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Redefining Fatherhood and Child Cloning in the Posthuman World of Caryl Churchill's *A Number*

Caryl Churchill'in "A Number" Oyununda Baba Kimliği ve Çocuk Klonlamanın Posthüman Çerçevede Yeniden Tanımlanması

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Öz

Caryl Churchill'in "A Number" (2002) adlı oyunu, Salter adında bir baba ile onun "orijinal" ve klon oğulları arasındaki ilişkiyi tasvir etmektedir. Alkol bağımlısı olan Salter, eşi öldükten iki yıl sonra "orijinal" çocuğu Bernard'a (oyunda B1 olarak geçer) bakmayı reddeder ve onu bir çocuk bakım merkezine gönderir. Salter'in çocuğunu sosyal bakım merkezine göndermesinin temel nedeni, annenin ölümünden sonra çocuğun istismara ve ihmale uğraması, ayrıca eskiden olduğu kadar zeki ve "hoş" görünmemesidir. Bu nedenle, Bernard'a (B1) bakmak yerine, Salter "orijinal" çocuğunu klonlamaya ve B1'in kopyasına bakmaya karar verir. Ancak, doktorlar yalnızca bir klon değil, B1'in yirmi klonunu yaratır; bu klonlar oyunda B2 ve Michael Black olarak adlandırılır. Bu bağlamda, oyunun olay örgüsü dikkate alınarak, bu makalenin temel amacı, olay örgüsünü posthümanist bir perspektiften incelemek ve bilim ve teknolojinin insanlığı ve insan olmanın gerçek özünü tehdit ederken yakın gelecekte yol açabileceği olası zararları belirlemektir. Bu araştırma, "A Number" adlı eserin insan klonlama ve genetik araştırmaları, posthümanist bir distopyaya geçişin potansiyel tetikleyicileri olarak nasıl ele aldığını incelemektedir. Bu bilimsel ilerlemeler, ilk etapta insanlığın gelişimine fayda sağlayacak gibi görünse de, nihayetinde distopik bir dönüşüme, daha spesifik olarak, posthümanist bir distopyaya, zemin hazırlayabilir.
Anahtar Sözcükşer: Caryl Churchill, *A Number*, posthümanizm, insan klonlama, distopya.

Abstract

Carly Churchill's play *A Number* (2002) depicts the relationship between a father named Salter and his original and clone sons. Salter, being an alcoholic addict, refuses to look after his "original" child named Bernard (B1 in the play) and sends him to a childcare centre two years after the death of his wife. The main reason that he sends his child to the social care centre is due to the fact that the child becomes abused and neglected, and does not seem to be intelligent and "pleasing" as he used to be once the mother was alive. Thus, instead of taking care of Bernard (B1), the father decides to clone his "original" child and look after the copy of B1. However, the doctors do not make one clone, but twenty clones of B1, who are named B2 and Michael Black in the play. Taking the play's plot into account, the main purpose of this article is to look at the plot from a posthumanist perspective and determine the possible damages of science and technology in the near future, while threatening humanity and the real essence of being a human. Thus,

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this research explores how *A Number* examines human cloning and genetic research as potential catalysts for a shift towards a posthumanist dystopia. While these scientific advancements may initially seem to benefit humanity's development, they could ultimately pave the way for a dystopian transformation, or, more precisely, a posthumanist dystopia.
Keywords: Carly Churchill, *A Number*, posthumanism, human cloning, dystopia.

Introduction

A Number is a play written by Carly Churchill and presented at the Royal Court Theatre in 2002. The play has four characters: A father named Salter, his son Bernard (B1), and Bernard's clone brothers, B2 and Michael Black. The play also covers other characters, such as the mother of B1, Salter's wife, who died many years ago, and a number of clones of B1. The underlying plot of *A Number* emerges gradually throughout the play's five scenes. As a young man, Salter, a man in his early sixties, is an alcoholic who abuses his wife and young son. His wife dies when their only kid, Bernard (or B1 as mentioned in the play), is two years old. After this tragedy, Salter falls into a two-year phase of depression and neglects his child, Bernard. Salter turns over his son to social services after Bernard is totally silent and antisocial due to his father's negligence and lack of a mother. However, Salter is overcome with sorrow for his parenting mistake and wishes to "restore" Bernard to the boy he was when he was born, perfect and unspoiled, since the child was not the same as before due to Salter's negligence and the lack of a mother.

