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Literary Bioengineerings in the Novel: The Romanian Robot

Abstract: This study examines the posthuman perspective as a "mythopoetic production" (Clarke), wherein the human is deconstructed through analysis not as a unified whole but as an "assemblage". Through this lens, the human is reinterpreted as a fluid entity, assimilating and integrating diverse cultural, technological, and ecological influences that shape its identity. In *Omul de cristal* (*The Crystal Man*), published in 1930, Nicolae Rădulescu-Niger constructs such a figure in the form of a proto-robot, an artificial entity humanized through its integration into a social system. Eudoxiu, the physician-character, engineers Amedeu, who is subsequently destroyed through a violent act. The creation of the crystal man is achieved through the tools of a pseudo-creator, rendering the human not merely a biological entity but a dynamic social, cultural, and technological construct.
Keywords: Novel; Robot; Proto-Posthumanism; Technogenesis; Nonhuman.

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The present study aims to examine an interwar novel by a lesser-known Romanian author from the perspective of its positioning within a framework that offers an integrative view of the evolution of humanity and technology. Posthumanism, as conceptualized by Bruce Clarke, represents a form of "mythopoetic production" that includes "tales about human metamorphs [which] intimate that the form of the human has neither somatic nor psychic fixity"[1]. Conversely, Peter-Paul Verbeek's concept of nonhumanism emphasizes "the idea that the human can only exist in its relations to the nonhuman"[2]. Discussing the "nonhuman" becomes meaningful when artificially created beings, such as Amedeu, the "crystal man" imagined by Nicolae Rădulescu-Niger, appear, with the narrative discourse proposing a proto-posthumanism from this perspective.

Our thesis is grounded in two key components of the theme, both intricately linked to science: on the one hand, the discovery of glass, which has even given rise to a mental pathology, thus imagining and fabricating the notion of the "glass man"; on the other hand, technogenesis, through which a proto-robot is produced. We observe a connection with reflections

in literature on the process of creating an artificial being, as well as a framework constructed from historical events that address the "crystal man", the central character around which the novel under study is built. Consequently, we note that history documents a psychological condition known as the "glass delusion", which involves an individual's belief in the real fragility of their body, as if it were made of glass. This condition appears to have emerged in the 15th century, coinciding with industrial modernization and the production of glass. We also consider the pathological case of King Charles VI of France, who was terrified by the possibility that he would shatter into pieces, believing himself to be a "glass man". Closer to the time of the novel's publication, an international exhibition showcased a "glass man", later referred to by Americans as the "X-ray man". The immense success of such exhibits led to the creation of over nine such figures between 1928 and 1945[3], now displayed in Dresden and Berlin. Additionally, studies by Herbert Bayer of the Bauhaus school highlight the motif of transparent statues, inspired by Polyclitus' ancient Doryphoros.

Within the context of this discussion, we observe the evolution of a clear dependence of humanity and technological progress, from *homo œconomicus* (Vilfredo Pareto[4]) to *Homo faber* (Henri Bergson[5]), *Homo ludens* (Johan Huizinga[6]), *Robo sapiens* (Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio[7]), and the more recent theory of Alain Robitaille, which envisions the genetically modified human – HGM[8]. In 1966, John Cohen[9] has already traced the history of robots in his study *Human Robots in Myth and Science*. Thus, the concept of *technogenesis*, which implicates technology in the evolution of humanity, becomes evident.

> This idea is the essence of technogenesis: the co-evolution and co-creation of humanity and technology. Technogenesis is not a one-time historical event; not merely an origin story that explains our emergence as the human species in the distant past, but an ongoing process. Of course, all species continually evolve under pressure from their environments. But according to technogenesis, human evolution is tied to something other than environment and genome – to technology, which has its own developmental momentum[10].

The association between humans and machines/robots has been recognized since the oldest times, as demonstrated by Kevin LaGrandeur[11], who notes that androids emerge as characters in early literature, and we might add, even in antiquity, through the "automation" of human processes. LaGrandeur further observes:

> The story that someone could actually create an artificial human, mechanical or organic, was always associated with public reprobation and fear, as well as awe. So philosophers who dabbled in alchemy and the creation of androids were often outcasts, being hounded from town to town, like Paracelsus and Agrippa, or being publicly censured, like Roger Bacon[12].

Thus, we observe the convergence of two ideas: alongside the perspective of the "glass man", the researcher or artist is

captivated by the concept of an android that mimics its creator.

> The idea of the android as an enhancement to the body or brain of the maker is, as we have seen, both very old and remarkably consistent in its symbolic value. It appears to represent the mysterious force of the scientific mind and, simultaneously, to trigger a sublime reaction that mixes awe at human technical potential with loathing of its existential consequences – consequences that extend to a sticky quandary about what separates our gods and even our machines from us[13].

