

# Dystopian Futures and Posthuman Realities: Biopolitics in Lauren Beukes's *Moxyland*

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## Abstract

Lauren Beukes's *Moxyland* is a dystopian science fiction novel set in a near-future Cape Town, South Africa, which delves into the complex interplay between posthuman biopolitics, technology, authority, and the human body. This article examined the posthuman dimension through the lens of biopolitics. The article depicts the oppressive nature of pervasive surveillance and corporate control informed by the apartheid past, wherein four characters become entrapped in a society governed by these forces. Moreover, it demonstrates how the bodily integration of the regulatory technology derives from the racial idea of Western personhood, which intensifies the subjugation by altering subjects into posthuman entities. By adopting the Foucauldian theory of biopolitics as an analytical framework, this study traces the pivotal role played by biopolitics in the transformation of individuals into posthumans. The amalgamation of surveillance technologies and bioengineered enhancements leads to the commodification and perpetual manipulation of the subject, serving to uphold social order and preserve capitalist systems. The findings of this study shed light on the intensification of the control exerted by posthuman biopolitics, thereby contributing to the reconfiguration of the place of humans in academic discourse surrounding the intersection of power, technology, and the human body. By critically analysing the novel through the lens of Foucauldian theory, this article offers insights into the consequences of biopolitical control, underscoring the need for critical examination and discourse on the ethical implications of emergent posthuman societies in the Global South.

**Keywords:** biopolitics; dystopia; *Moxyland*; posthumanism; power; surveillance; technology

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## Introduction

In the evolving landscape of contemporary speculative fiction, Lauren Beukes's *Moxyland* (2018) presents a provocative exploration of dystopia where biopolitical regulation assumes dominance. Using a biopolitical lens, which in the colloquial lexicon deals with the management of human life, Beukes posits that dystopian societies may possess the ability to exert power over their populace by controlling and regulating individuals deemed undesirable. To attain the desired outcome, the government or corporate entity may employ biopolitical measures. However, in today's advanced capitalism, technological advancement has accelerated these measures beyond human limitations, thereby compelling individuals to adopt a posthuman existence in order to ensure their survival.

Lauren Beukes first pursued a career in journalism but later expanded her repertoire to become a highly productive writer from South Africa. Beukes's first novel, *Moxyland* delves into various cyberpunk themes, of which the posthuman is a major one. Beukes shows that the human is not a self-contained being, but a posthuman assemblage linked to a "political, cultural, and geographical landscape" inextricable from "its past, its present, and its nonhuman others" (Ericson 2018, 9). Emerging as a key figure in South African speculative fiction, Beukes's writing informs and alters our fundamental understanding of life with respect to contemporary technology. South African speculative fiction, in particular, has a rich history of continuous and interactive dialogue with apartheid pasts and tangible scientific futures. Apartheid was a policy in South Africa during the second half of the twentieth century that enforced racial segregation and discriminated against non-whites in terms of politics and economics. Despite the abolition of the legislation that established apartheid in the early 1990s, the social and economic consequences of this discriminatory policy continued to exist in the twenty-first century. *Moxyland* unfolds in a near-future Cape Town, where corporate and governmental control pervades every aspect of life. The story revolves around four main characters: Kendra, a corporate-sponsored photographer; Lerato, a skilled hacker; Toby, a wealthy blogger; and Tendeka, a rebellious activist. As their lives intersect, the novel explores themes of technological surveillance, corporate dominance, and social stratification. Through their diverse perspectives, *Moxyland* examines the dehumanising effects of a hyper-connected society and the struggle for personal autonomy within an oppressive regime informed by the lingering shadows of apartheid.

Contrary to Visagie's (2010, 96) claim about South African literature's "isolated existence from developments in the Global North," *Moxyland* speculates on the reproduction of the apartheid terror through biopolitical regulation of African life by Western technology. Prior research has examined the novel's dystopian concern, which foregrounds the technologies that influence social life based on political and social structures. Louise Bethlehem (2014) examined the convergence of futuristic urban contexts, digital technologies, and biopolitical governance in the novel, which mirrors certain elements of the social landscape during the apartheid era. Cheryl Stobie (2012)

explored the dystopian elements utilising Lyman Tower Sargent's concept of "critical dystopian" novel connecting it with the sociopolitical context of South Africa. While earlier research is commendable for exploring the complexities of power dynamics and dystopian themes, it is limited in its scope since it primarily draws on the humanistic experience of personhood. It fails to take into account the Western human and its "inseparability from both its economic foundations in the naturalization of property and its racialized history of colonialism" (Vint 2021, 16).

