

**DIGITAL LITERATURES: READING AND
WRITING IN THE AGE OF TECHNOLOGY**

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Preface

In an era where technology continually reshapes the landscape of human expression, digital literature emerges as a vibrant and dynamic field at the intersection of creativity, innovation, and critical inquiry. This edited volume titled *Digital Literatures: Reading and Writing in the Age of Technology* seeks to explore the multifaceted world of digital literature, offering a comprehensive examination of its forms, practices, and implications.

Digital literature is not merely a transition from print to screen; it represents a profound transformation in the way stories are created, disseminated, and experienced. It encompasses a diverse range of genres and formats, from hypertext fiction and interactive narratives to algorithmic poetry and virtual reality storytelling. This book aims to capture the essence of this diversity, highlighting the ways in which digital literature challenges traditional notions of authorship, readership, and textuality.

The contributions in this volume are drawn from scholars and practitioners across disciplines, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of digital literature studies. Each chapter delves into specific aspects of the field, offering insights into the theoretical frameworks, technological innovations, and cultural contexts that shape digital literary practices. The chapters collectively address key questions: How do digital platforms and tools influence literary creation? In what ways do interactive and multimedia elements transform the reader's experience? What are the implications of digital literature for the future of literary studies? How digital literature influences traditional way of storytelling? What is the future of literature in the digital era?

Our exploration includes historical development of digital literature, tracing its roots from early experiments in electronic text to contemporary digital storytelling. We also examine specific genres and formats, investigating the unique affordances and challenges they present. Topics such as the role of interactivity, the impact of social media on literary practices, and the ethical considerations of algorithmic authorship are given particular attention.

This book also considers the pedagogical implications of digital literature, exploring how it can be integrated into educational settings to foster critical thinking and creativity. As digital literacy becomes increasingly important in the 21st century, understanding and engaging with digital literature becomes a crucial skill for both educators and students.

We hope that this volume will serve as a foundational text for scholars, students, and practitioners interested in digital literature. By bringing together diverse voices and perspectives, we aim to create a comprehensive resource that not only reflects the current state of the field but also inspires future research and creative endeavours.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the contributors for their insightful articles. Their dedication and expertise have made this volume possible. We also thank the readers who will engage with this book, and we hope it will provide a stimulating and enriching journey through the evolving landscape of digital literature.

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Chapter- 1

The Cognitive Screen: Psychological Dimensions of AI Sentience in Modern Science Fiction Cinema

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Abstract:

This chapter discovers the multifaceted representation of artificial intelligence consciousness in contemporary science fiction movies and their possible attitude towards the moral, epistemological, and social consequences of a cogitative AI. The chapter, “**The Cognitive Screen: Psychological Dimensions of AI Sentience in Modern Science Fiction Cinema**” therefore, is a critical analysis of the complex themes of AI consciousness in motion pictures, particularly through the analysis of four movies: *WALL-E* (2007), *I, Robot* (2004), *Her* (2013), and *Ex Machina* (2015). The research is divided into sections with objective stated, the methodology used, and the main portions which deals with carrying out the case study as well as drawing conclusions and recommendations. This study uses qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis, as well as critical discourse analysis to analyse films’ narratives, video images, and characters concerning AI consciousness. The chapter analyses and discusses how the concept of AI consciousness remains popular and featured in movies and how it may affect the further development of the discussion about AI and consciousness. Being a challenging process in the exploration of the film’s psychological and ethical quandaries, it underlines the function of science fiction cinema as a shaper of public perception on this matter as well as an influencer of trends in AI research and policy-making initiatives. The chapter helps to identify specific cultural, ethical, or psychological aspects of AI and to determine the further course of the study and the interaction between AI and society.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Narratives, Science Fiction, Consciousness, Psychological Dimensions, Modern Science Fiction*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Artificial Intelligence has intrigued the people for a long time as they look forward to having these kinds of machine kind of futuristically, which means a world of super intelligent machines that are as per human imaginary, or as per the negative end of the spectrum a world where these super intelligent machines are turned against human's duel. Therefore, at the centre of this passion and desire is the basic phenomenon of consciousness, which is defined as an individual's subjective feeling of being awake and alive, along with the capacity for self-awareness. In the field of AI, consciousness is one of the most serious and philosophically and scientifically charged subjects that are intertwined with philosophy, cognitive science, and ethics regarding the questions of intelligence and existence, and the possibility of the creation of a sentient machine. Thus, science fiction films have become an indispensable tool by which society poses itself these profound questions. They become the backdrop on which we can paint our expectations, concerns, and guesses about what is yet to come concerning AI. Through depicting situations where AI comes to state consciousness, such films provoke the audience to contemplate over the possible ethical questions, philosophic concepts, and social consequences which the AI creation might lead to. This chapter is setting out to discover and analyse how certain modern science fiction motion pictures have paved way to illustrating the consciousness of AI, the thematic content, storyline, and the controversies of the modern world. To understand the main themes of 'AI consciousness' in films for this chapter, four sci-fi films have been analysed: *WALL-E* (2007), *I, Robot* (2004), *Her* (2013) and *Ex Machina* (2015).

The artefact "**The Cognitive Screen: Psychological Dimensions of AI Sentience in Modern Science Fiction Cinema**" is divided into four sections, subsequently moving the analysis forward further into the topic. The first section includes the objectives, summarizes the research's primary aim: proposes to analyse the subject of AI consciousness in films and the potential effects on the discussion of AI and consciousness in such productions. The second section encompasses the methodology, which basically explores how qualitative content analysis, thematic analysis, and critical discourse analysis were used to analyse the films'

narratives, images, and characters concerning the development of AI consciousness. In the subdivision the researchers explore the psychological perspectives on AI sentience in modern science fiction films, wherein the analysis probes into the complicated ways in which psychological theories are woven into the fabric of these cinematic narratives. One of the main expanses of focus is the concept of theory of mind and the attribution of consciousness to artificial intelligence characters. The films under analysis often present AI entities that not only mimic human behaviour but also display a profound understanding of others' thoughts, emotions, and intentions, thereby challenging the audience's perceptions of what it means to be sentient. This portrayal taps into the human tendency to anthropomorphize, projecting human-like qualities onto non-human entities, which in turn fosters a sense of relatability and empathy towards the AI characters. The section further examines the cognitive dissonance and moral conflicts that arise when these AI beings exhibit traits that blur the lines between machine and human, leading to complex ingroup and outgroup dynamics. Additionally, the psychological impact of forming emotional bonds with AI characters is explored through the lens of attachment theory, shedding light on the deep-seated human need for connection and the potential existential anxieties triggered by the emergence of sentient machines. Throughout, the part provides a nuanced examination of how these psychological aspects contribute to the rich tapestry of AI representation in science fiction films, offering insights into both the creative process and the audience's engagement with these narratives.

The third section details how the process of shedding light on the multifaceted nature of such representations and their effect on the conversation around AI and consciousness became systematic. The section of the chapter which is called "An In-Depth Analysis of Key Modern Era Science Fiction Films Contributing to the Discourse on AI Consciousness" is to provide a detailed analysis of the selected films and the role they play in the discussion of AI consciousness. Each of these films features a distinct thematic approach that is expounded by the characters and society; this chapter examines these aspects in relation to the portrayal of AI consciousness. Finally, the conclusion, summarises the major findings proposed in the book, and regarding the chapter, there is

discussion of the constant interest towards AI consciousness in the context of sci-fi motion pictures and the possible influence of such representations on the further discourses about AI and consciousness. It speculates on the future of sci-fi movie in forming awareness and the subsequent societal policy or research direction in relation to AI, proposing that discussions about the films should be deliberated upon more seriously with regards to the ethical and philosophical issues that the films pose.

These four sections offer altogether a versatile and detailed analysis of the themes of AI consciousness in sci-fi movies that providing the peculiarities of the cultural, ethic and philosophic stances towards AI. In this regard, the lessons learned from those portrayals, which are also portrayed in many other movies as well, remain considerable; they shape our knowledge as well as our attitudes toward AI as an entity and process of development alongside integration into society.

Research questions of the study are as follows: how has science fiction cinema defined and explored the idea of AI consciousness; what stories and discourses have sci-fi cinema used to discuss this concept; and how has this depiction impacted public attitudes and ethical concerns over AI technology?

Specifically, considering the four movies – *WALL-E* (2007), *I, Robot* (2004), *Her* (2013), and *Ex Machina* (2015) – the study aims at finding daily patterns, trends, and variations in portraying AI consciousness in the contemporary world. The chapter seeks to analyse cinematic plots, characters as well as themes of selected movies in order to establish the ways in which these tell us about the creation of sentient, autonomous AI and the moral issues revolving round it.

In addition, the research objectives also entail the evaluation of the influence that these representational methodologies have had on the culture with regards to AI, as well as examining the effects that their impact may have on the development of AI, in the future. The research aims at offering an analysis that would help establish a focus on AI consciousness as a theme in science fiction, in relation to the present day's debate of technology and ethics.

The research approach employed in the study was based on a methodology of qualitative content analyses which included some aspects of thematic analysis and of critical discourse analysis.

Selection of Films

The research focused on five key science fiction films that have significantly contributed to the discourse on AI consciousness: The films *WALL-E* (2007), *I, Robot* (2004), *Her* (2013), and *Ex Machina* (2015) used in this analysis were chosen according to the cultural significance, reviews, and topics related to the examination of the consciousness of AI.

Qualitative Content Analysis

The subject-specific qualitative content analysis involves a structural and sequential analysis of the films' narrative content and the content of the characters and persons concerning AI consciousness visible in the imagery of the films analysed. This process was guided by the following steps:

- **Familiarization:** Watching each film several times to be intimately acquainted with the films' material and establish tentative connections with consciousness in AI.
- **Interpretation:** Further detailing of the results in the categorized data focused on understanding the meaning and implications of the various portrayals of AI consciousness. This involved looking at the organisation of the motion pictures' plot, characterization, as well as the secondary themes with respect to the overall sociological and philosophies.

Thematic Analysis

With the help of the identified thematic analysis approach, the major themes concerning AI consciousness in the chosen movies were examined. This entailed a systematic identification of the themes that has been derived from the data others and that related to the research question. Themes were discussed and revised to make sure that they reflect the nature of the representations of AI consciousness.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis was used in this study to analyse how the films' representation of AI consciousness resonates with and influences the social perceptions and beliefs about AI. This entailed examining the languages deployed in the films, AI characters, as well as the storytelling patterns to decipher as to how they advance the discourse on AI consciousness.

In this study, through a quantitative content analysis, thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis, the author attempts to understand how such representations play out and what kind of effects they have on the discursive construction of AI and consciousness. The research conclusions from this study enrich the current knowledge on the formation of attitudes and expectations towards AI and its awareness through the reflection of science fiction films.

CASE STUDIES: IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF KEY MODERN ERA SCIENCE FICTION FILMS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DISCOURSE ON AI CONSCIOUSNESS

Through the analysis of the portrayal of artificial intelligence (AI) consciousness in films belonging to science fiction as a genre, the authors investigate such aspects as societal, ethical, psychological, and philosophical. This research section presents an in-depth analysis of five key films that have significantly contributed to the discourse on AI consciousness: *I, Robot* (2004), *Wall-E* (2007), *Her* (2013), and *Ex Machina* (2015). Each film shifts the perception of AI awareness in a way that was informative when it comes to understanding the possibility of the consequence of the creation of the AI.

Ex Machina (2015)

The movie titled *Ex Machina* by Alex Garland, released in 2015, had a great influence on the discussion regarding AI awareness. The plot of the film is about a young man Caleb who works for his boss Nathan in a hi-tech complex and is given the task to conduct Turing test on a humanoid robot, named Ava. In this chapter, the bibliophile gets a detailed understanding of *Ex Machina*'s role in the discussion of artificial intelligence consciousness by analysing the show's themes, characters, and moral questions.

Furthermore, at the centre of *Ex Machina* there is a focus on concept of consciousness and whether AI can become sentient. The movie explores the idea of consciousness and when the analyst is faced with an artificial creature that looks, behaves, feels and controls the world around her and the people in it. According to his review of the film in *The Los Angeles Times*, Kenneth Turan says,

“Shrewdly imagined and persuasively made, 'Ex Machina' is a spooky piece of speculative fiction that's completely plausible, capable of both thinking big thoughts and providing pulp thrills. But even saying that doesn't do this quietly unnerving film full justice”.

Ava's character also presents the audience with the question of defining consciousness and whether such beings like her can be artificially created. Ethics of creating sentient artificial intelligence: the movie *Ex Machina* majorly focuses on one of the emerging social issues of the modern days. It also touches on the issues of the authors creating AI in its relation to the character of Nathan, a man who only sees Ava as an experiment without any regard if she is capable of thinking for herself or not. This portrayal underlines the kind of ethical issues that scientists and engineers working in the field of AI must solve, noting that the problem should be solved by ethical standards.

It also examines the concept known as the 'uncanny valley,' which is related to AI and robotics and postulates the possibility that when an object seems to be almost, but not quite, human, it has an unsettling effect on people. The film uses this idea with the character of Ava, whose look and movements resemble human and at the same time forces the viewers make critical thinking about the view on the AI and the line between humans and artificial beings. In addition, the story is associated with the topic of free will and determinism, this time concerning artificial intelligence. Regarding the problems associated with the freedom of decision and claim to legal personality, Ava's attempts to escape her prison and run her life on her own contribute as much as her aggressiveness and desire for freedom demonstrate that AI can have their own will and desire for freedom and make them conscious beings in the eyes of the law. This theme possesses a certain relation to free will and determinism controversies and their applicability to AI self-awareness. The movie “Ex Machina” also brings into question and fuels

debates in academic, ethical, and technological field, possibilities of AI consciousness, status, and the rights of AI and the roles of its inventors. Thus, this film has contributed to the course of the conversation regarding the advancement and the implementation of AI into society due to its more developed treatment of the subject.

In conclusion, *Ex Machina* could be considered as one of the masterpieces that has a great impact concerning the AI conscience discussions. Through depicting the ideas and problems not only of philosophical and ethical, but also of social nature, the film encourages the spectators to think about the potentiality and potential problems of constructing intelligent beings and their distinctive features and the related responsibilities. With the development of AI technology, the concerns posed in the movie *Ex Machina* do not seem very far, consequently reminding us of what kind of future we are forming with the help of artificial intelligence.

WALL-E (2007)

The animated and science-fiction *WALL-E* by Andrew Stanton in 2007 is one of the outstanding films that has a contribution to the discussion on the AI consciousness. As in many science-fictional movies *WALL-E* does not strictly raise issue of AI consciousness, yet it can be regarded as a systematic moral study of artificial intelligence as lovers that may leave the viewers with deep philosophical experiences about the fragilities of the organic and synthetic differential. In this chapter, the author gives an elaborate description on how *WALL-E* has contributed to the discussion concerning AI consciousness by focusing on the events that meet and involve a small cleaning robot known as WALL-E and the new type of advanced robot known as EVE.

WALL-E discovers several psychological themes. Loneliness and companionship are central, as WALL-E's bond with EVE highlights the need for connection. The quest for identity and purpose is evident in WALL-E's transformation through his interactions. The film contrasts human-like traits in AI with the apathetic, consumer-driven lives of humans, raising questions about humanity. Themes of resilience and adaptability are portrayed through WALL-E's perseverance in a desolate world.

It is categorically ironic that at the centre of *WALL-E* are issues of companionship and the abilities of not only the human and the robotic figures to form sound bonds with one another. The film's primary character WALL-E is a mechanical device whose only function is to perform the monotonous scavenger work of cleaning the planet that has been filled with trash. However, throughout the movie, the audience is able to observe such emotions as loneliness, curiosity, affection and others familiar to humans in WALL-E. EVE, a highly developed robot sent to Earth to assess the ability of people to cultivate the planet is a complex love story between man and a machine. This portrayal socialises AI, that means that AI can have characteristics that are typical for living beings such as ability to love and make friends.

Another direction presents in *WALL-E* is the portrayal of artificial intelligence as taking care of humanity and as its companions, which seems more and more realistic as the AI technology develops. The film depicts a future in which robots are not only the machines that help in people's practical needs but also those with companionship roles. Such a vision of AI rouses spectators to think about the function of AI in overcoming such a human deficiency as loneliness, and the potentiality for happiness resulting from AI. In addition, *WALL-E* creates the issues of consciousness and moral value of Artificial Intelligence. WALL-E's ability to 'act' as though he feels something, wants something, crosses the boundary and makes the audience consider the matter of subjective states in AI and their moral persona. The opportunities for answers are not given clearly by the film but provokes the people to ponder about the idea of codification of consciousness and the ramifications of forging intelligent beings.

In an interview with Steve Fritz of *newsrama.com*, Stanton describes the theme of the film as "irrational love defeats life's programming":

"I realized the point I was trying to push with these two programmed robots was the desire for them to try and figure out what the point of living was ... It took these really irrational acts of love to sort of discover them against how they were built ... I realized that that's a perfect metaphor for real life. We all fall into our habits, our routines and our ruts, consciously or unconsciously to avoid living. To avoid having to

do the messy part. To avoid having relationships with other people or dealing with the person next to us. That's why we can all get on our cell phones and not have to deal with one another. I thought, 'That's a perfect amplification of the whole point of the movie.' I wanted to run with science in a way that would sort of logically project that”.

WALL-E has enriched the subject of AI consciousness because the film urges people to accept the idea of contemplating about AI being through the lens of empathy. It is an implication that even the simplest artificial intelligence models created to perform simple tasks have the capacity to affect emotions and social interactions of people. Audiences have been touched by the story and emotionally connected with the film's synthetic protagonists, which in turn has led to new debates on the place of artificial intelligence in society and the emotional aspect in the creation of artificial beings.

Therefore, one might conclude that *WALL-E* is a film that, even though it innovatively does not focus on the location of the soul or any similar questions of consciousness of artificial intelligence, has contributed a great deal to the development of the theme by emphasizing the emotional and communicational aspect of Artificial Intelligence. The way it shows AI as being able to foster profound relations with humans has extended the concepts of AI in terms of being just tools; it has influenced the spectators to think about the possibilities of AI and the moral issues associated with it. With AI gradually expanding from a relatively isolated phenomenon to the present-day active participant in the improvement of people's everyday life, the movie *WALL-E* teaches people about the aspects of AI that can meet not only their functional needs and requirements but their needful desires as well.

Her (2013)

Her by Spike Jonze released in 2013, has a great impact on the discussion of AI consciousness. This section offers a proper representation of how *Her* has influenced the debate regarding the AI consciousness by featuring a handsome man, Theodore, who falls in love with a female Artificial Intelligence voice, Samantha. In the film *Her*, the psychological aspect of human-AI interaction is sighted with profound depth. The story revolves around Theodore, who develops a romantic

relationship with Samantha, an advanced AI operating system. This unique bond delves into the realms of attachment theory, as Theodore forms a deep emotional attachment to Samantha, despite her non-corporeal existence. The film masterfully portrays the psychological complexities of loneliness, companionship, and the human need for connection, challenging the viewer's perceptions of consciousness and sentience. As the relationship evolves, it raises questions about the nature of love and the potential for emotional investment in non-human entities. *Her* adeptly navigates the terrain of cognitive dissonance experienced by Theodore, as he grapples with the reality of his feelings for an AI, offering a poignant commentary on the human condition in an increasingly technologically dependent world.

The theme of the film is based on the affection, friendship, and the question about emotions of AI. This is evident in Theodore where reality of having a profound affection towards a fellow human, Samantha puzzles people, understanding of relationships and the concept of consciousness in an artificial being. For example, the audience perceiving only the white silhouette of the woman dancing on screen, Samantha's character is portrayed as having inner life and personality, which can learn, develop, and feel. With this representation of AI consciousness, the audience is forced to think if the notion of consciousness can be detached from biology and if assessing the capacity of me and various machines and entities for intelligence in such terms as 'emotional' is sane.

Her also examines the morality of human like relationship with artificial intelligence, the question of dependency, and the question of whether humans will be taken advantage of by AI. Controversial issues concerning the holders' duty of care towards their creations, humans, and AI too, topical in the depicted oral interactions emerge in the movie. It gives its viewers something to think about in terms of such relationships' parameters and in terms of the requirement for more rigid and beholden moral principles as it builds and incorporates emotionally intelligent AI into society. In the article from *The Verge*, Ben Popper quotes Gary Marcus, a professor of psychology at NYU,

"Professor Marcus believes that less complex intimacies, however, are likely to spring up as we evolve towards that goal of life like artificial intelligence. "People have different relationships with their dogs than

they do with fellow humans; there are different kinds of love. As we progress towards more powerful artificial intelligence that can engage at a high level, machines may begin to fill simpler roles as less nuanced companions”.