We observe that this "symbolic value" is essential in assessing the role that imagining such representations can play in literature. This perspective is evident in Nicolae Rădulescu-Niger's novel *The Crystal Man*, published in 1930, which constructs a character that can be associated with a proto-robot/android. Karel Čapek, in his 1921 play *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)*, introduced the term "robot"[14] to denote "artificial workers" in the context of depersonalization through the technological automation of labor. Furthermore, as noted, the robot is defined by Fiévet like "an artificial creature, most often mechanical, autonomous or not, capable of movement or moving one or more of its components, performing specific tasks, and reproducing all or part of human or animal characteristics"[15] providing a broader context for this concept. A few years earlier, in 1927, Fritz Lang's silent film *Metropolis* featured a robotic replica of the female character Maria, set in a futuristic city in 2026m, which was marked by skyscrapers and social crises. Such representations thus contextualize characters that would permeate both literature and, especially, 20th-century cinema.

The Crystal Proto-Robot

Several works are known to center on such characters, distinguished by the transparency afforded by crystal or glass. Examples include H.G. Wells' *The Crystal Egg* (1897), Edward Page Mitchell's *The Crystal Man* (1881), and *The Ablest Man in the World* (1879). Rădulescu-Niger's novel focuses on the perspective of the creator, who constructs an artificial being. The rural setting is employed to highlight the incongruity between the environment and the revolutionary discovery. Set in this context, the narrative describes a world in formation, where the seeds of new technological trends were still germinating[16]. The text notes: "It is 1910. The village has grown accustomed to the idea that the doctor has a son, but it is still puzzled: where did he come from, and with whom?"[17] Here, the community's voice conveys the mystery surrounding the young man's appearance. Beyond the invention presented to the world, Dr. Eudoxiu Zarian serves to raise questions such as: "What if a person's thoughts could be seen without their knowledge?"[18] - pointing to the possibility of interconnected networks or intelligent systems. Florin Manolescu considers Rădulescu-Niger's novel to be

> the first novel featuring a robot in Romanian literature. [...] The strangest aspect of this automaton, which neither eats nor drinks, is a mechanism for radiating thought, making thoughts visible [...] and the

> peculiarity of endowing it with a Sămănătorist personality, surprising for a science fiction novel[19].

This reflects a process of localization, an ideological shaping of a character that evolves from a proto-robot blueprint into a structure bearing social significance. Ion Hobana, in *The Golden Age of Romanian Anticipation*, notes that *Sămănătorist* insertions are sometimes critiqued, as exemplified by:

> Dimitrie Anghel's story *The Enemy of Mechanization*, which indirectly polemicizes with one of the retrograde aspects of *Sămănătorism*: the overseer Panțu sabotages agricultural machinery to work the land as in ancestral times. 'Machines are a vain word and complex, diabolical inventions', he declares, justifying his vandalism. (…) This subtle anti-scientism, later amplified by *Gândirism*, is evident[20].

In *The Crystal Man*, Rădulescu-Niger does not directly attack science but insinuates its risks through the narrative: the artificial being, though perfect, generates fear, suggesting that surpassing natural limits leads to alienation:

> 'This man is an invention, a creation resulting from years of arduous labor… He is an artificial being'. 'Artificial'? she exclaimed, frozen in astonishment, gazing at Eudoxiu with trepidation. 'You will soon see for yourself… For now, let us see if I can at least activate the mechanism of his movement…'. (...) It was undeniably true that she was beholding an artificial man – that this figure, so closely resembling the natural yet artificial, had inspired in her… love? The genius of the creator was indeed profound![21]

The narrator concludes that admiration is directed primarily toward the creator of the artificial man and only secondarily toward the creation itself. The description of the artificial body is rudimentary: pieces of crystal bound with metal threads, yet in the visible parts, it retains an imitation of skin:

> In front of the library stands, motionless, a life-sized body of tall stature–or, more accurately, an empty shell in the form of a human body, crafted from finely wrought crystal pieces bound with metal. On a table, higher than usual, near this body, rests a head, exquisitely modeled from a material that makes it resemble a natural head, though its eye sockets remain empty for now. There are also two arms, crystalline up to the elbows, from where each hand appears to be made of flesh with its natural skin[22].

This constructs a hollow image, that of an "empty shell in the form of a human body", delineating an entity devoid of inner substance, mimicking the human form without possessing the essence of life or consciousness. The "finely wrought" crystal material evokes fragility and transparency, suggesting the vulnerability of this artificial construct. The metal bindings, in contrast, signify rigidity and mechanicity, underscoring the tension between the organic and the inorganic. Similarly, the head lacks eyes, symbolizing the absence of

a gaze – an emblem of consciousness, soul, or the capacity to engage with the world. The empty eye sockets may be interpreted as a reference to the incompleteness of human creation.