The objective of this study was to determine whether biopolitics is a consequence of human exceptionalism from the standpoint of posthumanism. This study examined the dystopian extreme of biopolitics, drawing influence from Michel Foucault's (2010) analysis and his subsequent reevaluation of the concept via a neoliberal perspective. The dominance of capital over life results in detrimental consequences including the destruction and oppression of mankind and its freedom, as depicted in *Moxyland*. Through reading this study individuals may have a heightened awareness of the tyranny faced by humanity and the government's control through biopolitics. This study employed posthumanism theory to examine the viewpoint of humanity when biopolitics assumes a role of representation as in the book. Furthermore, it allows the reader to gain a deeper understanding of both human and non-human freedom. In addition, the study sought to determine how biopolitics can play a crucial role in attaining posthumanism and how the concept of humanity can be redefined within a biopolitical context, ultimately leading to a posthuman society. The study contends that in *Moxyland*, Lauren Beukes used storyline and setting to convey the concept of biopolitics as the primary catalyst for the formation of a posthuman society. This notion suggests the emergence of a novel form of (post)humanity that might potentially serve as a counterforce to the dominance of biopolitics. Furthermore, it would advocate for the establishment of improved social frameworks in the future. Before moving to the analysis of the novel, certain key ideas used to analyse the novels need to be explained to better understand Beukes's protest against the biopolitical state through her critique of the exercise and abuse of power in South Africa.

## Posthuman Biopolitics, Capital, and the Human in the Twenty-First Century

Foucault's anti-humanist stance greatly informs his biopolitical analysis which criticises liberal reason and the enlightenment rationalities to advance the universal political subject (Wichelen 2020, 161). Many later theorists consider this the inception point of posthumanism. It has its origins in Michel Foucault's conceptualisation of the body as the central locus of power, and researchers who have expanded on or engaged with Foucault's ideas have made significant contributions to posthumanist theory in various ways. The majority of the disciplinary techniques are implemented on the human body, but in the time of digital capitalism, the body, stripped of its material existence, has become "a source of surveillance data" (Lyon 2001, 17). Posthumanism aids us in filling

that gap. Pramod Nayar (2018, 13) explains that it theoretically interrogates the present human predicament and states:

As a philosophical, political, and cultural approach, critical posthumanism addresses the question of the human in the age of technological modification, hybridised life forms, new discoveries of the sociality (and “humanity”) of animals, and a new understanding of “life” itself. In a radical reworking of humanism, critical posthumanism seeks to move beyond the traditional ways of thinking about the autonomous, self-willed individual agent in order to treat the human itself as an assemblage, co-evolving with other forms of life, enmeshed with the environment and technology.

This deconstructs the enlightenment ideal of the human/man as an autonomous entity disconnected from its surrounding technology; humans shape their environment as much as it informs them. However, this human-technology dynamic is incongruous, as biopolitical machinery can be utilised to exert repressive control and manipulation over the body. Although it originated in the classical period, biopolitics’s contemporary relevance has been altered by the advent of advanced fields such as biotechnology and biosciences, a glimpse of which can be seen in the novel. In modern times, biology has been intertwined with projects focused on bioeconomic innovation. Capital is becoming more interested in humans not just for their ability to offer labour, but also for their biological characteristics. As Foucault observes, “This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes” (Foucault 1990, 141).

The ongoing restructuring of neoliberalism’s biopolitical regime pervades almost all aspects of life, thereby altering it into property or another commodity. Taking a cue from Marx under real subsumption, the labour process is structured in accordance with the requirements and desires of capital (Hardt 1995, 38). This is achieved through the implementation of technological advancements and other innovations by capitalism, which aims to maximise profit. As a result, new labour processes are created within the capitalist system and are perceived as an inherent force within capital itself. Melinda Cooper (2011) contends that neoliberal biotechnology surpasses the boundaries of material constraints by compelling plants to yield harvestable goods outside their normal biological cycle and by manipulating animal bodies to function as chemical manufacturing facilities. The phenomenon of real subsumption also has an impact on human bodies, as Cooper later examines in collaboration with Waldby (Cooper and Waldby 2014). The critical aspect here is that labour-power in these circumstances originates from the physical body, specifically from biology. What does the idea of personhood and the concept of the human mean in this particular situation? How does analysing modern biopolitics in light of this acknowledgement help us gain insight into the interplay between life and capital, and to see living in a different light? The present study explored these trajectories to advocate for the necessity of reimagining

personhood in posthuman terms. This reimagining is crucial to establish alliances and lifeways that can provide decommodified futures.