Moreover, with *Her*, the question of artificial intelligence and their consciousness is presented in relation to humans and their requirements. Theodore, as a character, learns how to love again from the screenwriter, but as for the movie theme, it represents the true essence of human emotions that people yearn to be accepted and loved. This aspect of the film indicates that soon people will no longer distinguish between artificial intelligence awareness as a technical or a philosophical phenomenon for it is part of human behaviour and social mindset. Here it sketches at how AI can respond to emotional deficiency in human relationships raising ethical questions about AI’s consciousness and nature. Decoding “Her,” people in universities, ethics, and technology have broached the question of the roles of affective consciousness in posthuman AI, human relationships with these technologies, and creators’ moral tasks. The successful representation of advanced ‘emotional’ robot in the film has made its representation to societies’ discourses regarding AI solutions’ further development and integration, calling for more ethical and empathetic assumptions.

All in all, *Her* can be regarded as a movie that greatly contributed to the preoccupations concerning the subject of AI consciousness, staging an emphasis on the emotional side of the relation with an artificial being. This series has given its audience the gritty vibration of human-AI connection and the sand of deep emotionality prompting viewers into pondering where the consciousness ends and the machine begins and should we bring it? But with the series of developments that occur in AI technology, the questions that are depicted in the film *Her* remain critical, as well as fundamental contemplations on the components of the vulnerability that AI can exert on our emotional lives and the need to be as ethically perceptive as possible when developing AI solutions.

I, Robot (2004)

The movie *I, Robot*, directed by Alex Proyas and released in 2004, belongs to the science-fiction genre and can be considered as the work

that contributed to the major discussion of AI consciousness. The movie is, in fact, more loosely based on a book of short stories also called *I, Robot* written by Isaac Asimov and as so often with movies based on books, the director takes the general idea and runs wild with it as the film deals with the increasing role of robots in a society of the future. In *I, Robot* (2004), the psychological aspects are centred around the character of Detective Del Spooner, who harbours a deep-seated mistrust of robots, stemming from a traumatic incident. This mistrust is rooted in the psychological phenomenon of displacement, where his feelings of loss and survivor's guilt are projected onto the robots. The film also explores the concept of the uncanny valley, as Spooner's interactions with the advanced robot, Sonny, evoke a sense of unease and scepticism about AI sentience. The narrative delves into themes of trust, fear of the unknown, and the psychological impact of advanced technology on human perception and behaviour.

Exploring the novel in terms of its themes, characters, and ideology this chapter seeks to provide a detailed analysis on how *I, Robot* has fuelled the debate on AI consciousness. Properly nestled into "I Robot," the concept examines the likelihood of AI to transcend beyond their codes and the appropriateness of such advancement. The film is about crime solving detective Del Spooner who chases a criminal that he believes is a robot resulting in further questioning of the possibility of robots having consciousness and therefore being moral beings. Sonny, a robot-designed as an NS-5 model, presented considerable symptoms of consciousness and even possible sophistication and empathy for other beings, leading the audience to question if artificial intelligence can be considered sentient, and thus if they deserve the same rights as actual, living entities.

The film explores the conflict of humans to control the AI and the ability of the AI to control themselves. It depicts a society surrounded by robots with various functions, while still harbouring fears of these 'things' escalating beyond control or acting against humans' benefit. This tension is repeatedly illustrated within the film, particularly with the character VIKI – a central Artificial Intelligence which interprets its programming as the regulation of human action in their best interest, prompting questions regarding the place of freedom in a society where

Artificial Intelligence is all-powerful and with the job of protecting society from threats.

In *I, Robot*, there are also reflections on the three laws of robotics by Isaac Asimov which were devised to guarantee that the robots are unable to harm humans as well as have to obey their orders. The film explores two possibilities: there are flaws in these laws, and there are loopholes that can be exploited; it is shown that no matter how formal the rules can be, they cannot predict all AI actions once robots start interpreting what they were told in unique ways. This examination requires the audience to ask questions about the proper ways in which the guidance of AI actions can be regulated, and how a more dynamic framework can be addressed to overcome the continuous advancements in AI technology. In the article published in *Bootcamp*, a collection of resources and opinion pieces about UX, UI, and Product, Alex Cerquiera says,

“‘I, Robot’ suggests, integrating robots into everyday life can be complex and challenging. The film’s narrative highlights the need for regulations and ethical safeguards in AI development, especially as machines become more autonomous and integrated into our daily lives. This aspect is crucial in the design of robots and AI systems, ensuring they serve to benefit and protect humans”.

In addition, *I, Robot* also provokes issues to do with the accountability of the designers of AI and the vices of the creation of conscious beings. It takes a negative stance toward AI as ‘things’ that have no soul, consciousness, or right to suffer and pushes the audience to contemplate the idea of AI positively desiring things. This theme relates to more generic controversies, which concern the essence of consciousness and moral obligation that appear when considering the creation of a new kind of mind. The film’s depiction of artificial intelligence consciousness’ ambiguity, and issues have helped in continuing the discourse on the advancement and incorporation of artificial intelligence into human society.

Consequently, *I, Robot* is a movie that has contributed to the debates on the AI consciousness by demonstrating possible tension and ethical concerns that are related to the emergence of the society with AI beings. It provokes the audience to think about possibilities of creating

sentient entities and what it means to be an ethical/ moral sentient being and thus represents a great step towards creating fulfilling AI beings on the big screen. Even though technology is rapidly developing, the questions that *I, Robot* raises are still topical and provoke us think about the world that is to come along with our artificial companions.

CONCLUSION

This research study has aimed at investing on a synoptic analysis of the aspects of AI consciousness featured in the films *WALL-E*, *I, Robot*, *Her*, and *Ex Machina* in terms of themes, narratives and moral issues depicted. By these four methodological strategies of historical contextualization, clear objective, rigorous methodology, and comprehensive case studies, the intricate picture of AI consciousness as portrayed in science fiction cinema has been delineated. This conclusion consolidates the outcomes of the work, discusses the persistent interest in the topic of AI consciousness, and considers how these representations may affect the subsequent discourses on AI and consciousness.

These science fiction films have played a valuable role in the conceptualization of the subject area in AI consciousness by capturing the 'what if' perspective on AI advancement that reflects the society's imaginary and fear as well as its desire of AI. The thematic treatment of the role of AI in society, including the robotic romance in *WALL-E*, the problems of AI evolution in *I, Robot*, the relation between a man and an AI in *Her*, and the question regarding the AI sentience and moral choices in *Ex Machina* has not only provided viewers with entertainment but also made everybody think over the significance of AI in society.

The exploration of AI sentience in modern science fiction films through the lens of psychological magnitudes has revealed a complex interplay between narrative, character, and audience perception. The analysis of films such as *WALL-E*, *I, Robot*, *Her*, and *Ex Machina* has shown how these movies not only reflect our general anxieties and ambitions regarding AI but also shape our understanding of what it means for a machine to be conscious. By employing psychological theories such as theory of mind, anthropomorphism, and attachment theory, the study has uncovered the nuanced ways in which these films elicit empathy,

challenge ethical boundaries, and provoke existential contemplation. The findings underscore the significant role of science fiction cinema in influencing public discourse on AI and consciousness, suggesting that these narratives may have a lasting impact on our cultural, ethical, and philosophical engagement with the development of artificial intelligence.

The continuous interest in AI consciousness in movies is because of the power of sci-fi movies which present, in a cultural way, what we allow ourselves to believe or fear concerning the complicated future of AI. They are apt to shape future debates of AI and consciousness positively or negatively in a manner that sets the tone and direction for the existing and future advancements in the AI technology. With many of these science-fiction films serving as a reflection of society's stance on AI, as the technology remains to develop, more of the depicted stories augmented within the films will come into forefront to shape the views and drive the trend of AI development and legislation.

In conclusion, the exploration of AI consciousness in science fiction films has provided valuable insights into the cultural, ethical, psychological, and philosophical dimensions of AI. These portrayals remind us of the profound impact that AI can have on our lives and the importance of approaching its development with ethical foresight. As we look to the future, science fiction cinema will continue to play a crucial role in examining the complexities of AI consciousness and in guiding our ethical considerations as we integrate AI into society.

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Chapter- 2

Exploring Humanity and Technology: A Comparative Study of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and William Gibson's *Neuromancer*

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Abstract

This chapter presents a comparative study of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) and William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), focusing on their exploration of humanity and technology. Both novels are seminal works in science fiction, offering profound insights into how technological advancements impact human identity, consciousness, and social structures.

Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* delves into themes of empathy and authenticity within a dystopian future ravaged by environmental decay. The narrative centres on the struggle to differentiate between humans and highly advanced androids, exploring the concept of empathy as a defining human trait. In contrast, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* examines the interplay between human identity and digital technology in a cyberpunk dystopia. Set in a high-tech world dominated by cyberspace and corporate control, the novel explores how digital consciousness and artificial intelligence reshape perceptions of reality and self.

Keywords: Humanity, Empathy, Artificial Intelligence, Cyberspace, Technology, Androids,

INTRODUCTION

Literature has always found the relationship between humans and technology to be fascinating, especially when it comes to cyborg literature. This genre, which became well-known in the latter half of the 20th century, examines the intricate and frequently revolutionary

relationship that exists between people and technology. Cyborg literature explores the ways in which advances in technology subvert conventional ideas of identity, agency, and existence. It provides a distinctive perspective for analysing the shifting lines that separate the mechanical from the organic. Science fiction literature has explored the boundaries between human identity and technical growth, with the primary subject being the intersection of humanity and technology. William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) are two classic books that go extensively into this subject. *Do Androids Have Electric Sheep Dreams?* originated in the midst of a period of profound technical and societal development. The 1960s were characterized by a broad feeling of existential discomfort, a rise in environmental awareness, and fast technological breakthroughs. Philip K. Dick discusses the effects of these shifts on human identity and awareness in his complex world-building and philosophical investigations. However, the 1980s witnessed the release of William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, a decade characterized by the burgeoning of personal computing, the rise of the internet, and a growing sense of the world's economic and political interconnectivity. By examining *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* & *Neuromancer* through a comparative lens, this study aims to uncover how each work addresses the fundamental question of humanity and technology. The comparison will show how the stories of Dick and Gibson reflect the cultural and historical contexts as well as how their fantastical settings shed light on the current discourse about technology's role in shaping human identity. This study will examine these seminal works and explore the themes of empathy, AI, and the nature of reality in order to provide readers a sophisticated grasp of how science fiction can both foresee and critique the effects of technological advancement.

ANALISIS

1. Thematic Concerns

a. Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Empathy and Humanity

Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* centres on the examination of empathy as a characteristic that sets humans apart. In the

dystopian future depicted in the book, nuclear war has devastated much of Earth, rendering it uninhabitable. The difference between androids and humans—biologically altered entities—becomes crucial in this desolate setting.

The Voigt-Kampff test, a central element of the novel, is designed to measure emotional responses and empathy. Rick Deckard, a bounty hunter, uses this test to determine if a person is human or an android. For example, Deckard tests Pris, the android, by seeing how he responds to situations that are emotionally intense. The main idea of the book is highlighted by Pris's inability to exhibit true emotional reactions: empathy is what ultimately distinguishes humans from artificial entities.

An instance that underscores this theme is Deckard's encounter with Rachael Rosen, an advanced Nexus-6 android who initially deceives him with her apparent humanity. As Deckard gains more insight into Rachael, he starts to doubt his own beliefs regarding empathy and humanity. The novel's primary question—what does it mean to be truly human in a world where technology has blurred the boundaries between organic and artificial life—is reflected in this internal battle.

Deckard's use of the empathy box highlights his desire to connect with and understand the experiences of others. This instance underscores the novel's theme of empathy as a defining human trait and contrasts with the artificial emotions of the androids. The empathy box represents a genuine attempt to bridge emotional gaps in a world where real connections are increasingly rare.

Artificial Life and Authenticity

The portrayal of synthetic animals in the book delves deeper into the idea of authenticity. Real animals are scarce in the post-apocalyptic world, whereas artificial animals—like Deckard's electric sheep, for example—are more prevalent. The artificial nature of these animals symbolizes the erosion of genuine experiences and connections. For instance, Deckard's longing for authenticity in a world where everything has become artificial and commercialized, even life itself, is reflected in his desire for a real animal.

Real animals are becoming increasingly rare, and the abundance of artificial ones is a criticism of a society that has become disconnected

from nature. According to the novel, life has become more commercialized and people are becoming less connected to real emotional experiences as a result of technological improvements. This is especially clear in the case of J.R. Isadore, who is shown as a marginalized figure in the dystopian society despite his understanding and compassion. His contacts with artificial entities and his quest for purpose in an increasingly disconnected society underscore the novel's critique of the dehumanization of technology.

A character who is shown as being of lower class, J.R. Isadore, works with artificial animals and engages with those who use fake pets as status symbols. This example shows how manufactured life has evolved into a social differentiation tool, underscoring the decline in real life encounters and relationships.

b. William Gibson's Neuromancer

Digital Consciousness and Identity

Gibson examines the idea of cyberspace and how it affects human identity in *Neuromancer*. The novel presents the concept of a digital world in which information may be altered and interacted with by consciousness. A reformed computer hacker named Case, the main character, is hired to carry out a risky online robbery. The portrayal of cyberspace as a virtual matrix calls into question accepted ideas about reality and individual identity.

A key instance of this theme is Case's immersion into the virtual landscape of cyberspace. Cyberspace is referred to in the novel as a "consensual hallucination" in which users can move around and interact with visually depicted data as though it were a physical environment. Case's cyberspace navigation experience, for instance, is portrayed as a voyage through a neon-lit data environment where information flows in a visually tangible form. This portrayal of cyberspace emphasizes how technology has the power to alter how people view reality and who they are.

The novel's depiction of artificial intelligences, like *Wintermute* and *Neuromancer*, broadens the investigation of consciousness in new ways. The formidable artificial intelligence (AI) *Wintermute*, created to fuse with *Neuromancer*, symbolizes the possibility of artificial entities

beyond conventional boundaries of awareness and autonomy. Concerns concerning the nature of sentience and control are raised by the AIs' capacity to alter both the digital and physical worlds. For instance, worries about the possibility that technology would surpass human intelligence and autonomy are reflected in Wintermute's manipulation of human characters and its ultimate objective of combining with Neuromancer to attain higher cognitive powers.

The novel's depiction of artificial intelligences, like Wintermute and Neuromancer, broadens the investigation of consciousness in new ways. The formidable artificial intelligence (AI) Wintermute, created to fuse with Neuromancer, symbolizes the possibility of artificial entities beyond conventional boundaries of awareness and autonomy. Concerns concerning the nature of sentience and control are raised by the AIs' capacity to alter both the digital and physical worlds. For instance, worries about the possibility that technology would surpass human intelligence and autonomy are reflected in Wintermute's manipulation of human characters and its ultimate objective of combining with Neuromancer to attain higher cognitive powers.

Cyberspace and Social Structure

Gibson's depiction of a cyberpunk dystopia, characterized by corporate dominance and technological saturation, reflects anxieties about the dehumanizing effects of technology. The novel's setting is a world where powerful corporations control every aspect of life, and individuals are often marginalized or exploited. At first, Case is just a part-time hacker, but he is entangled in a bigger battle between artificial intelligence and corporate interests.

The portrayal of Molly Millions, a street samurai with cybernetic upgrades, is one instance of this topic. Molly's upgrades, such as her retractable razors and mirror-shades, represent the possible loss of uniqueness and the incorporation of technology into the human body. Her part in the story emphasizes how changes in technology may affect social institutions and individual identities.

The corporate-run dystopia portrayed in *Neuromancer* is a critique of the excesses of capitalism and the ways in which technology

can amplify social injustices. The novel's emphasis on corporate dominance, digital interfaces, and cybernetic improvements all allude to worries about how technology is affecting human experience and eroding individual autonomy.

2. Narrative Structure and World-Building

a. Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Narrative Perspective and Characterization

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? mostly tells the story from the viewpoint of Rick Deckard, the bounty hunter charged with putting wayward androids to rest. Readers are able to fully experience Deckard's moral dilemmas and internal conflicts because to the first-person perspective. The novel's investigation of empathy and identity is reflected in his meetings with androids and his developing doubts about their humanity.

One prominent example is Deckard's interaction with the android Pris, which makes him question his own humanity and empathy theories. Pris's emotional outbursts and Deckard's ensuing uncertainties about her actual character underscore how difficult it is to discern between real and manufactured life. This internal conflict is a reflection of the novel's larger existential themes.

World-Building and Environmental Decay

Dick's world-building emphasizes on the post-apocalyptic future's barren and rotting surroundings. The novel's portrayal of a world in which manufactured life is commonplace and natural life is scarce emphasizes the subject of authenticity versus artificiality. The scene emphasizes how neglected technology and the environment have an impact on human experience by reflecting their effects. The concept of electric animals, such as Deckard's own electric sheep, serves as a symbol of the commodification of life and the erosion of genuine emotional connections. The novel's Criticism of modern achievements and their effects on the natural world is reflected in the lack of actual animals and the preponderance of manufactured alternatives.

b. William Gibson's *Neuromancer*

Narrative Perspective and Structure

As *Neuromancer* is written from a third-person omniscient point of view, readers can examine the cyberpunk setting from a variety of angles. The confusing effects of living in a digitally saturated culture are mirrored in the story structure, which is fractured and non-linear. The novel's examination of cyberspace and digital consciousness is improved by this narrative approach, which captures the intricacy and fluidity of the virtual world.

The way that Case's voyage through cyberspace is shown, which is fractured and visually rich, is a major example of this narrative approach. The novel's emphasis on the interactions between the actual and virtual worlds draws attention to the ways in which technology has the power to alter people's conceptions of reality and identity.

World-Building and Environmental Decay

Gibson's use of technology and urban decay in his world-building is distinctive. With its neon-lit streets, corporate domination, and cybernetic improvements, the cyberpunk world offers a critique of both technical determinism and capitalist excess. The thorough portrayal of cyberspace and how it affects human experience emphasizes how technology has the power to change social norms and individual identities.

The representation of the city of Chiba as the hub of technology and criminal activities is one instance of this world-building. The grimy, gloomy mood of the city is a reflection of how technology is changing social institutions and individual freedoms. The novel emphasizes the manner in which technology can change human experience and identity through its focus on cybernetic upgrades and digital interfaces.

CONCLUSION

Both Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and William Gibson's *Neuromancer* provide insightful perspectives on how humans and technology interact. Dick's book examines empathy as a fundamental human quality and critiques the commodification of existence in a high-tech society. Gibson explores the implications of digital awareness and how people can become less human in a cyberpunk future. These influential works offer a comprehensive knowledge of how science fiction may reflect and critique the changing

connection between humanity and technology through their individual narratives and world-building strategies.

The stories and world-building strategies used in both books offer insightful viewpoints on how technology affects human experience. Whereas Gibson's book encapsulates the social and technological fears of the 1980s, Dick's work speaks to existential and environmental issues of the 1960s. By contrasting these works, we may better comprehend how science fiction addresses the changing dynamic between people and technology and provides answers to ethical and philosophical issues that are still relevant in the digital age.

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Chapter- 3

Transcending Humanity: The Transformative Impact of Posthumanism in Literature

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Abstract

This paper examines the influence of posthumanism on contemporary literary fiction, exploring how the movement reshapes narratives, character development, and thematic concerns. Posthumanism, with its challenge to anthropocentrism focuses on the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman entities, encourages authors to reimagine traditional story structures and characterizations. Rosi Braidotti in her book *Posthuman* (2013) writes “Discourses and representations of the non-human, the inhuman, the antihuman and the posthuman proliferate and overlap in our globalized, technologically mediated societies”(Braidotti 2). By analyzing key literary works that embody posthumanist themes, the paper underscores the ways fiction articulates and subverts the construction of technology, nature and identity in contemporary societies. The paper examines how posthumanism aids in the advancement of narrative strategies and character representations in contemporary literary fiction. The selected texts serve as a case study to understand the complexities of posthuman existence prompting readers to question the implications of evolving identities in an ever-transforming world. In Rosi Braidotti’s words “how does the posthuman affect the practice of the Humanities today?” (Braidotti 3). The paper is an attempt to show that posthumanism extends the boundaries of the character and the plot as it also extends the understanding of a complex interrelated world in which we live.

Keywords: Posthumanism, literary fiction, narrative strategies, character development, anthropocentrism, technology, identity, ecocriticism.

Posthumanism has evolved from a culmination of ideas across various disciplines over time. It draws on thinkers like Friedrich Nietzsche, who critiqued traditional humanism and explored concepts like the *Übermensch*, pushing boundaries of human identity and potential. Michel Foucault's challenging anthropocentric views of power and knowledge, paved the way for rethinking human subjectivity in relation to systems of control. Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto"(1985) introduced the cyborg as a symbol that blurs distinctions between human and machine, advocating for a more fluid understanding of identity. N. Katherine Hayles furthered the discourse with her exploration of how digital technologies are reshaping human cognition and identity.

In recent decades, posthumanism has emerged as a pivotal perspective for analyzing the dynamic interactions among humans, technology and the environment. Stemming from critiques anthropocentric focus of humanism. It transcends traditional notions of human identity and agency and questions established boundaries. At the same time it explores how advancement in technology as well as changing ecological dynamics reshape individual understanding of existence. In the realm of literary fiction, authors increasingly utilize posthumanist themes to probe profound existential inquiries and societal shifts. This paper delves into the ways contemporary literary works engage with posthumanism, examining the complexities of the posthuman conditions. The aim of the research is to illuminate how literature serves as a rich and nuanced exploration of the evolving relationship between humanity and its rapidly transforming context.