The purpose of this invention is of a "social nature"[23], not an attempt to rival divinity, as its aim is to create "an artificial man capable of living, though undoubtedly without the ability to procreate"[24]. This perspective is emphasized through the introduction of relationships with female characters such as Daniela Mioneanu or Adela Bucescu, "the woman of revelries", alongside Debleu, Puianu, and Gobescu, who are described as "fleeting lovers". This reiterates a social implication, yet the narrative direction is constructed as an expression of scientific progress, driven by knowledge.

The novel also interweaves mythological elements, for instance, by attributing a medieval, legendary origin to the character Ion Colibaș. Thus, "descended from an ancient noble lineage, the Drăculești, in an unbroken male line, Ion Colibaș retained an unyielding pride in his heritage, though without arrogance"[25]. From a mythological perspective, the association with the Drăculești introduces an ambivalent dimension. Vlad Țepeș, a representative of the Drăculești family, is a dual figure: a historical personality but also a cultural archetype associated with violence and cruelty. This duality reflects a tension in Colibaș's character – between nobility and a potential darker side.

Technogenesis and Alchemy

Through the process of creating the "crystal man", the novel illustrates a fascinating intersection of technogenesis, alchemy, and proto-posthumanism[26], highlighting humanity's ambition to transcend biological limits through artificial creation. The creator's space is associated with the "sight of a metallurgical workshop" and a hearth "laden with soot", evoking archetypal images of alchemy, where raw matter is transformed into a superior form through purification and metamorphosis. Set in a rural context, this scene proposes a tension between tradition and modernity, between the natural environment and the realm of technological creation. The hearth, with its soot-laden chimney, can be interpreted as a symbol of alchemical transformation but also of the technogenetic effort to shape living matter in a way that imitates and surpasses nature.

The depiction of Dr. Eudoxiu Zarian, whose "bold idea" to create an "artificial man" reflects a vision of humanity's evolution alongside scientific and technological development, is central. The intention to reproduce "the external configuration, the internal anatomical structure, and certain physical and intellectual organic functions of a natural human"[27] stems not only from a desire to imitate but also to reconfigure the human condition, introducing "specific modifications to organs and functions"[28] that define the uniqueness of the artificial creation. Such approaches anticipate what would later be termed "posthumanism", engaging with the interplay of the organic and the mechanical[29], the natural and the artificial. From this perspective, Dr. Eudoxiu Zarian can be interpreted as an archetype of the modern alchemist, a *homo faber* who, instead of seeking the philosopher's stone, strives to create a superior being capable of transcending biological limitations.

Zarian's project can also be analyzed through the lens of Donna Haraway, who argues that the boundaries between human, machine, and nature are fluid and negotiable, defining a robot/cyborg as: "The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self"[30]. This essential trait, tied to the collective and personal self, is also evident in Rădulescu-Niger's "crystal man". Unlike traditional alchemy, which sought the perfection of matter, the technogenesis proposed by Zarian's "crystal man" project suggests that the human is not a fixed category but a fluid one, negotiated through interaction with technology. The doctor's artificial creation is not merely a replication of the human but an extension that reconfigures human ontology, challenging traditional dualisms (natural/artificial, body/mind, creator/creation). In this context, Zarian embodies the posthumanist paradox: the desire to transcend the human through technology is accompanied by an anxiety about the loss of human identity and the dangerously close proximity to the "gods" or "machines" created by humanity.

The reader is cautioned regarding the inquisitive disposition of the doctor, as his pursuit of knowledge "further and deeper" following the attainment of his medical doctorate underscores a connection between scientific inquiry and metaphysical exploration. This reflects a modern alchemical trajectory, wherein science becomes the instrument for achieving transmutation - not only of matter but of the very concept of life. In the terms articulated by Rosi Braidotti[31] who explores posthumanism as a redefinition of subjectivity, Zarian's project can be seen as an attempt to map a new form of subjectivity.

Artificial Brain, Neural Network

In this novel, Rădulescu-Niger explores the theme of the artificial brain and neural network from a perspective that proposes a reconfiguration of the cognitive and physical functions of the human body through technological means. The meticulous description of Eudoxiu Zarian's studies of the human skull, through "partial surgical experiments" and "analytical topography" of cerebral organs, points to a rigorous scientific approach. At this stage of research, the text highlights the limitations of this approach: higher cognitive functions, such as "intelligence, will, memory, and judgment"[32], remain a "mystery of creation", impossible to reproduce chemically. This impossibility leads to a mechanistic solution, wherein Zarian creates individual "devices" for each function – hearing, sight, speech, movement – a metaphor that anticipates what we now recognize as an artificial neural network, in which specialized modules mimic the functions of the biological brain. Zarian's artificial brain, with its "cranial case divided into two concave hemispheres" and intricate mechanisms, represents an attempt to translate the organic complexity of the human brain into a mechanical system – an aspiration that, we argue, prefigures the concept of artificial neural networks in contemporary computer science.