This emerging dispositif of (post)human existence can be observed in speculative literature that explores the impact of new institutional environments on our understanding of life and its commodified biology. Foucault notably observes that the concept of the human, as conceptualised by the human sciences of modernity, is a very recent invention, one that may be approaching its end (Foucault 1994, 387). Biology is one of the human sciences, and according to Foucault, the shift from natural history to biology brings about the notion of life as a distinct concept or thing that can be comprehended independently from individual living organisms (Foucault 1994, 128). Following Agamben who contends that dispositif is “anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings” (Agamben 2009, 14), the current study infers the contemporary human as the result of the dispositif of humanism, rather than as an inherent or timeless identity that comes before it. But one must not fail to account for the significant influence of colonialism and systemic racialisation in shaping the development of the modern human.

The convergence of governance and biotechnology within the framework of biocapital plays a crucial role in exerting pressure on the concept of “the human” hence necessitating a fresh reconsideration of personhood in a posthuman framework. In his 1979 lectures titled *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault examines the impact of neoliberalism on the transformation of governing methods. During his last lectures of that year, he analyses the particular issue of American neoliberalism—in its globally dominant form—and specifically the manner in which US market liberalism has evolved into “a whole way of being and thinking” that facilitates the widespread application of market principles to all facets of life (Foucault 2010, 218). This transformation from a man of exchange to entrepreneur of himself is characterised by a novel sort of alienation, as labour-power, being a form of capital, is inherently tied to the one who owns it. The shift in perspective where one’s abilities are seen as a machine that can be rented and manipulated is an indicator of real subsumption of life by capital (Vint 2021, 15). This pursuit of self-interest stands at odds with the unity of juridical subject in a functioning society. Foucault argues that as classical liberalism evolves into neoliberalism, the focus on individual interests becomes more prominent, overshadowing the importance of collective rights. This shift leads to a primary understanding of social relations through market principles, undermining the bonds within civil society and isolating individuals based on their economic ties (Foucault 2010, 274). But the institutions of civil society, as Sylvia Wynter (2003) reveals, have been influenced by colonial history. Consequently, these institutions serve as both a means of maintaining community and a method of excluding some individuals from that group.

This study focuses on novel biopolitical configurations that we contend accurately depict new forms of subjectification. A depiction of new biopolitical figures in *Moxyland* illustrates recent methods of transforming life into a commodity, where life itself becomes a resource for capital, as demanded by the current profit-driven systems. Biopolitical figurations serve as indicators of significant changes in our understanding and practical engagement with life, both as an abstract idea and as a physical experience. They can also provide guidance in exploring other perspectives on life, humanity, and the interconnectedness between different beings. These biopolitical figurations serve as both a diagnosis and a map, allowing us to observe how our understanding of life is changing in the twenty-first century and motivating us to pursue a different direction.

### *Moxyland* in Context

In 2018, the current state of *Moxyland*, a seemingly democratic South Africa, is governed by a dominant consortium of companies, backed by an oppressive police force and a complicit government. The initial narrative of the novel exposes the biopolitical framework that underlies the city of Cape Town, which is segregated into two primary groups: corporate employees and civilians. However, as the events progress, the reader uncovers the dystopian truth of the “rural” area, which experiences frightening outbreaks of dangerous diseases such as AIDS. The disparity between the rich and the impoverished has increased in contemporary South Africa, overcoming race, which used to be the primary marker for this split. The urban region is segregated from the rural population which is filtered “out like spam” in order to preserve the bodily and social immunity of the corporate (Beukes 2018, 39). Access to medical breakthroughs is limited to individuals with significant financial resources, while longstanding governmental commitments “they’ve been promising to fix since the 1955 Freedom Charter” to ensure adequate housing for those who do not belong to the corporate class have not been honoured (Beukes 2018, 42). In urban areas, technology is employed to inundate naive individuals with advertising with the aim of stimulating desires for costly goods. The majority of the populace is effectively satisfied and regulated through the utilisation of cell phone technology. Cell phones facilitate financial transactions and provide exclusive benefits to corporate employees, who belong to a privileged social group that looks down upon civilians and rural people who lack access to superior transportation, health care, and food. Cell phones not only provide day-to-day transactions, but they are also utilised by the government as a powerful tool for control. Minor misdemeanours are punished via “defusing,” which involves administering shock treatment through the individual’s cell phone, “so we’re all unquestioning, unresisting obedient model fucking zombie puppydog citizens” with compliant behaviour (Beukes 2018, 41). On the other hand, felonies are punished by disconnection, effectively stripping the individual of his legal rights and reducing him to “bare life” (Agamben 1998).