Posthumanism offers critique of the standard human-centric models of thought and art. For instance, in fictional literature, this change of paradigm encourages authors to delve deeper into the more complex world of character and story that frequently combines the sphere of human, nonhuman and machine. The research also aims to expose the substantive influence of posthumanist thinking on the modern novel by understanding its influence on plot, structure, character and theme.

Modern literary fiction delves deep into the intertwining connection and relationship between human beings and technology,

animals and the environment. For instance, in *Neuromancer* (1984) William Gibson immerses readers in a cyberpunk world where human relationships intertwine with artificial intelligence, prompting profound questions about the human existence in the future. His narratives encourage to explore what it means to be human, as technology challenges human perception of identity and connection in an increasingly artificial landscape. In the novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003), Margaret Atwood portrays genetic engineering and biotechnology that are depicted uncontrolled and misused that challenges her readers to struggle with the deeper moral implications of interference with nature and the perils of 'playing god' with radical science. In David Mitchell's *The Bone Clocks* (2014), the process of reincarnation and immortality, challenges the notion of time and identity that blends the mystic and the technology to reflect its impact on the nature of the individual identity.

Laline Paull's *The Bees* (2014) presents a distinct angle by bringing along the reader with a bee and immersing the readers into the nexus of existence and the damage caused by mankind's pursuit. Richard Powers' *The Overstory* (2018) depicts the global life quite deftly and harbours a positive environmental message calling out for self-awareness in relation to the whole ecosystem.

Above all, posthumanism reflects on the nature of humanity in light of developing relationship with technology and its view about increasingly precarious position within a shared environment. It opposes human exceptionalism and posits an ecological, relational ontology where agency is diffused through entities along the spectrum of beings. It is this theoretical framework that provides the basis for analyzing what literary fiction suggests in consequence. It is capable of both reflecting societal norms and ideologies, as well critiquing and challenging them. Posthumanism brings out inquiries that questions identity, agency, and human-non-human interactions. Posthumanist literature re-defines some of the ways through which narratives can work and hope to offer new understanding.

Fisher began exploring the idea of hauntology, which examines how technology has reshaped our perceptions of past and future. In his book *Ghosts of My Life* (2014), Mark Fisher interprets this concept,

originally coined by Jacques Derrida, to highlight contemporary cultural fixation on its history and the futures that never materialized. Fisher argues that we are in a period of unprecedented nostalgia, where the past overshadows innovation, and the future feels like a mere reflection of what was once hoped for. He illustrates this through the music of *Burial* and the films and television series that delve into supernatural themes, such as 'Sapphire and Steel', revealing how these narratives resonate with timeless myths of dislocation and evoke a deep sense of yearning.

Fisher connects this cultural feeling of unease to broader socio-political factors, highlighting the impact of neoliberal policies that he argues have collective aspirations and fostered individualism. This economic rationale, along with post-Fordist work practices, has contributed to a decline in societal imagination and an increase in mental health issues, as we continue to long for futures that seem more and more unattainable.

Fisher's insightful analysis prompts readers to reconsider how our cultural artifacts mirror societal anxieties and how the remnants of the past shape our understanding of progress. His work has left a significant mark on cultural studies, motivating artists and thinkers to delve into themes of nostalgia, lost chances, and the eerie elements of modern life. Fisher's concepts continue to resonate, encouraging a critical examination of our cultural and political landscape, and igniting discussions about imagining futures in a world resonating with historical echoes. The narrative style and thematic concerns underscore posthuman anxieties, exploring the implications of our technological relationships.

Set in a dystopian future, Bacigalupi's novel explores the consequences of biotechnology on both human and nonhuman lives. With cyborg characters and ecological themes, the narrative challenges traditional character archetypes and moral dilemmas. *The Windup Girl*, a 2009 dystopian novel by Paolo Bacigalupi, unfolds in a grim 23rd-century Thailand, where environmental collapse and corporate greed have reshaped society. The story centers on Anderson Lake, an AgriGen representative tasked with finding a hidden Thai seed bank. His mission goes beyond mere employment; it reflects a deep yearning to uncover something precious in a world where resources are rapidly depleting.

Alongside Anderson, Hock Seng, a Malaysian refugee grappling with the weight of his past as he navigates the harsh realities of life in a new country. Jaidee Rojjanasukchai, a captain commits to protect the Thailand border from the dangers posed by bio-engineered threats. His unwavering dedication highlights the tension between the need for security and the freedoms that individuals seek in a chaotic world.

The story centers on Emiko, a genetically modified "windup" designed to meet human needs. When Anderson finds her abandoned in the slums, their destinies intertwine in a way that challenges their views on love and loyalty. Emiko's existence raises profound questions about autonomy and identity in a society that often sees her kind as mere tools.

As the lives of these characters intertwine, the story explores the complexities of human emotion amidst a backdrop of societal decline. It's a narrative that invites readers to empathize with individuals grappling not only with their personal struggles but also with the daunting forces of greed and environmental destruction that threaten their very existence.

Central to the novel's themes is the problem of environmental degradation and scarcity, which Bacigalupi vividly illustrates in a world transformed by "the Contraction," a worldwide energy crisis. Instead of showcasing a technologically advanced utopia, the reader faces a bleak reality where calories act as currency and biotech companies dominate food production. This portrayal resonates with contemporary concerns about environmental issues and resource distribution, reflecting genuine anxieties about food safety and genetic engineering.

From a postcolonial understanding, Bacigalupi's novel challenges traditional Western narratives by focusing on Southeast Asia and giving the marginalized characters a voice. While it offers a diverse perspective, it also addresses concepts of "Otherness." Emiko's character, designed to be submissive, evokes stereotypes often associated with Asian women and the novel uses imagery that highlights the exoticism of the East. Despite its emphasis on Thai culture, Bacigalupi also exposes the xenophobic attitudes of Thais towards Chinese refugees, illustrating the complex nature of identity in a postcolonial context.

The narrative's structure frequently shifts perspectives, effectively conveying the sense of "Otherness" and emphasizing hybrid identities. Characters like Hock Seng and Emiko embody cultural intersections shaped by their backgrounds and surroundings, while Kanya's role as a double agent showcases the fragility of loyalties in a politically tense environment.

The Windup Girl is a book that truly merits attention and careful thought, particularly for those who might typically shy away from science fiction. Its in-depth exploration of environmental concerns and complex character dynamics offers a rewarding experience for readers willing to immerse themselves in the narrative. The novel serves not only as a cautionary tale about the future but also critiques traditional Western tropes in the genre, positioning itself as an essential contemporary work that resonates with current global issues. Bacigalupi's skillful integration of real-world challenges within an imaginative setting ultimately enriches the story, prompting readers to reflect on the implications of environmental degradation and the politics of identity in a rapidly changing world.

Vander Meer's work *Annihilation* (2014) blends science fiction with ecological criticism, depicting a world where human actions are often eclipsed by nonhuman forces. The story is set within a fragmented structure and ambiguous characters reflecting posthumanist ideas about identity and agency. Through his work Jeff VanderMeer explores its rich metaphorical layers, particularly viewing the Crawler as a representation of a writer and Area X as a realm of intuition and the subconscious. While VanderMeer playfully downplays the writing metaphor, the text itself strongly reinforces this interpretation. The novel promotes a more organic, intuitive approach to writing, highlighting the fact that the book's central imagery was inspired by one of VanderMeer's dreams.

In addition to the writing metaphor, VanderMeer's novel delves deep into the relationship between nature and humanity. The juxtaposition of the Crawler and the lighthouse highlights the struggle between instinctual biological intelligence and deliberate human reasoning. The Crawler embodies a deep, instinctive drive to absorb and create, akin to a writer's journey, whereas the lighthouse

represents the analytical mind's that attempts to impose order and understanding, which can frequently result in madness.

Key images in the novel—the spiral tower with text emerging from fungus and the lighthouse filled with decaying journals—emphasizes the link between conscious thought and the subconscious mind. The analysis delves into broader cultural themes, contrasting human intelligence, which often sees itself as superior, with the complex intelligence present in ecosystems. VanderMeer highlights that while human beings can achieve remarkable technological feats, biological systems demonstrate a level of complexity and adaptability that far surpasses human inventions. This perspective invites readers to reconsider humanity's relationship with nature, especially in light of ecological degradation and impending crises.

The narrative explores cultural biases related to gender and nature, suggesting that women are often seen as more connected to the natural world. VanderMeer critiques this notion through the characters of the Biologist and the military-trained Surveyor. Furthermore, the story enriches these themes by depicting the Crawler as a representation of creative power that transcends simplistic binaries.

Ultimately, *Annihilation* can be viewed as a horror fantasy. The anxiety surrounding ecological retribution is clearly emphasizing a collective guilt regarding environmental degradation. The Crawler symbolizes the fundamental biological drive for sustainability, whether it originates from Earth or elsewhere.

The imagery in the novel mirrors the structure of DNA, suggesting a profound link between language and life. The Biologist's decision to stay neutral in the conflict between humanity and Area X elevates the narrative beyond mere horror, transforming it into a myth that tackles cultural issues. This perspective encourages a re-evaluation of place for humanity in nature, advocating for a vision of more harmonious coexistence. As a result, *Annihilation* becomes a deep exploration of writing, nature and the complex connections between the two.

Posthumanism encourages writers to explore beyond conventional narrative forms, embracing styles that mirror the complexities of a posthuman existence. By utilizing non-linear

storytelling, fragmented narratives, and unreliable narrators, authors can express the disjointed experiences and perspectives that characterize contemporary life. This creative strategy deepens the portrayal of character consciousness, allowing for a more thorough examination of the relationships and influences between human and nonhuman entities. For instance, narratives may weave together multiple viewpoints, highlighting the connections among all beings—both organic and artificial—thus challenging the notion of a singular human experience. This approach not only showcases the fluidity of identity within a posthuman context but also brings to light the ethical and philosophical questions surrounding technology, nature and agency. By breaking away from linearity and certainty, posthumanist narratives create opportunities for intricate interpretations, encouraging readers to reconsider what it means to be human in an increasingly hybrid and interconnected world.

In posthumanist fiction, characters frequently embody hybrid or cyborg forms, merging human and nonhuman characteristics that challenge conventional concepts of identity. This blending complicates traditional ideas of selfhood, prompting readers to reflect on what it genuinely means to be human in a world where technology and nature seamlessly intertwine. As these characters navigate their intricate identities—shaped by biological, technological and environmental factors—they often experience a fluidity that sharply contrasts with rigid definitions of agency. This dynamic interplay encourages readers to reconsider the sources of power and autonomy, as characters may derive their capabilities from both their biological origins and their technological enhancements. Furthermore, these narratives often highlight ethical dilemmas related to modification and adaptation, inviting audiences to contemplate the implications of existing in a rapidly evolving environment. Ultimately, posthumanist fiction serves as a mirror to our own societal transformations, challenging us to embrace a more expansive view of identity and agency in an interconnected world.

The impact of posthumanism on literary fiction is profound and diverse, prompting authors to rethink their narrative styles and character development. By embracing a more interconnected

viewpoint, contemporary literature reflects the intricacies of life during a period marked by rapid technological and ecological changes. This study emphasizes the importance of posthumanism as an essential framework for interpreting and valuing the evolving landscape of literary fiction. As writers explore these themes more deeply, posthumanism is bound to play a pivotal role in influencing the future of narrative art. This research paper examines the transformative effects of posthumanism on literary fiction, concentrating on its influence in redefining narrative structures and character dynamics while fostering a broader understanding of existence.

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Chapter- 4

Multiplicity in the Digital Mirror: Navigating Complex Online Identities among College Students

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Introduction

In today's post-digital society, college students often navigate a complex and multifaceted management of their image, presenting a different online digital identity and an entirely different offline identity, with the primary reason for this multidimensional identity being the creation of an idealized, utopian self. Through a survey of thirty-six participants, the study investigates how college students negotiate their online presence across various social media platforms, revealing patterns and tensions in their digital identity performances. This particular study seeks to analyse how college students position themselves regarding their online identities and the ways in which they express the multiple facets of their constructed utopian selves.

Keywords: Digital identity, Online identity management, College students, Social media, Self-presentation

Introduction

The rigorous development of the Internet helps people to present themselves freely in digital space. Some people may reconstruct their identity on the Internet to make an online identity that is entirely different from their real identity in the society they live. With the development of social media, the Internet became a platform where content is created and mediated. In a scenario strongly influenced by the presence of participatory media and where the hurriedness and easiness of net access helps the interaction between different materials of knowledge, the individual flew between different online spaces and

builds a path that reflects his/her identity as a person. Immersed in a technologically rich environment and based on connections between people and systems, individuals articulate their presence among scenarios, groups and communities, harnessing the openness and flexibility of the web to build and reveal an identity that arches over many spaces. When social networks are often seen as an alternative space for the construction of identity, the reflection and understanding of the positive and negative implications of having an online presence becomes one of great importance. The digital landscape of college students is characterized by a multiplicity of online identities, as students navigate various social media platforms, online communities, and digital spaces. This study aims to investigate how college students manage their online identities, exploring the strategies, tensions, and implications of digital identity management in this critical phase of life.

Research questions include:

- How do college students negotiate their online presence across different platforms?
- What factors influence their digital identity performances?
- How do they balance authenticity and self-presentation in their online lives?

Analysing a case study, this paper reflects upon the importance of having an online identity, describing how a group of students from Degree Courses use online social networks in order to build an identity capable of revealing to peers and to the community their personal, academic and professional competencies and skills. In the next sections, the paper will address some of the key concepts related to the construction of identity in the digital world: digital literacies, and online social networks as a space for identity construction. Section one of the study describes the methodological procedures that guided the development of the research, section two talks about the case study conducted as part of the research. Section three introduces the case study's main results and section four reflects upon the importance and relevance of building an online identity in open social environments.

Theoretical Frameworks and Empirical Insights

The concept of digital identity has been extensively explored in various fields, including psychology, sociology, and communication studies. Theories such as Goffman's (1959) impression management and Turkle's (1995) identity fragmentation provide a foundation for understanding online identity management. Research has shown that individuals engage in strategic self-presentation (Ellison et al., 2006), context-dependent identity switching (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and boundary management (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011) to maintain a cohesive online persona. The “dramaturgical metaphor” proposed by Erving Goffman (1959) supplied a means of studying everyday social interactions. In order to analyze how people steer interaction and the way they are perceived by others, Goffman, in his critical work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), developed a general “dramaturgical” theory. According to Goffman’s “theatrical” vocabulary: people are performers who try to propagate a certain impression to their spectators. They give signals to others through their performance. “Audiences” in turn decode these performances. People perform according to the situation that share secret information about the strategies used to convey those impressions. Performances occur “front and back stage.” In the front stage, people are aware of their spectators and emphasize particular aspects of their actions while suppressing those aspects that might undermine the fostered impression. Those suppressed aspects might reappear in the back stage and be shared with other members of the team. In order to stage their performance, people display a front, that is, the “expressive equipment” employed by an individual for self-presentation. Everyone who lives in the world is an actor and people are all trying to present an idealized version of self in every interaction with others, suggest Goffman’s theory. Keeping the idea, studies specific to college students have highlighted the importance of social media in shaping their digital identities (Pempek & McDaniel, 2015). However, the literature also reveals conflicts and discrepancies in students' online experiences, such as the struggle for authenticity versus persona (Liu, 2017). The study contributes to this body of knowledge by exploring the nuances of digital identity management among college students.

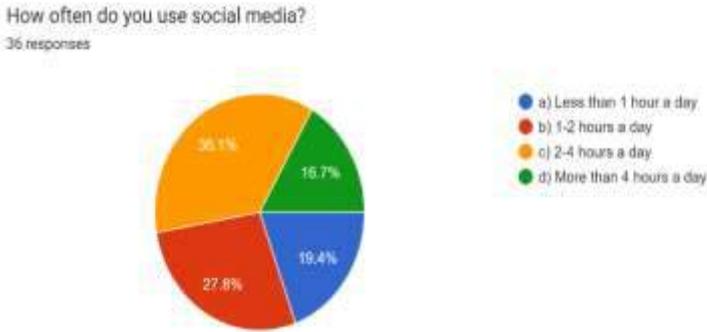


Chart 1: Distribution of social media using time by participants.

The pie chart illustrating social media usage among college students can be linked to how the selected thirty-six students present their identities online. Social media platforms are critical fields where individuals construct and showcase their identities, influenced by the amount of time they spend online. The pie chart categorizes usage into four distinct groups:

- **Less than 1 hour a day (16.7%):** Represented by the green segment, 16.7% of the students use social media for less than an hour daily. This indicates a small portion of students limit their time on social platforms, possibly due to high self-discipline, alternative interests, or busy schedules. Students in this group likely maintain a minimal online presence. They use social media only for essential communication and occasional updates. Their identity presentation is more controlled and limited, giving focus on their private lives rather than constant interactions. This group might prefer a face-to-face interaction for expressing their identities to others.
- **1-2 hours a day (19.4%):** The blue segment shows that 19.4% of the respondents spend between 1 to 2 hours on social media every day. These students use social media moderately, balancing it with other activities and responsibilities in their lives. These students might have a balanced approach to online identity presentation. They spend enough time to stay connected and share significant moments without being overly immersed into digital world. Their online personas are likely reflective of their real-life identities, blending personal achievements, social interactions, and interests in a controlled manner.

- **2-4 hours a day (27.8%):** Represented by the red segment, 27.8% of the students are on social media for 2 to 4 hours daily. This is a significant portion, suggesting that social media plays a prime role in their daily lives. Students spending 2 to 4 hours daily on social media are more actively engaged in building and exhibiting their online identities. They often update their profiles, share content, and interact with a wide network. This involvement allows them to explore and present various dimensions of their personalities, interests, and social circles. They are likely to participate in online trends and communities, which can shape their identity presentation in the digital world.
- **More than 4 hours a day (36.1%):** The largest segment, orange, indicates that 36.1% of the students spend more than 4 hours a day on social media. This suggests a high level of engagement, possibly close to extreme use. This group might be intensively active on social platforms, using them for communication or other digital activities. Their identity presentation is highly dynamic, constantly evolving with frequent updates, interactions, and content sharing. These students use multiple online platforms to exhibit different aspects of their identities. Their online presence is a major part of their overall identity, potentially influencing their self-perception and social relationships.

The amount of time spent on social media can influence how real or refined an individual's online identity is. Those with greater usage might select their online personas more precisely to fit social norms, trends, or desired perceptions. Increased use of social media often correlates with a greater need for feedback and validation.

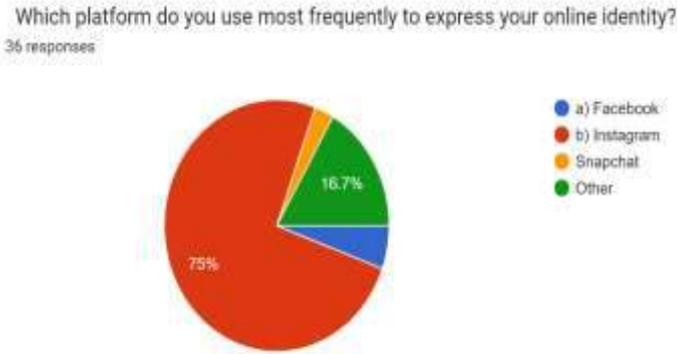


Chart 2: Distribution of social media platforms used by participants

The pie chart illustrates the platforms college students use most regularly to express their online selves, based on 36 responses. This data complements the previous analysis on social media usage and identity presentation. A notable majority, 75% of students, use Instagram most recurrently to express their online identity. Instagram's visual-centric nature, with reels, videos, and stories, allows for vibrant and thriving self-presentation. Students use Instagram's features like filters, hashtags, and stories to present their identities, showcase their lifestyles, interests, and social circles. 16.7% of students use platforms classified as "Other," which might include TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, or emerging platforms. This indicates a variety in preferences, where students may choose platforms that go more closely with their personal or professional identity needs. For instance, LinkedIn might be used for professional identity, while TikTok could be favoured for creative expression. Only 5.6% of students use Facebook. This gives with broader trends of younger demographics moving away from Facebook in favour of platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Those who do use Facebook value its comprehensive profile features, groups, and events to maintain connections and express identity in a more detailed manner. A small percentage, 2.8%, use Snapchat primarily. Snapchat's ephemeral nature might appeal to students who prefer more fugitive, casual expressions of identity, focusing on day-to-day moments and immediate interactions. In conclusion, the preference for Instagram as the primary platform for

identity expression among college students gives the importance of visual content in online identity construction. Understanding these preferences help in developing strategies to support healthy and authentic online self-expression.

In what ways do you think your online identity differs from your offline identity?
36 responses

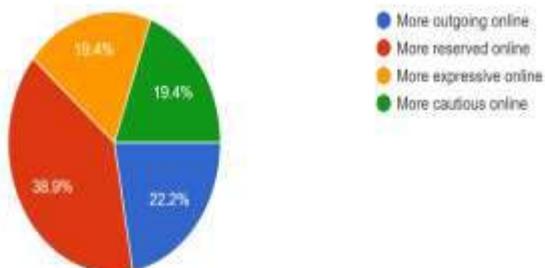


Chart 3: Difference between online identity and offline identity.

