

# KEEPING THE REAL ALIVE: A STUDY OF SELECTED CYBER CULTURE WORKS



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Doctor of Philosophy

**Submitted By:**

Junaid Mahmud

Ph.D. English

**117-FLL/PHDENG/F16**

**Supervised By:**

Dr. Akhtar Aziz

Assistant Professor

Faculty of Languages and  
Literature

IIUI, Islamabad

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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**KEEPING THE REAL ALIVE: A STUDY OF SELECTED  
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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

In English

To

Faculty of Language & Literature

**(Ph.D. English)**



International Islamic University, Islamabad

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate my dissertation to two women: my beloved mother and my wife Mariam, who have played a pivotal role in leading me to where I am today. My mother brought me up without any discrimination despite me being a special person. She rather gave me extra care and stood by me in all the ordeals of life. Without her support, I could not have even dreamt about this degree and all other achievements of my life. My sweetheart Mariam has never left me alone in any phase of my life and I believe God has especially created her as a support system for me. She inspires me and never creates any hurdle in any matter of my life.

## THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read the following thesis, examined the defense, are satisfied with the overall exam performance, and recommend the thesis to the faculty of language and literature for acceptance:

**Thesis Title:** Keeping the Real Alive: A Study of Selected Cyber Culture Works

Submitted by: **Junaid Mahmud**

Registration #: **117-FLL/PHDENG/F16**

Name of Student

**Doctor of Philosophy**

Degree Name

**Dr. Akhtar Aziz**

Name of the Research Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of the Research Supervisor**

**Prof. Dr. Najeeba Arif**

Name of the Dean

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of the Dean**

**Dr.**

Name of the Rector

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of the Rector**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## DECLARATION

I, **Junaid Mahmud** son of **Sultan Mahmud**, Registration # **117-FLL/PHDENG/F16**, Discipline (English), Candidate of Ph.D. (English) at the International Islamic University, Islamabad do hereby declare that the thesis “**Keeping the Real Alive: A Study of Selected Cyber Culture Works**” submitted by me in partial fulfillment Ph.D. degree is my original work and has not been published or submitted anywhere. I also solemnly declare that it shall, not in the future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution. I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of the degree, the work may be canceled, and the degree revoked.

Dated Aug 18, 2023

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Signature of the Candidate

**Junaid Mahmud**

## ABSTRACT

### **Title: Keeping the Real Alive: A Study of Selected Cyber Culture Works**

Cyberculture is no longer a dream or a prophecy, but an absolute truth where the symbiotic rapport of technology and humans has become parasitic: endangering the agency and identity of humans because the boundaries between the machines and the humans are rapidly being blurred. Consequently, the perpetual debate between the structure and agency arrives at its pinnacle. In the recent past, science fiction made a radical shift by envisaging the present, rather than its customary subject matter of predicting the future where technology would usurp the free agency of humans. Present science fiction writers are wrestling with the ever-growing dependence of humans on technology at the cost of their individualism, identity, and subjectivity in their works. They endeavour to dig all those structures and sovereign mechanisms through which technology subjugates the freedom and agency of humans through an unswerving assault upon the real of individuals. This study deliberates upon all those dynamics that are pivotal to implicating the technology to usurp the freedom of humans, especially in the works of Kevin J. Anderson, Scott Westerfeld, and William Gibson. The notion of human real espoused by Bhaskar and Fukuyama has been taken as the spectrum to analyze the threat on the human real. The critical realism propounded by Bhaskar has been used as a fulcrum to reach the hidden structures that manipulate technology to threaten the humans' real. The research explores all the challenges that technology imposes on human agency and subjectivity. The research has revealed how the characters in the selected novels succeed in restoring their agency and real. The dissertation comes out with the endorsement that religion, power discourse, global metropolises, evasive surveillance,

and the desire for social conformism are the hidden structures that sequester human agency and subjectivity. The dissertation promises the real to be kept alive if humans would begin to see things beyond the empirical reality, abandon apathy, search for the space in the discourse or structure where they could avoid the gazes of the panoptic eye, to learn to distinguish the things.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Junaid Mahmud

Aug 18, 2023

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Would any primordial humans have envisioned the pinnacle of technology that has emerged from the discovery of fire and the invention of the wheel? It is doubtful they anticipated that the very technology they once used to master external environmental forces would ultimately constrain their freedom and agency by becoming an integral part of their existence.

The potential for technology to eventually dominate its creators has been evident since ancient times, particularly in the context of weaponry used in warfare. For example, in Greek mythology, the story of Prometheus bringing fire to humanity symbolizes both the empowerment and the peril of technological advancement (Hesiod, *Works and Days*). Similarly, the rise of tools for warfare, which Lewis Mumford discusses in *Technics and Civilization* (1934), reflects how early technological advancements could lead to human subjugation by their own creations.

This early recognition of technology's potential overreach has ignited a longstanding debate among philosophers, sociologists, intellectuals, scholars, and writers about the nature of the relationship between humans and technology. Jacques Ellul, in *The Technological Society* (1954), argued that technology develops autonomously, often beyond human control, while Martin Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology* (1954) critiques the way technology reframes the world as mere resources for exploitation, diminishing human freedom.

Opinions remain divided between those who see this relationship as symbiotic and those who view it as parasitic. Ray Kurzweil, in *The Singularity Is Near* (2005), envisions a harmonious relationship where humans and technology co-evolve, enhancing each other's potential. On the other hand, Neil Postman's *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (1992) warns of technology's parasitic nature, often dictating societal norms and subjugating culture to its needs.

This enduring discourse raises a critical question: Does technology shape human actions, or do humans shape the functions of technology? In other words, does technology influence human identity and agency, or do humans use technology to achieve their objectives? Despite ongoing debates, technology has continued to advance unimpeded, infiltrating every aspect of human life, ranging from education, medicine, and agriculture to art, media, construction, commerce, fashion, sports, and religion. Even its critics concede that technology has significantly enhanced human comfort, revolutionized agriculture, transformed communication through social media, and diminished distances via advancements in transportation and the internet.

Up until the mid-twentieth century, many sociologists and anthropologists argued that humans controlled technology, and they ensured it remained a subordinate tool. However, the discovery of atomic energy, the development of genetics, the proliferation of the internet, the widespread availability of GPS, the advent of social media apps, and innovations in artificial intelligence have fundamentally altered the cultural landscape. Technology has evolved into an independent mechanism that increasingly dictates human agency.

Today, distinguishing between humans and technology is increasingly difficult, if not impossible. The boundaries between humans and machines have become blurred or entirely erased. We inhabit an era where human identity is mediated through technological tools, where invasive surveillance restricts individual freedom, where empirical reality is shaped by technology, and where media and social media can disrupt subjectivity. This intricate cyber culture has rekindled debates on technological determinism and human agency, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century. This is the point where my research gets its grounds. The dissertation argues that contemporary cyber culture, as portrayed in the selected novels, diverges significantly from traditional science fiction's utopian vision of the future. Unlike classic science fiction which often depicts an idealized future where technology enhances human freedom and agency, the novels in question present a more complex reality. In these narratives, technology is not merely a tool or intermediary but an autonomous force that intersects with and constrains human agency. Characters struggle to assert their free will as technology, influenced by hidden structural forces, becomes a dominant factor that shapes and limits their actions and choices. The perspectives shared by Greg Sherwin and J. Nathan Matias about the future role of technology and AI in reinforcing power structures and constraining human agency resonate closely with the core arguments of my research that contemporary portrayals of cyberculture diverge from traditional science fiction's utopian visions, instead, they depict technology as an autonomous force that limits human freedom. This view is substantiated by the concerns expressed by these experts.

Sherwin's claim that technology will remain under the control of powerful elites who exploit it politically, economically, and emotionally reflects the notion that technology becomes an instrument for reinforcing existing power structures (Sherwin 2019). Just as Sherwin anticipates that AI will be used to perpetuate the ideologies of those in control, my research highlights how technology in these novels intersects with and constrains human agency, shaping characters' choices and actions in ways that echo this concern.

Similarly, Matias's observation that technology will be used by bureaucrats and elites to maintain control over the decisions and agency of ordinary people parallels my argument about how technology in contemporary cyberculture is not merely a tool but a dominant force that limits human freedom (Matias, 2018). Matias's perspective that technology will shape the decisions of common people through designed apps and programs aligns with my depiction of technology as a constraining force, influenced by hidden structural dynamics. Christopher W. Savage further argues that AI is designed to subtly influence user decisions, making individuals unknowingly complicit in the agendas of those who control the technology (Savage 2020). Alejandro Pisanty adds that globalization and commodification will further entrench this control, with technology serving the interests of global markets and governments (Pisanty 2016).

Conversely, some experts, like Marc Rotenberg and Jeremy Foote, are optimistic about technology's potential to enhance human agency. Rotenberg (2019) anticipates that new regulations and ethical frameworks will safeguard individual rights, while Foote (2017) believes that humans can shape technology to their needs, dismissing technological determinism. Melissa R. Michelson (2018) argues that technology merely suggests



actions, leaving final decisions in human hands, and emphasizes that humans will continue to exercise free will, especially in complex decision-making.

These perspectives intersect to frame a broader debate: while some foresee technology as a means to entrench existing power structures and limit individual agency, others highlight its potential to empower and enhance human cognition. My argument builds on this debate by suggesting that contemporary cyberculture, as depicted in recent novels, reflects these tensions. Unlike traditional science fiction's utopian vision, these narratives portray technology as an autonomous force that intersects with and constrains human agency, challenging the idealized view of technology as purely liberating.

In examining the nexus between agency and structure, previous studies have often oscillated between emphasizing one over the other. This historical debate reflects a broader challenge in sociology: balancing the influence of social structures with the capacity of individuals to act independently. Traditional structuralist approaches, such as those advocated by functionalists (e.g., Durkheim 1893/1997) and structural Marxists (e.g., Althusser 1971), have focused on how overarching social structures shape and constrain individual actions, often sidelining the role of personal agency. Conversely, interpretive and humanistic approaches, such as those of symbolic interactionists (e.g., Mead, 1934) and phenomenologists (e.g., Schutz 1967), have highlighted the sovereignty of individual agency, which sometimes neglects the profound impact of structural constraints.

In this context, my research seeks to address the gap by foregrounding the role of technology as both a structural force and a medium through which individual agency is

negotiated. While acknowledging the significant insights offered by both traditional and contemporary sociological theories, my work problematizes the dichotomy between structure and agency by exploring how technological environments mediate this relationship.

To understand the role of technology in shaping individual agency, it is essential to examine the relationship between individuals and social structures, as it is within these structures that agency is both exercised and constrained. Dr Nicki Lisa Cole (2019) offers a succinct yet insightful definition of structure. She describes it as “the complex and interconnected set of social forces, relationships, institutions, and elements of social structure that work together to shape the thought, behavior, experiences, choices, and overall life courses of people” (Cole 2019). Conversely, agency refers to individuals' subjective capacity to make decisions and act according to their own will. Thus, while structure represents the objective framework of society, agency embodies the subjective dimension of individual action.

The tension between structure and agency reflects a longstanding debate in sociology, with varying schools of thought emphasizing one over the other. Holistic and psychological perspectives often fail to fully acknowledge the autonomy of structure or the emergence of agency. For instance, functionalists of the mid-20th century frequently minimized the role of individual agency, while phenomenologists downplayed the significance of social structures. Similarly, structural Marxists and normative functionalists have historically prioritized structural factors, which often sideline individual subjectivity and agency. In contrast, interpretive sociologists have championed the sovereignty of agency, at times neglecting the constraints imposed by structures.

This debate led to the emergence of new sociological approaches in the 1960s, which sought to reconcile the concepts of agency and structure (Dawe 1970). Among these approaches, some sociologists have focused on the covert structures that influence and govern overt social frameworks. It also highlights how these hidden mechanisms shape individual actions and agency. This understanding bridges the gap between the traditional dichotomy, and it offers a more integrated perspective on the dynamic relationship between individuals and structures in contemporary contexts.

General functionalists have been pivotal in shaping the discourse on the interplay between agency and structure. Key figures in this tradition include Amitai Etzioni (1968), Peter M. Blau (1964), Walter W. Buckley (1967), Marvin G. Gouldner (1976), and S. N. Eisenstadt and I. Curelaru (1977). These theorists, along with Perry Anderson (1976), Jürgen Habermas (1971), David Lockwood (1964), Helmut Wellmer (1971), Gianfranco Pizzorno (1968), and Alain Touraine (1968) from the humanistic Marxist tradition, as well as interactionists such as Erving Goffman (1964), and Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson (1974), have contributed to a clear understanding of these concepts. A significant development in this debate came from those exploring the covert structures that influence overt structures and organizations. Lévi-Strauss (1963), Piaget (1968), and Sebag (1964) introduced the idea that hidden structures exert discursive power, shaping actions and agency in subtle ways. Two notable approaches emerged from this discourse: Walter Buckley's 'morphogenetic approach' and Anthony Giddens' 'structuration theory.'

