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“Not with a Bang but a Whimper”: The Ascendance of the Posthuman in Eric Stenbock’s “The Other Side”

Jeremy Walker

The Victorian period saw the rise of the Gothic horror monster story. Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde,* which Stevenson proclaimed to be “the worst thing he ever wrote” was widely popular and “sold forty thousand copies in Britain during the first six months,” suggesting that Gothic horror resonated with the population of Britain, especially the fascination with distorted human bodies (“Robert Louis Stevenson” par. 12). Furthermore, the Gothic horror of Stoker’s *Dracula* was popular at the time of its publication and has maintained a significant presence in the public consciousness up to the present day.

In the same tradition of Gothic horror, a relatively unknown story titled “The Other Side: A Breton Legend” published in the late Victorian journal *The Spirit Lamp* (edited by Lord Alfred Douglas) by the now obscure Eric Stenbock, tells a story which lends itself to analysis of issues of posthumanism. Besides providing a solid framework for analyzing posthumanism, “The Other Side” also presents an opportunity to examine the work of an author who has flown under the radar of contemporary literary critics. Stenbock has largely remained in obscurity despite the fact that his contemporaries thought highly of him. Lord Alfred Douglas obviously thought well enough of Stenbock and his writing to publish his work, and even W.B. Yeats once said of him that he was a “scholar, connoisseur, drunkard, poet, pervert, most charming of men” (Yeats, x), which reveals Yeats’ recognition of Stenbock as a capable writer, and at the same time congratulates him for violating and

disrupting Victorian ideals. The story "The Other Side" is set in a village which butts up against an area the villagers call the 'other side,' and in which werewolves and similar types of monstrous creatures dwell. A small brook separates these two areas creating a type of barrier, and each side primarily leaves the other in peace. The protagonist, Gabriel, eventually crosses over to the 'other side,' becomes a werewolf, and narrowly escapes back to the village. While the 'other side' is destroyed after his escape, Gabriel remains a werewolf at the end of the story.

Looking at posthumanism in the Victorian period, the allure and the spectacle of the distorted human body can be seen as a manifestation of cultural concerns about the human body, morality, and the privileged position of humanist philosophies. The conflicts between the village, and particularly Gabriel, and the 'other side' present a framework that captures the narrative of posthumanism as it plays out in the story. Neil Badmington accurately captures a central element of a posthuman narrative when he asserts that "humanism is forever rewriting itself as posthumanism," which can be seen in a variety of instances in the "The Other Side" as they story illustrates the conflicts within the humanist paradigm of creating unity by eradicating alterity ("Theorizing Posthumanism" 15–16). By moving broadly from topography to societal dynamics and finally to individual characterizations, I will illustrate how Eric Stenbock's werewolf short story, "The Other Side" depicts humanism as always becoming posthumanism.

Understanding the relationship between humanism and posthumanism is crucial to understanding the role of posthumanism and the posthuman in "The Other Side." Humanism emphasizes the human ability to reason and reinforces Protagoras' concept that the human is the measure of all things. This paradigm begs two questions: one, what characterizes the 'human,' and, two, when you recognize idea of 'human' as a construct, what do you do with this antiquated and exposed construct? The connection between humanism and posthumanism is not one of violent opposition, but one of rewriting, of reconfiguring previous and possibly antiquated philosophies with their contemporary progenitors. Posthumanism is in many ways a manifestation of Derrida's discussion of deconstructing a system from within the system as the elements of humanism "are employed to destroy the old machinery to which they belong and of which they themselves are pieces" ("Structure, Sign and Play" 284). Posthumanism is not a project which destroys humanism, but one that appropriates the aspects of humanism in order to establish a more useful and accurate philosophy. The relationship and shift from humanism and posthumanism is also described by N. Katherine Hayles

as "mean[ing] something more complex than 'That was then, this is now.' Rather, 'human' and 'posthuman' coexist in shifting configurations" (6). Hayles emphasizes Derrida's point and suggests that humanism works within a system and uses its own tools to dismantle itself.

