evolution. Interesting” (Okorafor, 2025, p. 50). This moment shows that technological transformation changes every day human experiences. In earlier times, passengers often interacted with drivers during travel, which created small social connections. The self-driving car removes that human presence, replacing interaction with automation. In this way, technology reshapes social behavior and fragments traditional forms of human communication.

At the beginning of the story, Zelu loses her job and suddenly has a large amount of free time. Instead of remaining idle, she decides to concentrate on finishing her novel. She spends most of her time sitting with her laptop and writing continuously. Day and night she remains absorbed in the process of typing and developing her story. Because of this intense focus on digital writing, she often forgets basic routines of life and sometimes does not even remember to eat during the whole day: “Once again, she’d forgotten to eat all day” (Okorafor, 2025, p. 99). This moment reflects that technological transformation reshapes everyday human behavior. Zelu becomes so deeply engaged with her laptop that natural bodily needs are overlooked. The dependence on digital tools alters the balance of daily life, showing that technology can gradually disrupt traditional human habits and contribute to the fragmentation of human identity.

When Zelu is living in the hostel with her boyfriend, there comes a moment when she has to leave the room for some time. Before leaving, she decides to write a small note for him with a few instructions. She picks up a pen and writes the message on paper. While doing this, she suddenly feels strange and awkward because writing by hand is no longer a common practice in their daily life. In modern times people usually leave messages through mobile apps or digital platforms instead of paper: “After the day she'd had, writing by hand, the old-school way, felt rebellious” (Okorafor, 2025, p. 129). This moment illustrates that technological transformation has altered traditional forms of communication. Writing with pen and paper once represented the normal method of leaving messages, but now digital communication has replaced it. Because of this shift, even a simple handwritten note feels unusual, showing that technological change fragments earlier human practices.

In the novel *death of the author* Zelu and her boyfriend often live far away from each other because of their different responsibilities and locations. Even though thousands of kilometers separate them, they remain connected through digital communication. Instead of waiting for letters or long visits, they easily contact each other through phone calls and social media. In earlier times, people had to travel long distances or write letters to stay connected with loved ones, but modern technology now allows instant communication: “I saw it on the social media. He paused. I’ve wanted to call you. I’ve wanted to call you, too. I’ve missed you. His voice was soft but purposeful” (Okorafor, 2025, p. 158). This moment shows that technological transformation reshapes human relationships and communication. The ability to connect instantly through digital platforms replaces traditional practices like letters and long physical visits. As a result, technology alters the way people maintain relationships, demonstrating that modern communication tools transform and fragment earlier social traditions.

After the death of Zelu’s father, many relatives gather at her home to offer condolences and support the family. The house becomes crowded and emotionally heavy. Because of the long day and the presence of so many people, Zelu feels exhausted and needs some rest. Instead of relying on human comfort or conversation, she decides to put her earbuds in and play music on her device. While listening to the music, she gradually relaxes and eventually falls asleep: “Putting some music on. Thankfully, she soon fell asleep” (Okorafor, 2025, p. 279). This moment reflects that technological transformation changes traditional human practices. In earlier times, people often relied on oral traditions such as lullabies or comforting voices from family members to fall asleep. Here, digital music replaces that human interaction, showing that technology transforms everyday habits and gradually fragments earlier cultural and social traditions.

After losing job, Zelu begins living in a small hostel room while trying to finish her novel. Because she has no stable income, she struggles to pay her bills regularly. Eventually, the electricity company cuts off the power in her room. This situation makes her anxious because without electricity she cannot charge her laptop or mobile phone. These devices are important for her writing and communication, so the loss of electricity creates a serious problem in her daily life: “ComEd had finally cut off her power. She hadn't fully paid the bill in months. She checked her phone's battery life. Twenty-five percent; BullSHIT. Whatever! she shouted” (Okorafor, 2025, p. 32). This moment highlights that technological transformation reshapes basic concerns of human life. In earlier times, survival mainly depended on food and shelter, but now daily activities depend heavily on electricity and digital devices. Zelu’s anxiety about charging her phone and laptop shows that technological dependence changes priorities and fragments traditional ideas of survival.

In different states of America for zelu and her boyfriend, it was difficult to meet regularly. When her sister’s wedding approaches, he takes a flight to see her, showing how modern technology enables rapid long-distance travel. This contrasts with older times when people relied on buses, trains, or even horses, which required much more time and effort to meet loved ones. Their ability to connect quickly highlights that technological advances have changed human routines and capabilities: “He was flying into Chicago just to meet her” (Okorafor, 2025, p. 98). This quotation demonstrates that technological transformation reshapes human experiences and expectations. Travel that once demanded significant time and planning is now almost instantaneous, fragmenting traditional practices and altering social behaviors. Technology thus expands human capability but also shifts the nature of daily life and interaction.