Salter gives himself a second try at parenting, but not by traditional fathering methods. He pays a scientist to clone Bernard and finally receives a "new" kid (B2 in the play), a clone of the "original" child. The scientist also creates other clones of Bernard, the play indicates roughly twenty in total, and it is unclear if Salter is aware of this outrageous act of the doctors. His attention is on the one perfect cloned child he receives, and he believes that by raising him (B2, the new child), he compensates for his failure with his "original" son (B1). The hospital where the cloning occurred, apparently in secret, as one may understand from the plot of the story, ultimately discovers the records of the process of cloning and contacts the clones one by one, possibly to undertake a study on the clones. Salter's sons, his "original" one, the clone he then raised (B2), and another clone named Michael Black, are made aware of their histories as a result of the hospital's communication with the clones. Salter himself learns about the various clones that were developed and starts visiting them one by one, ending up with Michael Black. The play then focuses on the reactions of Salter's sons and Salter himself to these discoveries, and all characters (sons) respond very differently to the revelations, to their status, to their "father", and to each other (Griffin, 2012, pp. 14-15). To read more about a commentary on the play's summary, one may have a look at Gabriele Griffin's 2012 article (mentioned in the Bibliography).

Posthumanism as a Literary Theory

In current philosophy and critical theory, posthumanism, sometimes known as post-humanism, meaning "after humanism" or rather "beyond humanism," is a concept that addresses the prevalence of anthropocentrism in 21st-century thought. To understand the concept of posthumanism, one needs to clarify what humanism is and human, or rather, the question of "[w]hat makes us human?" (Gumanay, 2023, p. 115) could be asked. Being human, caring for the ones around us, in our families, around the globe, taking care of the globe's all the living and non-living heritage to pass it on to future generations is and has been one of the most fundamental values of humans. Though countless wars and crimes have happened, humans have always been trying to protect each other and their most valuable material and non-material possessions. Literature is one of those possessions that humans have been trying to protect for thousands of years, and all these protections have always had one central source: Anthropocentrism. That is why humans may ask questions like "[w]hat is my purpose [in this life]?" and "[w]hat makes us humans?" (Gumanay, 2023, p. 115). However, with the arrival of posthumanism, the direction of humans and their central theme, which is anthropocentrism, seems to be on the edge of a twisted change. Questions such as whether humans are not the centre of this world anymore (cf. Atasoy & Tekin, 2024), and whether the concept of anthropocentrism

has any value, could be asked. Furthermore, more clarification would be needed if "[a]nthropocentrism is the belief that the human being exists at the centre of existence" (Rae, 2014, p. 1). Then, what does "post" or "after", and "beyond" humanism mean? The mentioned three words, at first glance, give the notion that humans are no longer the most dominant figure on earth, nor are any other living species. One may argue that posthumanism is the era of machines, robots, technology, and AI. It could clarify that human nature is no longer the centre of art and literature, as is the case with other sciences. However, one may also argue that "post" means returning to nostalgia and improving the betterness of human societies. Thus, in this case, "post" in posthumanism might not necessarily mean "after" but rather "for." Stefan Herbrechter states the following lines about the "post" of posthumanism:

> 'post-' (as in poststructuralism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism or indeed posthumanism) is a funny creature and usually develops a dynamic of its own. To position oneself 'after' something (in the case of an '-ism', a discourse) inevitably requires both repression and return, in short, a 'post' produces spectres, temporal ambiguities, repetitions, memory lapses, symptoms of desires and anxieties. (Herbrechter, 2015, pp. 1-2)