Humanism is not eradicated, but acknowledged as Janus would acknowledge the past while recognizing what is coming or has possibly already come. Badmington discusses posthumanism in similar terms as Hayles, only he is even more explicit in incorporating Derrida's notion of "lodg[ing] oneself within traditional conceptuality in order to destroy it" ("Violence and Metaphysics" 111), and he makes use of this notion in order "to reveal the internal instabilities, the fatal contradictions, that expose how humanism is forever rewriting itself as posthumanism" ("Theorizing Posthumanism" 15–16). Notions of humanism are difficult, if not impossible, to stamp out because, primarily, the notion of reflexivity overwhelms the discussion of posthumanism by the very fact that it is forever tied to the human subject as the producer of the theory. As soon as I say that humanism is dead and we stand in its wake, I am reinserting myself into the humanist paradigm by arguing (in the true spirit of 'man' as the measure of all things) from the perspective of a human because I continue to measure existence on my own human terms.

In "The Other Side" the interplay between the human (or the traditional), the culture, and the posthuman future are introduced topographically:

> There was a forest and a village and a brook, the village was on one side of the brook, none had dared to cross to the other side. Where the village was, all was green and glad and fertile and fruitful; on the other side the trees never put forth green leaves … and only one still running brook like a silver streak flowed between. (53)

In the small community in which the story is set, the brook divides two distinct areas of human embodiment. One side retains and perpetuates tradition and advocates a purposeful ostracizing of alterity in order to maintain the human construct, while the other side breaks with tradition and accepted practices. The landscape itself perpetuates and sets up the inherent conflict between the two sides of the brook. The fact that it is only a small brook separating the two areas is representative of the intimate relationship between humanism and posthumanism. Humanism cannot stop itself from becoming posthumanism, and posthumanism cannot become something entirely separate from humanism because its origin is found in the aporia of humanism.

Moving from a topographic view to a more physiological one, we can see the contrast of the posthuman and human bodies as they are perceived from the human perspective and also we observe the blurring of the two categories of 'human' and 'posthuman.' The beings on the 'other side' are feared precisely because of their similarity to the humans. And it is important to note that similarity is defined by difference because if something is similar, it is not exactly the same and contains difference. There is then, an inherent alterity to similarity that is played out in "The Other Side." The bodies of the humanoids on the 'other side' are infused with animal characteristics in a passage in which Stenbock describes them as "the were-wolves and the wolf-men and the men-wolves, and those very wicked men who for nine days in every year are turned into wolves," and more importantly, their bodies also exhibit characteristics of typical human culture (53): when Gabriel wakes up on the 'other side,' he finds himself in a bed and then goes downstairs to a homely condition where "the wonted coffee and bread-rolls were on the table" (61). This is not some nightmarish scene that would be expected among such inhuman monsters, but a scene that is so familiar that it would be difficult to find a clear break with, as the text describes it, the human side of the brook. The similarity (which necessitates difference) of the two cultures illustrates the way humanism re-writes itself as posthumanism. The bodies of those on the 'other side' may not be quite 'human', but in the moment of recognizing their otherness, it is possible to recognize the transient definition of the human that humanism wants to so desperately hold on to.

Understanding Fukuyama's attack on posthumanism in his work *Our Posthuman Future* is important because it underscores the move of self-preservation of humanistic ideals that are represented as the fear of the humans in "The Other Side." As an example of this desperate hold on humanist ideals, Fukuyama's work argues that the threat of biotechnology is subversive because it changes human nature. Human nature is important to Fukuyama because it "exists, is a meaningful concept, and has provided a stable continuity to our experience as a species. It is, conjointly with religion, what defines our most basic values" (7). In this assertion Fukuyama makes a few assumptions that are problematic: he assumes that at the present there is such a static category of human nature, he assumes that values are universal to those humans, and that there is something desirable about 'continuity of experience.' These assumptions are representative of the homogenizing impetus of humanism. Alterity is then feared, like those on the 'other side' because these 'beings' do not fit into the category of human uniformity. Fukuyama's