Since it was chemically impossible to create an artificial brain with all its attributes, it was necessary, for each cerebral center with its specific role in relation to certain parts of the body, to devise a device, each dedicated to hearing, sight, articulated speech, jaw movement, smell, and then the most challenging ones – those of intelligence, will, memory, and judgment

– whose location in the skull medicine has been unable to pinpoint, as they remain a mystery of creation in the development, over time, of functions and the organs they have shaped[33].

The activation mechanisms of the "cranial apparatus" and the "bodily apparatus" through keys inserted at precise points crystallize this mechanistic vision while introducing a symbolic dimension. The keys, positioned "below the nape" and "above the right hip", serve as the point of emergence for the body's functional dependency, with the prior activation of the cranial apparatus emphasizing the primacy of consciousness or intellect in defining the human. In this sense, Zarian's apparatus can be likened to a modern neural network, where the activation of one system (the "cranium") triggers the operation of another (the "body"). Zarian's creation of an artificial brain constitutes an act of foundation, a creation that seeks to imitate nature while simultaneously revealing a rupture: the higher functions of the human mind, deemed a "mystery of creation", elude mechanistic logic. This rupture reflects a posthumanist anxiety[34], as articulated by Braidotti, concerning the risk of technology reifying the human, reducing it to a sum of functions rather than recognizing its relational nature.

In the context of robotics and the android, Zarian's project anticipates contemporary concerns related to the development of humanoid robots and artificial intelligence. The described artificial brain, with its devices dedicated to specific functions, resembles the modular architectures of modern robots, where distinct subsystems (sensors for vision, processors for speech) are integrated to create an appearance of autonomy. However, Amedeu, the crystal man, underscores a fundamental limitation: the inability to chemically or mechanically replicate higher cognitive functions such as will or judgment.

The cranial apparatus is set in motion by a key inserted into a mechanism located below the nape, above the spine. The bodily apparatus is activated by another, slightly larger key, inserted into a mechanism fixed above the right hip, corresponding to the position of the right kidney in a natural body. This apparatus is thus prepared for movement but does not function effectively unless the cranial apparatus begins its operation[35].

The description of the "man" who "opens his eyes and looks naturally" after the mechanisms are activated by keys evokes a scene of awakening that mimics human life, yet simultaneously elicits "shivers" and an "indescribable sensation" for the creator. The gesture of the "crystal man" raising his hand to his forehead, "as if to recall", suggests an appearance of consciousness, an imitation of human reflexivity that remains ambiguous: is this a genuine manifestation of consciousness or merely a mechanical simulation? This ambiguity resonates with posthumanist questions about the boundaries between living beings and machines, as formulated by N. Katherine Hayles (1999), who argues:

> The materiality of an embodied text is the interaction of its physical characteristics with its signifying strategies. Centered in the artifact, this notion of materiality extends beyond the individual object, for its physical characteristics are the result of the social, cultural, and technological processes that brought it into being[36].

In Rădulescu-Niger's work, the "artificial man" is an "artifact" that imitates the human, but its materiality – internal mechanisms, the "mechanism of movement" – reveals a technological rather than biological origin. Hayles explains that the materiality of a text or artifact is not limited to its physical characteristics (the mechanical body) but encompasses the semiotic strategies that imbue it with meaning (the ability to inspire love, to appear "natural"):

> But what shivers – oh!... what an indescribable sensation – when his man opens his eyes and looks naturally, exactly like one awakening and trying to make sense of his surroundings!... He raises his right hand to his forehead, as if to recall, and, seeing Eudoxiu, fixes him with a questioning gaze. Eudoxiu, in this moment of astonishment and satisfaction, does not know what to do: the reality, which begins to live, overwhelms him. The crystal man takes a few steps through the room. It seems that the gleaming tools on the tables and in the cabinets catch his attention…[37]

Rădulescu-Niger imagines, in place of the "belly and stomach", a "network of platinum wires" and "steel cogs" connected to a "specific center in the cranium"[38], amplifying the vision of an artificial body that eliminates biological necessities, reconfiguring the human body as a mechanical system. The replacement of nerves with "wires" connected to a cerebral center reflects an attempt to recreate an artificial neural network, an idea that prefigures contemporary cybernetic systems. In this sense, Zarian's "crystal man" can be seen as a precursor to the modern android, a hybrid construct navigating the organic and inorganic, an attempt to control and rationalize the body by eliminating "unnecessary" biological elements such as digestion.