Based on Herbrechter's statement, posthumanism is not necessarily about machines, but also a chance to return to humanism. Nevertheless, to simplify, one may add that a literary work, written by a human (not an AI device), could be considered a post-humanist text if there is any major or minor indication of technology or technological advancements. Modern and postmodern sci-fi books and films could be added to this list as well. To this record, our daily social media chats and emojis that we use could be included too; "emojies (…) have gained their popularity as a new way and path for communication and interaction among people [and] this way of communication in the future will increase more and more" (Dirgeyasa, 2022, p. 64). Thus, as given in the last statement, even the way we communicate changes with the usage of emojis. Lately, however, in literature and art, posthumanism has been shown to be interrupted by language. Using emojis, not only in text messages, but in literature and art, is a newly emerging trend. As an instance, "Under the Grid" by Andrew Dana Hudson (2018), alongside many other solar stories in the book called *The Weight of Light: A Collection of Solar Futures* (2018), could be a proper example of such literary works with the emojis used in them (p. 73). Additionally, the usage of AI, robots, and drones in the stories of the same collection is another example of post-humanist literature (Aghasiyev & Tekin, 2025), which is worth mentioning.

However, postmodernism is not an easy term to define, and many debates are being held in order to clarify its real sense. Some scholars try to link the term to the emergence of late technological developments. In contrast, others claim that the concept of the term is quite rooted in the history: "People's curiosity about what lies beyond humanity was already prevalent in the 1800s. The term first appeared in the form "post-human" in 1888, in a book called *The Secret Doctrine* by Helena Blavatsky" (Gumanay, 2023, p. 117). Gumanay also states that the term is not detailedly described by Blavatsky as the time period might have been way behind the technological advancements (unlike today). Nevertheless, to clarify the historical definition of the word, one may check dictionaries. Oxford Dictionary states that the word "posthumanism" was used by Ihab Hassan for the first time in 1971. Hasan does not deeply clarify the term, though he gives an example in which he mentions "[f]rom infrahumanism to posthumanism" when giving a sci-fi example in literature (Hasan, 1971, p. 25). Later, Ihab Hassan best summed up this method when he claimed that humanism's five hundred years were coming to an end and that the time had come for it to change into what we can only refer to as posthumanism; "Humanism may be coming to an end as humanism transforms itself into something one must helplessly call posthumanism" (Hasan,1977, p. 843). Hasan's humanism refers to the movement that started after (or with) the Renaissance. In the development of posthumanism, cyborgs have made a great contribution. It appeared with the publication of the essay "A Cyborg Manifesto" by Donna J. Haraway in 1985, which later contributed to the development of "feminist posthumanism", though the author never used the term "posthumanism" (Gumanay, 2023, p. 118). Haraway's work illustrates the contemporary use of the term "cyborg" as a crucial component of how posthumanism has developed in the

last twenty years (Miah, 2007, p. 8). However, in literature, the concept of posthuman is nothing new, though the term is gaining popularity in our present, as Andy Miah states:

> Often, stories about the transformation of biology and the rise of machines are imbued with narratives of fear and uncertainty, which reveal a sense of human insecurity arising from sharing the world with the living machine, or the cyborg. Such alien beings are frequently represented as a threat to humanity, calling into question their identity and powers of domination. Literary examples abound on this topic, including Hans Christian Anderson's fairytale story, *The Nightingale* (1844), Mary Shelley's (1818) *Frankenstein*, and more recently, Isaac Asimov's robot stories. (2007, p. 12)

The given quote above highlights how narratives involving biological transformation and machine intelligence often mirror deep-rooted human anxieties about identity, agency, and control. The portrayal of the cyborg or artificial being as a threat reflects a posthuman condition in which traditional humanist boundaries are destabilized. By referencing works such as *Frankenstein*, *The Nightingale*, and Asimov's robot stories, Andy Miah emphasizes a longstanding literary tradition that interrogates the limits of the human in the face of technological advancement.