views are "part of a predictable genre of writing in which the incipient eclipse of the 'human' is lamented and the 'post' taken, in eschatological mode, as a decisive temporal break," but posthumanism can be theorized and viewed in ways that do not signal a form of human extinction, as much as a human transformation which amalgamates past and present (Castree 1341). In pointing to one of the weaknesses of Fukuyama's argument and humanism in general, Badmington illustrates a strength of posthumanism in its willingness to recognize alterity. While discussing Fukuyama's human universals as being "remarkably fascistic," he points out that Fukuyama's text "sets its sights upon identity, the single, the simple, the same. And to reach such a destination, the text must cancel out, silence, exterminate whatever deviates" ("Mapping Posthumanism" 1347-8). Because posthumanism moves in the direction of expunging the myth of human universals and of recognizing difference rather than attempting to eradicate it, it works to reconfigure humanism rather than destroy it.

The move of humanist self-preservation and maintaining of the status quo for which Fukyyama argues shows up in "The Other Side" as a focus and reinforcement of tradition by Gabriel's mother. The illogical fear of posthumanism for which Fukuyama argues is reflected in Gabriel's mother's reaction to the brilliantly blue flower that Gabriel brings back from the 'other side':

> [W]hen she saw the strange blue flower, [Gabriel's mother] turned pale and said, 'Why child, where hast thou been? sure it is the witch flower'; and so saying she snatched it from him and cast it into the corner, and immediately all its beauty and strange fragrance faded from it and it looked charred as though it had been burnt. (56)

The mother immediately recognizes the blue flower as a symbol and an embodiment of the 'other side' and emphatically rejects it. Additionally, if taken as a symbol of the female and female sexuality, the rejection of the flower becomes a rejection of feminism that would weaken the patriarchal ideology of the human side. Gabriel's mother therefore can be viewed as enforcing tenants of humanism as she rejects her own sexuality and the possibility to assert herself by dismantling her subjugation. The flower loses its beauty, fragrance (i.e. its vitality) and becomes charred just as Gabriel's mother's sexuality has been cast away and devolved into a humanist unity with the other women referenced in the story. The majority of the named characters on the human side are women, but they

work to duplicate the patriarchal presence in their culture, which can also be seen in Gabriel's young female friend, Carmielle.

The repetition of inherited ideology of the humanist paradigm as an effort to replicate sameness and reject otherness is seen in a situation where Carmielle becomes a near duplicate of Gabriel's mother. Once again Gabriel attempts to share the beauty of the blue flower with a loved one, and once again he is met with rejection:

> Carmeille turned pale and faint and said, "Oh, Gabriel what is this flower? I but touched it and I felt something strange come over me. No, no, I don't like its perfume, no there's something not quite right about it, oh, dear Gabriel, do let me throw it away," and before he had time to answer, she cast it from her, and again all its beauty and fragrance went from it and it looked charred as though it had been burnt. (57)

The reaction is almost identical. The young girl is a bit more revealing of how the flower makes her feel, but her initial reaction and her decision to violently throw the flower away is again a culmination of the patriarchal and humanist ideology in the way that sexuality is contained and the boundaries of socially acceptable behaviors in general are reinforced. Humanism posits certain values as universally human, and in the near identical situation with the females at least a generation apart, the homogeneity of experience is startlingly clear. The women on the human side work to narcissist ends to reject anything outside the accepted range of practice, belief, and value.