Both approaches emphasize the interdependence of action and structure. Buckley's morphogenetic approach and Giddens' structuration theory agree that "structural

patterning is inextricably grounded in practical interaction" (Archer 225-252). They assert that "social practice is ineluctably shaped by the unacknowledged conditions of action and generates unintended consequences which form the context of subsequent interaction" (Archer 225). Giddens challenges traditional dichotomies between agency and structure by arguing that both are essential and interdependent. He rejects the determinism of functionalism and radical Marxism, as well as the voluntarism of contemporary action theories, by affirming that agency and structure are mutually constitutive.

Giddens' second step involves balancing the dichotomy between subject and object by acknowledging that actors are conscious of societal norms, which they use to reproduce society. This challenges both structuralism and functionalism. Furthermore, Giddens rejects the static-dynamic dichotomy, emphasizing that understanding social interaction requires considering both temporal and spatial dimensions (Archer 226). He introduces the concept of the duality of structure, where structure is not an active agent but exists as a set of options and choices available to actors, manifesting through their practices and actions. Structure resides in the memory of agents, guiding and shaping their actions while being continuously produced and reproduced.

To address the interplay between structure and agency in the context of technological determinism, it is essential to integrate critical realism into this discussion. Critical realism, as articulated by Roy Bhaskar (1979) and further developed by scholars like Margaret Archer (1995), David Collier (1994), and others, provides a framework for understanding the complex dynamics between structures and agents. This theory posits that reality comprises three domains: the 'real,' which consists of underlying mechanisms;

the 'actual,' which encompasses the events generated by these mechanisms; and the 'empirical,' which includes human experiences and perceptions of these events. Critical realism emphasizes that to fully comprehend the social world, one must uncover the hidden structures that govern observable phenomena (Morton 2006).

In the context of technological determinism, critical realism offers a clear approach to understanding how technology interacts with and shapes human agency. By examining the hidden mechanisms and structures that influence technological systems, critical realism allows us to investigate how technology may both constrain and enable agency. This meta-theory acknowledges that technology while appearing to be a neutral tool, is embedded within broader structures that shape its use and impact. The theory's focus on uncovering these hidden structures aligns well with the exploration of how technology and AI might perpetuate or challenge existing power dynamics.

Critical Realism (CR) is fundamentally an ontological theory rather than an epistemological one. It asserts that reality exists independently of our perception of it. In other words, reality is present regardless of whether we are aware of it or not. Critical realism divides knowledge into two categories: transitive knowledge, which concerns our understanding of the world, and intransitive knowledge, which pertains to the world itself. This theory emphasizes that to fully comprehend the social world, one must reveal the underlying structures and mechanisms that influence observable events. As Morton (2006) notes, "A central idea of CR is that natural and social reality should be understood as an open stratified system of objects with causal powers" (p. 24). According to this framework, reality is divided into three domains: the 'real,' the 'empirical,' and the 'actual.' The domain of the 'actual' encompasses all events produced by underlying

mechanisms; the ‘empirical’ domain includes human experiences and perceptions of these actual events; and the ‘real’ domain consists of the hidden mechanisms that generate these actual events.

One of the core aspects of critical realism is its approach to the relationship between structure and agency. Margaret Archer’s Morphogenetic Approach articulates this relationship by highlighting that individuals are simultaneously free and constrained by their social contexts, and they are aware of this duality (Archer 1995). This perspective introduces two crucial distinctions: first, the separation between individuals (agency) and the social context that influences and constrains them (structure), and second, the distinction between the material reality of social contexts and our cognitive understanding of these realities (material and ideational aspects of social life).

To grasp these distinctions fully, it is essential to consider the concept of emergence in critical realism. Emergence refers to the process by which higher-order social phenomena arise from the interaction of lower-order elements, similar to how water emerges from hydrogen and oxygen. This concept suggests that emergent properties are derived from their constituent parts and are influenced by how these parts interact. The emergent properties also exhibit unique characteristics that result from the interaction of the underlying components.

Integrating critical realism with technological realism and understanding their alignment with technological determinism is crucial for unpacking the complexities between agency and structures, particularly in the context of cyber culture. Critical realism (CR), as established by Roy Bhaskar, is an ontological theory that posits reality exists independently of human perception. It divides knowledge into transitive and intransitive

categories and emphasizes that to truly understand the social world, one must uncover the hidden structures and mechanisms that shape observable events. According to Morton (2006), "A central idea of CR is that natural and social reality should be understood as an open stratified system of objects with causal powers" (24). This theory delineates reality into three domains: the 'real' (underlying structures and mechanisms), the 'actual' (events generated by these mechanisms), and the 'empirical' (human perceptions and experiences of these events).

Critical realism's approach is instrumental in exploring the entangled relationship between structures and agency. One of its fundamental insights is the dual nature of agency and structure. Archer's morphogenetic approach, for instance, illustrates that individuals are both free and constrained by social structures, and they are aware of this duality (Archer 1995). This insight underscores the distinction between individuals and the social contexts that both enable and constrain their actions. Archer's work aligns with the concept of emergence in CR, where higher levels of social complexity emerge from the interactions of simpler elements, akin to how water emerges from hydrogen and oxygen. This concept helps in understanding how new social structures emerge from individual actions and interactions while retaining properties from the lower levels.

Bhaskar's Transformational Model of Social Activity (TMSA) further enriches this analysis by focusing on the interdependence between structure and agency. TMSA, introduced in Bhaskar's 1979 work *The Possibility of Naturalism*, highlights how structures and agency are mutually constitutive. It emphasizes that while structures precede human agency by providing material conditions for action, they are not autonomous; instead, they function through the mediation of social activities and human

agency. This model also introduces the concept of linking actions and mechanisms that operate independently of both structure and agency. These mechanisms can either facilitate or constrain agency, depending on how they are manipulated by structures and individual actions.

Technological realism complements CR by focusing specifically on how technological systems and artifacts interact with and shape social practices. It posits that technology is an active participant in social processes rather than a passive tool. The integration of CR with technological realism involves examining how technological systems both shape and are shaped by social structures and human actions. For example, technological systems can reinforce existing social norms or create new forms of social control, illustrating their role as both structures and agents.

This integration is crucial for addressing the limitations of technological determinism, which suggests that technology alone drives societal changes. While technological determinism emphasizes the unidirectional influence of technology on society, CR and technological realism provide a more refined view. They acknowledge that while technology can significantly shape social structures and behaviours, these structures also influence technological development and deployment. For instance, digital surveillance technologies affect individual behaviours and societal norms, but these technologies are also shaped by existing power dynamics and social practices.

In the context of cyberculture, the concept of agency becomes particularly intricate when juxtaposed with technological determinism. Technological determinism suggests that technology shapes society and human behaviour in a unidirectional manner, and it often portrays technology as an autonomous force that drives social change. This perspective



implies that individuals are largely passive recipients of technological impacts. However, this view oversimplifies the complex interplay between technology and human agency, especially in the digital age where technology and culture are deeply intertwined.

Critical realism (CR), particularly as conceptualized by Roy Bhaskar, provides a more detailed framework for understanding this complexity. In Bhaskar's Transformational Model of Social Activity (TMSA), he argues that social structures precede and influence human actions while also being continuously produced and reproduced through these actions. However, this model, while foundational, is developed in a context that does not fully anticipate the rapid technological advancements and their profound impacts on social dynamics.

In cyberculture, where digital technologies mediate virtually all aspects of social life, the traditional application of Bhaskar's model requires significant adaptation. In cyberculture, technological systems are not merely passive elements but active participants that shape and are shaped by social structures. Technologies such as social media platforms, surveillance systems, and digital communication tools do not just influence human behavior; they create new forms of social interaction and control that complicate traditional notions of agency.

To address these complexities, I have adapted Bhaskar's theoretical approach to better account for contemporary constraints on agency within cyberculture. While Bhaskar's original TMSA emphasizes the interdependence between structure and agency, it does not fully encompass the ways in which digital technologies introduce new mechanisms of control and influence. In adapting this model, I incorporate insights from technological

realism, which posits that technologies have active roles in shaping social practices and power dynamics.

In this revised framework, I propose that digital technologies serve as both structures and agents within the cybercultural context. Technologies impose new constraints on agency by facilitating surveillance, manipulating information flows, and shaping social norms. At the same time, they also enable new forms of agency by providing platforms for expression, resistance, and social mobilization. This dual role of technology aligns with Bhaskar's concept of linking actions and mechanisms but extends it to consider how these digital mechanisms operate in a technologically mediated environment.

For example, social media platforms, as digital structures, can constrain individual agency by promoting certain types of content and limiting others, shaping public discourse and personal identity. Simultaneously, they provide tools for individuals to assert agency, create communities, and challenge existing power structures. This dual effect demonstrates how technology can both enable and restrict agency, complicating the traditional binary of structure and agency.

By incorporating technological realism into the critical realism framework, I highlight how digital technologies introduce new forms of agency and control that were not anticipated in Bhaskar's original model. This adaptation allows for an understanding of how cyberculture both constrains and empowers individuals, reflecting the complex interplay between technological and social forces in the digital age.

The interplay between critical realism and postmodernism brings to light the complexities of human identity and agency in the digital age. As postmodernism accentuates the

blurring of the real and the hyper-real through the concept of simulacra, it challenges the fundamental reality of every entity, including human beings. This questioning of what makes humans distinct is further explored by critical realism. Bhaskar, in his book *The Possibility of Naturalism* (1979), attempts to resolve this issue by identifying tendencies such as memory, rationality, the ability to discriminate, seeing beyond empirical layers, and sensing emotions as the core attributes that endow humans with their unique spirit. Similarly, Fukuyama (1992) adds to Bhaskar's list by including feelings of pain, emotions of love, fears of the future, and the ability to design the future as key characteristics that define human identity.

However, the advancements in technology over the latter half of the previous century have further complicated this understanding of human identity. The emergence of cyborgs—a blend of humans and machines—has led philosophers and intellectuals to claim that humans are losing their subjective identity, merging into a new cyborg identity that is neither entirely human nor machine (Haraway 1991). This conflation challenges the notion of agency, as technology begins to usurp human agency, presenting a scenario where the distinct human identity is at risk of being entirely transformed.

In this context, humans are confronted with the dilemma of reconciling their memories of past identities with the realities of their new, technologically intertwined selves. The trauma and anxiety arising from this conflicting situation raise questions about the possibility of restoring the "human real" or whether a complete transformation signifies the demise of previous human identity and subjectivity. Philosophers have explored the efforts of humans to retain their agency within a discourse where technology, rather than being a mere tool, emerges as a structure that curtails human agency.

This debate has been vividly explored in the realm of science fiction, especially by authors such as Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, William Gibson, Scott Westerfeld, Bruce Sterling, and Kevin J. Anderson. These writers have depicted a cyberculture that is either present or not too distant in the future, highlighting the struggles of humans in an era where technology is an inseparable part of their existence. The shift in science fiction to focus on the present underscores the immediate challenges that humans face in a technologically mediated world.

Science fiction's engagement with these themes reflects the anxieties and challenges of cyberculture, where humans cannot fully extricate themselves from technology, which has become integral to their identity. The genre portrays characters grappling with modern technology and their transformed identities, striving to restore their subjectivity and agency to a minimal level. Through their struggles, science fiction offers a narrative itinerary that suggests possible paths for humans to reclaim their real selves.

This intersection of critical realism, postmodernism, and science fiction provides a rich framework for understanding the dynamics of human agency in the digital age. By analyzing these perspectives, this dissertation aims to explore the entangled complexities of agency and structures that stifle it, particularly in the context of cyberculture and technological determinism. Through the lens of critical realism, we can unpack how pre-existing ideas about structures and agency are relevant to contemporary constraints on agency imposed by cyberculture, as illustrated in the selected texts.

In a nutshell, the convergence of critical realism, postmodernism, and science fiction offers a comprehensive approach to examining the evolving nature of human identity and agency in the digital age. By integrating these theoretical insights, this dissertation seeks

to illuminate the challenges and transformations that define human existence in a technologically mediated world, providing a deeper understanding of the interplay between agency, structure, and technology. This research aims to explore the hidden structures that implicate technology in the restoration of the agency to the human realm. This dissertation will excavate the traumas, anxieties, conundrums, and pains humans undergo in the presence of cyber culture that persuades humans to forfeit their previous identities and tendencies that make them what Bhaskar terms “real” humans. At the same time, this dissertation proposes a solution to this skirmish between structures and agents. Thus, this research will be helpful for all those who are the inhabitants of the cyberculture and it is no exaggeration that the entire world has been incorporated into this cyberculture.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

This dissertation posits that contemporary cyberculture, as depicted in the novels under discussion, diverges from the traditional science fiction portrayal of the future. Rather than depicting an idealized or utopian future where technology enhances human freedom and agency, these novels present a reality where technology, far from being a mere tool or intermediary, becomes an autonomous force that intersects with and constrains human agency. The characters in these narratives struggle to assert their free will because technology, in conjunction with hidden structural forces, operates as an independent entity that shapes and limits their actions and choices.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

This dissertation investigates three critical questions within the realm of cyber culture as depicted in selected novels.