In *Moxyland*, society highlights both positive and negative technological and medical advancements resulting from corporate progress. The stories of the four main characters

explore these developments. However, the overall socio-economic conditions depicted in the novel are unfavourable for the majority of the population. Tendeka explains how “the shipping industry has died together with the economy” (Beukes 2018, 42). Furthermore, the story portrays a grim scenario in which the government strives to establish control by whatever means necessary, including implementing quarantine, segregation, using brutal police authority, and enforcing censorship. The novel’s dystopian tendencies are voiced through the first-person narratives of the four narrators. All four urban protagonists oppose the corporatised state built on racialised neoliberal principles. The novel features a recurring term, “government inc.,” which is utilised by various characters to refer to state power. The term incorporates the abbreviation “inc.,” which implies incorporated, thereby suggesting that the government in *Moxylant* has “outsourced too much of its sovereignty to corporate powers” (Vint 2021, 132). The novel suggests a strong connection between the position of governmental authority and the influence of corporate power, with the latter exerting complete control over the former. Each protagonist tries to fight this dehumanisation in their own manner.

Kendra, a developing artist, covertly employs analogue cameras to document Cape Town on reels of vintage film. Following the tragic death of her father, she has been taken over by the corporation and given immune-enhancing nanotechnology that leads to her developing an addiction to the sponsored beverage (Beukes 2018, 1–3). Toby is a young Caucasian individual who is a bored and disillusioned modern-day vlogger, with his thoughts and emotions merely reflecting the screen he always carries. The “smartfabric” of his “BabyStrange” coat both transmits and captures photographs for his video blog (13). Motivated by a combination of boredom and self-promotion, Toby partners with Tendeka, a black homosexual activist who opposes corporations, to plan and carry out acts of symbolic violence against the company on behalf of marginalised individuals. He is the only impersonal character in the novel who overcomes his individuality for his passion of the community by any means possible. Raised as AIDS BABY, Lerato has successfully advanced in the corporate world, and aids Toby and Tendeka in causing disruptive and violent actions against the established corporate structure. The acts of subversion mentioned involve climbing a corporation billboard to gain unauthorised access to its content (96–99), physically destroying a genetically modified art installation using sharp pangas (176–178), and organising a flashmob “pass-protest” demonstration (210–224) that ultimately exposes Tendeka’s unwitting manipulation by the corporation he intended to oppose.

## Life in Moxylant

The city of Cape Town in the novel comprises Prima-Sabine FoodSolutions International, Vukani Media, Inatec Biologica, Communique, and Eskom, which are the major corporations that run the show in *Moxylant*. As their names suggest, they penetrate all aspects of life, rendering it valuable or disposable. The perpetual use of high-tech vocabulary defamiliarises the reader as well as normalises the presence of technology. The presence of biotech products for daily use suggests that consumerism

permeates the city's cultural fabric. The prevalence of sophisticated biotechnological advances such as “nutradiet” drinks attuned to an individual's “bio-rhythm,” “bio-tech creams,” which work as a moisturiser on the subdermal level, etc., suggests that health in *Moxyland* can be “accumulated, appropriated and redistributed in ways analogous to the value generated by labour-power in Marxist terms” (Dumit 2012, 48). This indicates that the pharmaceutical consumption is not primarily because of advancements in disease prediction, but rather driven by the goal of maximising profit by increasing the number of prescriptions. Patients are treated as consumers and medicine is tailored to their specific “bio-rhythms” (Beukes 2018, 18).