Zarian's project to construct a "crystal man" – an android with a human appearance but devoid of biological necessities – evokes, to some extent, the Faustian myth, wherein absolute knowledge and creative power are achieved through a moral sacrifice. In this sense, the text raises questions about the tension between technogenesis and the creator's responsibility, the nature of the human, and the risks associated with transgressing natural boundaries – themes that resonate with the Faustian pact described in the quotation: "Faust saw the futility of life because he had reached old age without finding in science the answers to questions beyond human knowledge […]; but this conviction, like his desire for non-existence, was not sincere, since temptation was able to sway him and make him sell his soul to Satan"[39]. The invocation of Goethe's imagined Faustian pact suggests a perspective on the evolution of the human being in relation to science, which could have provided what was lacking for happiness. This connection between the pursuit of happiness through science is embodied in the character of Eudoxiu, who, like a figure in a fairy tale, lacked an heir. From this unfulfillment arises the tireless research that leads to the creation of the artificial being. A clear tension is also expressed between the transparent, inorganic "crystal" and the transparency of thoughts: "for a man's intimate thought to be seen is incompatible with the nature of things, with man, who never wishes his moral portrait to be known"[40].

The creation of a transparent android like Amedeu, whose crystalline body reveals a "metallic structure", could also be interpreted as an intrusion into the private sphere of human consciousness and morality. This literal and metaphorical transparency accounts for the loss of autonomy and privacy that define the human, suggesting an "incompatibility with the nature of things" in the act of artificial creation. The purpose of Amedeu's existence is formulated as follows: "not to defy his creator but to conduct 'an experiment of a social nature'"[41], indicating an apparently benign yet ambiguous intention. This "social experiment" can be interpreted as an attempt to test the limits of interaction between man and machine, but also as a challenge to the natural order. In contrast to the Faustian myth, where the desire for absolute knowledge leads Faust to a pact with the devil, Zarian appears to pursue a practical, not merely theoretical, transcendence.

The character "Părăluță" Mihaiu, described as "lunatic" or "epileptic" and involved in the „killing" of Amedeu, introduces a tragic and moral dimension to the narrative. His violent act could be a visceral reaction against the artificial, an affirmation of human limitations in the face of a creation that defies the natural order. In this sense, Amedeu's destruction reflects a collision between the human and the artificial/nonhuman, underscoring the conflict among creator, creation, and society. The detailed description of Amedeu's damaged body – with cracks in the crystal, a hole at the base of the skull, and a paste mimicking flesh – emphasizes the hybrid nature of the creation, situated at the boundary between organic and artificial. These technical details, combined with the doctor's mechanical intervention, as he "skillfully disassembled the skull like a mechanic", highlight that he is a constructed product, revealed through the act of "cleaning" and "disassembling" the skull – a form of dismantling identity, an exploration of the interior that can be viewed both as an act of knowledge and a violation of integrity.

Amedeu's existence as an artificial entity evokes questions akin to those raised by contemporary artificial intelligence (AI): What does it mean to create a being that mimics the human? Are there impassable boundaries between creator and creation? The transparency of Amedeu's crystalline body can be interpreted in contemporary terms as an allegory for the exposure and manipulation of data and algorithms in the digital era, raising concerns about the loss of privacy in the face of technology. Simultaneously, the interplay between the natural body and the significance of the artificial is evident in the reaction of the female character. Confronted with Amedeu's "artifact" nature, she experiences an emotional crisis: her love for a mechanical construct blurs the boundaries between the living and the artificial:

> When she saw 'Amedeu' exposed, she realized, with astonishment, the reality of the thing: she was facing a crystalline body through which an entire metallic structure was visible. At the back, below the shoulders, there was a crack in the crystal plate extending from the neck to the waist, perfectly mimicking this part of a body. Another hole was at the base of the skull. The material that formed the flesh-like paste had been crushed and pierced, and the cranial case was shattered.

> The doctor cleaned the area of crystal fragments and splinters, then disassembled the skull with the skill of a mechanic[42].

Amedeu, a Precursor to AI?

The proposition to view Amedeu, the "crystal man" in the analyzed text, as a precursor to artificial intelligence (AI) involves an interdisciplinary exploration of how literature anticipates the technological and ontological dilemmas of modernity. The novel depicts a cultural scene in which a music professor recounts the life of Chopin and his relationship with George Sand, followed by the recitation and critique of Depărățianu's poem "Summer in the Countryside". Amedeu actively participates in this discussion, offering a detailed literary analysis, suggesting that the android possesses not only cognitive capacities but also an apparent aesthetic sensibility. His ability to recognize "genuine poetic sensibility" in Depărățianu's poetry, while also identifying flaws such as a "somewhat unrefined style" and "neologisms", indicates a processing function that mimics human critical judgment.