1. What traumas and anxieties do character in the selected texts experience when their real is challenged and their agency suppressed?
2. What itineraries do these characters opt for on their journey to restore their free agency and subjectivity?
3. What are the covert real mechanisms that complicitly enforce conformity within the structures depicted in these novels?

#### **1.4 Delimitation**

This thesis focuses on exploring the intersection of cyberculture, human agency, and identity formation through an analysis of selected works of speculative and cyberpunk fiction. The primary texts selected for this research include *Uglies* (2005), *Pretties* (2005), and *Specials* (2006) by Scott Westerfeld, collectively referred to as the Uglies trilogy, *Hopscotch* (2002) by Kevin J. Anderson, and *Pattern Recognition* (2003) and *Spook Country* (2007) by William Gibson. These novels were chosen through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse exploration of cyberculture and provide insights into its impact on identity, agency, and societal structures. The study is delimited to these texts and does not include other works outside this thematic focus.

The analysis is confined to examining how technology influences identity and agency within the chosen texts. Broader societal or technological implications not directly addressed in these novels are beyond the scope of this research. Additionally, the study focuses on specific themes and characters that are central to addressing the research questions, leaving out other aspects of the texts that fall outside the scope of cyberculture and human experience.

The theoretical framework for the study is grounded in critical realism, as proposed by Roy Bhaskar, to understand the relationship between human agency and structural forces. This is supplemented by Jane Kroger's perspectives on identity formation, Francis Fukuyama's concept of the human real, Michel Foucault's theories on punishment and discipline, and Michele De Certeau's ideas on spatial practices. These theoretical approaches are applied only to the extent that they provide insights into the selected texts, without attempting a broader critique of the theories themselves.

The study does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the cyberpunk or speculative fiction genres as a whole. Instead, it narrows its focus to the themes of identity, agency, and spatial practices within the context of the chosen works. The temporal scope is limited to novels published between 2002 and 2007, reflecting early 21st-century perspectives on cyberculture, and does not address developments in speculative fiction or cyberculture beyond this period.

By establishing these boundaries, the study maintains a focused approach that ensures a coherent and in-depth analysis of how the selected novels engage with the complexities of cyberculture and its influence on human identity and agency.

### **1.5 Rationale for Selecting Primary Text**

The novels selected for this thesis are *Uglies* (2005), *Pretties* (2005) and *Specials* (2006) by Scott Westerfeld, *Hopscotch* (2002) by Kevin J. Anderson, *Pattern Recognition* (2003), and *Spook Country* (2007) by William Gibson, which are selected after purpose sampling. They provide a diverse exploration of cyber culture from various perspectives and genres. *Uglies* (trilogy) by Scott Westerfeld offers a dystopian vision of a future where cybernetic enhancements and societal pressures shape identity and agency. This

novel provides valuable insights into the intersection of technology and social conformity, which highlights issues of self-perception and societal control in a technologically advanced society. *Hopscotch* by Kevin J. Anderson presents an engaging narrative that reflects on the impact of technology and cyberculture on personal agency and societal dynamics. Its inclusion allows for an examination of less mainstream but still relevant perspectives on the role of technology in shaping human experiences. William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* and *Spook Country* are seminal works in the genre of cyberpunk. They offer commentary on the digital age's influence on identity, perception, and global connectivity. *Pattern Recognition* explores themes of digital culture, branding, and information overload, while *Spook Country* delves into espionage, technology, and the evolving nature of space and identity in a hyper-connected world. Together, these novels provide a comprehensive view of cyberculture, and examine its impact on identity, agency, and societal structures. They offer a blend of speculative fiction and contemporary themes that are crucial for understanding the complexities of cyberculture in the context of human experience and philosophical inquiry.

By addressing the questions, the dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between technology, structure, and human agency in cyberculture. It sheds light on both the challenges faced by individuals and their methods of navigating and overcoming these obstacles. The analysis focuses on the works of three distinct writers: Scott Westerfeld, Kevin J. Anderson, and William Gibson, each of whom portrays different stages of life and corresponding challenges.

Westerfeld's *Uglies* explores the adolescent phase, where characters confront issues of identity and conformity in a technologically advanced society that imposes physical and



social standards. The novel delves into how the pressures of adolescence, combined with cyber-cultural forces, affect the characters' sense of self and autonomy.

Anderson's *Hopscotch* addresses characters that have recently transitioned from their teenage years into early adulthood. This phase introduces different dilemmas and strategies for reclaiming agency that reflect the unique physical, emotional, and social challenges faced by individuals at this stage of life.

Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* and *Spook Country* feature fully grown, professional characters who confront the complexities of modern cyber culture. Their experiences are shaped by their established careers and mature perspectives that lead to distinct forms of entanglement and resistance against powerful structures that seek to enforce control and conformity.

The separate analysis of these works highlights that the enigmas and challenges related to personal identity and agency, as well as the methods of addressing these crises, vary significantly according to the characters' life stages. Each phase, adolescence, early adulthood, and professional maturity, imposes different physical, emotional, and social bearings and needs. Consequently, the structures that seek to control and enforce conformity also vary and present unique obstacles and solutions for each group of characters.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

In an era where digital technologies increasingly shape our perceptions of reality, the concept of "keeping the real alive" becomes crucial in understanding how cyber culture influences and reflects the human experience. This thesis explores selected works within

cyber culture to examine how they navigate the complex relationship between virtual and tangible realities. By analyzing various digital artifacts—from online narratives and virtual communities to interactive media—this study aims to uncover how these works challenge, reinforce, or redefine our understanding of human agency and the real. Through a critical examination of these texts, the research highlights the tensions and synergies between cyborgs (artificial humans) and humans, thus contributing to a deeper comprehension of the impact of cyber culture on the subjectivity of human freedom. It will also analyze how, in the presence of advanced technology, humans seem struggling to keep their free will and subjectivity alive.

The secondary argument of the research is that the existing model the Transformational Model of Social Activity (TMSA) needs to be revised. Specifically, technology should be considered on par with structure, culture, and agents, rather than as a secondary or auxiliary element. This re-evaluation is crucial because the novels demonstrate how technology, influenced by covert structures, plays a central role in constraining human agency. These hidden structures use technology not as a bridge to greater freedom, but as a means to entangle and restrict the characters' actions.

The thesis also highlights that the human real—authentic human experience and emotional depth—is endangered in the cyberculture portrayed in the selected novels. The protagonists experience a range of adverse effects such as displacement, anxiety, alienation, emotional numbness, physical pain, and homelessness that illustrate how technological advancements and structural manipulations undermine their sense of self and well-being. Despite the technological progress, the novels suggest that true

contentment and fulfillment are rooted in humane emotions and feelings, implying that humanness remains a constant, enduring quality.

In conclusion, this dissertation provides not only a critique of how cyberculture and technology impact human agency but also offers guidance on how individuals might adjust to and navigate this ever-evolving landscape. By analyzing the novels through this lens, the research encourages a detailed understanding of cyber culture and proposes ways to reconcile its challenges with enduring human values and agency.

My research is meticulously structured into several chapters, and each chapter focuses on different aspects of human agency, cyber culture, and identity formation within the framework of critical realism and philosophy. The introductory chapter lays the groundwork for the entire study as it provides an overview of the key themes and objectives. Chapter 2 delves into the concept of the human real. It explores human agency and the evolution of cyber culture, including its values, the intersection with science fiction, and the origins and development of cyberpunk literature. Chapter 3 establishes the theoretical framework and discusses the purpose of philosophy, basic terms, and significant theories from Hume and Bhaskar, as well as the distinctions between different domains of reality and the application of critical realism to literature. Chapter 4 examines identity formation as a mechanism of oppressive social regimes within cyber culture, which focuses on memory and cyborg identities as threats to natural human tendencies. Chapter 5 investigates the influence of religion and philosophical constructs on cyber culture and human agency, while Chapter 6 addresses the impact of global metropolises, surveillance, and the commodification of art on the human real, exploring themes of globalization, homesickness, and the dichotomy between places and non-places. The

research concludes in Chapter 7 and synthesizes the findings and contributions to the field, followed by a comprehensive list of references that support the scholarly work. This structured approach ensures a thorough examination of the complex relationship between human agency, cyberculture, and identity formation within a philosophical context.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CONCEPT OF HUMAN REAL, HUMAN AGENCY AND EVOLUTION OF CYBER CULTURE**

#### **2.1 Human Agency**

##### **2.1.1 Introduction: The Significance of Human Agency**

Human agency or the potential for people to take action and consciously affect the world is fundamental to human existence. It serves as the source from which our decisions, principles, and sense of direction are drawn. But in the convoluted terrain of contemporary thought, the idea of human agency has frequently been disregarded, undercut, or watered down. In order to revive awareness and respect for the human agency as a crucial component of who we are, it is imperative to explore its significance, challenges, and implications in human life.

##### **2.1.2 The Historical Evolution of Human Agency: From Ancient Greece to Modernity**

The historical review explores the evolution of human agency from classical Greek tradition to the Enlightenment. In classical Greece, human agency was closely tied to self-direction and moral considerations, such as the pursuit of virtue and the good life (Frede 2011). The capacity for reason was seen as essential for recognizing and incorporating the good into one's soul. In order to understand agency more dynamically, let's take the work of Plato into consideration where agency seems closely tied to the soul and its faculties (Although Plato didn't explicitly talk about agency). Plato considered the soul to be the seat of reason, emotions, and desires. According to his tripartite theory of the soul, a well-functioning soul consists of reason (logos), spirit (thumos), and appetites (epithumia). Plato believed that the ideal state involved harmony among these elements,

with reason guiding and controlling the passions and desires. Taking it as the underpinning, in my opinion, agency arises from the exercise of reason, allowing individuals to make virtuous choices and act in accordance with moral principles.

Aristotle, a student of Plato, also explored the concept of agency in his ethical and philosophical works. Aristotle emphasized the importance of practical wisdom (phronesis) in making virtuous choices and engaging in ethical action. He viewed humans as rational beings capable of deliberation, judgment, and moral decision-making. Agency, for Aristotle, involved the cultivation of virtues through habituation, leading to the development of a virtuous character. He argued that virtuous actions were the result of individuals acting by their rational faculties and striving for eudemonia, a flourishing life.

In Greek philosophy, the concept of agency was often intertwined with notions of moral responsibility and the pursuit of a good life. It was believed that human beings could exercise reason, make choices, and act following moral principles. While external factors and circumstances might influence human action, philosophers emphasized the importance of personal autonomy, self-reflection, and the cultivation of virtues in realizing one's agency. However, during the Renaissance and Enlightenment, a new understanding of human agency emerged, emphasizing individual autonomy and the freedom of choice (Taylor 1989).

### **2.1.3 The Enlightenment and the Rise of Human Agency**

The Enlightenment and its impact on human desires and aspirations are very significant to comprehend the development of the concept of human agency. Various scholars (Beiser 1996; Gottlieb 2016; Pinker 2018) have argued that Enlightenment thinking, which emerged in the 16th century and continued until the 19th century, emphasized the

rational mind as the sole source of legitimate knowledge. This emphasis led to the development of formal logic and scientific discourse as the ultimate forms of knowledge. The success of rational science in fulfilling human needs gave rise to a shift towards fulfilling desires, and focusing on mental, psychological, and emotional aspects of human life. The Renaissance philosopher, Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola (1463–1494), articulated the early promises of the Enlightenment, envisioning humans as free beings with the ability to shape them as they preferred.

#### **2.1.4 Challenges to Enlightenment Thought and the Crisis of Modernity**

However, as the Enlightenment project progressed, raising collective expectations, some thinkers began to question its hegemony and relevance, particularly in making sense of humanity. The period from the late 19th to the mid-20th century was a time of significant turmoil and strife, including world wars, which challenged the optimistic promises of Enlightenment science and philosophy. Although Enlightenment and Modernism are very different things, yet it led to a growing belief that modernism had failed to address pressing moral and existential questions, undermining the meaningfulness of the human world. Consequently, philosophical literature emerged that analyzed the crisis of the modern world and the resulting malaise of modernity (Olson 2013).

#### **2.1.5 The Crisis of Meaning in the Post-Enlightenment Era**

Consequently, a crisis of meaning emerged in the post-Enlightenment or “postmodern” period. The origins of this crisis can be traced back to the 19th century, with thinkers such as Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Friedrich Nietzsche questioning the ability of modernist rationalism to address existential and moral questions. The

intellectual movements of Marxism, Darwinism, and Freudianism, along with the work of G.W.F. Hegel played significant roles in shaping this crisis (Stewart 2015).