Apart from this, the biotech industry in *Moxyland* enhances the security apparatus through their genetically modified organisms, specifically *Aitos*, which are genetically engineered dogs. These beings not only challenge the clear distinction made by the liberal human dispositif between itself and other species, but they also highlight how life is today perceived as a highly adaptable substance, blurring the boundary between living organisms and machines. This dehumanisation is extended to Kendra, an “art school dropout reinvested as a shiny brand ambassador” (Beukes 2018, 7), who undergoes an irreversible biological transition by injecting nanobots into her body that permanently brand her with the Ghost logo on her wrist. The act of relinquishing her physical body to the advertising company is the sole means by which she is granted access to the corporate realm. Kendra is not the only one; all the “young, dynamic, creative, on the up, the perfect ambassadors for the brand” are launched like a product once they have signed their product and the nano has settled in their systems without any visible side effects (Beukes 2018, 12). Life in *Moxyland* is controlled by capital through neoliberal practices and living matter is equated with machines through biotechnology. It normalises the idea that all life is machine-like and can be bought and sold like a property. This applies even to cases where the body has not been altered by genomics or other biotechnology.

Corporations produce dehumanised individuals who function as producers of what Nikolas Rose describes as biovalue. From a posthuman perspective, “capturing, domesticating, disciplining, and instrumentalizing the vital capacities of living beings” such as *Aitos* exploits their biological worth and equates them with machines instead of recognising them as independent entities (Rose 2007, 33). In addition, when biopolitical appropriations fail to acknowledge rational methods of understanding and engaging with other forms of life, they not only take control of their physical bodies but also strip them of their agency. According to Rebekah Sheldon (2023) the act of extracting biovalue has emerged as a new concern over the privatisation of life itself. By converting life into intellectual property corporations in *Moxyland* alienates bodies (humans or animals) from their embodied existence as their health appears to be something external, an idealised metric to which they must subject themselves (Vint 2021, 159). The precarious are subjected to various biopolitical mechanisms which reorient their living to maximising production that corporations seek to extract.



Lerato's circumstances reveal similar exploitation, resulting in her absolute subjugation owing to her desperate situation as an orphan whose parents died from AIDS. Since her youth, she has been nurtured and instructed by a corporate entity (Eskom) that subsequently seeks to recover its investment through a legally binding agreement. The social structures that appear to be utopian, where corporate power assumes responsibility for vulnerable parties, are demonstrated to function as a successful biopolitical mechanism for controlling the diverse members of society. Lerato's successful rise in the novel makes her a prototype of global neoliberalism which intensifies and changes capitalist methods of extracting surplus value (profit) from workers (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 88). By colonising the entire life of labouring subjects, corporations reduce humans to organic tools. In time they start seeing neoliberal market values as something mandatory for a good life. Lerato and her sisters' impoverished experiences in Eskom Energy Kids, the Eskom orphanage where they "cultivate proprietary workforces" (Beukes 2018, 140), makes it clear that the "biopolitical stakes of corporate governance are life and death" (Vint 2021, 129). You must either become an entrepreneur and repay your debts, or you will perish. While corporations like Eskom do offer orphaned children a place to live and a promising future, the conditions at these schools are evidently far from perfect. Lerato successfully elevates to a higher and more esteemed position, while there are still some similarities: both institutions emphasise class discussions that revolve on topics related to the "parent company" (141). While the inclusion of such a discreet infiltration of the curriculum may evoke dystopian ideas of indoctrination, this example effectively demonstrates Beukes's ambivalent position in *Moxyland*. Lerato, who is 16 years old, is actively pursued by a rival corporation and recruited by a professional headhunter. Lerato undergoes an educational development that closely mirrors a professional career, making it a valuable asset for trade. Instead of serving as homes or accountable organisations, the skills institutes operate through agreements, discussions, and expulsions. Lerato's childhood experiences made her ruthless and cutthroat because that was the only way to keep up the status quo in Cape Town. All essential services such as police, water, power, food, and shelter require payment in exchange. Without corporate status in *Moxyland* one becomes as disposable as a rural. Communicate, Lerato's current employer, manages every crisis at government inc., and co-opts her into an instrument. Communicate exerts total control over public and private media communication. It aids government inc. by giving a "spin" to the facts and goes as far as halting the communication altogether when things become unmanageable. Lerato has no moral compass when it comes to professional progress, even if it means installing a backdoor in the "security software on the adboards that allows you to access Communicate's proprietary information, track the data and the response rates" (110).

