

**Evaluating Jorie Graham's Visualization of the
Future in "Runaway"
A Post-humanist Approach**

Dr. Mohamed Abdel Wahab Mahmoud

Lecturer in English Literature,
Faculty of Arts & Humanities,
Suez Canal University
mohw64@yahoo.com

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to evaluate the work of the post-humanist contemporary American poet Jorie Graham as exemplified in "*Runaway*." The tenets of post-humanism, the most recent philosophical and critical theory are surveyed in selected poems of "*Runaway*." Some poems are dedicated to identifying the severity of the dreadful ecological crisis. Others are assigned to visualizing the future of humanity in light of the technological revolution which the world witnesses today. For example, artificial intelligent agents are introduced in these poems foreshadowing what has really happened later on. By adopting the analytical and textual method, the researcher investigates the theoretical framework, the post-humanist approach, throughout selected poems of Graham's "*Runaway*."

Keywords: Graham, "*Runaway*", Post-humanism, Ecological Crisis, Futurity.

تقييم تصوير جوري جراهام للمستقبل في ديوان "هروب" مدخل ما بعد الإنسانية

د. محمد عبدالوهاب محمود

مدرس الأدب الإنجليزي

كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة قناة السويس

مستخلص

تستهدف هذه الدراسة تقييم شعر الكاتبة الأمريكية المعاصرة جوري جراهام من منظور ما بعد الإنسانية الفلسفي النقدي الذي ساد الأوساط النقدية في الآونة الأخيرة وذلك من خلال تحليل قصائد مختارة من ديوانها الشعري "هروب" والذي نشرته سنة 2020. وباستعراض هذه النخبة المنتقاة من القصائد اتضح للباحث أن شعرها يعكس ظلال المشكلة البيئية العميقة التي يعاني منها العالم اليوم على الإنسان في حياته اليومية. كما تقدم مجموعة أخرى من قصائد الديوان تصورًا لما ستؤول إليه حياة الإنسان على الكوكب الأرضي في المستقبل القريب. ولذلك تدعو جراهام قراءها لاستشراف حياتهم في المستقبل و التي تختلف كليًا عن واقعهم المعاصر بفعل الثورة التكنولوجية التي يشهدها العالم اليوم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: جراهام، "هروب"، ما بعد الإنسانية، المشكلة البيئية، استشراف المستقبل.

Introduction

Post-humanism, the basic philosophical and critical theory, has dominated life and thought since the beginning of the 21st century. The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed a humanist interest in the study of the life of man with special emphasis on the negative aspects to restore him back to the main track. The humanist approach was reflected in new social as well as critical theories which dealt with man as the center of the whole universe and the most important creature on earth. However, with the emergence of a real serious ecological crisis, a new theory either in philosophy or criticism has appeared approaching man in a new way. The post-humanist stance has come to direct all man-oriented studies to revolutionize the vision of man as a leading figure among all creatures on earth. From this time onward, lots of writers have born the responsibility of collapsing the traditional vision of man as the master among all creations.

One of the poets who used the poetic tool to shake man's stature in the universe as a basic slogan of post-humanism is the American contemporary poet Jorie Graham, a Pulitzer Prize winner. In her 15 collections of poems, especially the latest, she has exerted real efforts to develop the post-humanist approach to contemporary man. In her famous volume of poetry, "*Runaway*," published in 2020, Graham foreshadows the future of humanity in light of the important developments in the fields of industrialization and technology (Waldman 4).

The objective of the current study is to survey the basics of the new philosophical and critical approach, post-humanism, as reflected in Graham's "*Runaway*." Going through selected poems of her volume may unfold the poet's reading or visualizing of the future out of a post-humanist viewpoint. In the following pages, the study first sheds light on the tenets of the post-humanist theory as a theoretical framework to which some "*Runaway*" poems are applied in an attempt to know Graham's distinct treatment of man's life and thought in the 21st century. Adopting the analytical method while reading the poems of "*Runaway*," the researcher tries to probe

deeper in the poetic world of Graham and her ability to express the new conception of post-humanism in her poetry.

Throughout her career as a poet, Graham has always been interested in “the most urgent philosophical and political issues of the time” (Longenbach 2). Fully occupied with the ecological crisis in which the whole world is involved in our contemporary context, Graham has been urged to approach the issue from a different perspective driven by the overall atmosphere that condemns contemporary man’s responsibility for the crisis. She believes in the post-humanist dogma and the reconsideration of the importance and superiority of man over other creatures on the planet. Graham uses her deep interest in history, language, and perception to put challenging questions before the elite to answer in an attempt to suggest collective remedies for the ecological dilemma. Commenting on Graham’s work, Claudia Rankine, writes: “Graham’s masterful poems traverse almost four decades of inquiry into what it means to be in relation ... Her work pulls forward our mythical, historical, and personal narratives to inhabit our most collective experiences” (2). Graham’s outstanding work has pushed critics like John Ashbery to describe her as “one of the finest poets writing today” (4). Speaking about her approach in dealing with today's issues, James Tate acclaims that Graham is “A poet of staggering intelligence ... She assays nothing less than the whole body of our history, reshaping myth in ways that risk new knowledge, fresh understanding of all that we might hope to be (6).

In her poetry collections, especially “*Runaway*” (2020), Graham deals with the basic issues of man in a clairvoyant way. Coping with the tenets of the post-humanist critical theory which sustained the literary scene at the beginning of the 20th century up till now, Graham uses “*Runaway*” to deepen her stance of man's futurity. Throughout the poems, she visualizes the future of man and his desperate running away from climate change, social disruption, and global warming. She tries hard to reimagine a habitable present in which human beings might be led into the “next-on world.” Graham predicts the future preparing man to expect and accept the new life

on the planet. In fact, the post-humanist approach does not come out of a vacuum. Modern times have been led by streams of modernism which have shaped life since then. Before discussing Graham's post-humanist approach to all issues of contemporary man as reflected in her collection "*Runaway*," it would be more logical if a more concentrated light is thrown on the basic theoretical frameworks that led the life of man at the beginning of the Modern Age.

The Tenets of Modernism

Coming out of the revolutionary atmosphere sustaining Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, modernism was a liberal approach that yearned to reshape the way modern civilization regarded man's life, arts, politics, and science. Such a rebellious stance that really flourished between 1900 and 1930 took as a basis the rejection of European civilization and culture because of their corruption and going away from the main proper track. Dissatisfaction with the ethical bankruptcy of Europe pushed modern thinkers and men of letters to explore new alternatives. The real beginning of this new trend of modernism was due to the spread of a new spirit which regarded human beings as having the power to progress through devising or reshaping the environment through science and technology. Modern man has come to believe that the world is not centered around him, the idea which pushed him forward to adopt a new attitude towards his environment later in the following century (McParland 8).

Modernism was fundamentally characterized by nihilism, that is the rejection of all religious and moral principles as the sole means of obtaining social progress. Modernists, accordingly, repudiated all forms of moral codes of society. Rejection of conventional rules and experimentation with new forms led modernists to sail against the main current. Traditional slogans and morals were attacked, especially with the outbreak of World War I. A new generation of writers and thinkers began to adopt a new radical vision of modern man and life. T.S. Eliot's masterpiece "*The Waste Land*" can be dealt with as a panoramic picture of modern life and thought which epitomizes the essence of modernity.

