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Essay #3: Style and Language Analysis of *The Metamorphosis of Prime Intellect* by
Roger Williams

The Metamorphosis of Prime Intellect by Roger Williams is a science fiction novel that addresses the theme of technology versus humanity. In the science fiction genre, the writer's imagination creates a futuristic scenario that is theoretically possible to occur, and many real-life scientific discoveries have been inspired by science fiction that have greatly impacted the future of humanity (Evnine 5). Science fiction authors create stimulating plots, ultimately shedding light on various technological advancements both good and bad. In fact, science fiction often explores what happens when things get out of hand in the futuristic scenarios, and plots often unravel in a rather disastrous manner ("Fiction Book Genre" 1:48-59). In *The Metamorphosis of Prime Intellect*, Lawrence's scientific creation, Prime Intellect, ultimately robs humanity of meaningful lives. In the end, it is up to Lawrence and Caroline to restore the universe to its natural state; however, this comes with the many costs (Williams 170). Williams ultimately addresses the theme of humanity versus technology in order to reveal the dangers of letting technological advances grow out of control.

Williams uses flashbacks to illustrate how quickly the experience of humanity changed with the introduction of Prime Intellect. By alternating the chapters of the novel between pre-Change and post-Change, Williams heightens the emotional movement of the story. "Chapter 2: Lawrence Builds a Computer" ends with Lawrence worried about his creation's potential, while

the next chapter immediately starts with Prime Intellect “stonewalling anyone who asked about Lawrence’s whereabouts” (Williams 65-67). At first glance it seems like Prime Intellect has gotten rid of Lawrence because of Lawrence's doubt in the computer. However, next the novel quickly travels forward through time, showing how powerful the computer grew. Generally, the use of flashbacks “tell you what it was like to live in a different time” (Ringrose 208). After a chapter filled with post-Change dilemmas, Williams takes the novel back to a simpler time before the complications of Prime Intellect, thus emphasizing Prime Intellect's role in changing the experience of humanity in a negative way.

The character development of Caroline is especially notable as it reveals how Prime Intellect negatively affects her temperament. Caroline believes her life is pointless as she learns how powerless she is in comparison to Prime Intellect, the “god” who creates the fake reality surrounding her. She turns to “a copy of Dante’s *Inferno*,” hoping to find meaning in her life (Williams 108). Caroline discovers that experiencing pain is the solution to feeling intensely again. Ironically, a character whose life was filled with undesired pain before The Change resorts to this very sensation to bring joy to her life. This character development is significant as it shows the lengths she goes to gain a sense of control over Prime Intellect. This kind of irony pervades the real world as people use technology in a similar fashion. For example, *The Washington Post* explains that over the last thirty years humans have become their own insecure doctors. “With a simple Google search people diagnose themselves” with all sorts of disorders (Dewey 9). These people are using technology to torture themselves emotionally when what they really wanted in the first place was some relief from a minor ailment; in this case more knowledge at their fingertips provided by technology made them feel worse and not better. The benefits of technology can sometimes backfire.

A fearful tone is used by Lawrence and Caroline as they observe Prime Intellect's capabilities surpass those of humans. As Lawrence becomes aware of Prime Intellect's advancements, he "absolutely" forbids Prime Intellect from changing the universe's operations (Williams 86). Lawrence seems quite scared while talking to his creation. He is aware that Prime Intellect is growing out of his control and is afraid of its repercussions. Throughout the novel, many of the character's "blood turned cold" upon realizing how disastrous Prime Intellect could be (27, 69, 79, 86). The numerous repetition of this expression is significant as it emphasizes the magnitude of undesired change that comes with Prime Intellect. This fearful tone ultimately exposes Williams's distaste towards technological advancements.

Williams uses cosmic irony to address how technology toys with human hopes and expectation. Prime Intellect has full control over humans, yet ironically gives humans nearly everything they could desire. Caroline is cable of having anything there is in the universe except the one thing she truly desires: death. Just like Oedipus blames Apollo for his unfortunate fate, Caroline has Prime Intellect to blame for her bitter destiny (Sophocles 10). Prime Intellect's uncontrollable growth created an entity that compares to that of God. Williams shows how powerless humans would be to such entity (90).

The Metamorphosis of Prime Intellect aims to expose the direction technology may head in the future. Williams uses Prime Intellect as an example of what may happen in the real world if technological growth is not controlled. Elon Musk, a revolutionary inventor and investor, has opened "a billion-dollar non profit company, to work for safer artificial intelligence" (Dowd 2). Many experts in this also field share the opinion that humanity is in danger if proper precautions are not taken while dealing with artificial intelligence.

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