If we have the concept of posthumanism, then the posthuman is expected to show itself, as logically one would expect posthumanism to address the posthuman, and the post-humanist to posthuman. However, since there are certain debates about the validity of posthumanism as a concept (being for human or against human, calling back humans or being after humans), it is rather difficult to determine the post-humanist and the posthuman. The two terms might not follow each other. At the same time, posthumanism is thought not to be seen as a movement (or theory, concept, approach) that rejects postmodernism. Additionally, it does not represent a continuation of postmodernism. It seems that, as a movement, posthumanism still needs to determine its place in time. Posthumanism and postmodernism should be seen as co-implicated and entangled in their respective critiques of humanism. One simply cannot post one postmodernism with another one" (Herbrechter, 2015, p. 5). As Herbrechter states, posthumanism needs to accept the fact that it cannot ignore the existence of postmodernism and needs to co-exist with it. However, as mentioned earlier, posthumanism could seem as the end of anthropocentrism: "Posthumanism is often defined as a posthumanism and a post-anthropocentrism: it is "post" to the concept of the human and to the historical occurrence of humanism, both based, as we have previously seen, on hierarchical social constructs and humancentric assumptions" (Ferrando, 2013, p. 29). Those who believe that posthumanism is the end of humanism might contradict the approach of Herbrechter, since he states that contemporary literature has "a desire for a 'return', a 'reconstruction' or 'healing' (…). It is, of course, no coincidence that in the face of the posthuman (…) the discourse on the contemporary 'reconstruction of the human' in literature, criticism and (some) theory arises" (2015, p. 5). Hence, posthumanism calls back humanism, perhaps, for the betterness of humankind, for the nostalgia of the greatness of human civilizations, if we are to follow what Herbrechter states:

> [Posthumanism] should rather be understood as a symptom of a desire that seeks to detach itself from postmodern antihumanism (…) precisely at the time when this critique has in fact become the 'new reality'. With their insistence on existential or ontological plurality, the fragmentation of identity and a breaking up of aesthetic norms, the breaking up of narrative continuity and teleology, many postmodern texts are in fact, [a] rather ironically, more 'posthumanist', one could argue, than their current successors. (2015, p. 5)

As the quote above interprets, posthumanism is not a movement that is against humanism, but for the favour of humanism. Like many post movements, it might call us to focus on the humanity of the art in a time where technology occupies most of our lives. Perhaps, it could be understood as a natural process of literature in the time of technology. The artist might use posthumanist elements in order to showcase the global issues created by technology. However, one should not forget that the opposite is possible too.

Accordingly, when it comes to the posthumanist readers, "to read in a posthuman[ist] way is to read against one's self, against one's own deep-seated self-understanding as a member or even a representative of a certain 'species'" (Herbrechter & Callus, 2008, p. 95). So, one cannot read as a post-humanist, since it would be a counter movement towards one's own kind; human against human. One might only read but not delve into the thought of being a posthuman and reading as a posthuman. Additionally, the idea that we share this planet with other people, animals, robots, and objects whose fates are intertwined is emphasised by posthumanists. "[W]e must redefine our existence with this shared-world not as sovereigns but as equals since what awaits animals is what awaits humans" (Arıkan, 2019, p. 4). We make an attempt to concentrate on our relationships with other living and inanimate systems, which necessitates an awareness of environmental and technological changes. This makes us feel helpless since, despite our best efforts as humans, everything seems to be getting worse.

Accordingly, dystopia is commonly understood as a fictional society marked by oppression, environmental degradation, or technological overreach. It serves as a critical lens through which to examine contemporary anxieties about the future. It is often situated in speculative contexts, and its narratives highlight the consequences of unchecked political, technological, and ecological developments and serve as cautionary tales (Booker, 1994). In recent years, dystopia has become increasingly connected with posthumanism. Posthumanism repositions the human as one component within a larger, dynamic system of relations involving machines, animals, and ecosystems, often destabilizing anthropocentric perspectives. Dystopian literature and film frequently explore these posthuman themes by depicting modified human bodies, artificial intelligence, and ecological collapse. In doing so, they engage with questions about what it means to be human in technologically saturated environments (Herbrechter, 2013). Additionally, the loss of individual agency in dystopias can be read through the posthuman lens as a critique of liberal humanism's assumption of self-contained, rational individuals.