On the 'other side,' however, the one female we encounter, named Lilith, contradicts the perception based in fear that is found in the village by the way she is cast as a sympathetic, rather than 'evil' character. Judith Halberstam, in her discussion of Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, points out that Hyde functions as a "stereotype for otherness" and that "he embodies the traits of the ugly and the undesirable and makes those traits essential signifiers of evil" (80). The portrayal of the 'other side' from those in the village is fitting with Halberstam's description of Hyde: the 'other side' is a signifier for evil just as Hyde is. This concept of otherness as evil is complicated when the story inserts the reader into alterity and reveals the similarity, rather than otherness of the other. The female character Lilith, whom I will discuss in greater depth shortly, establishes a relationship with Gabriel and generates sympathy from the readers. Lilith is a werewolf, who turns from wolf to girl depending on the moonlight, and at one point in the

story, the protagonist Gabriel follows her to the 'other side,' but at this moment in which Gabriel follows Lilith, he does not yet fully understand that she is a werewolf. As a result, when she suddenly turns into a wolf, Gabriel hits Lilith in the face with a log. Lilith's response to the violence disrupts the perception of those on the 'other side' as inherently inhuman, other, and evil:

> Immediately he saw the wolf-woman again at his side with blood streaming from her forehead, staining her wonderful golden hair, and with eyes looking at him with infinite reproach, she said . . . "Oh Gabriel, how could you strike me, who would have loved you so long and so well." (59)

The pain and the plea soften Gabriel and highlight the similarity of emotional reactions to pain and thus work to disarm the perception of inherent evil that those on the 'other side' hold. Although Hyde is always "wholly evil" and always a depository for socially unacceptable acts and behavior, the evil of alterity which Halberstam discusses is not as transparent in "The Other Side" because it is expressed subtly by the attitudes of individuals within the village (Stevenson 69). If Hyde can be viewed as wholly 'other' and as a symbol of intentional distancing from otherness, then Lilith, the central character from the 'other side,' can be viewed as working in an opposite direction of bringing people and ideas together.

After recognizing that Lilith functions as a contrasting figure to those in the village, it is important to consider her as not only a reaction to the humanistic ideology of the village, but also as a compelling posthuman force in her own right. While the categories of human and animal blur and lack anything 'essentially' human or animal, Lilith's body nonetheless contains remnants of those disrupted categories and should therefore be termed as posthuman because the posthuman body is one that is always disrupted, but also disrupts simultaneously. One of the conclusions of posthuman thinking is that the animal is no longer viewed in a hierarchical relationship to the human simply by merit of species. Cary Wolfe argues that humans will continue to inflict violence on one another as long as humanist philosophies dominate and create hierarchies which are so clearly established by the fact that "it is institutionally taken for granted that it is all right to systematically exploit and kill nonhuman animals simply because of their species" (8). The violence against Lilith by Gabriel represents a humanist move of violence against otherness. For my purpose, the important point of Wolfe's argument is the clear association

of human and animal as inherently separate entities within the humanist paradigm. By incorporating the otherness of the animal and by creating a literal duality of species, Lilith conflates the opposition between human and animal into a posthuman body.

Besides the duality of body, Lilith performs another important posthumanist function within the narrative through the allusion to the mythological character of Lilith. A symbol for the liberated female and freethinking rebel, Lilith of mythology was Adam's first wife who rejected him because she could not tolerate subjugation. The Lilith allusion is particularly potent within Victorian culture because of the fascination of the Pre-Raphaelites and especially Dante Gabriel Rossetti with the Lilith myth which could be explained by the desire (whether or not he was successful is another question entirely, however) to move away from cultural and gender stereotypes. The allusion to Lilith is important in a posthumanist reading of "The Other Side" because, within the Victorian context especially, the character Lilith references gender identity and sexuality that is outside the unifying ideology of humanism. While humanism is not in itself misogynist, the definition of human and, by extension, acts that are considered typical of and appropriate for humans are created by the same desire for unity which facilitates misogyny because of the nature of unity in which a center (the male gender) does violence to anything which attempts to disrupt the unity created by and for certain individuals.