## Smart Policing

Although technology plays a significant role in the lives of Beukes's protagonists, the most distinctive aspect of *Moxyland* is smart policing through digital media. Phoenix Alexander describes Beukes's digital media as "alien but familiar, consumable and

iconic, the digital medium as rendered in Beukes' texts generates a sense of dystopian jouissance via an authorial dive into occidental late capitalism, camera held out before her as she plunges into the depths" (Alexander 2015, 158). An essential aspect of *Moxyland*'s narrative is the "conjunction of gritty, urban experiences with virtual reality" (McQueen 2016, 5). In addition to serving as gateways to the virtual realm of information, phones are also utilised to control access to physical locations and resources. The convergence of digital media and policing is the dystopian extension of "urban neoliberalism which constitutes a new racial project under conditions of democracy, one in which the regulatory functions of the state are transferred to the market, or to the heralded public-private partnership" (Hetzler, Medina, and Overfelt 2006, 638). The corporations in *Moxyland* implement exclusionary measures akin to the real-life Central City Improvement District (CCID) in Cape Town, which has its own private "security cops" (Beukes 2018, 274), capable of circumventing the state's authorisation for repressive police actions.

The police in *Moxyland* go a step further by giving defusing quotas to owners of small businesses which promote corporate interests. Kendra encounters a woman "having a seizure on the pavement" (Beukes 2018, 134) because a shop owner had issued a defuse on her because of shoplifting. Since he was "logging one crisp every coupla days" (136), he now has to pay extra for exceeding the limit. The complaint regarding his violation of the limit is actually a consequence of engaging in criminal activity that surpasses the capacity of his allocated "crisps" quota to control. It is implied that the police have a duty to decrease crime to a controllable level. The wording of the complaint suggests that the system is a standard reaction to minor types of crime and, just like health, can buy policing rights in *Moxyland*. Civilians are therefore coerced into participating in the enforcement of violent control, so illustrating the conflicting nature of the system. According to Kempa and Singh (2008), while discussing private policing in South Africa, this method of maintaining public order shifts the focus from violating apartheid's racial hierarchy to violating private property, which then leads to repressive police measures.

The severity of repressive security procedures in *Moxyland* knows no bounds. If needed, the South African Police Services (SAPS) can use bioengineered creatures like Aitos and lab-coded viruses to neutralise the situation. *Statute 41b* of the *National Security Act* is founded on the same "colonial logic of racialization and naturalization of (intellectual) property that makes it inevitably complicit with capitalism" (Vint 2021, 201). Just like the health industry, the police in the novel preserve the immunity of the body politic as a reaction "to something that appears to threaten it" (Esposito 2018, 76). This attitude is revealed in the following scene by the Aito's unwarranted reaction to a street kid who was looking at a woman, "fastening its mouth like a bear trap on his arm and crashing him down to the street in one movement. There is a branch-crack of bone, followed by the inevitable screaming" (136). This suggests that any form of behaviour can qualify as pathological on the security spectrum and trigger the security protocol. The peak of the security protocol is witnessed in Adderley Street, where Toby and his

fellow gamers are playing in realspace. A group of protesters led by Tendeka and a large gathering of people enter into a situation of panic and violence. The players mistake innocent bystanders for other players, shooting purple fluid pellets at the innocent crowd, resulting in one convulsive move: “everyone drops to the ground, twitching, phones crackling as the defusers kick in” (Beukes 2018, 214). Despite the presence of numerous bystanders who are not involved in the conflict, law enforcement authorities employ stringent tactics to neutralise the situation by rendering all individuals in the vicinity immobile. The protestors, who voluntarily disconnected, attacked the dogs, which pushed the police to use national security measures, exposing everyone to the lab-coded M7N1 virus. The police inform them that the virus can prove to be lethal if the affected individuals do not seek “medical treatment at an immunity centre within 48 hours” (219). The weaponisation of non-human entities against humans once again repeats the same biopolitical splitting of life into valued and disposable categories. The security measures have a twofold purpose. First, the security measures subvert the traditional justice system by passing a verdict before determining the nature of the crime. A 48-hour window before their apparent deaths gives the alleged criminals a chance to prove their innocence through vaccination. However, it appears that vaccinated civilians will become disconnected, forcing them to choose the lesser of two evils—social death. Secondly, it forcibly immunises individuals from the community, as depicted by Kendra’s ill treatment by Toby and Mr Muller who asks her to leave once she is infected. We must abandon the personhood-based immunity model of biopolitics, which intertwines the politics of life and death by dividing populations into categories of life that need protection and life that needs to be sacrificed.