Hayek (1979) proposes that a conceptual alliance between Hegelian rationalism and positivism shaped dominant thought in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both traditions postulate the existence of powerful abstract entities or constructs that exert causal power over the material world. These constructs not only control events, but also have creative or constitutive power: shaping the nature of things and human experiences. However, the casualty of this ontological-epistemic system is human agency itself.

### **2.1.6 The Undermining of Human Agency in Contemporary Theory**

The triumph of modern contemporary social theory undermines the concept of human agency. Within the frameworks of both neo-Hegelian idealism and positivism, the idea of agency is reduced to a mere capacity to do what one wants, devoid of the autonomy to construct one's desires. The convergence of these two traditions is facilitated by their shared requirement for specialized training and education to perceive and understand the march of progress and the hidden abstract forces that govern human action and experience.

Positivism, in particular, introduced the concept of constructs into science, which are hypothetical entities used to explain phenomena at an abstract level. Constructs, such as "stimuli" and "responses," are not directly detectable but are inferred and endowed with real causal power in scientific explanations. These constructs are believed to shape and determine human behavior, overshadowing individual agency. This suggests that those who are not educated to see the world in terms of these constructs are considered ignorant and unable to grasp the true nature of events.



The examples from social psychology illustrate how constructs are used to make invisible social forces visible and to explain human behavior. The presumption of the real existence of constructs and their causal efficacy is prevalent in the language and methodologies of the social sciences. Constructs are referred to as laws, principles, forces, and structures, and they are invoked to account for various human behaviors. This reductionist perspective obliterates human agency by attributing causal power to abstract entities (Milgram 1992).

The convergence of German idealism and Comtean positivism in the late twentieth century has led to a structuralist movement in the humanities and social sciences. This movement emphasizes the recognition and understanding of abstract and causally efficacious structures and systems. While some scholars argue that we have moved beyond structuralist accounts, one can question this claim, as many contemporary explanations still rely on unseen abstractions.

Furthermore, it may be observed the persistence of causal explanations in the social sciences, suggests that scientism, which upholds materialist naturalism and the belief in powerful unseen abstract causes, remains prevalent. These explanatory approaches undermine genuine human agency by emphasizing external rational orders or realities, obtained through sensitivity training, consciousness-raising, or rigorous scientific observation.

Causal explanations grounded in material substances or abstract invisible causes undermine the possibility of meaningful human agency. The concept of human agency, defined as meaningful, purposive self-direction, is hindered by the existence of covert structures that determine human behavior. The more arcane and inaccessible these

structures are, the less agency and freedom individuals have. Paradoxically, even the enlightened elite or intelligentsia, known as the sage, may not possess genuine agency despite their understanding of these structures.

### **2.1.7 The Historical Evolution of Human Agency: From Ancient Greece to Modernity**

The historical review explores the evolution of human agency from classical Greek tradition to the Enlightenment. In classical Greece, human agency was closely tied to self-direction and moral considerations, such as the pursuit of virtue and the good life (Frede 2011). The capacity for reason was seen as essential for recognizing and incorporating the good into one's soul. In order to understand agency more dynamically, let's take the work of Plato into consideration where agency seems closely tied to the soul and its faculties (Although Plato didn't explicitly talk about agency). Plato considered the soul to be the seat of reason, emotions, and desires. According to his tripartite theory of the soul, a well-functioning soul consists of reason (logos), spirit (thumos), and appetites (epithumia). Plato believed that the ideal state involved harmony among these elements, with reason guiding and controlling the passions and desires. Taking it as the underpinning, in my opinion, agency arises from the exercise of reason, allowing individuals to make virtuous choices and act in accordance with moral principles.

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development of a virtuous character. He argued that virtuous actions were the result of individuals acting by their rational faculties and striving for eudemonia, a flourishing life.

In Greek philosophy, the concept of agency was often intertwined with notions of moral responsibility and the pursuit of a good life. It was believed that human beings could exercise reason, make choices, and act following moral principles. While external factors and circumstances might influence human action, philosophers emphasized the importance of personal autonomy, self-reflection, and the cultivation of virtues in realizing one's agency. However, during the Renaissance and Enlightenment, a new understanding of human agency emerged, emphasizing individual autonomy and the freedom of choice (Taylor 1989).

### **2.1.8 The Concept of Agency Beyond Political Libertarianism**

The Enlightenment perspective on human agency exalted individual autonomy and the power of free will. It revered the capacity to choose and shape oneself according to personal preferences as the epitome of human agency. This viewpoint positioned the rational mind as the source of absolute knowledge and freedom, empowering individuals to assert their will onto the world.

However, it's essential to recognize that the concept of agency extends beyond the confines of political libertarianism. While the modern definition of libertarian free will aligns with this perspective, describing human agency as the ability to autonomously choose from among alternatives (Kane 2005), this representation becomes problematic when examined at a theoretical or analytical level.

The essence of choice lies in the presence of reasons, and decisions are influenced by the strength of those reasons. Yet, when reasons become overwhelmingly compelling, they can constrain freedom, rendering the choice compelled rather than freely chosen. Agency is a concept that informs numerous political philosophies. For instance, Humanist Marxism emphasizes the liberation of individuals through critical self-awareness and collective action. Anarchism advocates for the abolition of hierarchical structures and the maximization of individual freedom within a cooperative society. Social democracy seeks to balance individual liberties with social responsibility, promoting equality of opportunity and social welfare.

Moreover, Human agency is a concept that has been central to philosophical inquiry for centuries. In the Enlightenment era, thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and John Locke celebrated individual autonomy and the power of free will (Kant 1785; Locke 1689). They viewed the ability to choose and shape oneself according to personal preferences as the pinnacle of human agency and they position the rational mind as the source of absolute knowledge and freedom.

However, philosophical discussions of agency extend far beyond the Enlightenment thinkers. Various strands of thought, including existentialism, phenomenology, and pragmatism, have dealt with questions of human freedom, responsibility, and self-determination. Existentialists like Jean-Paul Sartre emphasized the existential angst that accompanies freedom. He argues that individuals must take responsibility for their choices in a world devoid of inherent meaning (Sartre 1943). Phenomenologists like Martin Heidegger explored the ways in which our lived experiences shape our understanding of agency, highlighting the intersubjective nature of human existence

(Heidegger 1927). Pragmatists like John Dewey focused on the practical consequences of our actions and stressed the importance of experimentation and adaptation in the pursuit of individual and collective goals (Dewey 1922).

Beyond philosophy, the concept of agency also informs a wide range of political ideologies. For instance, Humanist Marxism emphasizes the liberation of individuals through critical self-awareness and collective action (Gramsci 1971; Marcuse 1964). Marxist thinkers like Antonio Gramsci and Herbert Marcuse argued that true freedom requires the transformation of social and economic structures that perpetuate inequality and exploitation. Anarchism, on the other hand, advocates for the abolition of hierarchical structures and the maximization of individual freedom within a cooperative society (Goldman 1910; Kropotkin 1892). Anarchist thinkers such as Emma Goldman and Peter Kropotkin envisioned a world in which individuals could freely associate and collaborate without coercion or domination. Social Democracy, drawing on both liberal and socialist traditions, seeks to balance individual liberties with social responsibility, which promotes equality of opportunity and social welfare (Rawls 1971; Sen 1999). Social Democratic thinkers like John Rawls and Amartya Sen argued that a just society is one in which all individuals have the capability to pursue their own conception of the good life, free from poverty, discrimination, and oppression.

### **2.1.9 Alternative Understandings of Human Agency**

An alternative understanding of human agency challenges the traditional concept of the autonomous rational self and its ability to impose its will on the world through free choice. While the concept of agency as self-control or self-mastery aligns with the

practical aspects of human life, it is not the foundational basis of human agency (William 2005).

Two types of choices are available. Type 1 choices refer to deliberative, conscious choices made through the imposition of will. However, the analysis reveals that even in Type 1 choices, reasons ultimately prevail and dictate the decision, rendering them no longer genuinely free. This leads to an infinite regress of reasons and decisions, undermining the notion of autonomous freedom.

In contrast, Type 2 choices involve yielding oneself to a perception or conception of the world. This type of agency entails taking on or giving oneself over to a particular understanding or reading of the world. It is not about asserting control but rather about embracing and engaging with the world in evaluative ways. Type 2 choices are more fundamental and occur in the ordinary course of life, without explicit deliberation.

The deeper analysis of both types may lead one to a point that there is no explicit difference in these two choices as one in either situation is controlled and driven by the underlying structures. However, the basic difference between both choices lies on the fact that one considers oneself free in type 1 and in type 2, one considers oneself driven by underlying structures. Rychlak (1988) has described the agency as an “introspective theoretical perspective.” It suggests that agency is characterized by a continuous process of taking up and giving over, rather than the imposition of will through deliberative choices. This understanding emphasizes creativity, open-endedness, and the importance of truth in grounding meaningful agency.

#### **2.1.10 Conclusion: The Restoration of Human Agency**

Human agency is synonymous with creativity, open-endedness, and the capacity for possibility, purpose, and meaning. Humans are constantly engaged in the process of making and remaking themselves, and their past and future are not fixed but subject to ongoing reinterpretation and re-evaluation.

Understanding agency as continuous taking up and giving over does not lead to chaos or randomness. Instead, there are consistent patterns and reasons that can be discerned from the introspective perspective of the agent. Predictability and consistency of behavior stem from shared human conditions, social realities, and environmental constraints. A genuine understanding of human behavior requires an approach that takes into account the individual agent's perspective rather than relying solely on generic theoretical assumptions.

It is emphasized that agency operates best in a reality that acknowledges the existence of truth, understood as knowledge of things as they truly are in their unfolding openness and meaningful possibilities. In contrast, a post-truth world devoid of truth would render agency impotent, purposeless, and devoid of meaning.

The predicament of the contemporary western intellectual tradition has been shaped by a confluence of rationalist and positivist influences. This has resulted in a "disenchanted" world (Taylor 2007) where explanations of human existence and the world are framed in terms of powerful yet unseen abstractions and structures that are only discernible to an educated intelligentsia.

The philosophical landscape neglects the flesh-and-blood human moral agent, as rationalist accounts of human action reduce individuals to mere entities governed by

impersonal laws. The depersonalization caused by mathematical approaches and the reduction of personal experience to measurable and countable entities undermines the recognition of individual uniqueness and inner purpose.

Moreover, the traditional models of agency derived from Enlightenment-inspired rationalism fail due to the infinite regress of causes and reasons. Materialist naturalism, positivist accounts, and post-Hegelian rationalist traditions do not accommodate genuine agency within their frameworks. Without a place for agency in our self-understanding, the concepts of meaning, purpose, morality, and intimacy become untenable.

Postmodern positions, while critical of naturalist explanations, also face ambivalence regarding human agency. Postmodernism encompasses a diverse array of perspectives, making it challenging to offer a succinct summary. However, one common thread is the rejection of Enlightenment rationalism's mistakes while grappling with the task of filling the explanatory space traditionally occupied by laws, forces, and constructs. Postmodernist thinkers often explore the influence of language, discourse, and community as subtle yet powerful forces that shape human thought and action (Lyotard 1984; Derrida 1976). However, it's important to note that these forces can sometimes resemble the very structures and constructs warned against by earlier critiques.

It may be concluded that the recognition of human agency as a fundamental aspect of our existence and the restoration of genuine human agency is essential to understand our humanity and what it means to be human because this can allow the best of our human potential to unfold.

## **2.2 Cyber Culture**



### **2.2.1 The Transformative Impact of Personal Computers on Human Life and Culture**

The advent of personal computers (PCs) in the early eighties transformed, reshaped, and revolutionized not only the ways of human life but also started fashioning human thoughts, controlling human agency, remodeling human habits, and enlightening humanity with new vision and wisdom. Consequently, it brought out an entirely new and diverse outlook on human culture. Initially, this new outlook of the culture was branded with the name of techno culture (Gulengul 2006). Computers became an integral part of human life; one could not detach these machines from humans. It was the era when the bond between the machine and humans appeared inextricable and powerful though more complex, bringing forth ever-increasing symbiosis between them. People started interacting, communicating, and sharing information by using a plethora of digital devices that paved the way for communication breakthroughs which came up with the possibility to connect the entire world with a single network. This worldwide connectivity made the cyber an adage and the ambiance of the era. Cyber means steering or governing and it is derived from the word “cybernetics” coined by Norman Weiner in 1948. According to him, it is the science of control and communication between the machine and the animal. The rapid growth and acceptance of cybernetics in human culture are due to the introduction of multiple and diverse digital gadgets and the emergence of cyborgs in the real world. These novel technologies provided humans with an environment where they underwent a variety of new experiences such as fashioning new identities leaving reality and controlling their own identities. However, this unwarranted reliance on machines enabled them to an extent that machines usurped the privileged status of humans which left humans with certain anxieties. Cyberspace is here

defined as the internet space: whatever we do on the internet, ranging from using social media to email. On the other hand, cyber culture is the accumulation of a set of practices, behaviors, values, modes of thoughts, and attitudes that one acquires manifests, and receives in the era of cyberspace or while using and interacting with cyberspace. One cannot grasp the real meanings of cyber culture without having a clear understanding of cyberspace so it is obligatory to have a clear vision of cyberspace.