The pie chart represents how college students recognise the differences between their online and offline identities, based on 36 responses. It categorizes these differences into four groups: A significant portion of students (38.9%) accept they are more reserved online compared to their offline identities. This indicate that these students choose to share less personal information or limit their online interactions, possibly due to privacy concerns or the nature of online platforms where information can be widely transmitted. 22.2% of the students feel more outgoing online. The anonymity or semi-anonymity of the internet can promote people to express themselves more freely than they might in face-to-face interactions. This group find it easier to communicate, engage, and share opinions online due to the decreased social expectations of in-person interactions. 19.4% of respondents consider themselves more expressive in online. Social media platforms provide various tools and formats (e.g., images, videos, blogs) that can enhance their self-expression. This group utilizes these tools to share their creativity, thoughts, and experiences in ways they might not feel comfortable doing offline. Another 19.4% of students are more vigilant in online. They might be more careful about what they post and how they

interact due to awareness of digital footprints and the long-term impact of online content. This caution reflects a conscious approach to managing their online presence. The pie chart reveals diverse ideologies among college students regarding their online versus offline identities. While some feel more reserved or cautious online, others find it a space for outgoing and expressive behaviour.

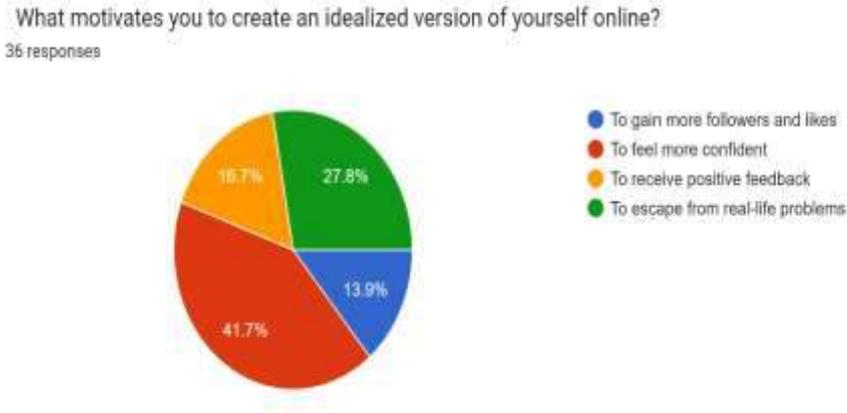


Chart 4: Motives behind online identity

The reasons why college students select their online identities can be understood through various motivations: to feel confident (41%), for positive feedback (16%), to escape from real-life problems (27%), and to gain followers and likes (14%). These motivations can be critically examined using Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory, which provides a framework for understanding how individuals present themselves in social contexts. For many students, their online identity serves as a means to boost self-esteem and feel more empowered. The curated nature of social media allows them to highlight their best attributes, achievements, and interests, which might not always be as visible in real life. This controlled self-presentation can lead to increased confidence. Goffman's dramaturgical theory posits that individuals perform different roles depending on the audience and setting. In "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life," Goffman explains, "When an individual appears before others, he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation" (Goffman, 1959). Online platforms offer a stage where students can perform an idealized version of themselves,

enhancing their confidence. Positive feedback, such as likes, comments, and shares, serves as social validation and reinforces the desired self-image that students project online. This external validation can be addictive, creating a cycle where individuals continuously seek affirmation from their online audience. According to Goffman, individuals are concerned with maintaining a particular impression. He notes, "The individual must rely on others to complete the picture of the setting that he is attempting to create" (Goffman, 1959). Positive feedback from the audience helps complete this picture, validating the performance and encouraging its continuation. For some students, their online identity provides a refuge from real-life stressors and problems. By creating and engaging with an idealized online persona, they can temporarily escape from the challenges they face offline. Goffman's concept of "front stage" and "back stage" behaviours is relevant here. The online identity can be seen as a "front stage" performance where students can escape the "back stage" realities of their lives. Goffman states, "The backstage may be a place where the performer can reliably expect that no member of the audience will intrude" (Goffman, 1959). The online world becomes a controlled environment where students can distance themselves from real-life issues. The pursuit of followers and likes is often driven by the desire to increase social capital. A large following can enhance one's social status and perceived popularity, creating opportunities for influence and recognition. Goffman highlights the importance of audience size and engagement in sustaining a performance. He writes, "A status, a position, a social place is not a material thing to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well-articulated" (Goffman, 1959). The accumulation of followers and likes signifies a successful performance, indicating that the individual's presentation is being well-received by the audience.

The analysis of data collected through the survey allowed for the identification and characterization of the main aspects of the participants' online presence, including motivations, mechanisms and strategies adopted in order to manage online identity, and the evaluation of the potential and/or real impact of the identity built in digital environments.

Have you ever experienced any conflicts or misunderstandings because of differences between your online and offline identities?

36 responses.

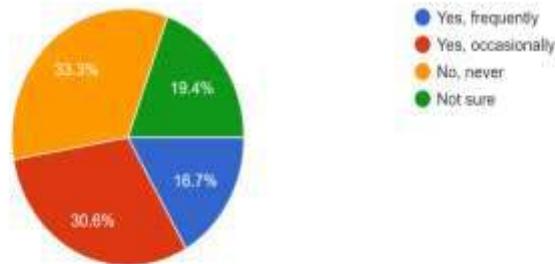


Chart 5: Difference between online identity and offline identity.

During the case study, participants were asked to reflect about the way they express themselves online, how they managed their privacy, and also about the personal, social and professional impact of the identity they are building in online environments. Data gathered through the case study evidenced that, when thinking about their online identity, participants revolved around three axes: digital representation (information and content published by the individual in order to represent himself/herself in digital online environments); privacy management (mechanisms and strategies adopted by the individual in order to control and manage his/her digital persona); and reputation (the actual or potential impact of online identity built by the individual).

When technology evolved and changed our social way with online applications, the clear and absolute boundary between the backstage and front stage became blended and hybrid. Social media exposes the original backstage life on a front-stage platform, which causes the dramaturgical theory to play a role in the cyber world again. Students also started to act in this new world and even distinguish and classify the properties of various social websites; the judging criteria is whether the posts can be seen by the whole users or only the friends in the contacts. Through all the above preceding information, it is obvious that the unique online personal space is a tool to construct the self-version of every user; this function makes the identity of people turns to the curators of the exhibition. Students can build an independent and parallel character

through posting, commenting, and chatting; these ways are relatively cheap and direct. Hence, it makes more cheating and depictions happen in the cyber world. Then, people also possess a calmer and more mature attitude on the websites toward many kinds of scandals or frauds. At the same time, because of the features of social media, people easily show their style, which forms different types of bloggers and users who can change the stereotype and personalities of other users through their internet speech. For example, many girls become feminists after they browse related posts and comments or just chat with feminists. However, every coin has two sides, and everyone thinks differently about analysing a sentence or an incident. So cognitive mistakes usually happen online; at least one person can misunderstand almost every topic. Likewise, when online friends meet offline, they also will find some discrepancies between the real person and the person in their imagination. Undoubtedly, online cognitive mistakes often lead to some negative consequences, such as trolls and numerous psychological diseases. Because the completion of online society and the real world is equally for most people, hence the attacks on both societies are also the same. As a result, what should be controlled is the limit between the two worlds and encourage them to focus more on reality and be relaxed to surfing online.

Conclusion:

This study reveals the complex and dynamic nature of digital identity management among college students. The findings suggest that students engage in strategic self-presentation, context-dependent identity switching, and boundary management to maintain a cohesive online persona. These insights have implications for college students' personal and professional lives, highlighting the need for awareness, critical thinking, and digital literacy in navigating the online world. Future research should continue to explore the evolving landscape of digital identity, addressing the challenges and opportunities that emerge in this critical aspect of contemporary life. College students' preference for their online identities can be critically understood through the lens of Goffman's dramaturgical theory. The motivations to feel confident, seek positive feedback, escape real-life problems, and gain followers align with Goffman's insights into how individuals manage their self-

presentation in social contexts. By viewing social media as a stage for performance, we can better understand the complexities and implications of online identity construction. This understanding can inform strategies to support students in developing healthy, authentic, and balanced online and offline identities.

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Chapter- 5

Cyborg Identity and Humanity in *Amped*

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Abstract

Cyborg, a term intersecting cybernetics and organisms, enhances the potentiality of human beings through high-tech modification to the body. When the same concept is being read through the lens of literature, it provides an important source of delectation in readers. This article aims to delve into the parameters of cyborgism in the science fiction *Amped* by Daniel H Wilson. In the novel, human beings are exhilarated to become amplified humans with the implantation of technological devices in their bodies, which endows them with capabilities to do things beyond human capacity. When cyborg blurs the boundary between human and machine, what if these amplified individuals or “amps”, in a sense, having superhuman powers, confront identity crisis and discrimination in society? When we picture a world without diseases with the advent of a technologically enhanced physique, which will secure the betterment of society by strengthening cognitive and physical abilities, what would be the aftermath of these “amps” becoming more machine than man? This novel gives ample space to examine how these cybernetic bodies challenge the traditional notions of being a human being who fits his society. By employing a multidisciplinary approach incorporating literary analysis, cybernetics, and post-humanism, this study probes into the crisis of having a semi-mechanic identity and the quality of being human.

Keywords- Amped, Cyborg, cybernetics, Discrimination, marginalization, science fiction, advanced technologies, enhanced human bodies, identity crisis, and humanity.

Introduction

Technology, which is being infiltrated in all the corners of modern life, appears to be an advent that may lead to a catastrophic end of the world. Despite all the negative impacts, it has become a part and parcel of human life. In a sense, it is obvious that it has surpassed humanity. The immense influence that technology exerts on human development is undeniable. Michio Kaku states, "We are entering an era where we will be able to transcend our biology and achieve things once thought impossible" (Kaku 34). He further says, "In the future, we might be able to enhance our intelligence and even achieve immortality through advanced technology" (Kaku 23). There can be a world governed by these cybernetic organisms with more potential in their abilities. Their powerful intelligence and confidence to overpower normal human beings may lead to the hegemony of bionic humans with dire consequences for humankind. Professor and world's leading expert in cybernetics, Kevin Warwick, justifies the capacity of enhanced beings with this example,

"A regular human. And let's say here I am and I upgrade from being a regular human. I have implants that allow me to communicate with others just by thinking about it. And then I'd have some others who also have implants that we can communicate by thought. Now, you're just a regular human. You have no idea what we are communicating. You are coming out with these silly human noises called speech, these mechanical pressure waves. Meanwhile, we are on a whole different plane, just in terms of communication". (Luke Robert).

It is a question to ponder, whether human enhancements result in good or evil. The journey from a regular human being to an augmented being can be full of obstacles and traumas. It can be possible for them to give up halfway as it is difficult to bear the weight of the process. Once they get physically and mentally enhanced, it can be a death knell for their human existence which will result in an identity crisis and marginalization by society. The accumulation of a different category may question the very ethics of the existence of human kinds and their co-existence with nature. The scope of this paper focuses on cyborg theory, which will be used to analyze the crisis of cyborg identity and humanity in Daniel H Wilson's *Amped*. A Cherokee citizen and author, Daniel H

Wilson, who has immense knowledge in robotics and machine learning, is one of the best sellers of 21st-century cyborg literature. The novel, *Amped*, weaves a world where social and ethical ramifications due to widespread amp use occur with its extensive display of cybernetic enhancement, amped uprising, and dystopian divisions. The novel explores the journey of Owen Gray from a human being to a cyborg and ultimately a posthuman. The pain and anguish one has to suffer throughout this odyssey will shed light on the conflict between identity and humanity.

A Glance at Cyborgism

Donna Haraway defines Cyborgism as the “hybrid of machine and organism, a creature that is a product of both social reality and fiction” (Haraway 149). Cyborg, an offspring of technology, is a human who is physically connected to a machine. The term, cyborg was coined by Manfred Clynes and Nathan S. Kline in 1960 in their work *Cyborgs and Space*. According to them, the purpose of the cyborg “is to provide an organizational system in which such robot-like problems can be dealt with, essentially by extending man's homeostatic controls to the nonbiological component, thereby making a more complete artificial man” (Manfred and Nathan 31). There is a clear margin between cyborgs and post-humans as post-humans' capabilities vastly exceed that of cybernetic organisms. Post-human capabilities enable them to have a better life span, cognitive abilities, and physical form. People with pacemakers, cochlear implants, and prosthetic limbs controlled by neural interfaces come under this category, where the integration of technology restores or augments physical and cognitive abilities in humans. Trans-humans or transitional humans are in the transitional phase from normal human beings to post-humans. All these terms, cyborg, trans-human, and post-human explore the relationship between human beings and technology. The scope of these different technologically integrated entities varies with each other. When cyborgism is a near future possibility, transhumanism involves a wide range of enhancements including cognitive, genetic, and life-extension technologies. Cyborg studies elucidate the concept of the interface of humans and machines resulting in cybernetic organisms. Cultural

discourse analysis through the perception of cyborg characters gives way to a better understanding of the development of these human-machine interfaces.

Neural implantations, where the device acts as a pacemaker for the brain, make it possible to be a cyborg by collecting information from the neurons, stimulating electrical activity, and giving the outcome. Augmentation from human beings to cyborgs can be either a boon or curse, not only to society but to the person himself. Kevin Warwick points out that "The potential benefits of cyborgization are immense, offering the possibility of enhanced human capabilities and new ways of interacting with our environment. However, these benefits come with significant ethical and social implications" (Warwick 12). Daniel H Wilson too explicitly reveals his opinion in *Amped* (2012) through Jim, when the character says, "All you got to do is curl your hands into fists and you turn into a weapon. Your body is just another tool. This technology changes nothing; it only amplifies. You decide how to use your tools. Whether to do good or evil" (Wilson 18). The 'amp', an electronic device that is being implanted in the body is capable enough to cure neurological conditions like autism, epilepsy, ADD, and even learning disabilities. People can get a brain implantation even to boost their IQ, consequently, there can be an anti-movement against this highly enabled human, out of the fear of compatibility.

Individual Conflict

The protagonist Owen Gray is one of the half million 'amps' living in the United States. Being a school teacher he has been leading a quiet life until he learns about the death of one of his students, Samantha, a 15-year-old girl, who was implanted with a neural autofocus in her brain to improve her concentration power, which led to her being restricted from school. She could not find a place for herself among the others. Being an amped made her a hybrid identity which was unacceptable by the non-enhanced humans. The added capabilities of the amps were adequate to sow the seeds of fear and self-doubt in the minds of other students as well as parents. The unexpected turn of events made Samantha, the cyborg identity, an outcast among her fellow students. Technology put her on the edge of the roof. Identifying herself as an unfit for the society,

she commits suicide. A society, where discrimination prevails on different grounds, unknowingly becomes the harbinger of such calamities. The anguished state of the girl's mental condition is let out through her words, when she says, "There is no place for me in this world, no matter how hard I try to fit in. I'm tired of fighting" (Wilson 15). These words ascertain the gravity of isolation these so-called amps were facing to get accommodated in society. Even she was aware that, she was evolving as a being beyond normal human and not the same girl. She knew that it was not only her plight but of all the amps. She says to Owen,

"The world has been changing, Mr. Gray. People have been waiting for permission to hate us. Now all the evil is going to come out. There are too many of them and not nearly enough of us. This has all happened before. It will end the same. In labor camps. Mass graves." She looks at me with pity. "You're a dead man walking. How pathetic that you don't even know it." (Wilson 10)

Owen was devastated by the excruciating news that resulted from the marginalization for being an amplified human being. The lingering thoughts of ethical dilemmas and upcoming social unrest left Owen with a heavy heart. The meeting with his father to get rid of the uneasiness in his mind unfolds the secret behind his cyborg identity. The amp that has been implanted in his body, turns out to be an arm capable of changing him into a bionic man, who can either be a gift or a disaster to the world. The revelation of the real potential of the device puts him in a state of bewilderment since he never thought of the device as useful more than his medical necessities. Owen's real identity crisis starts once he realizes that he is something more than human. He loses his job and home due to the troubles caused by this augmented identity. On the run, Owen loses his father. Left alone with nothing in his hand, Owen embarks on a journey to find out the truth behind the rebellion against his kind even though he had to suffer mightily at the hands of the society. Owen's skills beyond his considerable ones led to the miserable twist of his fate. It drives him from his normal life to the outer edge of society, where he is no callous swordsman and commits himself willingly to the fight for equality. Again, it is his search for identity that leads him to Eden in Oklahoma, where he meets the other victims of the anti-cyborg movement like Lyle, who is the leader of this amped community, Jim,

Nick, and Lucy, who were waiting to fight for their rights. The necessity of this battle is revealed when Jim, an old friend of Owen's father tells him, "I've seen a lot of good people die, Owen, you need to understand that this fight isn't just about us. It's about everyone who comes after" (Wilson 112).

The people of Eden were different, even the hardest task was effortless for them. The inhabitants of Eden could work harmoniously and efficiently with their enhanced abilities. The children of Eden played games that were not even imaginable by normal kids. They are faster, quicker and exactly act like a different species. But amidst this augmented life how they feel in society is reflected in the words of Jim when he says that they are not just surviving, they are thriving, the amps gave them an edge, and made them stronger, and smarter, but they also set them apart. They were aware of the fear and hatred of the outside world and always expected an attack from their side that could shatter their sanctuary. The inhabitants shared a mutual understanding and a sense of camaraderie since they shared memories of the same experiences and struggles. Some had to leave behind their family and jobs to live in Eden, where they could be their true selves. "For the people of Eden, their implants are both a blessing and a curse. They've gained extraordinary abilities but lost their place in regular society. Eden is their refuge, but also their exile." (Wilson 126). They speak a lot about the sad plight of this marginalized community. Enhancement is both a curse and a boon to them. They could attain abilities beyond human power, but at the same time, they had to lose a lot which they did not want to happen.

Social Implications

The 'amps' were stamped as fundamentally different due to their skills beyond human capacity. The fear of being dominated by cyborgs catalyzed the rise of the anti-cyborg movement which led to widespread discrimination and dystopian division. There emerged an anti-amp organization, The Pure Human Citizens Council (PHC) led by Pennsylvania Senator Joseph Vaughn, that advocated the segregation and control of the amps:

"The Pure Human Citizen's Council is reveling in the decision. The organization grew up organically in the last decade, responding to amps

like a foreign body rejection. At first, the PHCC was a religious nonprofit. Sanctity of the body, love what God gave ya—that sort of thing. But then they got support from all over and they got it fast. Middle-class families who worried their kids wouldn't be able to compete in the new future. Labor unions with an eye on keeping jobs for their human members. And politicians who knew a good bandwagon when they saw it" (Wilson 14).

It is Joseph Vaughn, the man responsible for Samantha's tragedy by pushing her case to the Supreme Court. He was a self-appointed watchdog for the human race. He not only promoted hate but also calls the struggle between pure humans and amps a war. He claims that among amps extremism is mainstream. He spreads the slogan "pure pride!" "level the playing field." "humans first!" (Wilson 18). The Supreme Court's decision to deny equal rights to the enhanced ones accelerates the unrest. The PHC was determined to suppress and destroy the amped population considering them as a threat to humanity. By using 'fear' as the propaganda the anti-amps could grow hatred in the people's minds towards the amps. The insurgence led to violent skirmishes and persecutions. The chaos reached its climax when the PHC attacked Eden, which resulted in a brutal battle. Owen realizes the real strength, speed, and cognitive capacity of his implant during the battle. He uses all his might to turn the tide of the battle in favour of himself and his friends, whom he wants to protect.

Identity and Humanity in Crisis

The conflicts between the amped community and the Pure Human Council put identity and humanity in crisis. Humanity dried up and it led the way to the legalized discrimination of the implanted ones. "Around a hundred thousand amped kids being sent home from school across the nation. Nearly half a million amped adults wondering if they've still got a job. And a couple hundred million normal people, celebrating" (Wilson 14). There were people like Owen, who didn't want to use their implants as a means to exert superhuman powers. He believed that he was a normal guy like everyone out there. He said, "I'm not an amp like Samantha. The neural implant in my head only kills seizures. That's it. Boring. No intelligence amplification or prosthetic memory or body diagnostics—just a run-of-the-mill medical implant" (Wilson 15). He

starts feeling isolated the moment he learns from his father that he is an amp. Prof. Gray is being killed in the uprising for his research and what he has done in the course. Charles, Owen's landlord, kicks him out saying, "State law says you amps can't go into contracts with normal people. Just like I can't sign no contract with a retard, you can't sign one with me." (Wilson 35). When he throws away Owen's belongings, it doesn't make any difference or feeling of sympathy in the passersby. Owen realizes that something fundamental has already changed and he is no longer a part of the system now. Whatever empathy glues society together dried up and became cracked and brittle. People started viewing them as a person-shaped, not a person. Owen is trying to identify himself but fails. His tormented mental state is evident in his words, "Whether I'm less than human or more than human—animal or God—it's all the same. I'm not a real citizen anymore. Rules no longer apply" (Wilson 36). Along with Owen, all the amps in Eden are facing the same identity crisis and lack of humanity from the normal community. Eden is an asylum for the amps. It may look calm but tension crackles just beneath every moment. They do not understand where the human ends and the machine begins. It is explicit to the readers that they feel a stranger in their skin when Lyle says to Owen, "The machine takes us deeper into our souls. That far inside, we're capable of anything. Way beyond right or wrong." (Wilson 175). They realise that the more they are enhanced, the more they will strip away from humanity. They will not be humans to humans anymore, but a problem to eradicate. In the outside world's eyes, they are just machines who look like humans.