## Resistance

Although resistance is the primary thread which brings together the four protagonists, it is tainted with the same biopolitical splitting of life. Each, in their own way, plays their part against the corporation that has infiltrated the government. Each character is inevitably entangled in this resistance, regardless of their level of volition. Although the protagonists try to dismantle the human biopolitics, their final fates are subsumed by the corporations. In the novel, it is observed that Tendeka’s involvement in violent terrorist attacks is influenced by the actions of Skyward\*, a digital avatar of a terrorist created by Communique. The technological aspects of Tendeka’s operations are facilitated by Lerato through the use of hacking techniques. Toby is noted to have joined Tendeka’s activities with a personal motive, while Kendra is portrayed as an unwilling and unwitting victim of the repeated terrorist attacks. The manifestation of biopolitical power’s absolute authority has been observed to incite insurrection among individuals subjected to its physical and psychological dominion and aggression.

The most humanistic character of the novel, Tendeka, has a propensity for taking risks because of his strong sense of purpose. Having familial ties with anti-apartheid activism, Tendeka carries out his rebellion in private as well as in public. Involved in a homosexual relationship with a Muslim (Ashraf), Tendeka has been married to a

pregnant woman named Emmie Chinyaka, a Malawian refugee, for three years so that she can secure citizenship. In exchange, they will keep the baby. This is Tendeka's revolt against "artificially imposed borders and bureaucracies" (Beukes 2018, 91). Tendeka's familial predicament exposes the dystopian biopolitical control of corporations over humans. Tendeka's sense of righteousness falls prey to the dystopian mechanisations of Skyward\*. In the aftermath of the protest at the Adderley station, Tendeka is infected with the M7N1 virus and refuses to take a vaccine. Tendeka, under the influence of Skyward\*, bombs the vaccination centre which kills many innocent people. Tendeka's death highlights Agamben's argument that the concept of biopolitics marks the point of entry into biological modernity, wherein society is viewed as a mere living organism that is integrated into political strategies (Bird and Lynch 2019, 2). Lerato's discovery that Skyward\*'s IP is running from Communique's server gets her into trouble. Jane from internal affairs discovers her "faked phonecalls for spyware, the backdoors in the adboards," created to cover Tendeka's tracks. One can observe that Tendeka's efforts towards an anti-corporate agenda and associated actions have been influenced by the very corporate power that he seeks to dismantle. Lerato is promoted to a higher position. Instead of defusing her, Lerato is assigned the task of creating fake terrorists on Communique's behalf. In the end, "fear has to be managed. Fear has to be controlled. Like people" (Beukes 2018, 214).

Toby, one of the primary protagonists, is a Caucasian male of youthful age, hailing from an affluent family that has disowned him because of his substance addiction. The individual possesses a high-end coat, "Babystrange," that consists of integrated cameras capable of projecting numerous images onto its exterior. Toby's choice to join Tendeka and his gang seems to stem primarily from their intention to exploit their material possessions in order to create a purposely provocative "streamcast." Toby trivialises the manifesto of the resistance movement and reduces it to a petty concern about consumerist pursuits. Toby's apparent shallow perspective on the apparently dystopian society of *Moxylant* is exemplified by his response to Tendeka's death, which he witnessed first-hand. Toby aims to derive financial gain from the tape, regardless of whether it serves to corroborate or challenge Tendeka's perspectives. Toby's sole consideration is the financial worth attributed to Tendeka's death, as he intends to auction off the storyline to the most lucrative buyer. At the end it is suggested that Toby is being healed after his sexual sojourn with Kendra who passes on her immunity to him. Beukes metaphorically represents the capitalist exploitation of the vulnerable from the most intimate aspect of life.