In this sense, Amedeu prefigures contemporary AI systems capable of analyzing texts, recognizing stylistic patterns, and issuing data-based judgments, despite lacking consciousness or subjective experience: "Amedeu presented him as one of the forerunners of lyrical poetry in our literature. Most of his poems were successful because they were the product of genuine poetic sensibility. However, he acknowledged that the style was somewhat unrefined and full of neologisms"[43]. He does not limit himself to praise but identifies shortcomings, such as the "somewhat unrefined style" and the abundance of "neologisms". This indicates a nuanced aesthetic sensibility capable of critical judgment, balancing emotional content with linguistic form. Neologisms, as innovative but potentially disruptive elements in traditional poetry, are seen as a drawback, suggesting a preference for clarity and tradition – a conservative stance that may reflect his programming by Zarian, a creator rooted in *sămănătorist* values. This critique recalls aesthetic debates in interwar Romanian literature, where linguistic purity was a contentious issue, and underscores how Amedeu imitates not only knowledge but also ideological positions.

From the perspective of technogenesis, he represents a literary attempt to imagine an artificial entity capable of interacting in social and cultural contexts, as suggested by his creator Eudoxiu Zarian's intention to conduct such a social experiment. Unlike modern AI, which operates based on algorithms and data processing, Amedeu is described as a complex physical mechanism with "platinum fibers" and a "cranial apparatus"[44], evoking a technological alchemy. Moreover, his engagement in literary analysis proves a capacity to imitate not only reasoning but also aesthetic sensibility, a trait that anticipates current debates about artificial creativity like poetry machine. Modern AI systems, such as those generating text or art, can produce works that mimic human styles but lack intentionality or authentic emotional experience. Amedeu, through his ability to evaluate Depărățianu's poetry, appears to transcend mere mechanical imitation, approaching a sensibility that, though artificial, is convincing in a social context. This raises the question of whether Amedeu is

merely an advanced simulation or a precursor to a form of artificial consciousness.

This artificial construct can be regarded as a literary precursor to the robot/cyborg/AI, through his ability to mimic human cognitive and aesthetic functions, thus anticipating questions about creativity, ethics, and privacy raised by modern artificial intelligence. Built as an expression of Eudoxiu Zarian's Faustian ambition, Amedeu embodies both the promise of technological transcendence and the ontological risks of surpassing human limits. The depiction of Amedeu's interaction with the cultural/literary environment and the technical details of his construction are on the intersection of technology, humanity, and morality, placing the text in an anticipatory dialogue with contemporary debates about AI and posthumanism.

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Notes

1. Bruce Clarke, "The Nonhuman", in Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Posthuman*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 141.
2. Peter-Paul Verbeek, "Cultivating Humanity: Towards a Non-Humanist Ethic of Technology", in Jan Kyrre Berg Olsen Friis, Evan Selinger, and Søren Riis (eds.), *New Waves in Philosophy of Technology*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 241–263.
3. Martin Roth, "L'homme de verre", in Terrain, no. 18 (1992), http://journals.openedition.org/terrain/3037, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/terrain.3037, accessed 25 September 2025: "Au centre de l'exposition internationale d'hygiène, en 1930 et en 1931, se dresse – sous un arc gothique – l'homme de verre. Le catalogue en fait le « modèle de l'être humain » qui réaliserait les préoccupations antérieurement exprimées par Lingner, c'est-à-dire « montrer que l'homme est un chef-d'œuvre technique et artistique ». La statue de verre fait sensation : des dizaines de milliers de visiteurs se pressent chaque jour dans la galerie d'exposition. La technique utilisée est déjà un événement : l'enveloppe est en Cellon, une matière synthétique translucide. La combinaison de ce matériau et d'un système de signaux optiques et acoustiques a dû produire une véritable fascination des spectateurs (ce qui vérifie l'hypothèse de Walter Benjamin, selon laquelle la connaissance ne peut être appréhendée qu'à travers un « petit choc »). Cet objet de haute technicité s'inspire, à ce qu'on suppose, d'une statue classique, « L'enfant en prière », sculptée en 300 av. J.-C. par Boedas de Byzance".
4. Vilfredo Pareto, *Manual of political economy. A critical and variorum edition*, edited by Aldo Montesano, Alberto Zanni, Luigino Bruni, John Chipman and Michael McLure, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014.
5. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell, New York, Henri Holt Publishing, 2008.
6. Johan Huizinga, *Homo ludens: A study of the play-element in culture,* Boston, Beacon Press, 1971.
7. Peter Menzel and Faith d'Aluisio, *Robo sapiens: une espèce en voie d'apparition*, Paris, Autrement, 2001.
8. Alain Robitaille, *Le Nouvel Homme nouveau. Voyage dans les utopies de la posthumanité*, Montréal, Boréal, 2007.
9. John Cohen, *Human Robots in Myth and Science,* London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1966, p. 30.
10. Stephen Cave, Kanta Dihal, "The Posthuman Condition", in Grant Hamilton, Carolyn Lau (eds.), *Mapping the Posthuman*, New York, Routledge, 2024, p. 93.
11. Kevin LaGrandeur, "Do Medieval and Renaissance Androids Presage the Posthuman?", in *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 12, no. 3 (2010), Article 3, http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol12/iss3/3.