The idea of an ideal human is propagated by humanism's violently unifying force which can be found in Patmore's "Angel in the House." and in Patmore's poem, the ideal woman of the Victorian period is the focus and provides a contrast for Lilith:

> She was all mildness; yet 'twas writ
> In all her grace, most legibly,
> 'He that's for heaven itself unfit,
> Let him not hope to merit me.' (Canto III.4.1–4)

Patmore's image of the ideal woman who is mild, graceful and placed on a pedestal reinforces the patriarchal power doing the placing. By idealizing the woman, the patriarchal presence asserts itself by proclaiming its innate power to exalt or to view the woman as an object and a site for domination. By invoking Lilith, "The Other Side" alludes to a deviance of gender identity and a dissolution of the ideal woman Patmore (and much of Victorian culture) creates. Within the narrative Lilith is the one who dominates Gabriel: she invites him to the 'other side' and is the one responsible for transforming him into a werewolf; in other words, as a locus for posthuman

gender and identity, Lilith subverts the unifying conventions of Victorian gender and sexuality. If the human is a construct, then so are human culture, society, and values. Lilith causes the human and human constructs to be configured as suspect and transitory. The village is therefore no more stable than the 'other side,' illustrating the fact that posthumanism is not a salvific response to humanism, but rather, as Badmington argues that humanism rewrites itself as posthumanism, the inevitable philosophical and material (in terms of embodiment) reconfiguration of humanism.

Since the theory of posthumanism I am using highlights humanism as always already embodying and becoming posthumanism, examining the character Gabriel reveals the tenuous state of humanism as it moves toward and becomes posthumanism. Viewing Gabriel as an allusion to the archangel Gabriel is similarly useful as with the allusion to Lilith in emphasizing the posthuman development within the narrative. The archangel Gabriel is often viewed as a messenger from God and as an angel of death, both of which apply in the narrative. Gabriel functions as a messenger to the village by the fact that he doesn't fit in, or, in other words, he is 'other' from the very beginning of the narrative. He is also a messenger as he returns from the 'other side' transformed into a werewolf and therefore further shares the message that humanism rewrites itself as posthumanism. He is the angel of death in the sense that the act of rewriting humanism as posthumanism signals the death of humanism as it is absorbed by posthumanism. Viewing Gabriel as an archangel, we witness his fall from grace, a becoming of otherness, and while he physically returns to the village, his repentance does not undo his rejection of humanism, but rather furthers the rewriting of the village, of his origin, as posthuman. By being a part of his humanist village, he works towards its transformation as well.

Gabriel could be described as becoming posthuman when he becomes a werewolf, but more importantly, Gabriel embodies the posthuman even before he incorporates such distinct bodily otherness into his being. The otherness of the 'other side' is attractive and intriguing to Gabriel, which sets him outside the village society by not inheriting or reproducing the fear that motivates the other villagers to avoid and hate the 'other side.' Portraying Gabriel as 'other' is established by a clear comparison in the text: "It was spring now … and everyone felt so happy that they ceased to tell stories of the 'other side.' But Gabriel wandered by the brook as he was wont to wander, drawn thither by some strange attraction mingled with intense horror" (53). Gabriel is not ignorant of the ideology of the village because horror mingles with his attraction. This amalgamation of horror and attraction, however, only serves to

move Gabriel further from convention in that on top of having a desire contrary to the dominant ideology, he further rejects that ideology by coalescing two emotions that are only combined in deviance, horror, and attraction. This amalgamation creates a posthuman emotion that moves away from the expectations of a unified humanism.