The Basics of Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a philosophical attitude that rejects the common origin of humans, as it dismisses any constant and definite truth in man's life. Postmodernists believe that human identity is formed by a variety of national and local cultures; moreover, it is affected by three basic concepts: gender, race, and social class. As a philosophy, postmodernism rejects such concepts as objectivity, rationality, as well as universality. Otherwise, it stresses the diversity of human experiences and multiplicity of perspectives. On the stylistic level, postmodernism calls for experimentation, which means a refusal of a single style or definition of what art should be. It also propagates the idea that there are no universal religious truths or laws. Instead, reality is formed by social, historical, and cultural contexts of everyone.

Postmodernism is an intellectual attitude characterized by suspicion towards all ideals of modernism. Like the French philosopher Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, it rejects epistemic certainty or the stability of meaning. Deconstruction is a philosophical and critical theory applied to the study of literature in particular which questions traditional hypotheses concerning the ability of language to represent reality. It refutes the allegations that a literary text has stable reference or identification. According to Derrida's theory, any close reading of a text shows that it is not meaningless but rather it is overflowing with multiple meanings. Deconstruction does not mean that concepts do not have boundaries; rather their boundaries might be parsed in various ways so long as they are put within new contexts (Balkin 3). It denotes that the context is important in any attempt to evaluate a literary work because changed situations or contexts lead consequently to acquisition of new meanings.

The Principles of Humanism

Humanism is a term which refers to a wide range of philosophical and moral movements unified by their attitude towards the supremacy and superiority of man in the universe. Such an attitude first began in the Renaissance of the 16th century with the spread of

man's over-confidence in his powers which pushed him forward to think upon himself as the center of the universe. In essence, humanism was a reaction against superstitious beliefs as well as the religious authority which sustained Europe throughout the Medieval times. The epitome of the new spirit has regarded man as being at the center of the moral world.

It could be said that humanism was anthropocentric in the sense that it has placed man on top of the interests of any attempt done to understand the universe. Since Greek and Roman times, all phenomena of the natural world have been interpreted depending on the mental potentials of man. Even modern science beginning in the 16th century has sought to achieve a deep understanding of the world of Nature depending on the powers of observation and reasoning assigned for man. Humanists believe that the human being occupies an eternal place at the very center of things, a place which is completely different from all other creatures living on the planet such as animals, plants, or even machines. That may account for the belief of some humanists that “man is hegemonic measure of all things” (Davis 2).

Humanism as a philosophical attitude focuses on man's free will, human motivation, and individual growth. It emphasizes that human beings have free will and are naturally good. Individuals have personal freedoms and an inclination towards self-improvement and growth. The humanist approach of modern times refers to the human being who puts his full trust on science and scientific method when trying to understand how the universe works, or to find truth in general. The human being also makes his ethical decisions depending on reason, empathy, and an interest in human beings' affairs. Humanism also assures the human being's ability to live without metaphysical or religious certainty and that all opinions are subject to revision and correction. It stresses man's ability to flourish depending on open communication, discussion, and criticism. Humanists call for man's necessity to show respect to man, irrespective of class, race, or creed.

Post-humanism: A Philosophical & Critical Theory

Post-humanism is a philosophical as well as critical theory that has spread in life and thought of the 21st century as a reaction to the traditional humanism of the previous centuries. Man who has always been the center of all studies and progress in all fields of knowledge has become the target of severe attacks on his primacy and even necessity as a category among others living on the planet. Unlike humanism that appeals to our shared humanity as a basis for creating community, post-humanists attack this approach thinking of it as being biased. Some of them even go further to claim that humanism is not only false, but also devastating (Theresa 4). Such terms as “humanism” and “shared community” may be reminiscent of things like progress, equality, and human rights. Post-humanists go on attacking the concept of “the human” alleging that it echoes colonialism, sexism, and racism. Humanism as an approach may appear attractive and convincing, yet a long history of human mannerisms stresses nothing but man's oppression of his fellow beings in humanity. Having a look at slavery and feminism may lead to finding out the illusion and deception of the slogans much sung by humanists. Slaves and women have suffered and been barred from having equal rights with whites. Postcolonial philosophers and thinkers criticized such views stressing man's image as a symbol of humanism.

Though biologically animal-like, as post-humanists believe, man places himself in a position superior to other life forms on earth. According to post-humanists, the vision of man's superiority should be stopped and instead the feeling that he is just a part of a whole universe should sustain (Bolter 4). Man is not alone in that universe and there are lots of things in common between man and other creatures on the planet. In their ideology, post-humanists think that it is the superiority-flaw that led to man's tragic falling damaging the planet to which he is bound as his mother. They stress the idea that man's distinct feeling has pushed him forward to exploit any materialistic potential to raise his living standard represented by the revolution in industrialization and technology. Once man is

psychologically separated from the planet forgetting the original tie between him and his mother, the earth, the whole planet has been drastically endangered as a direct consequence of man's ecocide, resulting in the dreadful ecological crisis. Such separation has also led man to feel fragmentation and alienation, the very essence of postmodern life.

Post-humanism can be perceived as a step forward towards bridging the gap between the human and non-human. It could help in reconciling the original relationships between man and all other forms of life on the planet (Theresa 3). However, such reconciliation will never be achieved unless man gives up his idea that he is "different" or "special." Instead, he should adopt an attitude in which he regards other non-human creatures as an important part of the natural world. Such a shift in perspective may urge human beings to take serious action in slowing down the extinction of animals and the destruction of the ecological gift of the planet.

Post-humanism has become a suitable strategy for the 21st century simply because of the complexity of the problems and the rapid changes in the fields of science and technology. Now, we live in an age of artificial intelligence, robots, and genetic manipulation. Human agents have become a too old weapon in wars due to the drastic change in the apparatus of wars. Warfare technology has devalued the human element paving the way for artificial intelligence to take the lead. Modern technology has shown huge damages inflicted upon the armies taking part in wars by using remotely controlled drone-strikes. Post-humanists believe that artificial soldiers might appear more humanely than real human soldiers, though the war machines might appear highly destructive. They argue that an army of robots will do as programmed and thus will never commit such crimes as raping women or killing the young or the old as humans might do. This may lead one to ironically ask the question: Can Robots be more compassionate than humans? Whether we accept that the world is changing rapidly or not, it is impossible to stop running of the clock of technological progress. The world has gone beyond the question whether new technology is

“good” or “bad” to a more urgent one of how such advancements in science can be absorbed and framed by an ethical dimension. Post-humanists assume a real role in regulating such matters helping in putting these moral frameworks to control the vast changes in the field of modern technology.