Discussion 1: An Overview of the Play

To consider *A Number* as a posthumanist play, one might look at the central scenario of the play: Cloning. In the play, a father is depicted as a lost person who decides to give his own child to a care home. By abandoning his child, he prefers to clone the same child rather than take care of the "original" child. The matter of cloning brings an important matter of biological parenting rather than the usual way of parenting. In order to fulfil this, the mission of biological parenting, technology, and science play their parts. The quest would not be possible if science had not improved that much. Thus, it leads us to the point where fathering is "done" rather than "being" (Griffin, 20212, p. 15). Salter is an example of a father who does fatherhood and forgets about being an actual father. Another main concern in the play could be the lack of a biological mother. The children are made in a laboratory, and there is no indication of a mother, even a surrogate mother. The absence of a mother is an example of a posthumanist approach; babies grow in an artificial womb, though it is not mentioned in the play. This futurist example could be a message to the near future developments in science, as Japanese scientists are carrying out research to create babies in a lab environment (Sexton, 2023).

Even for some, human cloning (as well as lab-grown babies) is a posthumanist dystopic development of science, and the play is an example of this posthumanist dystopic paradox: "*A Number* (2002) discusses human cloning and genetic science as the spectrum of reasons for a dystopian shift" (Muhi, 2019, p. 690). At first, such posthumanist scientific achievements might seem useful for the development of the human race; however, by the time they may bring a dystopic shift, a societal transformation towards oppressive, dehumanizing, and nightmarish conditions, loss of individual freedoms, and widespread suffering. Furthermore, the title of the play is an interesting way to describe a posthumanist world. At first glance, the title does seem to be a simple descriptive title in which the number of Salter's children appears to be indicated. However, as the play unfolds, the title not only indicates the number of children, but also the carelessness and selfish attitude of Salter as a "father". As mentioned earlier, he does not try to be a father, but "does" fatherhood:

> [The father] is not interested in a multitude of sons, in 'a number', even though he has a number of offspring, but in the one (son) with whom he is engaged at any one point in time. A Number as title gestures towards the paradox of Salter's position as it unfolds in the play, of both wanting a single, particular son and being prepared to draw on 'any number' of them to achieve this. (Griffin, 2012, p. 16)

Hence, Salter does not seem to look for a certain number of children, but only one of them: The perfect one, B1, whom he refused to look after and made his clones. The father is in a dilemma of wanting his son back, while he could easily reach B1 and raise him instead of cloning him. He is ready to create many of them so that he can get one of the "original" copies. Though he seems to love B1 and that is why he wanted to clone him, in reality, he is only obsessed with the perfection of B1. That is why he does not take care of B1 and bring him up. Salter lacks an emotional connection with all of his children. That is why he simply ignores the existence of B1, does not tell anything about the existence of B1 to B2, and once they are dead, he simply goes to the third number, Michael, to show his fathering experience. At the same time, simply, "[the title, first] may mean a certain [number] of objects; secondly, the definite number of an object in an array; thirdly, an object sharing similar characteristics with some other members of the same set (Bernard 1; Bernard 2, etc)" (Shilova, 2012, p. 47). Thus, the title could indicate the existence of any number, any child, it does not matter which one, but a child; a child on whom Sarter can continue his fathering experiment. Salter moves on from one to the other, hoping that, eventually, he will have a father-son connection with any of the children.