12. *Ibidem*, p. 9.
13. *Ibidem*, p. 10.
14. John Coehen, *op.cit.*, p. 30: "The word robot is akin to the Gothic arbi = inheritance, and also to the Gothic arbaiths = labour, toil, trouble, distress. A cognate German word Arbeit =work, and the Old Slavic equivalent is rabota; Czech and Polish robota = servitude or forced labour". See Eric Partridge, *Origins*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958, p. 458.
15. Cyril Fiévet, *Les robots*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2002, p.10: "Une créature artificielle, le plus souvent mécanique, autonome ou non, capable de se mouvoir ou de mouvoir l'un ou l'autre des éléments qui la composent, d'effectuer des taches précises, et reproduisant tout ou partie de caractéristiques humaines ou animales".
16. See Marius Conkan's study, "Lumi alternative" [Alternative Worlds], in Corin Braga (ed.), *Enciclopedia imaginariilor din Romania. Vol. 1: Imaginar literar [The Encyclopedia of Romanian Imaginaries. Literary Imaginary],* Iași, Polirom, 2020*,* p. 397-399.
17. All translations from Romanian into English are mine. Nicolae Rădulescu-Niger, *Omul de cristal*, Bucharest, Editura Curierul Judiciar, 1940, from the archives of the Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel (www.revistatransilvania.ro): "Suntem în 1910. Satul s-a obişnuit cu ideea că doftoru are un băiat, dar încă nu-i dumerit: de unde-l are şi cu cine?", p. 40.
18. Rădulescu-Niger, *op.cit.,* p. 226: "Ce-ar fi dacă omului i s-ar putea vedea gândul, fără ca el să ştie?"
19. Florin Manolescu*, Literatura S.F.,* București, Editura Univers, p. 245: "primul roman al unui robot în literatura română. (...) Partea cea mai stranie a acestui automat, care nu mănâncă și nu bea, este un mecanism al iradierii cugetului, care face ca gândurile să devină vizibile (...) al ciudățeniei de a-l fi înzestrat cu o personalitate sămănătoristă, surprinzătoare într-un roman SF".
20. Ion Hobana, *Vârsta de aur a anticipației românești* (prefață), București, Editura Tineretului, 1969, p. 15-16: "Povestirea lui Dimitrie Anghel, 'Duşmanul maşinismului', polemizează indirect cu unul dintre aspectele retrograde ale semănătorismului: vechilul Panţu strică maşinile agricole, ca să poată lucra pământul ca în străbuni. 'Maşinile sunt un cuvânt van şi nişte invenţii complicate şi diabolice', spune el, justificându-şi vandalismul. (...) E un antiscientism în surdină, pe care gândirismul îl va amplifica nemăsurat".
21. Rădulescu-Niger, *op.cit.,* p. 226: "Acest om e invenţiunea, e creaţiunea datorită unor ani îndelungaţi de muncă... E fiinţă artificială. – 'Artificială'? esclamă ea în culmea încremenirii şi privind la Eudoxiu cu teamă. – 'Te vei convinge peste puţin... Deocamdată să văd dacă-i pot pune în mişcare măcar resortul umbletului...." p. 223. Era clar adevărat că vedea un om artificial, - că omul acesta atât de asemănător firesculu, dar artificial, îi însuflase ei... iubire?!... Mare era genialitatea aceluia care crease'!"
22. Rădulescu-Niger, *op.cit.,* p. 10: "În faţa bibliotecii stă în picioare, nemişcat, un corp în mărimea naturală a unei staturi înalte, – sau, mai nimerit, cutia goală în forma unui corp omenesc, din bucăți de cristal foarte fin, legate cu metal. Pe o masă mai înaltă decât se obișnuiește, în preajma acestui corp, se află un cap foarte artistic modelat, dintr-un material care-l face să semene unui cap natural, căruia deocamdată îi sunt goale orbitele ochilor; se mai află apoi două brațe, de cristal până la coate, de unde, fiecare cu mâna lui, arătau a fi de carne cu pielița ei firească".
23. Rădulescu-Niger, *op.cit.,* p. 11.
24. *Ibidem,* p. 11-12.
25. *Ibidem*, p. 63. "Coborâtor din o spiţă boerească veche, a Drăculeştilor, în linie dreaptă bărbătească ce se urmase fără întrerupere, Ion Colibaş păstră, neînfrântă, mândria de neam, fără trufie însă".
26. Vezi și Lucian-Vasile Szabo & Marius-Mircea Crișan, "Technological Modifications of the Human Body in Neo-Gothic Literature: Prostheses, Hybridization and Cyborgization in Posthumanism", in *Caietele Echinox*, vol. 35, 2018: *Neo-Gothic – Hybridizations of the Imaginary*, p. 147-157 și Emanuela Ilie, *The Posthuman Poetry and the new body imaginary. Romanian and Moldavian voices,* in *Studii de știință și cultură*, vol. XVIII, issue 3, 2002, p. 17-25.
27. Rădulescu-Niger, *op.cit.,* p. 8: "configurațiunea exterioară, întregul anatomic lăuntric și unele funcțiuni organice fizice și intelectuale ale unui om natural".