Kendra is a young white photographer who inadvertently becomes involved in the protests that the other characters more deliberately engage in. Empowered biologically in a transhuman sense, the nanotech provides her with immunity against the M7N1 virus, but Kendra's anthropocentric psychology refuses the posthuman empowerment. This ultimately results in her neutralisation. It seems, as per Inatec's protocol, that any malfunctioning prototype, human or otherwise, needs to be put down. Any intellectual property of the company needs to be guarded for life. This very act of biopolitics

promotes life by regulating dangerous entities as well as putting away everything unworthy of living, thus creating a biopolitical commodity that can be subjected to perpetual manipulation by the government.

## Posthumanism, Biopolitics, and South Africa

In the dystopian turnout, the characters end up being slaves or dead. They were unable to achieve liberation from the dual subjugation of biopolitics and the racialised idea of personhood embedded in property, a Western import in the Global South. *Moxyland*, through its cautionary tale, underscores the continuation of the early European colonisation of the African people through Western infrastructure in contemporary times.

Advanced machinery and labour techniques disproportionately affected marginalised people during apartheid, as the settlers extracted natural resources for industrial manufacturing in their home countries. As mentioned, in South Africa, engineers made mineral extraction chemicals, and panoptic structures supervised the labour force. People without resources and opportunities relied on colonial dictators (Amin 1976; Rodney 2018). Today, the same apparatus has returned in the form of life-altering technologies associated with them, such as biotechnology, social media, and smart policing, as depicted in *Moxyland*. Companies such as Amazon, Google, and IBM are key players in South Africa's tech ecosystem. The panopticons refer to the centralised intermediaries and spy centres. The "land" utilised to extract rent is the intellectual property and private ownership of the means of computation. Data serves as the raw material that is processed for artificial intelligence services (Kwet 2021).

Any posthuman improvement will significantly increase the ability of those who possess it to engage in entrepreneurial endeavours. The actual issue at hand is that a large number of Africans continue to lack basic biological and human necessities for living. Africa has troubling statistics pertaining to diseases and famine. Sub-Saharan Africa has the greatest rate of undernourishment outside of Asia (Action Against Hunger 2021). In the region, almost 400 million people suffer from starvation. The WHO estimates that illnesses in Africa cost the continent \$2.4 trillion annually (WHO Africa 2019). How might posthumanist concepts overcome the current technological divide that has resulted in poverty and disadvantage for Sub-Saharan African nations?

*Moxyland*, in the intellectual tradition of Fukuyama, answers that the posthuman romance with future technologies will exacerbate global inequality and further alienate the disadvantaged. The novel depicts the posthuman character in the integration of technology with the body, but the protagonists lack the "posthuman subjectivity" that Rosi Braidotti (2013, 49) claims "expresses an embodied and embedded and hence partial form of accountability, based on a strong sense of collectivity, relationality and hence community building." All the protagonists protect themselves by compressing the "power of the body into control apparatuses that bind them to the established orders" in

*Moxyland*” (Esposito 2015, 115). Neoliberal market conditions create a biopolitical divide that is devoid of bioethics. We can create a better future only by moving beyond present ideas of personhood which entail too much individuality and neglect community. The posthuman must break free from this anthropocentric framework based on binaries such as human/animal, person/thing, and embrace posthumanism that embraces community and difference. Fukuyama claims, “True freedom entails the ability of political communities to safeguard the values they consider most important, and it is this freedom that we must exercise” in line with the technology revolution today (2002, 218).

## Conclusion

Biopolitics was once a technology that regulated life. Modern capitalism complicates biopolitics with its assumption of human exceptionalism. Consequently, we can infer the existence of a population subject to oppression. The novel illustrates the concept of biopolitics, which aims to address various issues of gender, sexuality, population control, and the commodification of human bodies. The consequence of this phenomenon is the prevalence of discrimination and oppression against certain groups, particularly coloured Africans, resulting in their dehumanisation and marginalisation. Conversely, the faction experiencing oppression may scrutinise the government’s notion of humanity. Portrayed as a cautionary tale, *Moxyland* highlights the notion that posthumanism encompasses more than just physical enhancements to the human form. Rather, it emphasises the importance of acknowledging and accepting the “other” and treating them as equals. While biopolitics may not always serve as the primary determinant for the transition to a posthuman state, it can serve as a catalyst for individuals to pursue opportunities for advancement.

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