



# **The Transhuman Antihero: Split-Natured Protagonists in Speculative Fiction from Mary Shelley to Richard Morgan**

*Michael Grantham*

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Advances in science and technology no longer change how we live, they determine it. In the not-too-distant future, techno-scientific developments may make individuals stronger, smarter, healthier and more productive--but to what end?

Addressing this question, speculative fiction has created an abundance of transhuman characters, protagonists with extraordinary strength, intelligence or abilities. Often they are antiheroes, openly rejecting--or rejected by--society and acting on immoral or extreme principles that challenge readers to approve, condemn, excuse or explain.

This study explores the antihero of speculative fiction as a paradoxical blend of human and transhuman. These protagonists illustrate the dynamics of individual, techno-scientific and societal norms, and blur distinctions between human and machine, biology and technology, right and wrong.

Fictional works covered include Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Olaf Stapledon's *Odd John* (1935), Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination* (1956), William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1986), Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen* (1986-1987), Richard Morgan's trilogy (*Altered Carbon*, 2001, *Broken Angels*, 2003 and *Woken Furies* 2005) and *Black Man* (2007).

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