**Practical Optimism and Women's Empowerment**

Practical optimism is a transhumanist principle that emphasizes maintaining a positive and constructive outlook toward technological and human advancement while recognizing real-world challenges. It involves a balanced confidence in the potential of innovation to improve human life, combined with proactive strategies to address risks and ethical concerns. This approach encourages individuals to embrace change, pursue enhancement, and engage with emerging technologies responsibly. Practical optimism fosters resilience, forward-thinking, and adaptive action, enabling humans to navigate transformative processes such as cybernetic integration, identity evolution, and the expansion of autonomy in a technologically evolving world. More's principle of practical optimism emphasizes a proactive stance toward the future rather than resignation to predetermined limitations. For More, optimism is not naïve hope but an intentional orientation of thought and action that insists upon human capacity to shape existence beyond imposed constraints (More, 2013). This framework directly connects with the pursuit of greater self-governance, especially for those historically relegated to marginal positions in social and technological structures. By anchoring optimism in action, More underscores that transformation becomes possible only when individuals envision themselves as agents capable of intervention rather than passive recipients of circumstance (More, 2013).

After receiving complaints from her creative writing students, Zelu loses her teaching job and faces a major setback in her professional life. Rather than allowing this failure to discourage her, she devotes herself to writing her novel on her laptop, channeling her energy into her creative work. Her perseverance eventually leads to international recognition, transforming her into a celebrated author. Later, one of the same students who had previously complained about her contacts her again. This time, Zelu refuses to remain silent and confidently expresses her feelings through a direct text message: "All of you can go to hell. I'll NEVER be that poster girl that you can manipulate like a paraplegic Barbie doll. You can't put my arm here and push my legs there! I'm ME! Deal with it!" (Okorafor, 2025, p. 187). This moment reflects practical optimism by demonstrating Zelu's complete confidence in asserting her identity and autonomy after overcoming earlier struggles. Instead of allowing others to define or control her because of her disability, she openly rejects their attempts to manipulate her. Her bold response signifies a woman who has gained the courage to speak for herself and defend her individuality without fear of judgment. The digital platform enables her to communicate her stance directly, reinforcing that women's empowerment is achieved through self-respect, independent decision-making, and the confidence to challenge attitudes that seek to undermine their autonomy.

After losing her teaching job, Zelu feels frustrated but refuses to let failure define her future. Instead of surrendering to despair, she turns her attention to writing and immerses herself in completing her novel. She opens her laptop and dedicates herself to her work, spending long hours writing without sleeping. Despite the emotional and financial difficulties she faces, she remains committed to her goal and continues striving to improve her circumstances through her creative efforts and the use of technology: "She wheeled to her laptop, put it in her lap, opened it up, and continued writing. For a second night, she didn't sleep" (Okorafor, 2025, p. 30). This moment reflects practical optimism by portraying Zelu as a woman who responds to adversity with resilience and purposeful action rather than hopelessness. Instead of allowing unemployment to undermine her confidence, she exercises autonomy by choosing to invest her time and energy in her creative ambitions. Her laptop becomes more than a technological device; it serves as a medium through which she maintains agency and actively reshapes her future.

Zelu's unwavering commitment to writing demonstrates that women's empowerment emerges through determination, self-belief, and the willingness to transform setbacks into opportunities for personal growth.

After experiencing repeated rejection of her earlier novels, Zelu refuses to abandon her dream of becoming a successful writer. Instead of allowing failure to discourage her, she decides to experiment with a new literary direction by writing a science fiction novel centered on rusted robots. Her willingness to explore a different genre reflects her determination to improve and embrace new creative possibilities. Once she completes the manuscript, she immediately sends it to her literary agent, taking a decisive step toward achieving her professional aspirations: “In the morning, before she thought too hard about it, she emailed the novel to her agent, Jack Maher” (Okorafor, 2025, p. 57). This moment exemplifies practical optimism by illustrating Zelu's confidence in her abilities despite a history of rejection. Rather than allowing past failures to limit her ambitions, she exercises autonomy by making an independent decision to pursue a fresh creative path and actively seek new opportunities. Her immediate action in sending the manuscript reflects a proactive mindset that values perseverance over fear of failure.

**Conclusion**

The present study has examined Okorafor's *Death of the Author* through the theoretical lens of More's transhumanist philosophy, particularly the concepts of morphological freedom, technological transformation and assimilation, and practical optimism. The analysis demonstrates that the novel rethinks the cyborg as a figure of self-directed transformation rather than technological dehumanization, presenting technology as a means of expanding human potential and reconstructing identity. Furthermore, the study reveals that technological transformation and assimilation reshape fragmented identities by enabling individuals to negotiate new forms of selfhood through the integration of advanced technologies. The findings also establish that practical optimism extends beyond technological progress to embody women's autonomy, resilience, and self-determination, illustrating how female agency is strengthened through purposeful action and informed engagement with technology. By applying More's theoretical framework to *Death of the Author*, this study contributes a fresh perspective to existing scholarship on Okorafor's fiction and contemporary posthuman discourse, demonstrating that technological advancement can function as a catalyst for identity reconstruction, empowerment, and social transformation rather than a source of alienation. Consequently, the study underscores the significance of transhumanist thought in literary studies and opens new avenues for exploring the intersections of technology, gender, and posthuman identity in contemporary speculative fiction.

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