The post-humanist creed is built on the achievements of modern technology which collapsed the traditional image of man with his domination over the universe. Digital devices have interfered with our life day and night; cell phones and computers have invaded our way of life distorting the traditional functions of our eyes, ears, mouths, and brains. Modern technology has enabled us to transcend human limitations giving man the ability to outsource his memory and communicate with others far away from him. Traditional definitions of what is “human” no longer apply to the present times. The humanist approach has become out-of-date in a way which pushes humanity forward to log onto the new post-humanist world with new possibilities and potentialities. Man's power has been doubled tempting him to fall in the vicious claws of overconfidence which may eventually lead him to his tragic downfall. The post-humanist approach puts new suggestions to be followed in order to save the planet so long as it is impossible to put the genie back in the box; technological advancements have become a reality we should face. The boundaries between the “human” and “non-human” have nearly disappeared and are about to dissolve. The traditional image of man and the “humane” has been turned upside down. The new approach looks upon man as being responsible for all these drastic changes. Technological revolution is nothing but a reflection of man's dream of supremacy and excellence on one hand; on the other hand, the ruination of the planet and the extinction of human life on earth are tragic results of man's ecocide in his treatment with his mother, the earth. Such a state seems paradoxical. Man has created the conditions of his undoing. As he has acquired much greater powers through scientific progress and technology, he has also fallen into the far greater danger of making the human race disappear.

The post-humanist approach provides a philosophical framework

which might repair the ecological crisis resulting from man's foolish ecocide; hence, a remedy can be suggested to face the damage and devastating conditions of the planet (Blanco-Wells 2). Such approach may also put steps forward towards proper coexistence of the various forms of life on earth. Post-humanism reconsiders life on the planet paying full attention to non-human agents shaping life on earth. It offers hypotheses upon which a new method could be adopted to rebuild the broken relationships and ruined ecosystems on the planet. As Lien puts it "It (post-humanism) signals a shift from a concern with culture and sociality as a strictly human attribute" (4). Other-than-human creatures have the same rights as living on earth and are equally important agents exactly like man.

The ecological crisis has been one of the important factors that pushed new post-humanists forward to deal with man's affairs in the 21st century. Lots of messages have been sent from specialized agencies stressing man's responsibility for the real change in the "natural world." All reports have shown that approximately a quarter of all kinds of animals and plants is threatened by the danger of extinction. Moreover, other natural resources of water and marine life have been badly damaged by man's ecocide (The Global Assessment Report). Generally speaking, excessive materialism of modern times resulted in negative effects of global warming, which regenerated a feeling of urgency that began to prevail in the minds of scientists, thinkers, and those responsible for environmental agencies throughout the world. Such crises have created a new attitude towards the planetary case. The new post-humanist approach blames man for the miserable state of the planet and, at the same time, sets other-than-human creatures free from the responsibility for the degrading conditions of the planet. The crises have been an opportunity for thinkers, philosophers, and scientists to adopt a necessary change in their outlook towards man with an objective of repairing the deteriorated conditions of earth.

The main bulk of the new post-humanist approach can be described as the desire to radicalize the attitude towards both human and non-human creatures on earth. It represents a general "umbrella" created

to include all theoretical, philosophical, literary, and cultural notions towards the human plague of modern times. Commenting on the post-humanist approach, Ferrando writes "It presents a radical critique of dualisms: nature\culture, mind\body, micro\macro, and traditional\modern in an attempt to think of new scenarios of co-existence on earth" (26-32). Ferrando thinks that the new strategy of post-humanism deepens the interdependence of both humans and non-humans in their relationships with the planet. Accordingly, such co-existence might offer a remedy for the horrifying state of the planet.

Post-humanism, then, calls for a new strategy concerning the ecological crisis, the basic idea of which is to transform the role played by other-than-human natures in any process of ecological reparation. It also calls for new relational views between humans and other-than-humans to deal effectively and properly with the disrupted socio-ecological crisis. The new strategy stresses man's necessity to reconsider all matters again bearing in mind that other-than-human creatures have equal rights of the planet and any suggested solutions for the ecological crisis should never exclude their equally important role to humans in any future interference to cure the crisis.

Post-humanism is a term that refers to the end of an era and the beginning of another which is axiomatically a reaction to what happened before. It denotes the start of a new mode of being which departs philosophically and culturally from the "humanism" of the 20th century. It approaches matters in a way contrary to the tenets of the previous philosophical framework of the preceding century: humanism (Lorimer 4). In the "humanist dogma," the figure of man is always put in the front as a center at which everything is examined in light of man's agency, supremacy, creativity, and consciousness in order to suggest a sense of the world. In sharp contrast, the post-humanist creed approaches man differently widening the scope and including all other forms of nature in any trial to understand the Great Cosmos and the ecological planetary crisis. What really encouraged the new philosophical trend is the real revolution in

scientific knowledge and technology as a result of which the importance and position of man in the front have been questioned and attacked. The innovations and developments in technoscience represented by genetic modification, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, and reproductive technologies, to name a few, have doubled the attitude towards the supremacy of humans over the universe. In a word, post-humanism can be dealt with as an apocalyptic vision of the next world which threatens human identity and the future habitability of the planet. Post-humanists have taken the possible future of human life on earth as an end in itself, and each in his own way has exerted an effort to visualize the future with the new concepts presented to guide life through in the soon-to-be future.

In the field of literature, especially poetry, writers who are strongly affected by the new mode of thinking began to express their attitudes in their art concerning the possible life of man in the soon-to-be future. One of those contemporary poets who are possessed by an apocalyptic picture of man's life on the planet is Jorie Graham. In her volumes of poetry, for which she was awarded many important prizes, she expresses her vision of the future especially in her volume *“Runaway”* (2020). Applying the post-humanist approach as a theoretical framework, the current study tries to throw more concentrated light on some of *“Runaway”* poems in an attempt to anticipate the future of mankind as perceived by Jorie Graham.

“Runaway”: A Post-humanist Volume of Poetry

In her volume *“Runaway,”* Jorie Graham runs away from the desperate present towards the future. She puts the present and future in one context to give the reader the chance to find out the necessity of going beyond the present. Moving throughout the present foreshadowing the future makes her “encounter the metaphysics of everything almost like John Donne” (Scharper 2). By using “high-spirited lines with little punctuation ... which makes the words move fast and her use of enjambment,” she comes closer to E.E. Cummings (Scharper 2). In four sections of long-lined poems, Graham probes deeply into the present to show how it is too

complicated and hopeless to amend or repair. She also foreshadows the future of man's life in a constantly changing world for which man is inevitably doomed to run away. Throughout the poems, Graham deepens the idea that climate change, ecocide, social disruption, and global warming necessitate man's escape out of this disastrous state of the planet and to be prepared for moving towards a misty future with which man is going to conflict because of his unfamiliarity with such a new kind of life. The formidable and clairvoyant tone of Graham in "*Runaway*" helps her visualize the future. Going through the poems, the reader feels the frustrated tone with which the poems have been written foreshadowing what is awaiting man in the future. The poems also explore man's struggle in a rapidly changing life in modern times plagued by life-and-death threats. Graham tries to find a meaning for a world in which everything loses its real identity. She skillfully juxtaposes personal experience with an overall suffering of climate breakdown and global change.