28. *Ibidem*: „anume modificări de organe și funcțiuni".
29. See also Daniela Petroșel, *Era mașinii. Despre postumanism și imaginarul tehnologic în literatură*, Bucharest, Tracus Arte, 2014.
30. Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980's", in Socialist Review vol. 80, 1985, p. 88.
31. See Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2013.
32. Rădulescu-Niger, op.cit., p. 31: "ale inteligenţei, voinţii, memoriei, judecăţii".
33. Ibidem, p. 30: "Fiindu-i și aci peste putinţă în mod chimic să dobândească un creier artificial cu toate ale lui, a trebuit, pentru fiecare centru cerebral cu rolul său, în legătură cu anume părţi ale corpului, să închipuiască câte un aparat, fiecare propriu auzului, văzului, vorbirii articulate, mișcării maxilarelor, mirosului, și apoi cele la culme de grele, ale inteligenţei, voinţei, memoriei, judecăţii, – al căror loc în craniu medicina nu l-a putut stabili, – ele fiind taină a creaţiunii în dezvoltarea, în timp, a funcţiunilor și a organelor ce ele și-au dat".
34. Bradoitti, *op. cit.*, p. 186: „the idea of the posthuman by now enjoys widespread currency in the era known as the anthropocene. It elicits elation in equal measure to anxiety and it stimulates controversial cultural representations".
35. *Ibidem*, p. 31: "Aparatul cranial se pune în mișcare cu o cheie ce se introduce într-un mecanism așezat mai jos de ceafă, deasupra coloanei vertebrale. Aparatul corpului se pune în mișcare cu altă cheie, ceva mai mare, introdusă într-un mecanism fixat deasupra șoldului drept, corespunzând cu locul rinichiului din dreapta dintr-un corp natural. Acest aparat este astfel pregătit pentru mișcare și nu funcţionează efectiv, decât dacă își începe funcţiunea cel al craniului".
36. N. Katherine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 89-104.
37. Rădulescu-Niger, *op.cit.*, p. 32: "Dar ce fiori, – o!... ce senzaţie de nedescris, – când omul lui deschide ochii şi priveşte în chip firesc, întocmai ca acela ce se deşteaptă şi caută a-şi da seama de locul unde se află!... Duce la frunte mâna dreaptă, ca spre a-şi aminti, şi, văzând pe Eudoxiu, îl aţinteşte întrebător. Eudoxiu nu ştie ce să facă în clipa aceasta de uimire şi de mulţumire: realitatea, care începe a trăi, îl covârşeşte. Omul de cristal face câţiva paşi prin încăpere. Pare că-i atrage luarea aminte uneltele sclipitoare de pe mese şi de prin dulapuri...".
38. *Ibidem*, p.10.
39. *Ibidem*, p.11: "Faust vedea nimicnicia vieții fiindcă ajunsese la bătrânețe fără să fi găsit în știință deslegarea problemelor mai presus de cunoștința omenească […]; dar această convingere ca și dorința lui de neființă nu erau sincere, devreme ce ispita a fost în stare să-l oprească și să-l facă a-și vinde lui Satan sufletul".
40. *Ibidem,* p. 165: "a i se vedea unui om gândul intim, este nepotrivire cu firea lucrurilor, cu omul, care nu-şi vrea niciodată cunoscut portretul moral".
41. *Ibidem*, p. 12: "o experienţă de natură socială".
42. *Ibidem*, p. 225: "Când îl văzu pe 'Amedeu' gol, ea își dădu seama, cu uimire, de realitatea lucrului: avea în faţă un corp de cristal, prin care se vedea o întreagă orânduire metalică. La spate, mai jos de umeri, era o spărtură în placa de cristal care mergea de la gât până la mijloc, perfect imitând această parte a unui corp. Altă gaură era la baza craniului. Materialul care întocmise pasta asemenea cărnii fusese strivit și străpuns, iar cutia cranială, spartă. Doctorul curăţi locul de bucăţelele și de așchiile de cristal, apoi desfăcu craniul, cu îndemânare de mecanic".
43. *Ibidem,* p. 87: "Amedeu îl arătă ca unul din premergătorii poeziei lirice, în literatura noastră. Cele mai multe din poeziile lui au avut succes fiindcă erau produsul unei adevărate sensibilităţi poetice. Recunoscu însă că stilul îl avea puţin îngrijit și plin de neologisme".
44. *Ibidem,* p. 31: "fibre de platină" și un „aparat cranial".