### **2.2.2 Cyberspace and Cyber Culture**

The pioneer of the concept of cyber culture is famous science fiction writer William Gibson who coined the term in his popular novel *Neuromancer* (1984) while describing an imaginary 'data scape' in which the characters move by 'jacking in.' In this way, they attach their consciousness to computers and networks. The manifestation of Gibson's cyberspace can be vividly seen in the following excerpt from his novel *Necromancer*, "Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by millions of legitimate operators... A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity, Lines of light ranged in the non- space of the mind, clusters, and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding" (Gibson 67). Though Gibson was not familiar with the scientific and computing progressions at that time, this fictional depiction of cyberspace nonetheless categorically provided the writers with a lens to foresee the complexities, challenges, and anxieties of the cyber culture. Moreover, Gibson, at that time, did not imagine what he was bringing in the field of science fiction, as well as in the real world. As he stated: "assembled word cyberspace from small and readily available components of language, Neologic spasm, the primal act of pop poetics. Preceded any concept whatever. Slick and hollow waiting received

meaning. All I did, folded words as taught. Now, other words accrete in the interstices” (Gibson 27).

In essence, cyber culture is the component of two technologies: AI (Artificial Intelligence) and biotechnology (the use of biology to develop new products, methods and organisms intended to improve human health and society). It is not possible to separate them because both have been helping and affecting each other to bring about revolution in the lives of humans. The entire outlook of the culture is shaped by these two technologies. Moreover, Stone (1995) believes that computer technology gives birth to the regime of techno sociality. Similarly, Rabinow (1996) asserts that biotechnology gives rise to bio sociality. These two regimes are the roots of what I call cyber culture as they typify the reality that we are the product of a techno-bio culture that is structured on the latest advancements of science and from which escape is out of the question. Benson and Standing (2000) spotlight the reciprocal rapport of technology and culture by asserting, "Culture is defined by technology, which in turn redefines culture." According to them, cyber culture is the manifestation of interactions between humans and machines, especially computers and cyborgs. Additionally, Escobar, (1994) claims that cyber culture, "originates in a well-known social and cultural matrix." It is the matrix where machines and humans rely on each other and try to overpower each other by asserting their domination over each other. Consequently, cyber culture is the culture where humans turn into cyborgs, where it is not possible to split reality from virtual reality, where machines control the agency of humans, where art and literature are dependent upon AI, and where one exists as multiple beings at one time, where every human

activity is performed and controlled through the computer, where human real and agency is under threat and where everything is transformed by technology.

### **2.2.3 Cyber Culture Values**

It is debated whether cyberculture is inherent in the values of its predecessor culture or if it has nourished and cultivated its own culture. Some people believe that it has contrived its values out of the current milieu, while others trace its roots in the previous culture because humans remain a very vital entity in cyberculture. Anderson (1997) highlights the importance of speed, reach, openness, and quick response in cyber culture, which emphasizes its dynamic and fast-paced nature. Castells (2001) contributes to this discussion by tracing the roots of cyber culture to cyber hacking, which he argues is driven by meritocratic values and a strong emphasis on human agency.

Building upon this foundation, Jordan (1999) focuses on the role of power in shaping cyber culture. He asserts that techno power structures the norms and values within this digital realm. Knupfer (1997) and Morse (1997) examine the gendered dimensions of cyber culture, particularly emphasizing the influence of masculinity on its values and dynamics.

Additionally, Kolko et al. (2000) explore the impact of American values on cyber culture and highlight the significant role played by American internet users in shaping its norms and behaviors. Essays in Shields (1996) provide a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of cyber cultural values, including power dynamics, identity transformation, censorship, and the intersection of race, gender, and religion within cyber culture.

While other scholars put forth the theory that cyber culture is totally a novel culture which emerges out of the recent revolution of AI and IT. They do not see any foundation or any direct relationship of cyber culture with the previous cultures or any modern culture. Levy (2001) speculates that cyber culture manifests the growth of "a new universal, different from the cultural forms that preceded it because it is constructed from the indeterminateness of global meaning." In Porter's 1997 collection, he, considering the cyber culture a blessing, asserts that the internet and AI are the "middle landscape" between civilization and wilderness which offers a platform to create new norms and cultural values as well as new cultural modes and ethics. Waters (1997) goes so far in his optimistic notion about cyber culture and cyberspace that he creates an affinity between cyber culture and spiritualism declaring cyberspace as a platform where human consciousness is "raised to a higher level."

#### **2.2.4 Cyber Culture Studies**

The expansion of the use of the internet, the miracles of the internet and its related technology, and ever-growing human enslavement to the internet and machine opened new horizons for the researchers in the field of cyberspace as they started to investigate the transformations occurring in human life due to the hegemony of internet and technology in the 90s. The scope of research in cyberspace did not limit itself to just computer science and its technicalities, rather it invited sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists to analyze the role of cyberspace in their respective fields which ultimately turned into a different and peculiar culture which was known as cyber culture. This research convinced David Silver (2000) to declare cyber culture studies a separate field of studies and he identified three different stages or phases in its development.

He called the first phase ‘popular cyber culture,’ which mostly focused upon the personal experiences of the people using the internet and on the usage of the Internet itself as well as the advancements made in the field of the internet and its related technology. This phase also evaluated the efficacy of the books to teach and guide people to use the Internet. The analysis of this period is based on experience and is mostly descriptive. However, there is no unanimous position about the influences and the role of internet and the technology upon human: some are optimist while considering it a wonderful help for humanity. On the other hand, some are very pessimistic as for them it will bring havoc in the near future in the lives of humans by checking their agency. Silver calls the optimists techno futurists who are utopian and are over-optimists about the positive and fruitful influence of the internet and its related technology upon humans. Silver asserts that the writers who write in US magazines like *Wired* or *Mondo* (2000) embody techno futurism in their writings as they see cyberspace as a new world to colonize and discover. *Rheingold* (1993) can be seen as an incarnation in this regard. On the other hand, the writers who predominantly see the threats and anxieties for humans in cyber culture are dystopian and are categorized by Silver as ‘Neo Luddites,’ (see, e.g. *Sale* 1995). Silver concludes by stating that “most writing during this phase falls somewhere in between these dystopian rants or utopian raves” (Silver 20). These conflicting and contradicting approaches are still going in the research of cyber culture studies. Now both of these approaches have their own respective theories and frameworks which are further enriching cyber culture studies and helping humans with their assertions and suppositions.

Silver discusses the second phase under the banner of 'Cyber culture Studies'. In this phase there are two pivotal concentrations which address both online and offline life. They are studies of community and studies of identity. In this phase, research explored how community and identity are refashioned in cyber culture: creating a direct relationship between cyberspace and cyber culture. This phase incorporates sociology, psychology, economics, and anthropology with cyber culture studies, providing a broader scope and vision to see the problems of identity and conformity in online and offline life. Silver claims that most of the research in this phase has a spirit of optimism about the future of humans especially in the presence of the internet and advanced technology. The confusion and the amalgamation of online and offline in one's life is another major focus of this phase where one finds blurring between real life and virtual life. Just as this dualism is still a source of trauma and anxiety for humans, so it remains a burning topic of cyber culture studies today. This phase witnesses the rise of cyber culture studies as a distinctive and special discipline where students are awarded degrees and diplomas.

According to Silver, the third stage of the evolution of cyber culture studies begins in the latter part of the 90s. He calls the third phase 'Critical Cyber culture Studies'. He finds the study in an advanced and well-organized discipline in this phase. He identifies four major thematic concerns in this developed phase of cyber culture studies. First is the continuity of the second that is to contextualize cyber culture with cyberspace by figuring out the simultaneous taking place of social, economic, and political activities as well as interactions both online and offline. Researchers, such as Miller and Slater (2000), draw connections between real life and online life with the help of empirical research. The variety of discursive narratives and constructions in cyberspace is taken as the 2nd

thematic concern of this phase by Silver. It covers all those constructions and narratives about cyberspace that are formed and constructed in other fields of study such as in literature, films, and video games. As far as literature is concerned, it is cyberpunk novels which offer various representations of cyberspace and cyber culture, highlighting all the effects and consequences of this technology on humans of this era as well as on the future of mankind. The availability of modern technology and the internet, and restrictions on its use based on race, class, gender, and ethnicity are the third major focus of this phase according to Silver. This research endeavors to explore the competition to control and capture cyberspace. This research also focuses on the marginalization, identity formation, social, economic, and political exploitation of the third world by the advanced nations (see, e.g., *Nakamura* 2002). Thus, cyber culture studies is a very important and significant field of studies as it deals with all those problems, conflicts, strategies, and anxieties that we face and apply to combat the technology to keep our real alive. Silver very aptly concludes the discussion on the role and scope of cyber culture studies by stating, “Cyber culture is best comprehended as a series of negotiations that take place both online and off... In the new millennium, it is the task of cyber culture scholars to acknowledge, reveal and critique these negotiations to better understand what takes place within the wires” (Silver 30).

### **2.2.5 Science Fiction and Cyber Culture**

It is difficult to trace the origin and thereby come up with an impeccable definition of science fiction owing to its perplexing themes, diverse techniques, baffling approaches, cryptic settings, and use of scientific terminology. One widely accepted theory about the origin of this genre states that it is the culmination of the twentieth century which is



nourished by the Western experiences of technology and its growth. This narrative is true as far as its popularity is concerned as it flourished rapidly in the twentieth century. However, we have to go back to the Greek epoch to excavate its genesis where we find Lucian of Samosata depicting and exhibiting the themes of the clashes and traveling between different planets in his famous *Vera Historia* ('True History').

Similarly, in the 17th century we have a clear glimpse of early forms of this genre in the stories of Cyrano de Bergerac's *Voyage to the Moon* (1661). Calvino declares Cyrano the pioneer of science fiction. Calvino analyses the philosophic and poetic features of Cyrano's work, "Cyrano extols the unity of all things, animate or inanimate, the combinatorial of elementary figures that determine the variety of living forms; and above all he conveys the sense of the precariousness of the processes behind them. That is, how nearly man missed being man, and life, life, and the world, the world" (3). This deep analysis of Cyrano's work shows that the writers of science fiction have long highlighted the philosophical, social, and psychological problems that humans face when technology is manifested in society. This analysis also challenges the criticism of science fiction that it has nothing to do with reality.

If it is believed that imaginary journeys, gothic settings, mysterious explorations, supernatural beings, and metaphysical expeditions are taken as the predominant features of science fiction, there will be no exaggeration to include many classical works in the ambit of science fiction and their writers would have considered the precursor of this genre, the works such as 'Homer's *Odyssey*, Dante's *Divina Commedia*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, More's *Utopia*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Voltaire's *Candide*, Rousseau's *Emile* and Goethe's *Faust*,' are all

possible candidates to be listed as works of science fiction. These works illustrate themes, such as human struggles against supernatural entities, confrontations of humans with the forces of evil who want to subvert human agency, and war with the aliens: making them a possible basis of science fiction.

When it comes to depicting the relationship between humans and machines or technology it is none other but Mary Shelley who is often understood to be the real predecessor of modern science fiction as she not only encompasses the opportunities that can come in the way of humans to raise their standard of living by embracing technology. However, at the same time, she encapsulates those threats that can dehumanize and capsize human agency with the misuse of technology in her famous work *Frankenstein* (1818). In this book, the protagonist, in order to serve humanity, creates an artificial being with the aid of technology. His intentions are very positive as he wants to use science to empower humans but, ironically, his creation appears as an emblem of all those challenges and repercussions that humans have to face when science produces a monstrosity. Instead of benefiting humanity, Dr Frankenstein's creation proves catastrophic. This work is actually a reworking of the myth of Faust, where a scholar overreaches and challenges the principles of nature, and thus is ruined. This theme of antagonism between science and nature would become a major flash point of later science fiction. The novel also highlights the role of all those power structures and mechanisms that transform this initially good being into a monster. Here Shelley broaches another debate: that science itself is not threatening, rather it is a system that is governed by humans who manipulate technology to play with the agency of humans. This debate is one of the most popular debates among science fiction writers, even in the late twentieth century.