"*Runaway*" has four-section poems which attract the reader's attention through run-on lines and prose-like way of versification (Hadas 2). All the poems take the reader forward towards the future through "frothing and pooling and threatening, at times to tap into a free-floating end-of-the-worldness" (Gordiner 5). The reader feels that the poet is doing her utmost effort to enlighten him with the fact that perhaps it is the last chance to understand the situation getting ready for the soon-to-be world with new definitions and concepts. This is done through the poet's use of "fractured phrases and sweeping lines" to wake us up (Sampson 3). The poems also are considered a reverent study of human truth and mortality by feeling and meditating on the cluelessness of a constantly changing world (Jacobson 4). The poet uses her tools to transplant the idea of the necessity of running away for the future as this is the only thing to do with the present state of the planet. The collection asserts the idea that the future brings a world beyond humanity, nature, culture, and all traditional powers man experienced before (Hadas 6). "*Runaway*" can be perceived as a prophecy -not a prediction- of a digitalized world to come and it really does. In essence, "*Runaway*" can be

approached as a sincere outlook on the present showing its desperate case and, at the same time, an invitation for man to stop crying over the spilt milk, get prepared for the future, and imagine how life will go as for the human race in general.

In her post-humanist approach, Jorie Graham blends her understanding of the present plague of the planet and humanity with her vision of the future. In almost all the poems of “*Runaway*,” she stresses the idea that the planetary plague is impossible to cure stressing that traditional human life will no longer find room in what is coming next. She also urges human beings to get ready for the future life in which their human identity might disappear paving the way for new creatures to take the lead of life instead. All post-humanist ideas can be traced out in “*Runaway*” poems. In the following lines, the researcher surveys such post-humanist ideas in selected poems of the volume.

The first visualized picture of the future comes with the outset of the volume when Graham propagates the idea that the future dwellers on earth are different from the human beings we are traditionally accustomed to. In “*All*,” Graham writes:

and giving us that sound. We hear it.
We hear it, hands
Useless, eyes heavy with knowing we do not
understand it, we hear it, deep in its own
consuming, compelling, a dry delight, a just-going-on
sound not
desire, neither lifeless nor deathless, the elixir of
change, without form, we hear you in our world, you
not of
our world ...
(“*Runaway*” 4)

The poet stresses the idea that those new dwellers have “sounds” and not “voices” which may refer to the fact that they are man-like but not real men. Perhaps they are robots or artificial creatures, the achievement of technology, the language of the future. She praises

the creation of the new dwellers as their "eyes heavy with knowledge we don't understand it." The artificiality of the new creatures is enhanced by speaking of them as they do not have desires themselves and that they should be programmed. She also stresses this artificiality by describing them as they are "a just-going on-on sound not desire, neither lifeless nor deathless" (4). The unfamiliarity of the new creatures to traditional human beings is referred to when the poet shows that there is a similarity between what has been before (human beings) and what is coming next, though there is a difference. She says "without form, we hear you in our world, you not of our world" (4). Graham shows the difference between what is natural known in traditional creation and what is artificial which will be experienced in the future. She juxtaposes the present with the future in an attempt to give the leader the opportunity to know the difference himself. At the end of the poem, Graham urges her readers that "we have to consider the while it seems\ to say" (5).

The same idea of the newly born creatures that will inhabit the planet in the future is confirmed in "Tree." Graham writes:

Something is preparing to begin again. It is not us. Shhh
say the spreading sails of
cicadas as the winch of noon takes hold and we are
wrapped in day and hoisted
up, all the ribs of time showing through in the growing in
the lengthening
harness of sound-some gnats nearby, a fly where the white
milk-drop of the
torn stem starts
(*"Runaway"* 6)

Graham transplants the idea of transfiguration. Accordingly, upon their death, human beings will take the form of another devalued creature, an idea which is borrowed from ancient Greek mythology where human beings or even gods are punished for certain crimes by being transfigured into other devalued forms. Graham stresses the same idea when she assures that "Something is preparing to begin

again. It is not us” (6). Because of the maltreatment of the planet exemplified by ecocide, human beings are going to be transfigured into “cicadas” hovering and flying through the sky as a form of punishment for their abuse of the mother, earth. Later in the poem, the poet shows the extent to which damage of the earth has reached by man's foolish malpractices. She writes:

..... They hurt. Correction. Must I put down
here that this is long ago. That the sky has been invisible
for years now. That the ash
of our fires has covered the sun. That the front is stunted
yellow mold when it appears
at all and we have no produce to speak of. No longer
exists
(“Runaway” 6)

Graham condemns man's behaviors in the planet, the result of which is that “the sky has been invisible for years” and that “the ash of our fires has covered the sun.” Man is the only criminal who is accused of the crime of ecocide represented chiefly in climate change and global warming. Everything accordingly has changed and “the fruit is stunted yellow” and finally “we have no produce to speak of.” Not only are human beings transfigured due to their ecological crimes, but also their traditional life on earth is about to disappear and human beings “have gone into another story” (6). Man is forced to get into the future with new concepts:

... The imagination tried to go here when we asked it
to, from where I told the
fruit in my right hand, but it would not go. Where is it
now. Where is this here where
you and I look up trying to make sense of the normal,
turn it to life, more life,
(“Runaway” 6,7)

The poet urges her readers to use their imagination to perceive that life awaiting them in the future trying “to make sense of the normal, turn it to life, more life” (7). Human beings should prepare

themselves to the drastic changes that will happen in the soon-to-be future.

“I'm Reading your Mind” is a poem in which Graham poses important questions through which she criticizes the present and predicts the future. At the beginning of the poem, she propagates the idea that all “things have been for centuries...already” (8). Traditional life has come to an end. However, the end is “not reasonable,” as all forms of life are going to disappear announcing the start of a new life with new creatures unknown before. That is why the poet confirms that “A strange heat is upon us.” Everything has changed and the new creatures are no longer familiar with the heat of the sun. Even if human beings are destined to live in the new world, they should prepare themselves to “live with the unknown” bearing their fate and the possibility of being exposed to diverse conditions. The poet takes the reader into another issue linking physical to metaphysical aspects in her vision of the universe. She confronts the gods who have forgotten what they gave us and how they made us. The gods refuse to confess their responsibility for the things we have become as human beings. She writes,

..... Surely in 2044 we shall be
standing in the field again, tending, waiting to surprise
this god who thinks he knows
what he's made. Well no. He does not know. We
might be a small cavity but it
guards a vast hungry-how bad does that hurt you,
fancy maker-you have no idea
(“Runaway” 8)

Thus, God is surprised when he sees the new creatures about whom “He does not know” anything. God here rejects the idea in essence owing to the strange state of the new creature. The poet reminds God of his inability to recognize the new creature saying to him that “you have no idea.” Graham here refers to artificially intelligent creatures, robots, who are man-like but they are not God-made; in reality, they are man-made. That is why the God does not accept any direct responsibility for such a creation. Later in the poem, Graham

confirms the end of human life on the planet predicting the beginning of a new one. She writes:

What we turned our backs on to come be in this field
of earth and tend -yes tend-
these flocks of minutes, whispering till the
timelessness in us is wrung dry and we
are heavied with end game
(“Runaway” 8)

Here, the poet refers to God’s feeling of horror being “frightened” so long as human beings are near their natural end. If this happens and the god turns his “back on humanity” on the basis that this is the only possible way to survive the universe, the question that should be answered is what will happen to human beings. Graham does her best to find a reconciliatory solution that can embrace both the visible or the seen world and the invisible or the unseen one. It could be said that through “Runaway” in general and this poem in particular, Graham is filled with senses of urgency, anger, fear, and expectation when she tries to put an answer for the question “what will happen to the invisible, when the visible goes?” (Judy 9).