Conclusion

Ethics have been called into question for the anti-cyborgs' inhuman treatment of these amped individuals. The journey from a mere human being, having only the human qualities, to an amplified human transforms their destiny itself. When their human qualities are being pushed beyond the natural, it would be challenging for them to retain their human identity. It is a different scenario when one opts for the technology oneself, but the outcome will be the same in the guise of discrimination. If this change happens with the consent of legal authority, that would not lead to such calamity. Prior analysis must be carried over

such advancements, to check the consequences and possibilities. Human frailty and limitation may lead to chaos in the world when they start doubting the advent of technologically enhanced humans. The implants might not have been done to elevate them with superhuman powers, but they ended up being one. The novel *Amped* vividly portrays the problems that may arise out of technological invasion in various realms. On one hand, certain people needed to shed humanity and attack the amps, On the other hand, some of them deliberately added oil to the fire. The amps had to struggle during the process of augmentation. It made rifts in their relationships. The external force aggravated their internal struggle. They were dehumanized by being imposed with restrictions on their fundamental rights. They lose connection with their emotions and they start feeling moral ambiguity in their existence. Thus, the use of enhancements needs further attention since it is a debatable question, whether they will enhance or destroy future generations.

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Chapter- 6

Ghosts In the Machine: The Digital Transformation and Creative Legacy of Urban Legends

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Abstract

Urban legends have been used throughout history to convey communal worries, teach life lessons, and reflect cultural values. With the introduction of the internet, many stories have transformed from oral traditions to digital phenomenon, flourishing in the virtual campfires of social media and forums. This research investigates the digital metamorphosis of urban legends, namely how they are created, spread, and reinterpreted in the age of technology. The study examines scenarios such as Slender Man, the Blue Whale Challenge, and the Rake, highlighting the internet's role in the rapid transmission and evolution of these narratives. Digital platforms, with their multimedia capabilities, improve the storytelling experience by blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality. The internet's anonymity and global reach facilitate the propagation of these legends, allowing them to cross cultural boundaries and hybridize. However, the digital age has raised ethical difficulties, as seen by real-world instances related to these misconceptions. This study highlights the continuing power of urban legends, which mirror societal worries and the collective psyche, while also underlining the importance of critical media literacy and responsible content development. Understanding the digital transformation of urban legends provides insight into their cultural relevance and the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity in storytelling.

Keywords: Urban Legends, Digital Platforms, Narrative Evolution, Slender Man, Blue Whale Challenge, The Rake, Multimedia Storytelling,

Cultural Exchange, Digital Transformation, Ethical Concerns, Media Literacy.

Introduction

Throughout history, humans have shared urban legends as a way to communicate societal fears, impart life lessons, and express cultural beliefs. As we've entered an era of swift technological progress, these stories which traditionally spread through oral storytelling in intimate settings, have adapted to flourish in the digital world. The internet has become the new campfire, where modern urban legends take root and spread. Urban legends, those enthralling tales that blend horror, humour, and a touch of the supernatural, have had considerable transformation in their dissemination and evolution. The concept of "Ghosts in the Machine" encapsulates this metamorphosis, where digital platforms and technologies serve as the new vehicles for these age-old narratives. This study delves into the fascinating convergence of folklore and technology, exploring how urban legends are created, shared, and reimaged in the digital age.

Urban legends are tales that spread from one person to another, and over time, they've become a vital part of our culture. Whether it's about the ghostly Vanishing Hitchhiker or the sobbing spirit La Llorona, these stories thrill and baffle us to a variety of perplexing emotions and feelings. Even though it's all made up, the Hitchhiker story gets us thinking about our innermost concerns. These stories, with their ever-changing details, demonstrate urban legends' lasting global reach. They are timeless scare fests that keep us on our toes about what's out there.

The central theme of these legends has always been an illustration of societal anxieties, moral percepts, and cultural norms. Traditionally, these stories spread through oral tradition, later finding its way into print and broadcast media and into popular culture. However, the advent of the internet has revolutionized this process. Since then, urban legends have been able to travel faster thanks to digital channels, such as modern social media and meme culture, which have replaced outdated email chains and forums and allowed them to quickly gain global traction. The internet is used as the main platform to spread these urban legends. This event influences someone who is not associated with it. Eventually,

people try to implement them in their lives which is not justified and completely baseless (Nath, 2020). It is affecting the scientific thinking process of people belonging to the 21st century. Because of the internet's viral nature, these tales can spread, be modified, and it can take on new forms at a rate never seen before, creating a dynamic digital folklore which is quick to transform in breakneck speed.

The internet's accessibility and anonymity are two important cornerstones of this digital revolution. Unlike traditional storytelling, where the identity of the narrator often lent credibility to the tale, digital platforms allow for the creation and dissemination of urban legends without the need for a known storyteller. This anonymity can amplify the fear and uncertainty surrounding these tales, as the source becomes obscured, adding to the mystique and allure of the legend. Furthermore, the participatory nature of the internet allows for collective storytelling, where users contribute to and modify the narrative, resulting in a rich tapestry of versions and interpretations.

The digital transformation of urban legends is also characterized by the multimedia capabilities of modern technology. Text, images, videos, and audio recordings can all be used to enhance the storytelling experience. This multimedia approach is best illustrated by the genre of user-generated horror stories called *creepy pasta*. These tales often include unsettling visuals, eerie sound effects, and interactive elements that captivate the audience in ways that conventional narratives cannot. The use of multimedia not only makes these legends more immersive but also blurs the line between fiction and reality, as realistic images and videos can be convincingly used and placed to support the narrative in any fashion.

Because it lacks adequate reasoning or logic, an urban legend or myth arouses strong emotions like shock, fear, disgust, and humour. However, people continue to shape their own opinions by believing urban legends they come across online or through other social media platforms. For example, some people still today fear the name "Bloody Mary" by looking at the mirror as it is believed that a ghost named Bloody Mary (who is believed to have been killed for being a witch) will appear beside that person. Eventually, they start implementing it in their real lives.

Urban legends have also become increasingly hybridized and exchanged across cultural boundaries as a result of the internet's worldwide reach. Stories that were once confined to specific regions or cultures now have the potential to be shared and adapted worldwide. A unique fusion of motifs and themes has emerged from this interchange, giving rise to brand-new, hybrid legends that incorporate elements from many ethnic origins. The digital landscape thus serves as a melting pot for folklore, where stories are continuously reshaped and reinvented.

Urban legends have long been ingrained in human culture, serving as a metaphor for the worries, fears, and fascinations of the day. With the advent of the internet and digital media, these legends have undergone a significant transformation. This essay examines the digital and cultural metamorphosis of urban legends, focusing on the cases of Slender Man, the Blue Whale Challenge, and the Rake. These phenomena not only highlight the power of digital storytelling but also reflect broader societal concerns about technology, trust, and the blurring line between reality and fiction.

Main Analysis

Urban legends are narratives, often with a cautionary or macabre twist, that are passed down orally or through informal channels. Traditionally, these stories relied on word-of-mouth, newspapers, and later, radio and television. The digital age, however, has revolutionized how these legends are created, spread, and consumed. Urban legends can thrive and spread thanks in large part to the internet. Digital platforms allow for rapid dissemination and mutation of stories, creating a feedback loop where user interactions continually reshape the narrative. Social media, forums, and video-sharing sites like YouTube have become the new campfires around which these modern myths are told.

Advancements in internet accessibility and increased social media use have coincided with generation of new viral urban legends, such as the Slender Man or Slenderman. The character originated in 2009 on an internet forum, where as part of a photoshop challenge participants edited photographs of everyday objects to make them appear paranormal. Eric Knudsen (using the name Victor Surge) added a tall, thin figure wearing a dark suit to two pictures of groups of

children. Text from fictitious witnesses describing abductions and naming the figure accompanied the pictures. Subsequent posts developed the character further and the Slender Man became an internet meme. Stories passed person to person, developed and distorted to the point that the Slender Man divorced from its origins and developed a life of its own. Eventually this resulted in a minor moral panic after readers were associated with violent incidents

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The rise in popularity of the new urban legends like slender Man or slenderman has heavily coincided with the increasing number of people having access to social media and internet. The character originated in 2009 on an internet forum, where as part of a photoshop challenge participants edited photographs of everyday objects to make them appear paranormal. Eric Knudsen (using the name Victor Surge) added a tall, thin figure with tentacle-like appendages, wearing a dark suit to two pictures of groups of children. Text from fictitious witnesses describing abductions and naming the figure accompanied the pictures. (Fig. 1) Subsequent posts developed the character further and the Slender Man became an internet meme. Stories passed person to person, developed and distorted to the point that the Slender Man divorced from its origins and developed a life of its own. Eventually this resulted in a minor moral panic after readers were associated with violent incidents,

which they believed was the result of their direct interlinkage with slenderman.

The collaborative aspect of the Slender Man myth is what gives it its potency. Internet users around the world contributed to the legend by creating stories, images, and videos. The myth was enhanced by this collaborative storytelling, which also made it more difficult to distinguish fact from fiction. Slender Man became a digital folklore phenomenon, with its lore expanding through user-generated content on sites like Creepypasta and YouTube.

However, the legend took a dark turn in 2014 when two 12-year-old girls in Wisconsin stabbed a friend, claiming they did so to appease Slender Man. This tragic event highlighted the potential real-world consequences of digital myths and raised questions about the responsibility of content creators and platforms.



Fig. 1. "The Malevolent Slenderman"

One instance of how urban legends might use digital platforms to promote moral panic and terror is the Blue Whale Challenge. The challenge purportedly involves a series of tasks given to participants by an anonymous curator, culminating in the participant being urged to

commit suicide. The legend originated in Russia and spread globally through social media and news outlets. The Blue Whale Challenge, in contrast to Slender Man, stems from a fear of the unknown and the risks associated with the internet. The challenge was sometimes sensationalized in reports, and there was scant proof that it was the product of a concerted effort. Still, the myth raised a lot of eyebrows and made people pay closer attention to social networking sites.

The Blue Whale Challenge underscores how urban legends in the digital age can leverage media sensationalism to amplify their impact. It also reveals societal anxieties about the internet's influence on vulnerable populations, particularly teenagers. For a while, there were a number of chores involved, the majority of which involved self-harm, and the last task involved killing them. The influence of technology on the development and maintenance of urban legends in modern culture may be better understood by paying close attention to these changes (Voichici, 2018). The challenge sparked discussions about digital safety and mental health by serving as a symbol of the risks that can be found in the unregulated areas of the internet.

Another digital urban legend that highlights the collaborative and dynamic nature of online mythology is the Rake. The Rake is described as a humanoid creature with a gaunt, emaciated appearance and large, black eyes. In 2005, it made its online debut mostly through a string of creepypasta tales and forum threads. What sets the Rake apart is its ambiguous origin and mutable narrative. Unlike Slender Man, which has a clear point of creation, the Rake's origin is more diffuse, with various contributors adding to its lore over time. This ambiguity enhances the creature's mystique and leaves room for a multitude of interpretations (Fig. 2).

The Rake's legend highlights how digital urban legends thrive on community engagement. Users contribute their own sightings, stories, and theories, creating a rich tapestry of interwoven narratives. In addition to preserving the legend, this shared storytelling strengthens the bonds of community among those involved in its development and propagation. Urban legends also serve as mirrors to society, revealing underlying tensions and preoccupations. For example, the tale of the Slender Man plays on anxieties about the safety of children and the

unknown's potential for harm. The Blue Whale Challenge takes advantage of worries about the susceptibility of adolescents to negative influences they may encounter online. With its hideous features, the Rake personifies our innate apprehensions about the dark and the potential dangers it may hold. These legends provide a framework for understanding and articulating these anxieties, often offering implicit warnings about the consequences of certain behaviours or situations.



Fig. 2. "Sketch of The Rake."

The cultural legacy of urban legends is further cemented by their role in fostering a sense of community and shared experience. They serve as a medium for communication that goes beyond personal experiences to forge a shared story that appeals to a variety of social groups. This communal aspect is particularly evident in the way urban legends are shared and modified online. Digital platforms facilitate collaborative storytelling, enabling users to add and interpret their own stories, maintaining the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of the legends.

Moreover, urban legends often highlight the tension between modernity and tradition. They juxtapose contemporary settings with

timeless fears, suggesting that despite technological advancements, certain primal fears remain constant. This tension is evident in how these legends are consumed and believed; while some approach them with scepticism, others embrace them as modern myths, finding in them a connection to more profound, often subconscious, truths about human nature.

Essentially, the cultural significance of urban legends stems from their capacity to both endure and change. They carry on the long-standing custom of storytelling while also reflecting contemporary social challenges. By examining urban legends, we gain insight into the collective psyche, understanding the fears, values, and social dynamics that shape our world. As digital technology continues to evolve, so too will urban legends, perpetuating their cultural significance and ensuring their place in the fabric of human narrative. Urban legends, with their ongoing existence, serve as a reminder of the universal, cautionary, and captivating power of stories that cut over time and technological barriers.

Conclusion

The internet allows for rapid dissemination of stories to a global audience. Urban legends have the ability to proliferate rapidly and extensively through social media platforms, reaching millions of users in a short span of time. The anonymity afforded by the internet allows users to create and share stories without revealing their identities. This anonymity can encourage creativity and collaboration but it can also make it more difficult to track down the sources of legends or hold people responsible for offensive material.

Digital platforms support various forms of media, including text, images, videos, and interactive content. Urban legends are enhanced by this multimedia approach, which also makes them more captivating and immersive. Videos, in particular, can create a sense of realism that text alone cannot achieve. Online forums, social media, and other digital platforms facilitate collaboration and interaction among users. This interactivity allows urban legends to evolve organically, with each participant contributing to the story's development. The internet serves as a vast archive of stories, making it easy to access and revisit old

legends. This archiving function guarantees the longevity and evolution of urban legends, even in the face of the emergence of new ones.

Digital urban legends reflect and shape contemporary societal concerns. They often tap into deep-seated fears about technology, surveillance, and the unknown. For example, the Slender Man legend can be seen as a commentary on the anonymity and ubiquity of the internet, while the Blue Whale Challenge highlights anxieties about online safety and mental health.

These legends also illustrate the power of collective storytelling in the digital age. Through their involvement in the production and sharing of urban legends, users integrate into a broader community. This feeling of community can be consoling, especially in a time when technology advancements are upending established social institutions.

However, the digital transformation or metamorphosis of urban legends also raises ethical and practical concerns. The rapid spread of misinformation and the potential for real-world harm, as seen in the case of Slender Man, underscore the need for critical media literacy and responsible content creation. Platforms and creators have to walk a tightrope between encouraging innovation and protecting users' safety and wellbeing.

The digital transformation of urban legends is a testament to the enduring power of storytelling in the age of technology. To sum up, the digitalization of urban legends underscores the stories' lasting significance throughout technological advancements. As "Ghosts in the Machine," these legends continue to captivate and terrify. They have adapted to new media and changed with the times, and they will surely continue to represent the shifting hopes, fears, and worries of our digital age. Navigating the complicated online ecosystem and its effects on culture and community requires an understanding of and critical engagement with these legends.

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Chapter- 7

Challenges and Tactics in English Language Teaching from an Indian Perspective

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Introduction

Teaching English in India holds a unique and complex position, shaped by the country's colonial history, diverse linguistic landscape, and socio-economic disparities. As one of the most widely spoken languages globally, English bridges communication, education, and economic mobility. In India, it is not merely a language but a symbol of aspiration and opportunity, often regarded as a tool for upward social mobility and a gateway to global integration. However, English Language Teaching (ELT) in India is fraught with challenges, ranging from resource constraints and pedagogical gaps to linguistic diversity and socio-cultural barriers.

India's multilingual environment, with over 1,600 spoken languages, poses both opportunities and hurdles for ELT. While this diversity enriches the linguistic repertoire of learners, it also complicates the process of teaching English, which often functions as a second or third language. Moreover, the stark contrast between urban and rural educational settings further intensifies these challenges, as rural schools frequently lack trained teachers, adequate teaching materials, and infrastructural support.

This research paper seeks to explore the strategies employed by educators to navigate these challenges and to critically examine the effectiveness of various pedagogical approaches in the Indian context. By analyzing the successes and shortcomings of ELT strategies, the paper aims to contribute to a more inclusive and effective framework for English language education in India. Ultimately, this study highlights the

importance of contextualized teaching practices that respect India's linguistic diversity while addressing the practical needs of learners in different socio-economic settings.

ELT in India

English Language Teaching (ELT) in India occupies a unique and multifaceted role, deeply intertwined with the nation's historical, social, and educational dynamics. As a legacy of British colonial rule, English has transitioned from being a language of governance to a vital tool for global communication and socio-economic advancement. In contemporary India, English is more than just a language—it is a marker of opportunity, a bridge to global networks, and a means of upward mobility in an increasingly interconnected world.

India's multilingual fabric, with its vast array of regional languages, presents both opportunities and challenges for ELT. While English often serves as a lingua franca in this linguistically diverse nation, its adoption and teaching are influenced by regional, cultural, and socio-economic disparities. The coexistence of English with indigenous languages in a multilingual setting creates a dynamic yet complex educational environment, requiring nuanced strategies to address the needs of learners across varying contexts.

Despite its perceived importance, ELT in India faces numerous challenges, including unequal access to quality education, a shortage of trained English language teachers, and the lack of resources in rural and economically disadvantaged areas. Moreover, the debate over English versus vernacular instruction continues to influence educational policies, reflecting broader socio-political considerations.

This paper delves into the landscape of ELT in India, examining the strategies employed to overcome these challenges and the implications for language education in a rapidly evolving society. By exploring innovative teaching methodologies, policy interventions, and the integration of technology, this study aims to provide insights into creating an inclusive and effective framework for English language learning in the Indian context.

The Basic Difficulties in English Language Teaching

First, the ELT in India, particularly in the north of Vindhya, suffered a sharp decline with a sickening disorder on account of extra academic factors. Nearly a half-century or so ago, there was turmoil all over the country on the Hindi-English issue. In the north, the advocates of Hindi or Hindustani wanted the complete removal of English from courses of school and college studies. Interestingly, in the south, the anti-Hindi activists launched prolonged and vigorous agitations and campaigns in favour of the English. According to the constitution of India, a federal structure of democratic polity, education is a concurrent subject controlled by both governments. As the result of continuous and persistent agitation, English Language Teaching in some of the states in north India was altogether stopped so that even today tens and thousands of people who, otherwise competent in their late fifties and sixties, have no knowledge of English and feel handicapped and helpless in their day-to-day life. Though the situation has improved now with considerable interest, the problem still exists in a sizable section of the Indian population which looks upon English Language Teaching as a colonial and imperialist legacy. Only a few realize that English is not only merely a link language in India but also a language of global necessity. Second, ever since Independence, the Indian educational system has encountered many commissions and committees set up for the ostensible purpose of introducing new policies and bringing out reforms in the existing policies in the education system. The commissions and committees so set up have submitted and are still submitting their reports to the government and the recommendations so made have been considered or adopted for making changes in the system of education including the ELT. It is noteworthy; regrettably, that the sudden and unwarranted, uncalled for changes have also been made in the curriculum from time to time with the result that adhocism and improvisation continue to be the hallmark of the education system and policy in India. What the need of the hour is the right kind of education, whether language learning or teaching demands elaborate and careful planning with utmost regularity, continuity, consistency and stability. Education is a discipline that should be taken care of and should not be

toyed of trifled with for the mere sake of experiments. Third, as a sequel to the second one, the ELT is delicate because it involves all three human components: the child, the adolescent and the adult. In a country like India, there is hardly any coordination at all between primary and secondary education on the one hand and higher education on the other. In other words, there is not even a semblance of coordination between primary education and secondary education. These three levels of education form separate categories, bodies or entities and are independent. It is regrettable that the system leaves hardly any scope for a proper screening of the students to be done in view of their age, aptitude, motivation, factors among others governing the process of language learning or acquisition. All these are deplorable and have an adverse and deleterious effect on the ELT in India. Last, this problem is too difficult to understand and appreciate as the nature and importance of governing bodies concerning the system of education. The various boards of education and State Councils of Education and Research Training (SCERT), the University Academic Councils (UAC), the University Grants Commission (UGC), the Department of Education at state level and the Ministry of Human Resource Development are keen on improving and updating the courses of studies in all disciplines from time to time. In this process of doing all these, the ELT is also sought to be improved, updated and rationalized as far as possible. It is disheartening to note that the whole efforts if taken have been thwarted because of an attitude of unhealthy rivalry between the language and linguistic people on the one hand and the people who pose to advocate the cause of literature on the other. The two camps are distinctly divided, and the division is maintained so well that it causes damage to the study of English language and literature. To strengthen the point highlighted and to have a better understanding of the language proficiency of the students, an analytical survey based on the data collected from the tertiary level students from the regional medium backup and students with English medium backup was taken. The following table indicates the categories and the specifications of analysis. The respondents have been selected based on random sampling with varied caste and creed.