Shelley's art also projects another notion that serves later science fiction that in the presence of machines humans experience the otherness which threatens their identity and ultimately challenges their real as one can observe the monstrous creatures of Leviathan, in *The Fly* and the *Alien Series*. The writers Jules Verne and H.G. Wells of the late 19th century played pivotal roles in the evolution of science fiction through their fiction as their fiction dwells upon the stories that depict scientific adventures which are quite plausible. *The Time Machine* (1895) by Wells appears as a whistle-blower for the later science fiction. Similarly, *The War of the World* (1898) exhibits the theme of aliens' attack on the Earth. One cannot declare such fiction to be mere works of fantasy as they are deeply embedded in the culture of that time: representing the anxieties as well as the cultural degeneration due to the bursts of technology. Such fiction also highlights the destructive consequences of technology as well as the loss of Victorian values and the declining imperialism of the West. Wells also inspired latter writers of science fiction who portray the apocalypse in their work. For instance, *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) by John Wyndham portrays the plight of a man and woman who are the last people on the earth after total apocalypse and who wish to resurrect the human life in its original spirit. Such a work of fiction endorses the fact that science fiction is not just a delineator of the remote future, but rather it can also envisage the challenges of the present: particularly the challenges that we face due to the prolific advancement of science. Wells branded his science fiction as "scientific romances" because it amalgamated the natural with the supernatural with his fertile imagination. Here it is noteworthy that romance does not refer to emotional and sentimental popular fiction. Rather the concept of romance, according to Wells, can be traced from the gothic novels, because in these books the real

is portrayed by enshrining it with bizarre and stupendous distortions. The gothic novels themselves are precursors of science fiction, particularly the latest science fiction, known as cyberpunk because of their shared exploration of themes related to the unknown, the supernatural, and the impact of technology on society.

Another very crucial stage was set up for science fiction in 1926 with the emergence of the American magazine, *Amazing Stories*, under the editorship of Hugo Gernsback. This magazine soon scaled the heights of popularity. On one hand, it aspired great writers of science fiction; on the other hand, some of its pulp fiction and films received very sharp criticism which earned negative fame for science fiction. Gernsback, the editor of this magazine, had a very confused and vague notion about the perfect science fiction. On one hand, being himself a scientist, he longed for a piece of scientific knowledge and information in the stories to enhance the knowledge of the young scientists; on the other hand, he wanted it to be “a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision” (Gernsback 4). Gernsback’s stylistic vision spawned a series of space operas that are considered the soul of the pulp era of science fiction produced in pulp magazines created by proficient writers. These stories were “hackneyed adventure tales in which heroes outfitted in dubious space metal wrecked alien worlds and rescued space maidens”(ibid 5). The paradoxical aesthetics of the stories of Gernsback created such a stir that the magazines of the late twenties and thirties such as *Wonder Stories* and *Astounding Stories* followed in the footsteps of Gernsback. The founder of *Astounding Stories* was John W. Campbell who regarded science fiction as an important genre that could wrestle with the facts of technology and its influences upon individuals as well as on the whole society. He used his platform to examine the dangers of advanced

technology especially when it is manipulated by hidden structures. At the same time, Campbell did not ignore the aesthetics of literary style that are produced through sophisticated narrative techniques and an arduous approach to the subject matter.

Campbell's efforts bore fruit in the form of the rise of great science fiction writers such as Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, Theodore Sturgeon, and Arthur C. Clarke. Their works put forth the major themes of this genre as their era was marked as the golden era of science fiction. According to Grolier, the major themes are, "robots, alternate worlds, faster-than-light travel, the seeding of the galaxies by human or alien cultures, the meeting of humans and aliens and its many astonishing consequences, and, in the later 1940s, the full range of possibilities presented by nuclear power" (6). In the 1950s, science fiction shifted its focus to explore the impacts of technology on individuals, as well as on the survival of the planet. It mostly talks about the role of technology in the daily chores where human habits are formed and where different structures and mechanisms directly implement the technology to mold individuals according to their wishes and play their role in covert presence which could not be easily figured out and one blames the technology for every trouble and crisis. .

This distinctive era of science fiction is known as the new wave. The period of the New Wave produced great writers like Brian Aldiss and J.G. Ballard. The rapid growth of the urban population, environmental pollution, dangers of radiation, and the role of technology in the rise of crimes especially related to drugs, and sex, are the major leitmotifs of the New Wave. Thus, unlike their predecessors who delineated the future of humans and technology and their relationship, the writers of the New Wave prefer to live in the present and explore the relationship between man and machines, the clash of

values. A concern with the evil designs of humans against humanity with the aid of machines and technology, and anxieties of the people about the atomic war and its consequences, particularly fears of the apocalypse, make this science fiction akin to the cyberpunk literature as it too depicts the machinations of modern technology and its consequences for humans. Hence science fiction, ranging from gothic novels to Wells, from Gernsback to New Wave, from Cyberpunk to contemporary science fiction, through its intermingling of reality and fantasy, never aims to escape reality. Rather it enables the readers to understand the challenges of the complex and puzzling reality through de-familiarization. As Kingsley Amis indicates in *New Maps of Hell* “the fantasy worlds of science fiction do not merely ask us to address the part played by science in our lives but also to evaluate the role of pseudo-sciences such as sociology, anthropology, linguistics, psychology and theology” (7). They never endeavor to thrust the people with knowledge as it is an entity rather they pursue us to explore what the knowledge is. As Darko Suvin argues, “In examining science fiction, cognition is a more relevant term than science” (8).

J.G. Ballard does not follow the convention of science fiction which aims to foresee the apocalyptic catastrophe with the invasion of aliens from other planets or the machines’ ultimate victory over humans. On the contrary, he addresses the instability of the knowledge in cyber culture through de-familiarization. His narratives portray the monstrosity of science and its repercussions in the techno-culture, as he claims while introducing his famous work *Crash* (1973): “The future is ceasing to exist, devoured by the all-voracious present. We have annexed the future into the present, as merely one of those manifold alternatives open to us” (9). The manifestation of meshed urban scenes, the mutilated bodies, and chaos everywhere is the emblematic presentation of a sense of

gothic loss in *Crash* (1973), which endorses the conviction that now science fiction writers have decided to remain in the present instead of going to distant future. As Fred Botting maintains, “The loss of human identity and the alienation of self from both itself and the social bearings in which a sense of reality is secured is presented in the threatening shapes of increasingly dehumanized environments, machinic doubles, and violent, psychotic fragmentation” (10). According to David Punter, the clash and conflicts between individuals and dehumanized environment are the nucleus of the writings of Ballard (11). Ballard’s writings thrust individuals into a techno-culture, which has already been transformed by technology: helplessly asking them to compete with the machines and at the same time strive for keeping their identity alive. Ballard sets the future of this genre by instructing that now it is no time to travel to other planets, rather it is the voice of the time to have a journey into one’s isolated and estranged. . This self, trapped between the hard machines and roads, works as traffic lines and the soft human body. Similarly, the motorcar serves an emblematic purpose as it is the emblem of technology. As Stephen Metcalf argues, the motorcar is implemental to the construction of “a terminal eroticism of technology as it collides with the human body and shatters it into fragments, violently hollowing out a subjectivity which is deposited as waste”(14). The vivid description of accidents, where human bodies are badly and horribly mutilated, tells the stories of the dominance of machines upon humans and how machines are mapped over the human body. The crashes in *Crash* are consequences of the techno-culture. It is not just male authors who use science fiction to describe the relationship of technology with humans and the circumstances of the culture where technology is flourishing.

Female authors like Angela Carter and Doris Lessing exhibit social degeneration and cultural depletion in their works of science fiction. Both these writers investigate how technology, serves covert mechanisms as a contrivance to aggravate the issues of gender and sexuality and creates the opportunity for society to curtail the agencies of individuals: predominantly the agency of women. However, they are agreed on one point that the human real, in actuality, is always affected by the superstructures such as morality, metaphysical structures, and patriarchy, more than they are by science. Wherever it appears that science is aggravating the social issues and directly challenging human real, it is working as a tool of any one of the above structures or any other covert structure. Doris ventures those metaphysical assumptions about the binary rapport of good and evil are more pivotal than science in the course of evolution of human history and the universe on the whole. By the same token, Carter in her futuristic science fiction such as *Heroes and Villains* (1969) and *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) satirize the social and cultural binaries such as masculinity/femininity, reality/fantasy, love/hate, and good/evil which appears to be inspired from gothic tradition. These texts ratify my assertion, that owing to the fluid generic boundaries of science fiction, any final definition is difficult, as it is a common practice of the writers to interweave the scientific motifs with themes that are apparently seen as non-science fictional. Because of this connection, one can come across many instances in literature where writers very shrewdly appear to experiment in literature by offering cross-pollination between science fiction and other genres of fiction.

One of the examples of these experiments is *Cosmic Trilogy* comprising out of the *Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943), and *That Hideous Strength* (1945) by C.S. Lewis. The satirical dystopian works *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley and *Nineteen*



*Eighty-Four* by George Orwell, on one hand, possess such characteristics that assure the readers that they are works of science fiction; on the other hand, they render the political and sociological issues and complexities which cannot be imagined in science fiction as it is associated with fantasy and entertainment. The works of both these writers underpin the role of powerful state institutions that took full advantage of advancements in technology to usurp the free agency of their people. They appear not to be a criticism of science, rather they highlight the covert mechanisms that control human fate.

Margaret Atwood is another science fiction writer who uncovers the hidden machinations of a powerful structure—religious fundamentalism—that asserts its political tyranny by the narrative of nationalism in her dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tales* (1986). The novel depicts how technology is used to transform the human body, chiefly the bodies of women, into a perfect model which is achieved at the cost of their biological drives and cultural desires: upsetting their free will and subverting their real. Taking science fiction in this direction, writers of cyberpunk and post-cyberpunk play a very significant role as they offer a dystopian interpretation of both the present and past: keeping in their mind the phenomenal progress in the field of science and technology and its relationship with the overt and covert structures, as well as with the independent mechanisms that intentionally or unintentionally govern humans or cyborgs. Thus, cyberpunk and post-cyberpunk are the latest phases of science fiction.

### **2.2.6 Origin of Cyberpunk Literature**

No genre appears without being influenced by any cultural milieu; rather every genre has a peculiar reason to appear, as it springs out of something already existing either in the form of its replica or its entire contrary. Correspondingly, cyberpunk literature can claim

its roots in the detective fiction of the 1920s as far as the style, setting, and characters are concerned. It appears to emerge out of the hard-boiled fiction of the late 1920s and early 1930s. On their part, the hard-boiled writers defied the traditions of contemporary crime fiction known as the golden age both in style and thematic concerns. The golden age was the age of post-Sherlock-Holmes, where we find narrow settings such as the small apartments in the cities or the countryside and in these setting the protagonist struggles to resolve and detect the crime through his wisdom, which is always based on logic and ultimately comes up with the solution substantiating his heroic personality. On the contrary, the hard-boiled writers set their stories in chaos by depicting the scenes of formless cities and remote areas, where certainty and stability are questioned along with the question of the currency of logic. As Ian Ousby writes, “Their heroes embark on journeys through the city, taking in its extremes of glamour and sleaze. Though they need to solve mysteries, they usually do so by stirring up trouble and being tough enough to handle the consequences. Hard-boiled endings, rather than returning society to order or vindicating the power of reason, affirm their heroes’ ability to survive against the odds” (17).

One can find this parallel between the hero of cyberpunk and the hero of detective fiction *Red Harvest* (1929) by Dashiell Hammett where the hero is left isolated in a chaotic and highly corrupt society. He is required to execute his duty single-handedly, even though he has been deprived of the sense of belonging. The hero finds himself in the midst of the brutality of the city. It is only the faculty of toughness that helps him to establish order. Chandler amplifies the isolation of his hero to defeat his enemy in *The Big Sleep* (1939) in ways that parallel the connection between his hero and a medieval gallant knight who

always knocked down the monster alone and thereby proves his valor. This idea aligns with cyberpunk on two levels; firstly, there is a vivid affinity between the adventures and the ordeals of heroes of the medieval age and the heroes and heroines of cyberpunk are indicative of the traditional pursuit as seen in Gibson's *Count Zero*, *Virtual Light* and *Idoru*. However, in cyberpunk, the dragons are not traditional rather they are in the garb of greedy capitalism.

A second parallel is that cyberpunk resonates with the gothic sensibility adopted by Chandler. Another genre that has provided the footsteps to be followed by cyberpunk is dystopian fiction, which is recurrently echoed in cyberpunk. Scenarios of apocalypse and post-apocalypse, which are among the most debated predicament of cyberpunk, are envisaged in Bernard Wolfe's *Limbo* (1952) where he takes us to North America which is going through a transition period after the nuclear apocalypse. This novel also highlights the role of invasive embodied technologies, especially lobotomy, in the daily life of humans. Themes of body transformation, cyborgs, and the miracle of biotechnology are part of cyber culture as visible in Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination* (1955). This novel highlights another feature of cyberpunk as it contrives a chaotic and anarchic society where the boundaries between acceptable norms and criminal conduct are blurred and one is unable to discriminate between an acceptable deed and criminal action.