An important component of the post-humanist creed is the disappearance of conventional creation and the existence of newly born creatures whose characteristics are different from what has been experienced before. In “My Skin Is,” Graham deepens the idea of the different copy of life unprecedented and unexperienced before. She writes,

parched, on tight, questioned, invisible, full of so much
evolution, now the moment is
gone, begin again, my skin, here, my limit of the
visible me, I touch it now, is
spirit-filled, naturally-selected, caught in the storm
here under this tree, propped up by
history,
(“Runaway” 10)

The new creature is endowed with a new skin which is “spirit-filled” and “naturally-selected;” the skin is not that kind human beings had before in their life on the planet. Traditional skin has its own “limit” and its “visible” appearance is what human beings are accustomed to. The poet does not know the definition of the new skin as it is something which she is not familiar with. Later in the poem, she describes that new skin by saying that “this skin no one can clean” (10). This denotes the different kind of skin being allotted for the new creatures to live on earth. These words could also be interpreted as referring to the skin of traditional human beings which are now dirty. This metaphorically suggests the dirty state of the planet due to man’s abuse of it.

The strange present which is no longer there to which human beings can resort and paving the way for the near future have been tackled as a major component of the new post-humanist approach. Graham enhances this idea of the strangeness of the present in “*Runaway*.” In “When Overfull of Pain,” she expounds the severity of the situation by showing that everything has changed. She writes,

lie down on this floor, unnotice, try to recall, stir a
little but not in heart, feel rust
coming, grass going, if I had an idea this time, if I
could believe in the
cultivation, just piece it together, the fields the sky the
wetness in the right spot, it
will re-line the earth it does not need your map,
(“*Runaway*” 12)

The speaker looks at the natural world around him trying to “recall” the kind of life he had before, but in vain. Everything is changing and “rust” is “coming” whereas “grass” is “going.” All natural components of the present have disappeared and new ones are expected to take their place. The poet realizes that “the assembly lines, the jet trails, ... thievery, scaffolds, money” (12) have “all vanished,” and that “the new thing now is not going to be new by the time you read this” (12). These lines assure the rapid change happening in the world towards the future which is already there.

Graham advises her readers to accept the change and to open their eyes and hearts to the new concepts presented. She herself stresses the idea when she announces “I’ll push into the roots that died when place was\ cleared of place” (13). She herself accepts the change.

According to post-humanism, human beings should escape or to be ready to escape all the potentialities of their current life on the planet. No remedies are effective enough to deal with the dying state of the planet and this necessitates us to get ready for a new kind of life to begin. In “Overheard in the Herd,” Graham stresses the same idea when she writes:

you have to make sure you have skin in the game was
one of the rules they
yelled out near the end. Also one must have hope. Also
watch the clock, the clock is
running out. Out of what. I had hoped to escape. To
form one lucid unassailable
thought. About what? It did not matter about what. It
just needs to be,
(“Runaway” 14)

Humanity should “make sure” that “the clock is running out” announcing the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. Human beings should “escape” the miserable state of the planet getting themselves ready for a new era in which they are not superior and that they should not involve themselves with asking “about what” simply because they will not be effective players in the new game. Graham skillfully uses the audio-visual image in “skin” and “yelled” to refer to the end of the game and that time is over. She advises humans not to concern themselves with “However much we missed the bus” (14), since they have already missed it without any hope of catching it later on. She again repeats the idea that a new era has already begun by saying that “there is this noise now it’s replacing everything” (14). What is ironical is that human beings have nothing to do to deal with the present situation:

oh ghost institutions-why must you hover here-spy

here-before me always though in-
visible. Or is it invincible. I can't make out the words
being said. Or is it sent. In my
direction. I'll wait for an answer. I have indeed nothing
better to do. I have nothing
actually at all to do. We cannot remember having that-
a thing to do.
(*"Runaway"* 15)

The new era for humans is like a "ghost" which "hover(s)" around them in an invisible way. Being a "ghost," the new era is not something real for humans to grasp or deal with simply because they are not familiar with the components of that new life. That is why they "can't make out the words being said." The only possible way to deal with the matter is to "wait" so long as human beings "have indeed nothing better to do."

The planet has become a different landscape for humans. Everything has changed and humans are no longer familiar with the new situation. In "[To] The Last [Be] Human," Graham speaks of the new landscape saying:

We're so full of the dead the burnt fronds
hum, getting going each day again into too much sun
to no
avail. I was human. I would have liked to speak of
that. But not now. Now is more
complicated. I have no enemy except day. The edges
turn hot and
stay
hot.
(*"Runaway"* 19-20)

The poet shows the different situation as for humans. Most of them have become "dead" in the sense that they are no longer able to live in a new atmosphere they are not adapted to, and this appears overtly when they complain of "too much sun." The past tense in "I was human" is highly expressive as it refers to the end of a human-

dominated era and the beginning of a machine-dominated one. Humans find themselves strange in that new world which is “now more complicated.” The major enemy humans are to fight is nothing but the new way or mode of life they have never been accustomed to before. It is not an easy task to do as the new unfamiliar world will “stay” longer. Moreover, there is no hope of rescue in the near future as they receive from time to time “not good news” and that “from now on you are alone,” which refers to the separation that will take place between traditional human beings and the new form of the world. What humans should be well-aware of is that they should be sure “that u are lost,”(20) and “whatever before had meant” (20) for them has gone forever. The speaker’s advice for humans is to do some effort to “understand time” (20) which is going on taking them into a new mode of life. The “empty riverbed” (21) is used by the poet to refer to human civilizations which have become “empty” losing their invaluable achievements. Fully possessed of fear of tomorrow, the poet poses frightening questions:

will the river fill again.
will there be pity taken.
will it ever rain again.
what is ever. what is again.
(“Runaway” 21)

It is the traditional human being who is wondering in these lines feeling desperate of the future and bitterly expecting the answer: no. There is no hope of salvation in the future. In these lines, Graham juxtaposes two important images of water: that of “river” and “rain” which explicitly regard water as a source of life; and the implied image of the absence of water achieved by interrogation in the three lines.