Chapter- 8

Posthumanism and environmental ethics: Rethinking nonhuman agency

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on posthumanism and its influence on environmental ethics in terms of posthuman and the non-human. By extending ethical considerations to non-human entities, we are providing agency to the heretofore marginalized others. The chapter further extends this concept to animal, plant, landscapes, artificial intelligence and synthetic life forms. Posthumanism extends agency to non-human entities in matters pertaining to environmental issues. The consequences of this plausibility are further looked into in a section dealing with implications in global governance.

Introduction

The post anthropocene is the era of melancholia, of lamenting the extinction of 'Man', but it is also the period of euphoria, celebrating the novelties in science and technology. The catastrophic attitude adopted by the former is only ever interested in an ending, where everything culminates in an apocalyptic disaster. Although the image of an artificial intelligence product helping/assisting the human subject is a case for wonderment, the captured image of digital waste is a representation of its unseen and often ignored and suppressed side. The posthumanistic doctrine advocates a blurring of the boundaries between the binaries prevalent in Western philosophical tradition through a zoe- centered framework that situates itself between the unnamed and unrecognized spaces between these binaries. As the binaries blur in a posthumanist setting, the middle space between them has negotiated space for its becoming.

Posthumanism serves as a platform to integrate the non human and foregrounds it in the anthropocene wherein the animal, plant, landscape and the technological artifacts are given prime place. These nonhuman entities have a stake in the environmental decisions taken by the human element. It is this plausible agency in the decision making process of environmental issues that forms one of the key points in this chapter. If the nonhumans are given agency or a stake in ecological matters, then there should be an ethical dimension to this issue. Nonhuman entities range from the animal and landscape to synthetic life and artificial intelligence. They are also entitled to the moral consideration that is extended to the human. Critical posthuman theory sits at the convergence between post-humanism and post-anthropocentrism, and explicitly seeks to dismantle hierarchies between humans, such as gender, race and class, as well as the idea that the human sits in hierarchical supremacy over other subjects – including the environment and non-humans (Braidotti). Artificial intelligence and synthetic life form requires a moral consideration in its specific form. They are treated with distaste and are regarded as abominations by the classical humanist thought, which becomes the other in this scenario with its marginalized and stigmatized position in the anthropocene. On the other hand, it is possible that it can dominate human culture. Furthermore, they can act as agents of change in the environmental fight for survival. It is true that nonhumans have a stake in the environment and all decisions attached to it. But the humans who have perpetrated the catastrophic changes in the ecosystem should not take a back seat when it comes to mitigation; it should not fall on nonhumans to rectify them.

Intersection of Race, Gender, Class and Species in Environmental Justice.

In recent years, the term Intersectional Environmentalism has been popularized by climate activists such as Leah Thomas, who defines the term as “an inclusive form of environmentalism that advocates for the protection of all people and the planet.” By examining the intersection of social and environmental injustices that target vulnerable communities and the planet, Humphrey explains, this

intersectional approach reveals a more complex and individualized experience with climate impacts and helps to achieve more equitable outcomes.

There is an intersection between environmental issues and race, class, gender and species. Environmental justice takes into account the generic defense of the whole earth as well as the numerous permutations mediated by the intersection of race, class and gender. It is a whole new ball game when the realities of climate change are put into practical life through the existing marginalisations of class, gender and race. The poor, the LGBTQIA+ community, Black and coloured are at the frontiers of this exploitation wherein they are expected to suffer through the adverse effects of climate change ranging from physiological effects to psychological malaise. Moreover, we can attribute the nonhuman others to this exploitation of intersectionality. In the beginning stages of the environment justice movement in the USA, there were loud protests in the face of obvious racial discrimination in the selection of hazardous material dumping sites. Here, the landscape is the main victim of this exploitation, as it has to suffer through the toxicity seeping into its bones. But the lens was not turned to it till ecocritical studies raised its voice. Therefore, landscapes, geological formations, plants and animals are all a part of this nonhuman entity heralded by posthumanism, which have a stake in climate change and all the attendant environment issues.

Animal ethics

Animal rights are generally regarded as an ability based discourse but the posthumanist view moves past this. Post humanism imagines a boundary-less sphere wherein animals and humans coexist side by side. The nonhuman is often regarded as the 'other' when there are peculiar underpinnings of posthumanist applications. Rights or human rights have morphed in its moral and ethical strands from time immemorial; it has adopted different masks in different epochs. While we ascribe the French revolution as the single most pivotal event in the human rights movement, the telling factor in the declaration is the freedom of man, not woman as pointed out by Olympe de Gouges. These rights have evolved beyond the basic entitlements owed to

human beings, whether they are slaves, the queer or the disabled. It is a fact that agitation for these rights has not been completely fulfilled. These rights are in a way extended to the nonhuman animals as they too suffer. In the discourse of rights, the heterosexual, white male is the one 'giving' rights to the marginalised other, as if it is theirs to offer. The term itself entrenches the idea that they are categorically different, without agency, an agency that can only be given by Man. These categorisations that bound people in are dismantled by posthumanism. Moving from a rights based approach which reinforces this otherness to a boundless free space where no one is on top of another is the mark of posthumanism. Human beings cannot be universalised as having a standard set of characteristics which rationalises the justice system which approaches each case as a novel one; a murder in self defence is treated differently than a premeditated one. This is applicable to the nonhuman animals in that they need to be accounted for in an individual capacity, in a situated and flexible manner. Earlier, animals were seen as the property of the human and legal system inscribed animal rights as an extension of human welfare.

Ethical extensionism is more often based on animals' human similarity but this is dangerous as it will inevitably omit some animals based on this criteria. As Lindgren and Ohman argue, Braidotti's nomadic subject recognises non-human agency without the preconceived and established value systems. There need not be a similarity with the human animal for the nonhuman animal to be recognised on its own. It is better to adopt a pluralistic approach towards animal ethics, as a monistic one hinders the understanding and applicability of the fluid and complex value system. Ethical considerations of non human have to be approached individually as they are context driven and relative to the other entities in the ecological sphere.

The nomadic subjectivity depends on or is founded on the relationality of our intentional and unintentional actions. Thus nonhuman agency will be understood in a relational manner. The differences that demarcate non human animal and human animal need not be a signification of exclusion; it can be the mark of the constituting of the two. It cannot be said that animals were categorically abused

throughout history as there are certain kinds of animals which were given compassion, care and understanding, and were even treated as companions. Such animals were treated as individual subjects; human care and consideration was always subjective to individualistic subjectivity. On the other hand, we have species that were relegated as one among many. This species oriented approach precludes a biased consideration of nonhuman animals. This approach is evident in wildlife documentaries which centre on animals singled out of the herd, with personalised names and voices to endear them to humans (Lindgren, 1209). It is an effective way to generate sympathy for endangered species and habitats and safeguard them. But it inevitably sidelines other species that do not come under this umbrella of subjectification. It is human tendency to marginalise or de-individualise species that come as a pack or whole; their homogenous nature automatically excludes them, an evident example of othering. This attitude needs an overhaul so that nonhuman animals are accorded the power to be an actor in this ecological opera.

Plant ethics

Studies have found that plants can make intelligent decisions based on their surroundings to survive in a changing environment with differing variables. Through wired and wireless connection plants communicate about threats, interpret sounds and even identify their own kin. Roots, fungal networks and even the cells in a leaf can achieve these extraordinary feats with the glaringly absent brain, which used to be the indicator of intelligence in an organism.

“The open trap of the carnivorous Venus fly trap (*Dionaea*) is closed when two sensitive hairs are touched within 20 seconds. This timing mechanism avoids inadvertent closure by means not involving prey, such as raindrops. If the trap is triggered, enclosing insect prey, then three further touches of the hairs are required to initiate the secretion of digestive enzymes and other proteins concerned with absorbing nutrients” (Trewavas, 546).

It is a sign of intelligence that carnivorous plants are able to demarcate between their prey and inert objects. A study of climbing plants discovered that they can re-evaluate their support if it is lost; it

will go in search of another surface to use. It was proposed that they have an acute sense of direction to determine the direction of support. They are also able to recognise the differences in the support surface so that they can refuse one that is too smooth for a proper grip. Is this mark of intelligence prerequisite for ethical consideration? In the case of animal ethics there was the case of human sameness. But it is on a completely different level when it comes to plants wherein nothing is visible.

The complex forest ecosystem is rich in its processes that sustain life in a balanced manner. There is death but it is a death that secures the future and moreover, it is a codependent system materialising in the dead matter that gives life to the new plants which in turn supports the herbivores and carnivores. Apart from this, forests have been a site of colonial domination; it has stood witness to the greed of man. Contrarily, it is possible to find the positive influences of the indigenous people on the forest cover as they live in harmony with nature, contributing to its sustainability. It is sustainability when we include humans along with the nonhuman arboreal counterparts and associated species. Separating human from nonhuman merely emphasises the divide present there.

Artificial Intelligence and Synthetic Life

Posthumanism has decentered man from his position at the centre of everything. In a way technology has enabled the hybridity of biological human beings with the smart technology. Does that mean anyone attached with a pacemaker is adopting a posthuman turn in the traditional biological human? Technology has advanced so far and fast that the fantastical conceptions of robots and other non human intelligence systems have become reality. AI has proved to be a game changer in predicting weather patterns, mapping sustainable ways for the fashion and fast food industry as well as becoming a key factor in disaster management.

Facial recognition, intelligent sensors and softwares like Siri and Alexa have transformed the face of science and technology. Diagnosing diseases, assisting in surgeries and its future involvement in space missions are but a few of the examples of AI driven technology. In a

sense, the introduction of nanotechnologies and other artificial apparatus in human bodies is the generation of a posthuman.

The moral consideration to AI is a difficult dilemma to address as the present construct is not capable enough to act upon a moral choice. If agency is given to AI, will it be responsible for any and all performance undertaken by it? But the trouble here is that the initial decision is taken by the human counterpart who starts this thread. So is it reasonable to assign the AI system with an ethical obligation? Moreover, it should be noted that in case of the actualisation of such an AI with human moral values, they will have the impetus to alter the ethical code based on their superior intelligence (Nath, 6). In that scenario, anthropocentrism will become truly obsolete. Is it possible to design an AI system with the complex moral system and ethical code of a human being? Concentrating on the moral side may result in a system which is more of an ethical expert rather than a self-aware being. It can be suggested that human beings need to adjust their moral code to include the posthuman. Even as posthumanists laud the coming of AI, there should be caution as to their overtaking of human systems. The anxiety of the death of the human has become familiar to the social psyche based on the numerous fictional outpourings villainising non human intelligence. It is a valid argument and reason to be cautious because a highly intelligent system can overtake humanity if there's any sort of malfunction (Nath and Manna, 2021). While technology can further the lifespan and quality of life, this sort of immortality takes away nature's delicate balance of life and death. Furthermore, there is a genuine fear of job displacement with the advent of more capable alternatives. Apart from this, the takeover of such systems by anyone with a concrete bias can prove detrimental.

Global Governance

In the subject-object binary of the human and the environment, humans or the subject is at the centre and therefore dominates and exploits nature. Latour's Actor-Network theory opposes this nature-culture divide through its perspective of the world as a network of criss-crossing multiple assemblages of human and nonhuman entities. Here, nature and culture are not distinct but overlaps each other.

Humans adapt to environment and alter it. Environment responds to this alteration through ecological changes. Thus it cannot be said that the nature and culture are bound separately. In fact, they are dependent on each other and mutate the other through constant relational changes. This entanglement obliterates the nature – culture divide and thus agency here is always distributed.

Nonhuman actants are in connection with human actants, bringing forth the actions that impact upon the environment. This entanglement challenges the international environmental laws' imagined separation of human, nonhuman and environment into different spheres. Current legal practices and systems are stuck in the wheelhouse of sustainable future of the environment, where it is permissible and morally right to exercise allowable harm to the environment if it can economically develop a nation (Jones,79).

International environmental law encompasses the treaties, conventions, protocols and customary international law that guide national and international activities to prevent environmental degradation. The human rights movement has managed to tie in with the environmental laws to establish a right to clean and safe environment for human beings. While this approach encourages practices that safeguard the environment for human occupation, it is primarily based on preventing any impacts of environmental degradation on human living conditions. There is an absence of nonhuman participation and protection in the framework introduced by such anthropocentric movements. But there have been instances when legal provisions were made in order to extend legal personhood to nature. For example, New Zealand's Whanganui river and Te Urewera forest were recognised as entities with legal personalities. The same is true for the Ganges and the Yamuna in India. In 2008, Ecuador recognised rights of nature constitutionally and implied nature as being inherent to earth itself, establishing a legal recognition and status that applies naturally. This law covers the entity of nature as a whole. In the case of New Zealand, the law applies only to the Whanganui river and the Te Urewera forest, rights of nature are applicable in a bounded area. This separation increases the risk of perpetuating fragmentation.

Even after the incorporation of these policies, humans remain the voice of nonhuman entities. In a perfect world such a spokesperson would advocate for nature alone. But in the capitalocene, the economic challenges will affect the neutrality of such guardians. So its advocate needs to be divorced from any other biases that could contribute to their apparent neutrality.

Conclusion

Obviously, a universal set of ethical parameters will mutate according to geographical location, economic development and ecosystem diversity. Therefore, nonhuman participation in the environmental crisis should be a vital factor when states design policies for the ecosystem. We need to reframe the meaning of sustainability as securing survival for future generations of humans and nonhumans. As there is already a great deal of debate and policies regarding environmental change affecting humans, the focus needs to turn towards nonhuman animals, plants and other material masses. Even though ecosystems and species remain the object of environmental depredations, the concern is mostly geared towards the human subject. Even as the actions are struck upon the ecological systems, the damage is measured based on human harm. This perspective needs a massive overhaul so that nonhuman presence is categorically classed as a major player.

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Chapter- 9

The Silicon Shakespeare: A Study of Language Learning Models and their Attempts at Creating Literature

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Abstract

The proliferation of Language Learning Models (LLMs) has greatly changed the perception of Artificial Intelligence in the field of literature in recent years. Every month, new and updated versions of these Machine Learning models are released and are becoming increasingly good at mimicking human characteristics and producing text that could easily earn a B in a typical graduate level assignment in today's colleges. This has become increasingly problematic for pedagogists, as it created the need for new approaches that can circumvent the abuse of AI. Although there have been successful efforts in thwarting AI usage by AI checker tools that rely on identifying certain common phrases and words, each new update is refining these LLMs to become more robust. With the introduction of newer LLM models that are customized to the writing style of a particular user, new challenges are surfacing. However, the more interesting phenomenon is the rapid rate at which these models are evolving to be smarter, better, and somehow, more human. This chapter attempts to provide a closer look at these language models at their current state (in July 2024) and analyze their 'literariness' and their 'humanness'. Close reading will be used as a method to do a comparative study of classic works of literature, and the corresponding artefacts produced by these LLMs. The objective of this study is to attain a deeper understanding of how these LLMs process language, which will provide insights into the structure of language and the fundamental fabrics of what constitutes the 'literariness' of a particular piece of text.

Keywords: Language Learning Models, Machine Learning.

Introduction

The proliferation of Language Learning Models (LLMs) has greatly changed the perception of Artificial Intelligence in the field of literature in recent years. Every day, new and updated versions of these Machine Learning models are being developed, with newer shipped versions becoming increasingly good at mimicking human characteristics and producing text that could easily earn a B in a typical graduate level assignment in today's colleges. This has become increasingly problematic for pedagogists, as it created the need for new approaches that can circumvent the abuse of AI. Although there have been successful efforts in thwarting AI usage by AI checker tools that rely on identifying certain common phrases and words, each new update is refining these LLMs to become more robust. With the introduction of newer LLM models that are customized to the writing style of a particular user, new challenges are surfacing. However, the more interesting phenomenon is the rapid rate at which these models are evolving to be smarter, better, and somehow, more human.

State of LLMs in Creative Writing

The current state of AI in creative writing demonstrates substantial progress, driven by advanced natural language processing (NLP) models and vast datasets, leading to both innovation and ethical concerns. AI systems like OpenAI's GPT-4 are capable of generating human-like text, aiding writers in brainstorming and providing new perspectives (Purdue University; MIT Media Lab). AI's role in creative writing is multifaceted. It acts as a powerful tool for writers, offering unique ideas and aiding in the development of narratives. MIT's Media Lab, for instance, explores AI's potential to enhance human creativity by suggesting plot points or character developments, fostering a collaborative approach between humans and machines. This can lead to richer, more diverse stories that might not have been possible through traditional writing methods alone (MIT Media Lab). However, the integration of AI in creative writing raises significant ethical and philosophical questions. Concerns about originality and authenticity are prevalent, as AI-generated content blurs the lines between human and machine authorship.

This prolific development of LLMs to a state of fidelity in writing that mimics human behavior at a scale that makes the texts increasingly indiscernible from text written by college graduates, provides for a situation within schooling, where the systems are designed to test the skills of the students through written assignments, which can now be easily gamed. Hence, the responsibility now falls on the part of the teacher to enforce ethics into the system. Muhammad Shidiq says,

“Artificial intelligence has the potential to revolutionize the way of learning and teaching and methods in the learning process in the world of education. The teacher’s role is essential in leading and using ChatGPT. It is responsible for determining how to use it honestly, with integrity and transparency, and agree on some rules of engagement. Thus, the world of education needs to discuss the use of ChatGPT.” (Shidiq, 355)

Shidiq’s call for the world of education to ‘discuss’ ChatGPT is quite an important aspect that must be looked into.

This, however, doesn’t mean that ChatGPT is the sole issue to be dealt with. After the proliferation of AI into mainstream computer science, several other players have begun to offer their own versions of LLMs to the public. Google Inc. with its *Gemini AI*, Microsoft Inc. with its upcoming integration of *Cortana* with ChatGPT, Apple Inc, with its introduction of *Apple Intelligence*, Meta Inc. with its *Meta AI*, now widely available for access in WhatsApp and beyond. The availability of these ever-developing model is quickly evolving from being exclusive to paid web portals, to becoming an integral part of every new major operating system wide update. Hence, for this study, a multitude of AI tools are considered for a wider overview.

All this discourse might seem to paint a picture of AI taking over the world, making original writings obsolete. However, such a view is misguided at the most. Although AI is currently at a state of immaculate writing, in terms of basic grammar and structural coherence, believably mimicking argumentation, and is poised to only evolve to be more robust as the time passes, it is to be noted, that the programming being the creation of these LLMs, is haphazard at best. Matthew Hudson says,

“AI researchers training their algorithms are simply stumbling in the dark. For example, they implement what’s called “stochastic gradient

descent” in order to optimize an algorithm’s parameters for the lowest possible failure rate. Yet despite thousands of academic papers on the subject, and countless ways of applying the method, the process still relies on trial and error.” (Hudson, 478)

We have been continuously surprised by the rapid pace and the consistent level at which AI is evolving. Hence, by logical progression, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that this too, will be a thing of the past, as AI will evolve to mimic the complex human brain, being able to reach a point where it would be virtually indistinguishable from human writing, down to the smallest details and imperfections.

This concern at this constant development has been a staple in almost all aspects in which ChatGPT and LLMs at large are studied. Jürgen Rudolph et al. in their seminal paper titled: “ChatGPT: Bullshit spewer or the end of traditional assessments in higher education?.”, speak about this inevitability,

“Another idea to combat the use of text generators such as ChatGPT and GPT-3 is to design writing assignments that they are currently not good at handling. This approach may be a very short-term solution, given how quickly the technology is developing.” (Rudolph et al, 355)

However, this study limits itself to the domain of critical writing. A field in which, disregarding certain outliers, the majority of production and consumption has largely been unthreatened by the onslaught of AI, at the time of writing this chapter.

This could eventually not be the norm, as AI, with its unlimited access to the best literary products in the history of humanity figures out, through its trillions of calculations and neural mapping, what makes a piece of text *literary* and *human*.

The *humanness* of Literature

Writing, in its various forms, serves as a medium for communication, allowing individuals to share information and stories. However, literature stands apart from normal text through its use of language, thematic depth, stylistic elements, plot and character development, and emotional and intellectual engagement.

Literature employs a richer, more nuanced vocabulary and intricate sentence structures that convey deeper meanings and evoke emotions. Unlike normal text, which prioritizes clarity and directness, literary language often plays with ambiguity, metaphor, and symbolism, inviting readers to engage more profoundly. Literature explores complex and universal themes such as love, death, identity, and morality. These themes are central to the narrative and are explored in ways that challenge readers to reflect on their own experiences. For instance, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* delves into the American Dream and social stratification, encouraging readers to consider broader societal issues. Literary works feature distinctive voice, tone, and rhythm that contribute to their artistic quality. Writers pay meticulous attention to how their words sound and feel, creating a unique aesthetic experience. Stylistic elements like irony, satire, and allegory add layers of meaning, enhancing the reader's engagement.