The control of human thoughts, actions, and minds, as well as different visions of the future, are the principles of cyberpunk which are exhibited in another masterpiece of dystopian fiction that is Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) where the pivotal character Alex's mind is controlled and his agency is restricted. This scene is replicated time and again in later cyberpunk as in Gibson's *Case*, *Angie Mitchell*, *Laney*

*and Slick*. Furthermore, Burgess's amplification of an intricate language, "Nadsat"—one that conflates in pastiche style; Cockney, Latin, rhyming slang Russian, and other idioms and registers—could also be considered as a prevision of cyberpunk's neologisms, idiosyncratic diction, and jargons. The discussion on the origin of cyberpunk literature cannot be concluded without relating that cyberpunk works have many things to share with post-modern literature and films, which is why many cyberpunk novels and movies are taught in the academic courses of post-modern literature. However, it does not mean that the entire cyberpunk literature can be taken as post-modern literature.

Still, there are a number of post-modern novels that bear similarities with cyberpunk literature. For instance, William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1959) is based on the theme of junk viruses and the excessive consumption of drugs that send people into trances where they experience repulsion and attraction towards a single object, idea, and action simultaneously. The binaries such as fantasy-reality, humor-pathos, crooked medical theories- erotic dreams appear blurred, fused, and mingled with one another that open new horizons for cyberpunk writers about such thematic features in their works. The uncertainty, perplexity, labyrinth, and isolation are the chief characteristics of the world where Pynchon throws his heroine, Oedipal Maas, to solve the riddle with the help of hints, some clues, and a hypothesis. At the same time, she does not know whether the riddle is real or fake. Challenges to the notion of reality are very crucial in works of cyberpunk. Along with the fluidity of reality, Pynchon prefigures other important aspects of cyberpunk, including the amalgamation of different cultures, metaphoric depiction of technology, and delineation alien characters, in *The Crying of a Lot 49* (1966). While analyzing the influence of Pynchon on the cyberpunk literature, Brian McHale observes

that Pynchon's "paranoid vision of a world controlled by multinational corporations, who are controlled, in turn, by the self-actuating technologies upon which their power depends"(18).

The subject matter and the concerns of cyberpunk writers are also vividly addressed in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1984), which subverts the idea that capitalist society is an ideal that offers a blissful and comfortable life for everyone free of any danger. The novel exposes the vulnerability of human society against the power of technology as the entire environment turns polluted and contaminated as a result of an industrial accident. Another event in the novel that upholds the mirror to ideals of social perfection is an event when an experimental drug fails to bring the desirable results, and instead causes fear, panic, and psychological mayhem in a large circle of society. Thus, this novel evokes the serious repercussions for real humans in the presence of modern technology. DeLillo also satirizes the concealed role of commodification and media in the formation of human identity and the control of the likes, tastes, wishes, aims, and actions of humans. The novel highlights the role of the masses of information received by humans in their lives: one of the major characters takes the sleep muttering of his daughter as a work of beautiful poetry, but in actuality it is the collection of the words of TV commercials. This shows how commodification plays with the real of humans. A very serious threat to human real is propagated in postmodern fiction which is the persistent surveillance of humans by making them subject to electronic and social media. This threat is the malady of cyber culture but it is professed by John Brunner's *Shockwave Rider* (1975) which raises the question of the real humans as they are identified not by their real but by their computerized identities such as their email ID, their Twitter

accounts, and their NIC. This renders them encoded data that is directly controlled and governed by the agencies and government.

It cannot be proclaimed that the phenomena of cyberpunk purely originated from literary evolution, rather it has emerged on the scene of this world as the result of many hidden and apparent mechanisms conflating with one another such as the advancement of technology, a glut of information on the internet, multiple social media platforms, commodification, and surveillance on national and international level. In cyberpunk, the word “cyber” connotes the new relationship between humans and machines, especially when machines have become an integral part of humans owing to miracles of the science of cybernetics. As for as the word “cybernetics” is concerned, it is coined first time in 1948 by Norbert Wiener (1894–1964) in his famous treatise *Cybernetics* that discusses the control and communication both in animals and machines. According to that book, the origin of the word cybernetics is the Greek word Kubernetes, which denotes steersman. Wiener identifies one common factor between the mechanical bodies and biological bodies that both work under their autonomous and self-regulatory system of control and communication.

Wiener, while relating the evolution of machines, argues that there are four different phases of history. According to him, the first period is pre-technological which he refers to as the golemic age. For him, the second phase is the period of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries which he calls the age of clocks and the third important phase is the age of steam that took place in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The most advanced is the age of communication and cybernetics which is the current phase that started in 20<sup>th</sup> century. The analogy of the machine for the body is based on the body’s inherent characteristic to

receive any signal of communication and the capability of responding to the information and knowledge it receives through its sensory mechanism. This notion of similarity between machine and body offers a new perspective of research in the field of cybernetics which aims to design machines according to the mechanism of communication of the body. To achieve this, cybernetics takes the nervous apparatus as a model which operates through a powerful control system of the brain. The consequences of the frequent interaction of machines and bodies are the most debated topic of cyberpunk literature. It discusses the identity of the cyborgs which are modeled on the model of the body and its nervous system. The writers of cyberpunk extrapolate the challenges faced by the real humans in the presence of the cyborgs as the cyborgs claim to be the new incarnation of the human real. Thus, cybernetics unhinges the imagination of the writers of cyberpunk by forcing them to see both the negative and positive results of this field. Another field of knowledge that stirs cyberpunk is the revolution in the field of digital technology and artificial intelligence. The invention of the Turing machine by the English Mathematician, Alan Mathison Turing, marks the beginning of the era of computerized-based artificial intelligence. The writers of cyberpunk expose the hidden mechanisms which control AI and which manipulate the free agency of humans, especially the agency of the common people.

### **2.2.7 Cyberpunk as a Genre**

Most of critics agree that the dawn of the cyberpunk genre was the years 1983 and 1984. The short story of Bruce Bethke published in *Amazing Science Stories* in November 1983 gave this genre the name it bears as the story was titled *Cyberpunk*. It is Gardner Dozois who used this term for the first time while analyzing the works of Catigan, Gibson, and

Sterling. David Porush explores the common and major focus of these writers and argues that what links them is the question: “What aspect of humanity makes us human?”(20). Such concerns, anxieties, and questions appear in cyberpunk whenever real humans confront, interact, and face cyborgs, androids, and the gadgets of AI which make humans uncomfortable, vulnerable, and impaired. Cyberpunk also unveils the conflict between natural and artificial, where humans are unable to discriminate natural from artificial because cyborgs are the replica of humans.

The effects of creating boundaries between real humans and artificial humans are vividly depicted in the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electronic Sheep?* (1972) by Philip K Dick. In the novel, the protagonist finds his identity and agency in danger in the presence of replicators. In order to confirm his identity as a real human he devises a test to discriminate replicants from real humans. This test assesses the level of replicants do not possess empathy so the test discriminates between the real and artificial humans on that basis. Thus, according to the writer, it is human feelings and emotions that can be taken as a yardstick to differentiate real and artificial humans. However, it is suggested in the novel that even the androids and other cyborgs can exhibit empathy. So the writer has broached the debate of the essence of real for the writers of cyberpunk.

The quest for one’s real identity and one’s free agency shape the characters of cyberpunk. The characters are the victim of split personality. They are rebels, and psychopaths, and are fighting for their survival; in other words, they struggle to adjust in their novel identity. Most of the cyberpunk works take place in settings where the characters are directly or indirectly associated with the computer or internet, depicting the epoch of the future where AI and biotechnology perpetuate, which blurs the reality by interspersing



the virtual reality and the actual reality. The characters are indulged in cyberspace activities and are fully transformed biologically owing to the latest advancements in biotechnology. Such a setting is on display in an original novel of cyberpunk *Neuromancer* (1984). The story revolves around a computer cowboy who is a secret illicit computer operator in an internet organization where the data of the entire world is preserved. It is the story of the crimes that are committed by computer users, the story of frauds on the internet, the story of the deceptions through the internet, the story of the power struggle, the story of conquering cyberspace, and the story of controlling and usurping the free will of humans by the powerful institutions and agencies, the story of the wars of the cooperative entities where common men are used as tools. The wonders of biotechnology are manifested in the novel as we are told that the natural organ of the body can very easily be replaced with the artificial one. This achievement renders the possibility of the commodification of human bodies as there exists an illegal market where human parts and genetic material are traded illegally.

Similarly, the different powers and abilities are obtained through advanced surgeries as Molly, a main character, enhances her ability to see in the dark by implanting a special mirror-shade upon her eyes, and in order to fight she fits lethal blades under her nails. The depiction of reality in cyberpunk is also analogous with cyber culture as Vivian Sobchack states that in cyberpunk it is “cognitive mapping and poetic figuration of social relations as these are constituted by new technological modes of ‘being-in-the-world’” (23). Larry McCaffery asserts that such cognitive mapping enables cyberpunk to exhibit the powerful and distressing technological logic that manifests the complex postmodern condition, concocted out of “equal measures of anger and bitter humor, technological

know-how and formal inventiveness”. He further argues that cyberpunk “systematically distorts our sense of whom or where we are, of what is ‘real’ at all, of what is most valuable about human life” (24). The writers of cyberpunk excavate another challenge to the reality and identity in the cyber culture as in this culture both identity and reality are commoditized and they appear unstable as one can refashion one’s body by purchasing new body organs and can thereby alter one’s identity.

It is a common practice in many cyberpunk works that people intentionally and frequently alter their identities as in the works of G.A. Effinger’s trilogy *When Gravity Fails* (1987), *A Fire in the Sun* (1990), and *The Exile Kiss* (1991), where the characters place a special chip in their already modified brains to acquire their desired identities. Moreover, they can buy software specially designed for some specific human traits and patterns called ‘moddies’ from the market. However, while playing with the theme of identity commodification, Effinger in his trilogy unveils the bitter truth that in this hierarchical cyber culture society, the fruit of advanced technology is not shared equally among all members of society. Rather the elite class uses the technology to kill the poor people brutally to get their body organs. It is also a common practice in the trilogy that the software is made from the data of human emotions and feelings collected from humans directly by engaging them in some emotional activity and recording the emotions at the same time. This abuse of the human brain and feelings is taken as an encroachment upon the human agency and its unadulterated identity. This mental rape allows the software to gush through the memory of the individuals which, consequently, unhinges the privacy of the individuals and plays with the memory of the individuals, which is an important mechanism of free human agency or a peculiar feature of human real according

to Bhaskar. The same predicament with more conviction has been rendered in the film *Strange Days* (1996) by Kathryn Bigelow where the characters can relive any kind of event such as the event of fear, anger, hate, love success, and failure by using a portable device containing the software in it that are formed from data collected from the minds of people. These experiences enable people to predict the future as well as decipher the memories of individuals that are a serious threat to the free agency and privacy of the individuals. Hence, this film presages the anxieties and dilemmas of the post-humans in the flood of technology especially in the cyber culture.

Early cyberpunk writers were very sensitive about the dependence of humans on the transformation of their personalities and especially the role of technology in the formation of the identity, which can pose serious threats to the identity of real humans, which is comprised of free agency, independent and private memory, emotions and feelings. The formation of the identity and transformation of the personality through technology was projected in the novel *Hardwired* (1986) by W. J. Williams. The characters in this novel willingly modify their identities including their sexual identities, as they have software named Project the Black Mind that initially transforms the mind into a crystal. These crystals are then sprinkled on another mind that is to be refashioned. These crystals erase the personality of the mind and imprint it with the new and desired personality on it. The designed software “sets up a mind in crystal. Then goes into another mind, a live mind, and prints the first mind on top of it. Imposes the first personality on the second”( 26). Such a situation creates prosthetic memory, fluid identity, and curbed agency that endangers the factors that form the real of humans.

Pat Cadigan unveils the hidden duplicity of technology in his novel *Mind Players*. As in the novel, one can purchase the desired identity from a company. However, this process has some limitations as users are required to select the identities from already available designed identities that indicate the hidden mechanism working covertly to persuade the individuals to embrace the identities that are necessary for achieving the conformism that endorses the fact that on one hand technology ensures the liberty for the individuals, on the other hand, it imposes the desired identities on the individuals. The presence of the brain police, a watchdog on the activities of the *Mind Players*, tells the story of the use of technology as a force of maintaining discipline by punishing the individuals who adopt identities that are not approved by the authorities.

Some prominent writers of cyberpunk in the 1980s have dealt with the theme of personality modification and change in association with drug addiction. One can explore Rudy Rucker's novel, *Software* (1982), where a scientist replaces his mind patterns with a robot body to enjoy immortality. However, ironically, he is disillusioned as he realizes to his astonishment that immortality does not endow him with the power to which he aspires. Another debate about cyberpunk is the identity of the body and its transformation through advanced technology. This debate is broached by the great cyberpunk writer Bruce Sterling in his fiction. Sterling is so prophetic in his treatment of the body's transformation and modification in his fiction that one finds in some of his novels and short stories the human bodies are so much altered that they become cyborgs. They no longer exist as human bodies because all the components of the real body are replaced with the electronic and mechanical prosthetic limbs signifying the obsolescence of the real humans.