Visualizing the future, Jorie Graham imagines the world tomorrow in which the revolution in technology will guide our life through. Human beings will be exposed to a different world with different agents leading it. In “From the Transience,” Graham gives her reader a glimpse of that would-be world. She writes,

... Do not trust world, the no-place into which I place
my no, the state of mind
into which I must clamp my mind, these objects which
do not exists, no do not, in the
actual, which depart from reality. Swim against current
my opacity soul whirs,
swim hard against the current

(*"Runaway"* 22)

The poet speaks of a new world whose aspects are completely different and "objects which don't exist" in "reality." The future does not have any resemblance to the present and this may account for human beings' inability to cope with the new artificially intelligent world. Graham stresses the idea when she says "Now, remember that. I see you nowhere, I hear you nowhere, we are\ on different pages." (23)

An important component of the post-humanist approach is the unity between the earth and man, a relationship of a mother and her sons and daughters. The destruction of the mother earth due to man's practices is also reflected on man himself. In "Prayer Found Under Floorboard," Graham expounds the common destiny of both the earth and man. She writes:

The earth with its fingers in our mouth nose ears.
The visible with its ghosts its smooth utmosts.
And weight and limit-how they heave
up-pray for us we are destroyers-
pray we fail-the mind must fail-

(*"Runaway"* 24)

The mutual fate of both the earth and man stresses the idea of unity even in suffering as they are closely related. The "earth"'s "fingers" are in the "mouth," "nose," and "ear" of man which figuratively refers to the interdependent relationship between them. Human beings know that they are "destroyers" whose devastating practices have eventually and harmfully affected the mother earth creating an insoluble ecological problem which will lead to the vanishment of

the planet. Graham repeats the word “fail” to deepen the feelings of unrequitedness and disappointment with humans who are to blame for the falling condition of the mother earth. Everything on the planet stresses the feeling that failure is inevitable due to man's foolishness in his treatment of the earth.

In an apocalyptic mode and visualizing the future of humanity, Graham, as a post-humanist, imagines the future of humanity in a digital space and atmosphere heavily affected by the technological revolution of modern times. In “Incarnation\Re-In,” she speaks of a Sibylean future human beings are going to witness, one where they are expected to live in forever in a reduced state, uploaded to a mainframe which human consciousness would struggle to absorb and understand (Judy 6). At the outset of the poem, Graham writes:

I am down to my food. I root and divide. I am not
pushed down I push. I with my
mouth use my nose where are my hands. I say who am
who am I
now. I ask what color am I now. I try to feel my skin
but my head is fixed to my
food and my hands where are my hands. What skin am
I I ask. You have no skin
(“Runaway” 26)

The poet uses the first person singular as if the human being is the speaker. The human being expresses his astonishment at the digital future of his “carnation” as the suggestive title shows; the human being is going to be reincarnated in another form which he has never been familiar with before. The first shock comes when he discovers that he does not have “hands,” traditional hands. He is also so fully shocked that he cries “who am who am I now.” He does not even feel his “skin.” The conclusion comes when he is assured “you have no skin.” Everything has changed and traditional form of man will disappear in such a digital future he is going to live in. The human being discovers that he is no longer that creature he used to be. That is why he keeps on asking about his new state of being:

... you are wrapped don't worry you won't fall out. It's
a new material. Am I
alive. Of course you are. You are always going to be
alive. If I could just turn and
look at myself. Do I have a self where are my hands
but then feel fingers and
they are tucked in. We used to have skins. Do I have
the other parts.
(*"Runaway"* 26)

The answer comes to the urgent questions concerning his existence: "it's a new material." The human being thinks that he is not "alive" because of the new components of his creation. But the answer comes stressing him that "of course you are" alive and that "you are always going to be alive." Rejection of the new state of humans appears when he assures that "We used to have skins." Of course, it overtly seems that it is artificially intelligent robots which are speaking now announcing that though they are man-like in appearance and behaviors, yet they are made of "a new material." Graham foreshadows and predicts the near digital future in which robots will take the place of men in almost every field and it has really happened. She gives us an apocalyptic picture of the future which really comes true.

The climax of the visualized future of mankind comes when the speaker puts it clearly and directly asking about the future of humans:

..... Am I normal I ask. Human?
I talk to
you you answer me are we speaking what are we
speaking. Are these words
actually being pronounced. I remember. I remember
we were overfull of
pain. The house went under the mud. It was an
avalanche it went under but not
into the earth. Now now is everything
(*"Runaway"* 26)

The human being cannot believe that the new creature who is man-like does everything humans used to do, though his creation is different. This accounts for his wondering “Am I normal ... Human?” The new artificial creature’s behaviors urge man to have a conversation with him but he discovers that they are different “Are these words actually being pronounced.” The machine exchanges speech with man and that is why man cannot accept or imagine the idea. Nevertheless, all predictions of the future have come true and the unprecedented revolution in modern technology has made it real to have a new world thoroughly led by artificially intelligent creatures (robots) without any mediation by real human beings.

Coping with the post-humanist dogma, Graham tries, in “*Runaway*,” to reconcile the relationship between man and time in an attempt to put the present and the future in a harmonious context. For example, in “*Thaw*,” she tries to “reconcile the back-and-forth of time and form, and trying to negotiate an identity despite the oscillation” (Sonntag 2). Applying a “science-fiction-quality,” Graham travels across time visualizing the future connecting it to the present and being guided by an apocalyptic spirit. The speaker in the poem gropes bravely for orientation within ruin:

.....I must not
get the time
confused. The times. There is a coolness in it which
would have been new
Spring. I can’t tell if it’s
smell, as of blossoms which would have been just then
beginning, or of loam

(“*Runaway*” 30)

The speaker stresses the necessity not to be “confused” and perplexed by time that is getting on rapidly and, instead, to get ready for the different future coming ahead. Things in the coming future will be “new” and traditional phenomena might disappear, or take different characteristics. One might find himself unable to “tell” what is happening or what is coming next as freely associated with “blossoms” which suggest beginnings of new creations. Graham,

here, propagates the idea of man's incomprehensibility and pain towards the change taking place around him. Later in the poem, Graham writes,

..... One of us looks up to where the sky had
been.
Our prior lives press on us
Something with heavy re-
Collection in it
Presses. Not
history anymore of course but
like it. Is it five minutes or 500 years.....
(*"Runaway"* 30)

Human beings who are confused enough of the change look back towards the world which they experienced a long time ago finding lots of things that "press on" their memories. Fully exhausted by the process of "heavy" recollection, humans are assured that "history," which means everything that happened in the past is no longer accepted as a clue with which to deal with what is coming next, simply because completely different genres are born anew. This means a new different era is going to begin; an era in which criteria and measures of time have entirely changed with a new rapidly-moving tone. "Thaw" is really Graham's outcry for humanity to reconsider their relationships with the concept of time if they want to find a satisfactory understanding of the world to come.