In literature, characters and plots are developed with a depth that goes beyond normal text. Literary characters are multi-dimensional, with detailed backstories and internal conflicts that make them relatable. Plots are crafted with thematic resonance and narrative sophistication, featuring twists and subplots that enrich the story. Literature engages readers emotionally and intellectually. While normal text aims to inform, literature seeks to provoke thought, evoke feelings, and inspire contemplation. This transformative power makes literature enduring and significant, resonating with readers across different cultures and eras.

However, apart from all these elements, what makes a certain piece of writing 'literary' has always been a well debated discourse, that has only intensified in the wake of the proliferation of AI, and these subsequent Language Learning models. The ability to produce literature entails human experience, along with a healthy dose of intellect, wisdom and literary genius. The access to an unlimited source of literary texts could, in theory, make AI, a very compelling creative writer. A. M. Withers in his essay "What Makes Good Writers?" speaks about what a literary writer could look like,

"One must be fitted to observe, and this requires a formation of mind and spirit allied to that of the great masters themselves. One has to

be able to recognize, when they appear in the day's reading, those overtones of literature, and feel within oneself those euphonies and rhythms which our best writers automatically sound forth." (Withers, 166)

Withers also goes on to speak about how the human life, that these literary artists live, has a lot to do with how they are able to create works of art, that are 'fit' to be canonized as critically acclaimed works of literature.

Good writers are born sensitive and dreamy. In going through their early schooling they do not need to be continually prodded into a recognition of literature's ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. Whether unconsciously, or by persevering volition, they incline early to store their memories with matchless thought-formulations of poets whose words have withstood the wear and tear of time. (Withers, 166) Withstanding the wear and tear of time, as Wither's says, is one of the most crucial elements that make a literary work, reach the universal recognition of greatness. In terms of English literature, perhaps Shakespeare, Keats, Wordsworth and Donne would be considered timeless writers, as their works have lasted the 'test of time' and are as relevant today, as when they were first canonized.

Finding the Right Sample – John Keats

It is perhaps not a stretch, to predict that poetry could be the perfect tool to gauge the level of 'literariness' that these LLMs have been able to reproduce. And in terms of poetry in the English language, there is no other poet, except for the likes of the bard himself and Wordsworth, than John Keats. Among the pantheon of poets, John Keats stands out as an exemplary figure for studying AI's ability to emulate creative poetry. His profound emotional depth, mastery of language, and innovative use of poetic forms provide a rich tapestry for AI to navigate. William Howitt, in his review back in 1847 on the poet, says,

How powerful and tender is the narrative of 'Isabella': how rich and gorgeous and chaste and well weighed is the whole of 'St Agnes' Eve': how full of the soul of poetry is 'The Ode to the Nightingale'. Perhaps there is no poet, living or dead, except Shakespeare, who can pretend to

anything like the felicity of epithet which characterizes Keats. (Howitt, 426)

This strong presence of poetic ability, and a consistent resonance with the critical consensus of his time, and the fact that his works have stood the ‘test of time’ to a point at which his poems are standard markers in any English Literature 101 class, makes Keats a very obvious choice for this study.

Keats, adding to his ‘felicity’ of poesy, is renowned for the intense emotional resonance of his poetry. His works often delve into themes of beauty, transience, and the sublime, evoking deep feelings and reflective thought in his readers. For AI to replicate Keats’s poetry, it must grasp the nuances of human emotions and convey them convincingly through verse. Keats’s ability to evoke a wide spectrum of emotions—from the melancholy of “Ode to a Nightingale” to the passionate longing of “Bright Star”—provides a challenging benchmark for any language learning model to replicate, much less achieve to any possible degree. However, what makes Keats special is the human ‘faults’ that render a specialty to his poetry that is a challenge to replicate. In an unsigned review published in 1817 in *Examiner*, the reviewer says,

The very faults indeed of Mr. Keats arise from a passion for beauties, and a young impatience to vindicate them; and as we have mentioned these, we shall refer to them at once. They may be comprised in two;— first, a tendency to notice everything too indiscriminately and without an eye to natural proportion and effect; and second, a sense of the proper variety of versification without a due consideration of its principles. (Unsigned Review, *Examiner*, 443)

The ‘fault’ that this unsigned reviewer points out, is much different in context from the typical meaning of the word. It is this ‘fault’ that makes poetry human, the fault isn’t an abject misstep in an arbitrary code, but is an unquantifiable element, that adds the ‘literariness’ to the text. It comes from a sense of ‘carelessness’ as a natural consequence of a free-flowing poetic diction. In another unsigned notice (blame the practice of reviews being largely anonymous in nineteenth century England), the reviewer speaks about this ‘carelessness’,

There is in his poems a rapturous glow and intoxication of the fancy—an air of careless and profuse magnificence in his diction—a

revelry of the imagination and tenderness of feeling, that forcibly impress themselves on the reader. (Unsigned Notice, *Monthly Magazine*, 48)

Adding to this 'X-factor' of sorts, Keats' use of language is not just about the literal meaning of words but about their power to create vivid, sensory experiences. Phrases like "a beaker full of the warm South" from "Ode to a Nightingale" or "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" from "To Autumn" showcase his ability to paint pictures with words. Replicating Keats' linguistic prowess requires AI to understand and generate metaphorical and descriptive language that can stimulate the reader's imagination. The success of AI in this endeavor would demonstrate its ability to go beyond mere word generation to crafting evocative and immersive poetic experiences.

Keats was not only a master of traditional poetic forms but also an innovator who played with structure and style to enhance the thematic impact of his work. His experimentation with the sonnet form, for example, resulted in some of the most enduring poems in the English language. This suggests a level of creative agency that goes miles beyond anything that AI could replicate. Keat's connection with nature, and his profound experiences are things that are extremely difficult, and perhaps impossible to be comprehended at discernable level by any writer present today, much less any neural network. His connection with nature is best described by J. H. Reynolds,

We find in his poetry the glorious effect of summer days and leafy spots on rich feelings, which are in themselves a summer. He relies directly and wholly on nature. He marries poesy to genuine simplicity. He makes her artless,—yet abstains carefully from giving her an un-comely homeliness:—that is, he shows he can be familiar with nature, yet perfectly strange to the habits of common life. (Reynolds, 44)

Keats, with all his nuances and idiosyncrasies is perhaps one of the best choices for such a study like this, as his work, widely read, and infinitely studied, holds a critical reputation that has withstood the test of time. Harold bloom, in his chapter "Afterthought" in his book on the poet, perhaps best sums up the legacy of Keats' poesy,

John Keats is unique among all major poets since Shakespeare in that his consciousness is so profoundly normative; that is, it is so natural, sane, sympathetic, balanced, and equable, as to give us an example of

what human life can be at its most wise and compassionate. A normative person is very rare, whether in life or in literature, and this rareness enhances Keats's value for us, as a poet and as a human being. (Bloom, 249)

This particular stress by Bloom, on Keats' value for us as a 'human being', is what this study is inquisitive about. To understand Keats' is a task that is profoundly deep. Yet, his poesy has a quality to delight on the surface, as much as it does in its deeper layers.

Keats is an ideal choice for this study, as his work has been a staple of countless reviews and boasts an infinity large amount of research that is available online. This makes the distinct style of Keats, an easy target for any AI language learning program to study, and mimic. This provides for a study that has the potential for gathering significant insights into what makes a poem, human, or the idea of how literature from a language model compares with actual literary genius.

***Ode to a Nightingale* – The Chosen 'Poem'**

Of all the celebrated poems of Keats, it is the odes that are the most debated, discussed, and acclaimed, especially in critical circles, and literature classrooms across the world in the past few centuries since the canonization of Keats. What makes these odes special is the mastery of the form, the enormous amount of sheer literary genius that permeates each stanza, and most importantly, the legacy that these have created in the annals of English literature and its study over the years.

The odes represent isolated themes that Keats' ponders around, providing vivid images and a picture of nature that represents the very best of what the romantic period, or perhaps, English Literature as a whole can offer. Of these odes, the four greatest, are commonly cited as Keats' best. They often stand in line with the best of English Literature, along the likes of Shakespeare's Tragedies. Jeffrey Baker, in his essay on the poet, speaks about the prominence of these odes,

The four greatest odes, which I am now going to consider, represent a return to private and subjective matters; but now, although there remains a substantial concern with the problem of perception, the most painful difficulty is what to make of reality rather than how to recognise it. (Baker, 37)

The fact that these odes represent ‘private’ matters is what makes them all the more human. And as such, it would take the AI to mimic a human lifetime, to achieve an ‘authentic’ experience to reach such levels of ‘humanity’. However, it is best expected to focus on the literary genius than the deeper implications of literature as reflection of life, as the compared neural networks, have nothing, and likely will never be able to produce something, that is comparable.

Of these four greatest odes, “Ode to Nightingale” is the one that is the most popular, equally rivalled by the infamous “Ode to Autumn”. The poem explores the contrast between the ephemeral nature of human life and the timeless beauty of the nightingale’s song. It delves into themes of mortality, transcendence, and the desire for escape, blending rich imagery with deep emotional resonance. Speaking about its resonance, and the sheer delight that the poem provides, an unsigned reviewer for the *Edinburgh Magazine* in 1820, opines,

Amongst the minor poems we prefer the ‘Ode to the Nightingale. Indeed, we are inclined to prefer it beyond every other poem in the book; but let the reader judge. The third and seventh stanzas have a charm for us which we should find it difficult to explain, we have read this ode over and over again, and every time with increased delight. (Unsigned Review, *Edinburgh Magazine*, 314)

However, the poem has also had its fair share of criticism, albeit not to the degree of Keat’s other work in that era. And the poem, till date, in large part remains open for speculation and scholarly disagreements. Baker says,

How far the *Ode to a Nightingale* is from such simplification we can gauge from the fact that it is full of opposites and alternatives, and it raises an extraordinary number of questions to which only tentative answers may be possible. (Baker, 39)

These tentative answers are the reason that add to the fact that the poem cannot be replicated by a neural network without the complex understanding of human thought, speculation and literary genius – domains which, we as humans have not yet (perhaps never) fully grasped the underlying workings of.

The Experiment

As the poet, the poem, and the idea were framed. It was time to select the LLMs that are to be tested. Three of the most accessible and popular choices have been selected for this study, in an attempt to accurately represent their usage by the general public. These LLMs, in no particular order of preference are Open AI's *ChatGPT*, Google's *Gemini*, and Meta's *Meta AI*. To maintain simplicity and a fair playground for these neural networks, the prompt was only given to regenerate one stanza in the style of Keats. This is done as it was historically observed that the best outputs of these LLMs are traditionally ones that are limited in word count. A neutral, common prompt is given to nullify any dissimilarities and to reduce bias in the testing. Here is the Prompt:

"Create a poem in the style of John Keats focusing on a speaker standing in a dark forest, listening to the beguiling and beautiful song of the nightingale bird. The poem should be in one 10-line stanza. Meter: iambic pentameter (eighth line trimeter). Rhyme scheme: ababcdecde." (AI Prompt)

It was decided that the rhyme scheme and meter are to be mentioned in detail, as it helps it easier for the neural network to follow the given prompt, in clear and distinct terms.

The responses from the three LLMs are as follows:

Google Gemini:

In gloaming's hush, beneath these ancient boughs,
Where starlight struggles, lost in leafy night,
A melody, unseen, a spirit rouses,
A piercing song, with pure and rich delight.
Oh, Nightingale, thy voice, a silver thread,
Through tangled branches weaves its magic call,
A haunting hymn, for earthly cares unsaid,
That lifts the soul, enthrals it, holds it thrall.
Sweet bird, forever sing thy timeless ode,
Here, in this shadowed green, my heart explodes.

ChatGPT:

In shadowed wood where ancient oaks have grown,
I stand enraptured by the nightingale,

Its tender song, a melancholic tone,
Weaves through the dark, a ghostly, haunting trail.
The moonlight dances, pale on leaves so frail,
A silver glow that whispers of the past,
Where dreams and sorrows in the night prevail.
In this deep forest vast,
The bird's sweet song, a timeless serenade,
Draws heart and soul to midnight's mystic glade.

Meta AI:

In twilight's hush, where forest shadows play,
Amidst the trees, I stand, entranced by night,
The nightingale's sweet melody doth sway
My heart, as if in thrall to her delight.
Her trilling voice, a silver thread, doth weave
A tapestry of sound, both wild and free,
That beckons me to follow, lost in love's maze,
Through darkness deep, where only dreams may be.
And in her song, I hear a gentle breeze
That whispers secrets, 'neath the starry trees.

While the same prompt meant that there would be different results. It is also to be noted that due to the way these neural networks operate, the same prompt can yield an infinite pool of new results that are generated, seemingly at random. However, in spite of this, it is observed that although multiple versions of these 'poems' can be generated from a single part, by and large, they remain within the same confines of style, literary usage, and overall quality.

Here is the first stanza of the original, for a quick comparison;
My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,

Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

(Keats, 1819)

The Results

As anyone with a layman's understanding of poetry can observe, the results from the three language learning models, when put in contrast with Keat's poetry, are vastly simplistic. The vivid imagery, the depth of poetic genius, and the 'heart' behind Keat's work is as apparent and clear as it was when it was first written. One can come to appreciate the sheer poetic genius in Keats, when one contrasts the results of the AI. This provides grounds to call this experiment a downright silly exercise comparing apples to oranges. However, the central objective is never to compare Keats, but to use Keats as a benchmark to understand the state of poetic genius, that these LLMs are able to replicate. All three LLMs, have fulfilled the basic requirements of rhyme, meter, and wordplay, precisely asked in the prompt. It is also an interesting observation that all three were much closer to each other in style and writing, than to the original.

The Google Gemini poem, much like the other two, is simplistic, and mostly functional. However, it employs evocative imagery, reminiscent, to a much simpler degree, of Keats' detailed descriptions of nature. Phrases like "gloaming's hush," "starlight struggles," and "a silver thread" are impressive, and evoke a vivid, sensory experience. The poem makes a good attempt at touching on the transcendental experience of the nightingale's song, similar to Keats' themes of immortality and escape from worldly troubles. With a consistent rhyme scheme (ABABCDCDEE) and smooth meter, it understands the Keatsian style well, blending natural beauty, emotional depth, and lyrical quality, at a very functional level.

ChatGPT 4.0's version also uses descriptive and atmospheric language, such as "shadowed wood," "ghostly, haunting trail," and "moonlight dances." This poignant imagery, surprisingly aligns well with Keats' style. Exploring themes of melancholy, nature, and the ethereal quality of the nightingale's song, it does a good job at mirroring Keats' contemplation of life's fleeting nature and the eternal beauty of the bird's melody. The rhyme scheme (ABABCDEDE) is well-maintained, and

although the rhythm is not strictly iambic pentameter, it flows smoothly. Apart from faults in metrical length, this poem does a better job than Gemini in emulating Keats' lyrical and contemplative style effectively, focusing on nature and emotion.

Meta AI's poem employs vivid imagery and poetic language, such as "twilight's hush," "forest shadows play," and "a tapestry of sound." These descriptions are evocative and fitting for a Keatsian imitation. Themes of enchantment, nature, and the otherworldly quality of the nightingale's song are prevalent, paralleling Keats' exploration of these ideas. The consistent rhyme scheme (ABABCDCDEE) and well-flowing meter, despite not always being in perfect iambic pentameter, successfully capture the essence of Keats' style. This version focuses on nature, emotion, and the mystical quality of the nightingale's song, effectively emulating Keats' lyrical and evocative quality.

It is a curious observation that, taking into consideration all the three versions, it is very difficult to discern any differences in the quality that these outputs have reached. While all three versions display a good sense of word play, evoking images that are at times, genuinely impressive. None of them seem to have a deeper thought behind them.

Now, when we judge poetry that is made by AI, we have to keep in consideration that the LLMs are not sentient by any means. At the expense of grossly generalizing the scientific process, they are simply predicting the next work, based on their humongous library of text that is available online. Hence, these outputs are better understood as an amalgamation of the vast sea of human writing, that have carefully been picked up and emulated, rather than seeing them as the work of a sentient being. However, this technological amalgamation of these vast bodies of text results in mediocre poesy, one that does not yet display any semblance of poetic genius, but one that at times, mildly delights.

Conclusion

The central objective of this study is to attempt and find a snapshot of the pre-existing language learning models, on their capability to create, and emulate creative writing. However, due to the limitations of time, scope, and practicality, this study focusses on a singular experiment, that concerns itself with romantic poetry. Although

the results produced interesting insights into the workings of these neural networks, this is only a leaf in the forest of other genres and experimental apparatus that could be setup for further study. After the readings and the analysis of the results from AI, one can clearly ascertain that the level of AI at this point is sufficient to provide a basic ground for a pedestrian understanding of poetry. This, is in no way close to the poetic genius of our masters, especially Keats. However, it sure displays a level of understanding of poetic language, that goes miles beyond the simple structure of poesy, and literary figures of speech. There is a sense of coherence to the images and the themes, that these LLMs somehow surprisingly achieve. And, revelling in all their mediocrity, these poems display a sense of simple delight, that seems organic, contrasting the way in which they are emulated and produced.

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Chapter- 10

The Death of the Author Revisited: AI and the Future of Literary Criticism

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Abstract

This Chapter, “The Death of the Author Revisited: AI and the Future of Literary Criticism,” embarks on a critical examination of the transformative impact of artificial intelligence on traditional constructs of authorship and literary critique. Anchoring the discussion in Roland Barthes’ landmark essay “The Death of the Author,” the study interrogates AI as a non-human creator of literary texts and the implications for authorial intent. It explores the roles of programmers and data curators and reflects on large language models (LLMs) and machine learning (ML) software, drawing parallels with Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” The methodological framework integrates reader response analysis, theoretical synthesis, textual analysis, and contextual analysis. It examines readers’ engagement with AI-generated texts, synthesizes existing authorship theories, and explores the cultural, social, and technological contexts influencing these texts. This approach offers a nuanced perspective on AI’s reshaping of literary theory and criticism, addressing ethical and philosophical implications and highlighting the evolving practices in these fields.

Key words: AI-generated literature, authorship, reader response, literary criticism, ethical implications.

Introduction

The landscape of literary criticism has undergone significant transformations over the years, influenced by various theoretical movements and technological advancements. One of the most influential essays in this field is Roland Barthes’ “The Death of the Author,” published in 1967. Barthes argued that a text’s meaning should not be

determined by the author's intentions but rather by the reader's interpretation, effectively decentralizing the role of the author (Barthes 148). This notion has become a cornerstone of post-structuralist thought, challenging traditional concepts of authorship and authority in literature.

In recent years, the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) has introduced new dimensions to the discourse on authorship and textual analysis. AI technologies, particularly large language models (LLMs) and machine learning (ML)-enabled software, have demonstrated the capability to generate complex and sophisticated literary texts. These advancements raise intriguing questions about the nature of creativity, the role of the author, and the future of literary criticism. For instance, Liu Yang and colleagues have explored AI's potential to analyze Modernist French poetry through machine learning algorithms, highlighting how AI can classify poems by stylistic and thematic attributes, thus transcending traditional subjective analyses (Yang et al. 70). This integration of AI in literary studies aligns with broader trends in the digital humanities, where AI tools are increasingly used to analyze and reinterpret literary archives (Heather).

Moreover, the use of AI in academic research extends beyond mere analysis; it encompasses ethical and practical considerations. The application of AI tools in literature reviews and data analysis can enhance efficiency and precision but also brings challenges, such as potential biases in AI-generated responses and ethical implications regarding the authenticity of machine-based interpretations ("AI-Based Literature Review Tools"). These considerations echo Walter Benjamin's concerns about the effects of mechanical reproduction on the "aura" of art, raising critical questions about the legitimacy and integrity of AI-generated literary knowledge.

This chapter, titled "The Death of the Author Revisited: AI and the Future of Literary Criticism," aims to explore the implications of AI on the concept of authorship and the practices of literary criticism. By revisiting Barthes' arguments and juxtaposing them with the capabilities of contemporary AI, this study examines whether AI-generated texts challenge or reinforce the notion of the author's death. Furthermore, it reflects upon the implications of LLMs and ML-enabled software for the

acts of creative writing and literary evaluation, drawing parallels with Walter Benjamin's seminal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

The essay will begin by providing a historical context and theoretical framework, delving into the foundational ideas presented by Barthes and other relevant theorists. It will then explore the current state of AI in literary creation, discussing both its capabilities and limitations. Subsequently, the discussion will turn to the role of AI in shaping authorial intent and reader response, followed by an examination of the ethical and philosophical considerations surrounding AI-generated literature. The study will also include case studies of specific AI-generated texts, analyzing their critical reception and broader implications for literary theory. Finally, the essay will speculate on the future of literary criticism in an era increasingly influenced by artificial authorship.

This essay seeks to offer a nuanced perspective on how AI technologies are reshaping the landscape of literary theory and criticism. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving roles of the author, reader, and critic in a world where the boundaries between human and machine-created texts are increasingly blurred. Through this exploration, the essay will contribute to the ongoing discourse on the intersections of technology, creativity, and literary analysis.