This hybrid emotion, this concurrent pulling and pushing of desires, is manifest again and intensified not long after the first introduction of the attraction/horror. Time passes, the sun sets and still Gabriel "wandered by the brook, filled with vague terror and irresistible fascination" (54). The passage of time reveals that this is not a chimera for Gabriel, but a motivating emotion which is intensified as the vague fascination and attraction moves from abstraction to concrete by an act of inscription of the desire and fear onto an object: the "large deep blue flower" (54). The flower becomes an impetus for action as we see when Gabriel considers actually crossing over to the 'other side' in order to possess the embodiment of his attraction and terror. Gabriel muses, "If I could only make one step across. … [N]othing could harm me if I only plucked that one flower, and nobody would know I had been over at all" (54). Gabriel recognizes the significance of the act he is contemplating, knowing that "the villagers looked with hatred and suspicion on anyone who was said to have crossed to the 'other side'" and by going to the 'other side' Gabriel would compound his otherness by deviancy and association with those things hated by the ideology (54). Gabriel jumps across anyway to retrieve the flower, which act propels the narrative forward, but it is not the act of crossing that configures Gabriel as posthuman, but rather the thoughts that precede the jump which signify an otherness already present in Gabriel.

When Gabriel finds himself on the 'other side,' in a space removed from the forces of humanism in the village, he hears a Nightingale sing and his "heart [was] filled with longing for he knew not what" (55). Gabriel experiences an indescribable longing, indefinable and therefore outside his humanist paradigm which always seeks to define and in definition there is a building up of borders which keeps certain things in, and others out. If humanism excludes as it seeks to unify, then things that are indiscernible (without clear borders) yet significant create moments of posthuman existence. Gabriel's complex amalgamation of seemingly disparate emotions, combined with his desires that are beyond the human are made distinct when he sees Lilith "look on him with her strange blue eyes full of tenderness and passion and sadness beyond the sadness of things human" (58), and in that look, we see Gabriel's attraction to Lilith as an explicit reflection of his attraction to the posthuman as it moves

beyond things human. Gabriel is so deeply attracted to Lilith and feels an intense connection with her "as though he had known her all his life" (59). Gabriel's perception of Lilith is as 'other,' but at the same time more a part of sameness than anything else in the village, and as he follows her, he chooses to rewrite his humanism as a more enduring posthumanism that seeks to account for and even incorporate otherness.

It is not, however, only in Gabriel's personal perceptions that we find posthuman elements, but also in how members of his community perceive him. It is clear that Gabriel is 'other' when he is described as "so unlike [his mother]" (65) and "not like the other kids" (54), which emphasizes the point that his origin and present circumstances with his peers are each rooted in otherness. When he goes missing, a respected woman in the village says that "there was no knowing what he might do next," which characterizes Gabriel as 'other' to such a degree that not only does he not fit in, but he is also so unlike the rest of the community that his actions are cast into shadow as indiscernible (64–5). Even Gabriel's gender falls into a category of indiscernibility when described by people in the village. In a revealing passage, we learn that:

> His schoolfellows did not like Gabriel; all laughed and jeered at him, because he was less cruel and more gentle of nature than the rest, and even as a rare and beautiful bird escaped from a cage is hacked to death by the common sparrows, so was Gabriel among his fellows. (54)

Gabriel's behavior and disposition distance him from the other boys, creating in him an alternate gender identity. The comparison between the "beautiful bird" and the "common sparrows," does two things: first, it reveals how Gabriel is rejected as a man in terms of behavior (throughout the narrative the village boys constantly seek out violent activities), and second, by describing him as beautiful, Gabriel is rejected as a man in terms of physical appearance. This description of Gabriel as not quite man, but also not quite woman forwards an identity of androgyny. He falls in a liminal space of gender identity which furthers the perception of Gabriel as typifying the posthuman.