As a post-humanist, Graham condemns man's ecocide as a basic reason for the dire ecological crisis. In "Exchange," she approaches environmental collapse as being a direct consequence to human global capitalism, where human greed has reduced our humanity to a degrading state:

here's where free choice vanished, here rights, here the
real meaning of the word-(you choose)-consequence,
capital, commodity, con-
sumption. Community? Come here says time. Just try
to

find it, the here.
 (“Runaway” 33)

Graham condemns man's free choice to put an end to his life on the planet out of his “free will” and this is entirely ironic. Because of man's selfish dreams of wealth being attained at whatever price, he may not pay attention to the harmful side effects which will finally lead to an incurable disease. That is why Graham cries “what is a loan” and “what else do you want the things to become” (33). It seems that there is no coming salvation from the climate disaster. The poet really knows the answer to the question “Do you really want to\ begin again” (35) posed in the poem. With no chances of hope to start over, there are just consequences which are irreversible. This pushes the poet to put it frankly: “That's the whole story. I will never know\ what is there to know. You will not be changed. You must believe” (35). Graham is already fully convinced that salvation is impossible and that running away towards the future is the only wise and reasonable solution for the problem.

In “Exchange,” Graham imagines the second coming of Jesus Christ on earth, not as God-made-man, but as God-made-human- remnant. Graham looks upon Christ as a 21st century savior returning out of our planetary waste. At the beginning of the poem, she writes,

You. You at the door a crumpled thing when I open
 surprised. Sing, you hiss. Prosecute, sentence, waving
 your thin not-arms like a dollar
 bill, your bewildering moldy skin-one or two of you
 are you, are you a god now,
 bony, wing-beaten down, smaller than
 ever, not dead as you should be but not
 alive either as you indicate

.....
 Are you new born now, I
 ask. Are you remnant.....

(“Runaway” 33)

The poet mocks money lenders who exchange money without

realizing that their capitalist activity would eventually harm the planet. She speaks to Christ feeling astonished because of those who are ready to sacrifice every valuable thing for whatever reason. Jesus Christ who is always quoted for perfection and ideality appears as a "remnant" of humanity instead. Graham shows the extent to which the dilemma reached when she refers to the stationary deeply-rooted picture of one of our most sacred figures, Jesus Christ, who is now shaken.

The same idea of the damaged planet and human beings' inability to go on living is tackled in "Sam's Dream." Graham writes:

..... The world is exhausted. I moisten my lips
and try to remember a song. I have to have a song to
sing you from out here. They say you now here
vividly.
This could have been a paradise my song begins. No,
this is, was, is, never will be again, will be, we hope
("Runaway" 39)

The world has become outworn and unsuitable to live in because of man's ecocide. Human beings exert the last-minute efforts to rescue the earth but in vain. The speaker is attached to a song or a flash of hope so that they may be saved. "I have to have a song" metaphorically refers to man's inevitable search for a world to live in because that is his fate on earth. The hopes of living in the same world experienced before are thwarted because it is certain that "this is, was, is, never will be again." Later in the poem, the poet shows human beings' inability to respond to the new world of the future as it is too fast to cope with:

..... It is much
bigger, faster – try to hear out – this place you're
being fired into – other in it – judgement of other –
logic, representation, nightmare – how to prepare
you – what do you dream – what must I sing
("Runaway" 40)

Thus, the new world is “bigger” and “faster” and humans are “fired into” without being ready to log onto. Traditional “dreams” of the past life should stop letting the new “song” to be sung and that is why the speaker wonders “what must I sing” to be prepared for the new world.

Graham foreshadows the dwellers of the 21st century speaking about the artificially intelligent creatures, robots who are going to take the rein of everything in the new world. In an apocalyptic tone, Graham says in “Sam's Dream,”

..... Amazing, you were not everything after
all. Out you come into legibility. Difference. Why
shouldn't all the same thing? It is a thing, says the
stranger nearby, it is a new thing, this stance this skin
like spandex closing over you, it's you
(“Runaway” 41)

The speaker describes the new artificial creatures as “amazing” simply because they do everything needed in a masterful way, if compared to humans. This appears when the speaker states that “you were not everything” meaning that there are other creatures who can go beyond you, the so-called “center of the universe.” The word “Difference” confirms the new creature’s peerless abilities. The conclusion comes directly when the speaker assures that “it's a new thing” which is “closing over” traditional human beings.

A significant asset of the post-humanist approach is the condemnation of man for the frightening state of the planet. The mother earth complains of man's foolish treatment of its rare sources. The ecological problem is the main concern of Graham’s “Sam's Standing.” In highly impressive lines, she speaks of the dystopian state of the earth:

..... High
up above the earth – even for so small a thing, so high,
above, she turns. Sees where
she's been, where she no longer is, will never be again.

I see it widen there,
right on her tiny face – the agitation, the vault, the
chasm of
minutes opening and brandishing, the dance that
begins now, the dance of
terror, I'm seeing it here.
(*"Runaway"* 43-44)

Having a comprehensive view of the bleeding planet "high up above the earth," the speaker asserts that the earth is so badly hurt that "she no longer is" and that "will never be again." This denotes the post-humanist idea of the hopelessness of the ecological crisis. The earth's "face" has become "tiny" referring to the extent of suffering of the plagued earth. The "dance of terror" is reminiscent of the view of the ancient Greek gods who express their happiness when defeating their opponents by dancing over their corpses. Owing to the full ruination of the earth, it has become almost like an immobile corpse. The poet refers to "human thoughtlessness" as being the real reason behind the devastation of the planet.

Futurity and the necessity of human beings' running away for the future represent a basic post-humanist theme recurrent in the poetry of Jorie Graham. In "Scarcely There," she visualizes the future of the world when a new era of artificial intelligence begins to take the lead. Graham writes,

After the high winds stop you're forced to hear
the freshness of what's
there. It smacks, shimmers – this sound of
the scarcely there, this adamantly almost, all between,
sub-
siding till adjustment – and then the wide re-blanketing
evenness sets in

(*"Runaway"* 53)

The speaker advises humans to get ready when the "high winds" of change blow and then "stop" taking the initiative and to "hear" and "know" the aspects of the completely new era that will begin.

Graham describes the “freshness” of the new era as being “scarcely there” to deepen the feeling that the new mode of life is so scarce because it has not yet been experienced. She urges humans not to be fully involved in the past lamenting its vanishment. She asks them to:

..... break grief, loosen possibility,
let vague
hopes float, sink – let other debris slip into
place. Rootless mind. Shallow whirling of law and
more and yet more law
brocading the emptiness. Then suddenly
all stills.
(“Runaway” 53)

The proper thing to be done by humans is to stop regretting what has happened and quickly stop “grief” and to be fully immersed in the new world with a “Rootless mind” to be completely devoted to the new world. Humans should not waste the last chance to coexist with the new agents or creatures who will be in the front in the would-be world.