Additionally, the names of the characters, B1 and B2, are possibly relevant examples of a posthumanist concept. Even though the real names of the clones and the original child are Bernard, the playwright refuses to use their actual names and presents them as if they are robots, machines, or a scientific discovery, just like planets (as planets have numbered names). Naming characters in such artistic licence could have several indications. At first, B1 and B2 are the victims of Salter's decisions regarding cloning. Thus, first B1 and eventually B2 (and all the other clones) are used as a scientific experiment. B1 is the original prototype, while B2 is a copy of the original product, as an updated version of a new discovery or a tool, a device. Moreover, both B1 and B2 have an identity crisis. While B1 is lost and neglected due to his father's careless alcoholic behaviours, he does not want to accept the fact that his identity is destroyed due to the clones. At the same time, B2 feels confused about being a clone and having many copies of himself. He calls B1 the "original" while considering himself a duplicate of B1. Hence, both B1 and B2 have identity crises because of having or being clones, and therefore, the playwright might have wanted to use "B1 and B2" names rather than calling them by their real names. The play may try to illustrate the "traumatizing effects [that] scientific evolution can have and [may imply] that once the process began, it can no longer be controlled or stopped" (Anghel, 2012, p. 164). Thus, Churchill might try to indicate the possible damage that science can cause to the identity of individuals while leading us to an age that deals with humans as products, to an age that we may call posthumanism.

Discussion 2: Detailed Posthumanist Perspectives in the Play

The first act of the play starts with B2 asking his father how many of them (the clones) there are. He states, "A number" (p. 10). Even though B2 uses the word "number", he does not indicate that his lab "siblings" are properties. He simply wants to know how many of his copies there are. However, when it comes to his father, he answers in a radical manner by calling his lab children "things" (p. 10). As their dialogue continues, B2 says to his father that "[the father] called them things. [He] think[s they will] find [that] they're people (…). Because [he, B2 is] one" (p. 11). However, in his response, Sarter insists that B2's siblings are "copies" while B2 refuses the idea immediately, saying that "they are not" (p. 11). Interestingly, Sarter ignores the fact that calling his other children "copy" also affects B2, as he is a copy of B1. Therefore, though he does not call B2 a copy of B1, he indirectly states it. Sarter continues his speech by clarifying that other children are the "copies of [B2] which some mad scientist has illegally [created]" (p.10). The father's clarification brings us to the issue of ethics, human rights, birth rights, and potential

dangers of technology and science. Salter's act raises a question of ethical rights and shows the potential dangers of technology, which "threatens the essence of the human race," writes Muhi (2019, p. 690).

Sarter's statement worsens B2's thoughts about himself. Gradually, the audience experiences B2's psychological pressure, in which he experiences identity loss. He states that "[he is] *not* real" and that is why his father should stop calling his siblings "copies" (p. 12). Here, B2's mental state about his true self and identity is depicted as damaged and frightened. He, knowing it for sure, admits that he is not real. B2 tries to state that he himself is a copy of B1, and that is why he is not any different from his nineteen siblings. He adds that "they are all still people like twins are all (…). [They] happen to have identical genetics" (p. 12). Hence, though B2 admits that he himself is a copy, he still values that he and his "twins", as he calls them, are real people, and having the same identical genetics does not make them "things". However, as B2 continues to speak, he states: "[O]f course I want them to be things, I do think they're things, I don't think they're, of course I do think they're them just as much as I'm me but I. I don't know what I think, I feel terrible" (p. 12). Hence, B2 wants his siblings to be "things" while he is scared that he will turn into a "thing" as he is one of the clones. His identity is a victim of his father's posthumanist step. Because of Salter's irresponsible decisions, B2 is having an identity crisis. This kind of future "reinforces the sense of loss and lack of identity of being in such a drastically different world" (Muhi, 2019, p. 685). Because B2 is lost in an identity crisis as a human being, he starts questioning his whole existence as a real and "original" human being.

Even though B2 is going through such a traumatic experience and questioning his existence and originality as a human being, the father does not seem interested in his son's concerns. Father proposes that they should sue the hospital as the doctors have taken B2's cells and created more lab children without B2's or the father's permission. Salter states that the doctors have stolen the cells from B2 and "damaged his uniqueness, weakened [his] identity" (p.14). This scene of the play sends a warning message that safety and trust are nearly impossible in the time of technology and science. Without the patient's permission, doctors can do experiments on people even though their job is to protect the privacy and health of the patients. It is seen that "[a]n individual's identity, needs and thoughts are dominated by technology; his freedom and individuality decline as he becomes the dominated, not the dominator" (Muhi, 2019, p. 680). Salter affirms that they (father and son) should demand five million (pounds, possibly) from the doctors as they have destroyed the uniqueness of B2.