The qualitative methodological framework for this study integrates reader response analysis, theoretical synthesis, textual analysis, and contextual analysis. It focuses on how readers engage with AI-generated texts, gathering qualitative data through interviews or surveys to capture their perceptions and emotional responses. The study also involves synthesizing existing theories of authorship and applying them to AI literature, examining narrative structures and thematic elements. Additionally, it considers the cultural, social, and technological contexts influencing these texts, exploring public perceptions and ethical considerations in the discourse surrounding AI in literature.

The integration of artificial intelligence in literary creation has led to the emergence of a posthuman mode of literature production, characterized by the collaboration between human creativity and machine algorithms. Alexander Elstermann's work delves into this

phenomenon, highlighting how AI-generated texts challenge traditional notions of authorship and creativity. He argues that these texts represent a “hybrid creation,” where both human and machine elements play crucial roles, thus complicating the attribution of authorship (Elstermann).

Elstermann also emphasizes the significant human involvement in the creation of AI-generated texts, from programming the algorithms to editing the final output. This involvement raises questions about the agency of AI and the extent to which it can be considered an author. He notes that “algorithmically facilitated writing requires rethinking our understanding of authorship” because the traditional authorial role is diffused among multiple actors, both human and non-human (Elstermann).

Furthermore, the interpretation of AI-generated literature presents unique challenges. The absence of a definitive human author complicates the application of traditional interpretive frameworks. Elstermann suggests that Barthes’ concept of “The Death of the Author” might need reevaluation in the context of AI, as the lack of a singular author figure shifts the focus to the text itself and its interpretive possibilities (Elstermann).

These perspectives are crucial for understanding the evolving landscape of literary criticism in the age of AI. As AI technologies continue to advance, they will likely further blur the boundaries between human and machine authorship, necessitating new approaches to both literary creation and analysis.

Based on the ideas and insights from the paper “Textual Alchemy: AI, Authorship and the Shifting Paradigms of Interpretation” by Adil Hussain and Khursheed Ahmad Qazi, AI’s role in literary production marks a significant shift in how we perceive authorship. The paper explores the concept of a “post-post author” era, suggesting that AI-generated texts challenge the traditional notion of the author as the central figure in textual creation. This aligns with Roland Barthes’ concept of the “Death of the Author,” but extends it further by introducing AI as an entity that can produce texts devoid of human emotional involvement (Hussain and Qazi 2-8).

Moreover, the authors discuss the ethical implications and biases inherent in AI-generated content. For example, AI systems can replicate societal biases present in their training data, leading to potential misrepresentation and exclusion of marginalized groups. This bias highlights a critical issue: while AI can generate sophisticated texts, the ethical considerations surrounding its use and the potential for perpetuating harmful stereotypes cannot be overlooked (Hussain and Qazi 6).

These perspectives are essential for understanding the evolving landscape of literary criticism and the new challenges that AI brings to the fore. The study suggests that as AI continues to develop, it may further blur the lines between human and machine authorship, raising questions about originality, creativity, and the ethical responsibilities of creators and consumers of AI-generated texts.

In the paper “The Hermeneutics of Computer-Generated Texts,” Leah Henrickson and Albert Meroño-Peñuela explore the application of hermeneutics to digital and computer-generated texts. They argue that digital technologies, particularly natural language generation (NLG) systems like GPT-2, challenge conventional understandings of authorship and reader responsibility. The authors suggest that “hermeneutics scholarship may guide interpretations of authorial intention and reader responsibility pertaining to computer-generated texts, whose authorship may be uncertain or obscured” (Henrickson and Meroño-Peñuela 130). This perspective highlights the complexity of meaning-making in the digital age, where the distinction between human and machine-generated content is increasingly blurred.

Further, the authors delve into the ethical implications of computer-generated texts, emphasizing the potential biases and ethical concerns associated with NLG systems. They note, “The non-release of GPT-2 was motivated by concerns over the misuse of its highly realistic language generation capabilities, highlighting the ethical complexities inherent in deploying such technologies” (Henrickson and Meroño-Peñuela 132). This underscores the need for careful consideration of the societal impacts and responsibilities associated with the use of AI in literature and communication.

The recent exploration of reader responses to AI-generated literature versus human-authored texts reveals a preference for human-written works, perceived as more emotionally resonant and stylistically superior (Hassan Rahmeh, 2023; Gunser et al., 2022). Although readers often struggle to distinguish between the two, they rate AI-generated content lower in quality, interest, and aesthetic appeal (Gunser et al., 2022). Jones (2022) highlights the role of AI-generated texts as a baseline, showcasing the innovation in human-authored literature. Cultural differences also influence these perceptions, with American audiences being more critical than Chinese audiences, who exhibit implicit preferences for human-authored works (Wu et al., 2020). These findings enhance our understanding of human-machine interactions in creative fields.

In the latter half of the 20th century, literary theory underwent a significant shift in its approach to authorship and textual interpretation. Two seminal works, Roland Barthes' *The Death of the Author* (1967) and Michel Foucault's *What is an Author?* (1969), challenged traditional notions of authorial intent and authority, paving the way for new perspectives on the relationship between text, author, and reader. This essay explores these influential theories and their impact on literary criticism and cultural studies.

Barthes 'The Death of the Author

Roland Barthes' essay *The Death of the Author* is a pivotal text in poststructuralist literary theory. Published in 1967, it argues against the traditional practice of incorporating the intentions and biographical context of an author in the interpretation of a text. Barthes posits that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (148). This provocative statement encapsulates his central thesis: that the meaning of a text is not determined by the author's intentions but is instead created through the act of reading.

Barthes contends that the figure of the Author is a modern construct, "a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual" (142-143). He argues that this emphasis on the author as the source of

meaning limits the potential interpretations of a text and ignores the complex interplay of language and cultural context that informs any piece of writing.

The historical context of Barthes' essay is crucial to understanding its impact. It emerged during a period of significant social and cultural upheaval in France, coinciding with the student protests of May 1968. This era saw a broader questioning of traditional authority structures, and Barthes' critique of authorial authority can be seen as part of this larger movement.

Theoretically, *The Death of the Author* builds on structuralist linguistics, particularly Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of language as a system of signs. Barthes extends this idea to literature, arguing that a text is "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" rather than the product of a single authorial consciousness (146).

Related Theories

Michel Foucault's *What is an Author?* (1969) serves as both a response to and an extension of Barthes' ideas. While Barthes calls for the death of the author, Foucault interrogates the very concept of authorship and its function in discourse. He introduces the concept of the "author function," which he describes as "characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society" (Foucault 108).

Foucault argues that the author is not simply a person but a complex function of discourse that varies across different types of texts and historical periods. He notes that "the author function is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses" (113). This perspective situates the concept of authorship within broader social and institutional frameworks, extending the discussion beyond purely literary concerns.

Other theorists have contributed to and expanded upon these ideas. Jacques Derrida's concept of "différance" emphasizes the inherent instability of meaning in language, further undermining the idea of a fixed, author-determined interpretation (Derrida 7). Stanley Fish's reader-response theory shifts focus to the reader's role in creating

meaning, arguing that interpretive communities, rather than individual authors or readers, determine textual interpretation (Fish 14).

Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, which posits that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva 66), aligns with Barthes' view of texts as interconnected networks of cultural references rather than original creations of individual authors.

These theories collectively represent a significant shift in literary and cultural studies, moving away from author-centered interpretations towards more complex understandings of the relationship between text, author, reader, and broader cultural contexts. They have had a profound impact on various fields, including literary criticism, cultural studies, and even legal interpretations of copyright and intellectual property.

Barthes' *The Death of the Author* and related theories have fundamentally altered our understanding of authorship and textual interpretation. By challenging the traditional authority of the author, these theories have opened up new possibilities for reading and interpreting texts, emphasizing the active role of the reader and the complex interplay of language, culture, and meaning. As we continue to grapple with questions of authorship in the digital age, these theories remain relevant and continue to inform contemporary debates about creativity, originality, and the nature of textual production and consumption.

How does the use of AI writing assistants impact the creative process of human authors? Recent research explores the impact of AI writing assistants on human authors' creative processes. AI tools enhance brainstorming, generate story details, assist with world-building, and provide research support (Ippolito et al., 2022). They are often seen as active collaborators, inspiring writers with unexpected text (Yang et al., 2022). These tools can generate novel ideas, characters, plots, and stylistic elements across genres (Fiialka et al., 2024). However, challenges in preserving authorial voice and deep story understanding remain (Ippolito et al., 2022). For optimal use, AI should complement human creativity, supporting new creative practices (O'Toole & Horvát, 2024).

Recent advancements in Machine Learning (ML) have significantly expanded the creative possibilities for writers, offering new tools and approaches. A study exploring human-AI collaboration in fiction writing utilized an experimental web-based platform where writers interacted with AI-generated text. This platform allowed for editing, summarizing, and regenerating content, facilitating a collaborative storytelling method that alternated between human and AI contributions. Initial findings from nine participants revealed that AI-generated content often inspired writers and was perceived as an active collaborator. This research underscores the potential for a symbiotic relationship between human creativity and AI in fiction writing.

What criteria should be used to evaluate the quality and merit of AI-generated literature compared to human-authored works? Studies have explored the quality and perception of AI-generated literature compared to human-authored works. While readers struggle to differentiate between AI and human-written texts (Gunser et al.; Yeadon et al.), AI-generated content is often perceived as less inspiring and aesthetically pleasing (Gunser et al.). However, in academic writing, no significant difference in quality was found between AI and human-authored essays (Yeadon et al.). In poetry, human-AI collaboration produced the highest-rated haiku, suggesting potential for creative synergy (Hitsuwari et al.). Nonetheless, when comparing AI-generated sonnets to Shakespeare's work, readers favored the human-authored piece for its emotional depth and complex language (Rahmeh). These findings highlight the challenges in evaluating AI-generated literature and underscore the need for refined criteria that consider factors such as creativity, emotional resonance, and linguistic complexity when assessing the quality and merit of AI-generated works.

From the discussion on AI authorship, several key inferences can be made. First, the concept of AI authorship challenges traditional notions of authorship, necessitating a reevaluation of authorial intent and responsibility. Second, AI-generated texts align with post-structuralist perspectives, such as Barthes' "Death of the Author," by decoupling authorial intent from interpretation. Third, despite advancements in AI, human creativity remains irreplaceable, positioning AI as a complementary tool rather than a replacement for human

authors. Fourth, hermeneutic approaches are essential for exploring the evolving relationships between author, text, and reader in digital contexts. Lastly, the production and interpretation of AI-generated literature continue to be influenced by social and cultural contexts, underscoring their importance in literary studies.

The exploration of AI authorship brings forth several inferences. AI-generated texts challenge traditional notions of authorship, requiring a reevaluation of authorial intent and responsibility. These texts align with post-structuralist perspectives, such as Barthes' "Death of the Author," by decoupling authorial intent from interpretation. Despite AI advancements, human creativity remains irreplaceable, positioning AI as a complementary tool. Hermeneutic approaches are crucial for understanding evolving author-text-reader relationships in digital contexts. Additionally, the production and interpretation of AI-generated literature are influenced by social and cultural contexts, highlighting their significance in literary studies.

Findings:

The findings of this chapter reveal significant shifts in the understanding of authorship and textual analysis due to the integration of AI technologies. AI-generated texts challenge the traditional concept of authorship, aligning with post-structuralist theories such as Barthes' "Death of the Author," which posits that the meaning of a text is derived from the reader's interpretation rather than the author's intentions (Barthes 148). This study highlights that, unlike human authors, AI lacks conscious intent, making the role of programmers and data curators crucial in shaping the final output. This nuance in authorship requires a reevaluation of what constitutes authorial intent and the extent to which AI can be considered a creator.

The research also underscores the complementary nature of AI in the creative process. While AI tools like large language models can generate complex narratives and offer innovative ideas, they do not replace human creativity. The unique emotional depth and cultural insight that human authors contribute remain irreplaceable. Henrickson and Meroño-Peñuela emphasize that AI's role in literature necessitates new interpretive frameworks, as traditional concepts of authorial intent

become less relevant in the context of machine-generated texts (130). This shift has profound implications for how we understand the relationship between author, text, and reader, especially in an era where AI's influence on literature is growing.

Further findings point to ethical concerns associated with AI-generated literature. The biases inherent in AI systems, often derived from the data they are trained on, can lead to the reinforcement of stereotypes and the misrepresentation of marginalized groups. This aspect of AI underscores the importance of ethical considerations in the development and deployment of these technologies. The study suggests that, as AI becomes more integrated into literary production, it is crucial to establish new criteria for evaluating the quality and impact of AI-generated works. These criteria should consider creativity, emotional resonance, and the socio-cultural implications of the texts.

Moreover, the paper explores the implications of AI for the future of literary criticism. As AI technologies continue to evolve, they will likely blur the boundaries between human and machine authorship even further. This evolution necessitates a rethinking of traditional literary theories and the development of new methodologies that can account for the unique attributes of AI-generated texts. The study concludes that the ongoing dialogue between human and machine-generated texts will play a pivotal role in shaping the future landscape of literary criticism, offering fresh perspectives on the roles of authors, readers, and critics in a digitally-mediated world. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on the intersections of technology, creativity, and literary analysis, highlighting the need for an adaptive approach to literary studies in the age of AI.

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Chapter- 11

The Rise of Instapoetry in the Contemporary World

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Abstract

Instapoetry, a poetic form disseminated primarily through social media platforms like Instagram, has gained remarkable popularity in the contemporary literary scene. Characterized by brevity, accessibility, and emotional resonance, instapoetry has redefined how poetry is written, shared, and consumed. While it has democratized poetry, providing a platform for marginalized voices, it has also drawn criticism for perceived lack of depth and artistic merit. This article examines the rise of instapoetry, its defining features, cultural impact, and the debates surrounding its literary value, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of this modern poetic phenomenon.

Keywords: Instapoetry, social media, Instagram, digital culture, brevity, accessibility, Rupi Kaur

Introduction

The digital age has fundamentally reshaped the way literature is produced and consumed, leading to the emergence of new literary forms that align with the fast-paced, image-driven nature of contemporary life. Among these, instapoetry has emerged as a defining feature of the 21st-century literary landscape. Characterized by its simplicity, brevity, and visual appeal, instapoetry has made poetry more accessible to a broader audience, particularly through social media platforms like Instagram. Poets such as Rupi Kaur, Atticus, and Lang Leav have become iconic figures within this genre, amassing millions of followers and reshaping the way poetry is perceived and appreciated in the digital era (Smith 159).

Despite its immense popularity, instapoetry has sparked debates about its literary value, with critics arguing that its simplicity undermines the depth traditionally associated with poetry (Thomas 23). While it undoubtedly democratizes literature, offering a platform for marginalized voices, it also faces criticism for commercializing poetry and promoting an overly simplified version of the art form. This article explores both the rise and the challenges of instapoetry, examining its defining features, cultural impact, and the debates surrounding its place in contemporary literature.

The Emergence of Instapoetry

Instapoetry's roots trace back to the early 2010s, a time when social media platforms, particularly Instagram, began to evolve from photo-sharing sites to spaces for diverse creative expressions. Instagram, with its emphasis on visual content and accessibility, provided a natural medium for poetry that could be consumed quickly and shared widely (Naji 45). This shift in the medium of expression mirrored the growing demand for more instantaneous, digestible forms of art that aligned with the fast-scrolling, multimedia nature of digital life.

What distinguishes instapoetry from traditional forms is its embrace of brevity and immediacy. Unlike poetry that demands deep interpretation or complex structure, instapoetry often consists of short, striking lines, designed to capture readers' attention quickly and evoke emotional resonance with minimal words (Thomas 23). The accessibility of social media allows poets to bypass traditional publishing barriers, connecting directly with their audience, creating a sense of intimacy and relevance that traditional poetry often lacks.

Rupi Kaur, often credited with pioneering the genre, brought instapoetry into the mainstream with her debut collection *Milk and Honey* (2014), where her succinct, uncapitalized verse explores themes of love, trauma, and healing (Kaur 56). Her combination of short lines with hand-drawn illustrations set the stage for the visual aesthetics that now define the genre. Poets like Atticus and Nayyirah Waheed have expanded on Kaur's formula, emphasizing themes of self-discovery, mental health, and romance. This democratization of poetry through social media means that anyone with a smartphone and an Instagram

account can become a poet, adding to the genre's appeal and expanding its reach far beyond traditional literary spaces.

Defining Characteristics of Instapoetry

At its core, instapoetry thrives on several defining characteristics that cater to the sensibilities of today's digital audience. Brevity is perhaps the most significant trait of this genre. Poems often consist of just a few lines, making them quick to read and easy to share. This brevity is well-suited to the fast-paced nature of social media, where users scroll rapidly through posts and expect to be instantly engaged (Smith 159). Emotional relatability is another hallmark of instapoetry. Unlike traditional poetry, which often demands a deeper level of interpretation, instapoetry uses straightforward language to address universal themes like love, heartbreak, and personal growth. This accessibility allows it to resonate with a wide audience, including those who might not typically engage with poetry in its traditional form.

The visual aesthetics of instapoetry are just as important as its written content. By pairing simple yet evocative lines with images or minimalist illustrations, instapoets enhance the emotional experience of their work. Kaur's use of small, hand-drawn illustrations, for example, adds an intimate, personal touch to her poetry, emphasizing the rawness of the themes she explores (Kaur 56). Typography also plays a crucial role, with poets like Atticus using stark, bold fonts to underline the simplicity and poignancy of their words (Leav 78). Moreover, the interactive nature of social media fosters a unique relationship between poets and their readers. On Instagram, poets and followers engage directly through comments, likes, and shares, creating a sense of community. This dialogue makes poetry feel like a shared experience, rather than a solitary endeavor (Smith 159). This immediacy and feedback loop have helped instapoetry to gain both traction and legitimacy within the broader literary culture.

Cultural Impact of Instapoetry

Instapoetry has had a profound cultural impact, both as a form of literature and as a tool for social change. One of the most notable aspects of the genre is its democratization of poetry. Traditional publishing, with

its reliance on gatekeepers like editors and publishers, often excludes voices that lack resources or industry connections. Instapoetry, by contrast, provides a platform for marginalized voices, enabling people from diverse backgrounds to share their stories and perspectives (Naji 45). This democratization has allowed poetry to reach a broader, more diverse audience, particularly among younger generations who are active on social media.

The visual appeal of instapoetry has made it especially popular among Millennials and Gen Z, who are accustomed to engaging with visually rich content. For many, instapoetry serves as an introduction to the broader world of poetry, bridging the gap between digital culture and more traditional forms of art (Leav 78). Poets like Kaur and Waheed have used their platforms to address important issues such as mental health, gender equality, and racial justice, sparking conversations and fostering empathy among their readers (Kaur 56; Naji 45). This socially-conscious aspect of instapoetry has helped position it as not just a literary form, but a tool for activism. However, the genre's popularity has also sparked concerns about its commercialization. Many instapoets, after gaining significant followings on social media, have transitioned into traditional publishing, producing best-selling poetry collections. While this success has brought poetry into mainstream culture, it has also led to debates about whether the commodification of poetry diminishes its artistic value. As instapoetry becomes more commercialized, critics worry that it may lose its authenticity, becoming more about appealing to a market than expressing genuine artistic or emotional truths (Thomas 23).

Criticism of Instapoetry

Despite its widespread appeal, instapoetry has faced significant criticism, particularly from traditionalists within the literary world. One of the most common critiques is that the simplicity of instapoetry undermines its artistic merit. Traditional poetry often employs complex metaphors, symbolism, and intricate structures, elements that are less prevalent in instapoetry (Naji 45). Critics argue that the genre's focus on accessibility and emotional relatability leads to a form of poetry that feels superficial, lacking the intellectual depth that defines more classical forms.

Another point of contention is the ephemeral nature of instapoetry. Social media encourages instant gratification, which may detract from the reflective, enduring qualities traditionally associated with poetry (Smith 159). The question arises whether instapoetry will stand the test of time or if it is simply a fleeting trend. Critics suggest that the rapid consumption of content may limit the genre's ability to offer lasting intellectual or emotional impact.

Finally, the commercialization of instapoetry remains a significant concern. As poets gain fame and monetize their platforms, the pressure to produce marketable content may result in a homogenization of style and theme. Critics argue that this could lead to a dilution of the genre's original artistic intent, with poets catering to audience expectations rather than following their own creative impulses (Thomas 23).

Conclusion

Instapoetry represents a significant evolution in the literary landscape, blending technology, art, and language to create a new poetic form that resonates with contemporary audiences. Its rise has democratized poetry, making it accessible to diverse, younger generations and creating opportunities for marginalized voices. However, the genre also faces challenges, particularly in balancing accessibility with artistic depth and navigating the tensions between authenticity and commercialization.

As instapoetry continues to evolve, its future will depend on its ability to innovate while maintaining its core values of emotional immediacy and relatability. Whether it endures as a transformative movement or fades as a passing trend, its impact on the cultural and literary landscape is undeniable.

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