Gabriel's gender liminality is further captured by his relationship with his human friend Carmeille because of the phonetic similarity of her name to Sheridan Le Fanu's vampire character Carmilla from the eponymous story. While this allusion is not as blatant as the allusion to 'Lilith' or 'Gabriel,' it is nonetheless plausible. Carmilla's lesbian identity can be mapped on Carmeille by virtue of Carmeille's relationship with

Gabriel "who loved him, [but] no one could make out why" (54). Carmeille's motivation to love Gabriel takes on a quality of perversion of the conservative Christian values of the village and strengthens the allusion to Carmilla because of the deviant sexuality inherent to each narrative. Just as Carmilla is described as experiencing "the ardour of a lover" (240) in the company of the female narrator and tells that narrator that "You are mine, you *shall* be mine, you and I are one for ever" (240–1), that lesbian quality is inscribed into "The Other Side" but in a more subversive way. Carmeille's attraction and love for the androgynous does not fit simply into any sexualized identity: it is not homosexual, but neither is it heterosexual. The otherness of their relationship is the quintessence of otherness, and as Donna Haraway asserts, "to be other is to be multiple, without clear boundary, frayed, insubstantial," which definition illuminates the perverse quality of a superficially innocent relationship (82); it is unidentifiable and therefore without a boundary or substance, expressing a disunity that disrupts the unifying Western humanist tradition of universal human traits and values.

Gabriel's body and identity is then an enigma from the start of the story and is not simply transformed into otherness when he loses his human category, but from our first encounters with Gabriel, he is fractured within his society and within his formation of self. This fracturing of body and self illustrates Foucault's claim that "The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration" (148). The unity of Gabriel's desires, sexuality, and body is an illusion, and as we follow the story, his disunity becomes intensified as he goes to the other side and becomes a werewolf. As the narrative comes to a close, Gabriel's body is literally inscribed by the events that created it and eventually forces his humanist society to "acknowledg[e] the fragmented, partial, constructed nature not only of one's identity but also of one's very body" (Clayton 65). Gabriel's body becomes posthuman in a way that forces his society to recognize his alterity.

A key point to make, though, is that the village does not reject Gabriel because of his transient identity. His monstrosity (whether caused by his initial lack of conformity or eventual werewolf identity) is incorporated into the village—into the humanist culture—which ironically fears otherness while unavoidably incorporating it into itself. Humanism exterminates alterity to favor the median (remember Fukuyama's discussion) because humanism favors the many and ignores the few. Gabriel incorporates otherness into his being as he remains part of

the few but also remains part of the majority by maintaining his existence within the dominant culture. Such a coalescing of disparate modes of being by the community is a move towards posthumanism, which is a push against homogeneity as a recognition of alterity and difference. The village, just like Gabriel's body, becomes a site for the incorporation of otherness.

The village worked to keep otherness at a distance by demonizing the 'other side,' but after the 'other side' is destroyed (which is an enaction of the humanist move to ignore and erase alterity in order to view humanity as possessing universal elements), alterity remains and is no longer part of the opposition, but part of the whole. The village thinks that is has prevailed when the 'other side' is destroyed, but the 'other side' has simply been incorporated as the village incorporates Gabriel who renders the possibility of humanist unity impossible. Whether viewed topographically, in terms of societal trends, or on an individual level, posthumanism expresses its ascendency. Humanism and tradition subsume alterity and expose themselves as philosophies of becoming, straining for unity and sameness, but never actually finding it because of their untenable position. Gabriel then becomes a synecdoche for the village and transgressing boundaries. He is part of the humanist machine and wants to continue being good and helping to serve Mass, but he still rewrites himself as 'other,' as posthuman. The village works violently to maintain the values that are seen as universal, but it still rewrites itself as posthuman as it accepts and incorporates Gabriel who has defied and corrupted the possibility of human unity. Badmington confirms that "Tradition does not necessarily fall into silence with its deconstruction" which is evidenced in the narrative's ending when Gabriel is re-introduced into society ("Mapping Posthumanism" 1349). Even though Gabriel has become posthuman, his culture of origin does not undergo a dramatic shift; the silence of continuity at the close of the narrative indicates that humanism does not, appropriating T.S. Eliot's language in "The Hollow Men," violently shatter and fall apart with a bang, but rather, subtly, with a whimper, it becomes posthuman.

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