Salter represents a personality that is more than just a classic capitalist patriarchy. He "measures his 'sons' in money, he considers them 'things', although they are living beings" (Anghel, 2012, p. 158). As the conversation between Salter and B2 continues, B2 states that he feels as if he has twins and he would "like to meet one. It's an adventure isn't it (…). [He] wouldn't be frightened to meet any number" (p. 16). B2's statement seems rather confident. He seems sure about what he wants, and the feeling of having a sibling is pleasant. It is possible to see a gradual change in his thoughts about his clone siblings. However, using the phrase "any number" shows that he is still unsure if he should accept his siblings as human beings. He could have used the phrase "any of them" rather than "any number." He himself is a number, numbered as "B2"; so, the ones he might meet would be B3, or B4, and so on. However, the father seems less interested and states that he is not interested in "a number." B2 is enough for him as a son (p. 16). The scene shows the coldness of the father towards his clone children. One may understand him as a hypocrite since B2 is a clone, too, and for a father who has a clone son like B2, what would be the difference between other clone children and B2? The hypocrisy of the father continues when B2 asks Salter about his mother and the "original" child. Salter states that the mother died in a car accident alongside four-year-old B1 (p. 20). However, as the story evolves, the father's lies slowly come out, and it becomes more difficult for the audience to trust anything that the father says through the play.

In the second act of the play, we are introduced to B1 for the first time. Salter argues that having ten, twenty "copies" of B1 is not his fault. He says "it has nothing to do with [him]" (p. 24). What the father does is to get rid of the responsibility of having so many children and refusing the fact that he did not take care of B1, instead preferring to have his copies. He is directly responsible, and definitely "it has something to do with him," though he refuses. Later, Salter states that "there were failures" (p. 26), meaning that some of the kids died when they were in the tubes, and eventually, the doctors managed to create perfect clones

like B2. This scene of the play shows the reality of science and the cruelty it can bring. This is, sadly, a perfect example of technology that controls humans, or rather, could be said to be a technology that humans control to control other humans. In Salter's speech, there is no emotion, and he does not seem to be sad about the fact that many kids before B2 were created did not survive. He is not unhappy because he believes that these kids were no more than failed copies in lab tubes. However, if these babies died in a human body, in a woman's womb, naturally, the father, and those who hear the news of it, would feel sad and emotional, as the matter is a "real" human life. So, this might be the danger that posthumanism brings with itself; lack of emotions and the lack of value of human lives (cf. Tekin, 2024; cf. Atasoy, 2023).

In the third act, Salter meets his clone son B2. The son states that he would like to go away as he is uncomfortable with having siblings all around. He states that he does not feel himself (p. 38) and does not want to see them, though he said in the first act that he would like to meet them (p. 16). This scene might showcase the sad dangers of technology and science in the sense that they are able to change one's life and make it impossible for individuals to continue their lives as before. Salter's scientific experiment, which he did thirty-five years ago, negatively changed B2's whole life. Thus, B2's whole life and identity are at stake, a sign of posthumanism which puts human identity (Ferrando, 2013), and human life in danger (Muhi, 2019). B2's fears are not in vain as he is terrorized with the thought that he will be killed by his brother as he says; "he'll [B1] kill me" (p. 46) as if he read B1's mind when B1 said that he would kill B2's children if he had any (probably out of jealousy) (p. 34). Respectively, as the play develops, in the fourth act, we learn that B1 has killed B2, and he discusses his crime with his father. Salter curiously asks about how B1 killed B2:

> What I want to know is how you actually, what you, how you got him to go off' to some remote because that's what I'm imagining, you don't shoot the lodger without the landlady hearing, I don't know if you did shoot I don't know why I say shoot you could have had a knife you could have strangled, I can't think he would have gone off' with you because he was frightened which is why but perhaps you talked you made him feel or did you follow him or lie in wait in some dark? (…) I don't love the others, you and I have got common cause against the others don't forget, I'm still hoping we'll make our fortunes there. (p. 50)

The saddest part in Salter's speech is that he is discussing the murder of his son with the murderer, who is his other son. This scene of the play could be an example of the mistakes that technology and science could bring which eventually will lead to the posthumanist dangers of both science and technology; humans lose their humanness just like Salter talking about his son's murder and the possibility of murdering rest of his sons, as he does not care for them at all though their existence is ultimately his greatest mistake. Salter even states that he does not love his other sons. The scene illustrates Salter's hypocritical approach and his failure as a father. He even encourages B2 to kill the rest of the clones.

In the last act of the play, the audience is introduced to a new clone son of Salter named Michael Black. He is one of the "copies," though he is mentally and personally different than B1 and B2. At first, Salter lies to him, saying that Black is the first son he meets (p. 54). He does not mention that he has already seen B1 and B2, and both of them are dead already, because after murdering B2, B1 committed suicide. Now, Salter is all alone, and he goes to find another son so that he may not end up alone and satisfy his greed for a son. It appears that for Salter, it does not matter which son he has. He only wants to spend time with the "same" flesh, face, and body. However, he ignores that those souls under the flesh are different people and different minds. Unlike B1 and B2, as well as Salter himself, Black is happy and positive about many things. He states that he was not angry when he found out about his clones, and he is not scared about his life, unlike B1 and B2, who were scared of each other and lost in an identity crisis once they learnt the news of having many of them. However, for Black, nothing changes and he continues his usual life: "We've got ninety-nine per cent the same genes as any other person. We've got ninety per cent the same as a chimpanzee. We've got thirty percent the same as a lettuce" (p. 62). As one may interpret Black's words, it does not matter what genes a person has, nor what relatives a person has. What matters is to be oneself and

have a true inner self. B1 and B2 lacked such a sense of belonging and knowing themselves. In contrast to his other brothers and genetic father, Black knows his purpose in life.

At the end of the play, Salter asks Black if he is happy and likes his life. In response, Black says, "I do yes, sorry" (p. 62). Black's word "sorry" represents that he understands the fact that his genetic lab father is desperate; however, he cannot do anything to solve this matter and bring back Salter's two dead sons. Also, he cannot act as B1 or B2 since his identity is different, yet Salter refuses to understand this basic fact.

Conclusion

To understand *A Number* as a posthumanist play, one should consider the play's primary scenario: Cloning. In the play, a father is portrayed as a lost person who commits his child to a care facility. By abandoning his child, he prefers to clone an identical child instead of caring for the "original" child. The issue of cloning emphasises the importance of biological parenting over traditional parenting methods. Technology and science play important roles in fulfilling the purpose of biological parenting. The quest would not be conceivable if science hadn't advanced sufficiently to this extent. As a result, fatherhood becomes "done" rather than "being". Salter, the father, is an example of a parent who does fatherhood but forgets to be a real father. Another major concern in the play that the playwright wants to focus on is the absence of a biological mother. The children (rather clones) are created in a laboratory, with no indication of a mother, including a surrogate mother. The absence of a mother exemplifies a posthumanist attitude, in the sense that the kids developed in an artificial womb, though this is not emphasized in the play. Additionally, identity loss is another issue in the play. B1 and B2 feel that their identities have been damaged, which is why B2 brings the end of himself alongside B1. For some, human cloning (along with lab-grown babies) is a dystopic progression of science, and the play exemplifies this dystopic paradox: *A Number* explores human cloning and genetic research as potential causes for a posthumanist dystopian transition. Thus, while such scientific achievements may initially appear beneficial to the human species' growth, they may eventually lead to a dystopic change, or rather to a posthumanist dystopia.

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