An important notion of the post-humanist approach to life in the modern times is the disappearance of traditional human world and the emergence of a soon-to-be one which is completely different. Human beings will find difficulty in coping with the new world because they are not familiar with it. In “The Hiddenness of the World,” Graham gives a highly suggestive title for the poem which echoes what is coming on the lines. Traditional world has disappeared:

The lovers disappear into the woods again. The war is
on. The blizzard on, in its own way. Also many
interpretations
on their way – of fascism, of transcendence, of what
you mean by
perhaps when you look at me that way. A minute more
and then a

minute more you look. And then? And then –
everything would have been
different.
(“Runaway” 63)

The poet regards human beings living in their usual world as lovers who have “disappeared” in the “woods” to show how far humans have been accustomed to their life on earth without realizing that their abuse of it would finally lead to the devastation of the planet. They have not realized that “the war is on” which means the beginning of an unprecedented kind of life. Attempts have been done to understand the situation but all are miscarried. The conclusion has been “everything would have been different.” Although a “Blizzard was expected” due to “lightening” which foreshadows what is coming next, humans have not taken the matter seriously and as a result they have been exposed to a sudden dreadful change turning their life upside down. They have tried to show their “apologizing” to “the earth” wishing they could stop their tragic falling. However, it was too late and the inevitable change took place.

Leaving the present aside and logging onto the soon-to-be future represented by artificially intelligent creatures in an age of digitalization has been a principal slogan of post-humanism. “Runaway” from which the title of the volume is derived is Graham's sincere advice for humans to get ready for what is coming next. Decisiveness can be felt from the very outset of the poem:

You wanted to
have vision
but the gods
changed
you wanted to feel
the fraction of the
degree of
temperature
enter the
water, feel the
minute leave the

minutes
 behind
 (“Runaway” 66)

Graham puts it decisively from the very beginning that humans’ attempts to stop to understand what is going on will all be disappointed simply because the gods who made the new creatures are not the same as the God who created human beings. That is why she asks them not to be fully immersed in their attempt to have “vision” of the new life or to “feel” the “degree” of “temperature” which metaphorically refers to knowledge in general. They should leave the “minutes\behind” which refers to the present and to join the future with its different components. She advises them to “take away\hope” (66) of restoring their previous world on earth again. The new artificially intelligent world with its “new data” (67) shows “more new hours” (67) which suggests the “faster rising” (67) of the new kind of life humans will soon be exposed to. Humans are asked to “change” their “minds” because “the house” is “burned” which denotes the frightful state of the planet.

The foggy image of the future life of humans on earth and the horrible changes that will take place is a post-humanist creed. In “It Cannot Be,” Graham stresses the idea of that change and the new mode of life human beings will be exposed to:

..... These changes to the living skin of silence, there
 were your dis-
 appearance into nonlife, into no-longer-ever-again-in-
 life – no – no longer in
 creation, no no more of your kind – changes silence to
 what can I call it – ex
 tinction – expiration – this new forever-
 (“Runaway” 70)

In the lines above, the poet uncovers the effect of the changes that humans will experience in their future life. Their “skin” will be “silent” which metaphorically denotes the state of motionlessness humans will encounter due to the queer components of the new life.

Graham describes the new life of humans on earth as “nonlife” because they are not familiar with and they find themselves unable to cope with to the extent that they think that they will be led “into no-longer ever-again-in-life.” They have the idea that they are almost dead because they do not know the details of that life-to-come. The new artificially intelligent creatures will be at the front at the expense of humans and this appears overtly when Graham says “no more of your kind.” The words “extinction” and “expiration” are used by the poet to confirm the “disappearance” of traditional man and the invasion of “machine-man” or “robots” to the soon-to-be life on earth.

Humans are shocked by the inevitable change which will happen to them in the future. The poet does not want to deceive them telling them the bitter truth:

..... Then it occurs. It cannot be. And never again
arrives – is it for-you or
me it arrives – the moment that cannot be undone. And
we are no longer ever again in life
together. Mother I need you. I cannot be taken back
now into the unmade,
(“Runaway” 70)

In a highly decisive way, Graham assures humans that “it occurs” meaning that the new world has become real and that “it cannot be” a nightmare. Traditional life will “never again” exist and the beginning of a new phase in humans’ lives is doomed to be as “the moment cannot be undone” which means that the change is coming unstoppable. “We are no longer ever again in life” is used as a refrain in the poem to stress the necessity of looking forward towards the future without any attempts to look back in anger. On behalf of miserable human beings who are forced to meet “the unknown” in their future life on earth, Graham addresses the earth as “Mother,” stressing humans’ “need” for her as sons and daughters who are awaiting their mother’s compassion through doing something for their salvation.

Unable to do anything themselves, human beings remind their mother, the earth, that “it’s not the world exactly now” (70) which shows humans’ certainty that their usual life has disappeared forever. Difficulty of the situation is doubled as humans “cannot find you” speaking to their mother. Though they speak of their current state as being “dead now,” nothing happens for their rescue as the new life’s “wave” has blown and it is “contagious” and this refers to the spread of the new agents forming the nature of the future life on earth. The climax of the human being’s fear of the future comes when he utters “I want a home” and “I want a place to be” (71). Humans are begging for help; otherwise, they are going to vanish letting the new artificial creatures take their place on the planet.

A dystopian picture of the future which stresses human beings’ vanishment and the invasion of artificially intelligent new creatures is a recurrent idea in the post-humanist dogma. The same idea is tackled in “Whom Are You” in which Graham uses the very title to epitomize the case. Human beings find themselves alone in a world extensively invaded by robots whose nature is entirely different from that of humans. The poet puts it clearly when she writes,

speaking to. What is that listening to
us. I’d like to know whom to address. In this we call
the physical world. Is there another where the footfalls
go
from this stony path as it grows granular. They dis-
appear. The silence is ruinous. It seems there could be
thunder hidden
(“Runaway” 72)

It is the human being who is speaking in these lines. He asks “what is that listening to us” which affirms the different make-up and nature of the newly-born creature, robot. Humans are not accustomed to these men-like machines which can do the jobs of man more ably than man himself, though they are just machines. The human being does not know anything about “whom to address.” “The physical world” is used by Graham to refer to the traditional world of man experienced throughout the whole ages before. Yet,

man does not receive any answer because of the difference in their natures. This state of perplexity pushes the poet to describe the "silence" or unexecuted conversation as "ruinous" to show the harmful effect of that change on man. The "thunder" is used by the poet to denote the strength of the new wave of artificial intelligence that began to blow on the human shore endangering his existence on earth in essence. At the end of the poem, the poet concludes her argument stressing the idea that "it's not our sound, we hear it & we know it well, it's not our sound. Not \ us" (73). The sounds of the new dwellers on earth are not like those of humans; they are those of robots.

Conclusion

In "Runaway," Jorie Graham applies her post-humanist inclination to her visualization of the future life of man. Fully occupied by the ecological crisis, the plague of contemporary life as well as the recent technological revolution, she discusses the urgency of these issues and their effect on man's life on the planet, especially in the future. Throughout the poems of the volume, Graham condemns man's responsibility for the ecocide of the planet showing its dystopian state which makes it difficult to be cured. In "Runaway," Jorie Graham also adopts an apocalyptic vision in which she visualizes the future of mankind on earth. Almost all the poems of the volume are dedicated to inviting readers to reconcile the present and the future contexts to be able to understand the new concept of life in light of the huge developments in the field of technology. Graham's poems have anticipated the most recent progress of science exemplified by artificial intelligence. The study shows overtly how Graham's "Runaway" is an outstanding post-humanist volume of poetry which best describes how man's life is likely to be in the future.

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