In Sterling's famous works *Schismatrix* (1985) and *Twenty Evocations* (1988), one does not find real humans: one can only meet with the two species of the cyborgs the Shapers and Mechanists. The former, as Claudia Springer relates, "use genetic engineering to design their organic bodies and extend their lives", while the latter "become increasingly mechanical as they incorporate technology into their cyborg bodies" (29). During *20 Evocations*, it is revealed that the extinction of humanity happened long so. There now exist only two diverse species fighting for absolute power and seeking to secure ultimate superiority or dominance over each other. The source of the pride and supremacy for the shapers is their immortality: they are never born so they will never die. The vulnerability of the Mechanists hinges on the inherent fallibility of the technology as it can break down at any time. Even then they are highly conceited and consider the Shapers clumsy, ugly, and inferior as mechanists bully a Shaper kid, "Gene lines... I can buy you, grow you, sell you, cut you into bits. Your screams, my music" (30). Despite the ultra-advancement in technology, the cyber culture society of Sterling exhibits a kind of schizophrenia: people who are equally capable of turning the other people schizophrenic posing a threat to identity and agency. Nikolai, a Shaper, experiences certain challenges to his identity when he decides to marry a Mechanist woman. Despite the transformation in his body, he does not allow his identity as a shaper to be subverted. Instead, he clones his wife after her assassination and reproduces her replica, freeing her from mortality. This young replica is his wife and, thus, he plays with her real self. However, after living 110 years, he becomes stoic and for death, which is not inherent in his personality because he is a shaper, but he realizes that the vigor, energy, and agility are no longer with him so he embraces the death by declaring, "Futility is Freedom!" (32).

Though the human real does not exist in the world proper of *Schismatrix*, still the tendency of memory, free choice, the emotions, are the reality of these shapers and mechanists rendering them the qualities of the human real. Apparently, both these are different entities having unique identities but the same cravings for domination, occupation on the earth, searching for new knowledge, and attaining love are the tendencies and values that both species are endowed with that decrease the boundaries between them. Thus, Sterling envisages the dilemmas and conflicts of cyber culture through the delineation of these two types of characters. In another work of Sterling, *Schismatrix*, the shapers and mechanists appear with their engineered and genetic bodies but the close analysis of these characters enables us to excavate the tendencies of the human real under their engineered and genetic bodies. These post-humans enjoy apathy, love, pride, conceitedness about their race, supremacy of their race, and the powerful memory that was supposed to be inherent in humans of the past. However, the writer gives them the language that is appropriate to their environment and their physical outlook but they feel, behave, think, and act like their predecessors, as in the following excerpt: “Give me what’s real,” she said. She undid her obi sash. Her kimono was printed in a design of irises and violets. The skin beneath it was like a dying man’s dream of skin. (33).

Thus, it can be asserted that cyberpunk renders the theme of the metamorphosis of both the body and identity embedding and incorporating it with the social fabric and milieu of cyber culture. As McCaffery argues that cyberpunk generation were the first generation of the artists to grow up with advanced technologies as a normal part of their daily lives rather than as exotic novelties. These technologies, including satellite dishes, video and

audio players, computers, video games and digital watches, were integrated seamlessly into their reality. Additionally, the cyberpunks were influenced by pioneering writers like Ballard, Burroughs, and Thomas Pynchon, who laid the foundation for the cyberpunk genre (34).

This generation witnessed the rapid development of technology, the rise of pop culture, and the emergence of concerns surrounding the impact of technology on society. They also experienced firsthand the effects of drug culture and were exposed to the rise of scientific horror movies. It can be argued that cyberpunk writers have first-hand knowledge of the growth of technology, unlike the previous science fiction writers who could just visualize it through the imagination. In this connection, Steve Brown observes, instead of having to create visions of the future practically from abrasion, they have the privilege to pleat “bits and pieces of what was actually coming true and feed it back to the readers who were already living in Gibson’s *Sprawl*, whether they knew it or not” (35).

### **CHAPTER 3**

## **CRITICAL REALISM AND THE DYNAMICS OF CYBERCULTURE: REASSESSING HUMAN AGENCY, IDENTITY FORMATION, AND TECHNOLOGICAL FORCES**

This chapter introduces the major concepts and tenets of critical realism that would help the researcher to investigate the relationship of agency and structure and the challenges that the individuals face in the cyber culture. This chapter argues the appropriateness of the critical realism as a framework for this dissertation. Since I have taken the concepts and theoretical perspectives of Jane Kroger's insights on identity formation, Francis Fukuyama's concept of the human real, Michel Foucault's theories on punishment and discipline, and Michele De Certeau's ideas on spatial practices. The integration of these concepts and theoretical perspectives to form a comprehensive framework help me to explore the hidden or overt structures, and independent mechanisms that directly or indirectly threaten the human real in cyber culture. This chapter justifies the integration of above-mentioned concepts for the current study. These perspectives collectively provide a comprehensive understanding about the struggle of the individuals to restore their agency in the cyber culture and what challenges they must face in restoring their real. Furthermore, these concepts help me to investigate the role of technology in constraining and shaping the human identity in the cyber culture. The chapter concludes with the discussion on the transformational model of the social activity (TMSA) by asserting that technology should be taken as an independent mechanism that can shape the identity of the humans in this model.



My study investigates the three cyber culture works that set in different time and that have the characters who belong to different age groups, analysing all these works with one theoretic perspective is not possible. Therefore, diverse critical perspectives are essential to explore the role of social structures, technology, and other mechanism that confront with the characters and play with their agency. In *Uglies*, the powerful structures use the identity formation to constrain the human agency. The characters have to undergo a transformation through their identity formation to restore their agency. The structures in the novel use the technology to create empirical reality for the individuals. The characters have managed to comprehend the layers of reality propounded by Bhaskar during identity formation. Therefore, Jane Kroger's perspective on identity formation helps to find the layers of reality in the *Uglies*. Similarly, in *Hopscotch*, the characters are helpless in the hands of BTL a law enforcement agency. The characters must use spatial practices to assert their agency. To understand how these characters have restored their real, the concept of spatial practices envisaged by Michel de Certeau is used as theoretical prop. Francis Fukuyama's concept of human real given serves as a lens to analyze the primary texts. Moreover, Michel Foucault's concepts of panoptic eye, and punishment and discipline have also been incorporated to investigate the practices of the capitalist's and spy agencies in *Pattern Recognition* and *Spook Country*. Thus, these diverse theoretical perspectives are very essential to explore the conflict of the human agency and social structures in the cyber culture.

### **3.1. Rationale for Hybrid Conceptual Framework**

The core of the framework of my dissertation is critical realism espoused by Roy Bhaskar in his works *Realist Theory of Science* (1975) and *Possibility of Naturalism* (1979).

Bhaskar's theory provides very appropriate lens and primary structure to understand the interplay of human agency and structural forces. It is very significant as it guides to explore the deep and often covert mechanisms that play crucial role in shaping and constructing the social reality especially in cyber culture. It provides a method for discerning the layers of reality—empirical, actual, and real—that influence and constrain human action, making it an ideal framework for analyzing the complexities of cybernetic environments and technological determinism.

Jane Kroger in her work *Development of Identity* (1996) highlights the role of social structures to form the identity of the individuals to achieve the conformity on social level. She has figured out the different identity markers that constrain the human agency in the guise of natural forces. Her work is very crucial in understanding the identity formation particularly in the cyber culture. In *Uglies* all these hidden mechanisms have been used very effectively by the structural forces in the construction of individuals' identity. The protagonists of the novel get trapped in these nets and begin to strive for the identity that these mechanisms opt for hers she sets the goals for herself which the society wants her to set. Kroger points out how the empirical reality is formed and the adolescents consider that reality real though it is empirical. Thus, Kroger's perspectives complements the critical realism furthermore, it provides a fulcrum to reach out the hidden mechanisms. It also helps to differentiate between the transitive and intransitive knowledge two key principles of critical realism. Kroger's emphasis on the peer group and community as agents in shaping identity aligns with the realist perspective of emergent properties within social systems, further supporting the analysis of identity in digitally mediated environments.

Foucault in his work *Discipline and Punishment* (1975) provides a critical lens for examining how power operates within cyberculture. Foucault's concept of panoptic eye is very similar with how institutions control and regulate behavior through surveillance in cyber culture. This panoptic eye is the independent mechanism that is used by the authority in maintaining the conformity in the society. Foucault's theories allows for a deeper understanding of the disciplinary forces at play in cybercultural spaces, reinforcing the critical realist perspective on structural constraints.

Where Fukuyama highlights the threats the humans are facing in the posthuman era in his work *Our Posthuman Future* (2002), he has also pointed out what make the humans real humans. According to Fukuyama it is moral choice, independent thinking, memory of sufferings and joys are the fundamental qualities that separate the humans from the cyborgs or machines in the posthuman period. This difference strengthens the debate of technological determinism and human agency. Fukuyama's insights support the critical realist approach by highlighting the enduring aspects of human identity that persist despite technological advancements. This concept of real helps to investigate the humans struggle to keep their real alive.

De Certeau in his work *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), offers a counter point to Foucault's panoptic eye specially through his ideas of spatial practices and "dark places" where the individuals manage to evade the surveillance and could keep their real alive as they follow their agency. De Certeau believes that the individuals succeed in finding the dark spaces within the discourse where they are not visible for the panoptic eye. In these dark places the individuals manifest their potential agency. This suggests that even within highly controlled environments, there are opportunities for resistance

and creative expression in the cyber culture. Most of the characters in the novels of my research seem endeavoring to find those dark places within the discourses to restore their agency. thus De Certeau provides some way for the individuals to keep their real alive which most of the characters use to achieve their potential agency even in severely constrained environment where technology is used as panoptic eye.

The integration of theories from Roy Bhaskar, Jane Kroger, Michel Foucault, Francis Fukuyama, and Michel de Certeau within this dissertation is grounded in a shared focus on understanding the complex interplay between structure, agency, and identity formation in the context of contemporary cyberculture. Critical realism, as developed by Bhaskar, serves as the foundation, offering a rich and dynamic framework that acknowledges the layered nature of reality and the dialectical relationship between structural forces and human agency. Jane Kroger's exploration of identity formation complements this by providing insights into how identities are constructed and negotiated within these structural frameworks, emphasizing the role of community and the differentiation of self from others. Foucault's analysis of power dynamics, particularly his concepts of docile bodies and panoptic surveillance, aligns with Bhaskar's focus on the constraining effects of structures, highlighting how disciplinary mechanisms shape individual and collective identities. Fukuyama's exploration of the human condition, particularly the qualities that define humanity, adds another layer to this discourse, offering a perspective on how technology challenges traditional notions of what it means to be human. Lastly, de Certeau's ideas on spatial practices introduce a critical lens on how individuals navigate and resist these structural constraints within cyberculture. The connective tissue that binds these theories together is their collective focus on the tensions between autonomy

and control, identity and structure, and the ways in which technology mediates these relationships in the digital age. Together, they provide a multidimensional approach to analyzing the impact of cyberculture on human real, and human agency.

### **3.2. Roy Bhaskar's Critical Realism and its Application to Cyberculture**

Bhaskar's critical realism presents a very powerful lens to explore the interplay between human agency, social structures and technology in cyber culture. Developed through his pivotal works *A Realist Theory of Science* (1975) and *The Possibility of Naturalism* (1979), critical realism accounts the limitations of positivism and empiricism by highlighting the stratified nature of reality. Bhaskar's approach emphasizes the difference between the empirical (observable phenomena), the actual (events that occur), and the real (underlying structures and mechanisms) (Bhaskar 1975). According to Bhaskar, the empirical reality is the reality that we form after observing the particular event, in other words empirical reality is the reality that society gives us through media and other sources. Empirical reality is our response towards the particular event or what we perceive owing to our previous knowledge and ideas about the particular event. This is why many people perceive the one event or phenomena differently. These different perceptions are the different empirical realities of one phenomenon. The actual reality is the event that occurs. It is the phenomena that offer many interpretations. The empirical reality is based on the actual event. The third layer of reality is apparently not visible. It consists of the hidden mechanisms, emergent and covert structures that control and shape the actual phenomena. The researchers endeavor to reach the real by observing the actual and by analyzing the empirical realities that are formed on the actual. This tripartite

model is pivotal for exploring how cyberculture's technological systems impact human agency and identity this model helps to discover all those mechanisms that form the empirical reality and through that reality control the agency of the individuals. The novels, *Uglies*, *Hopscotch*, *The Pattern Recognition* and *Spook Country* are set in the time and cyber culture where empirical realities are presented as real realities, for instance, in *Uglies* the protagonist and her fellows were assured that after the operation they would be the perfectly beautiful and totally free but the case was entirely opposite. They were made docile toys in the hands of powerful structures. The characters had to forfeit the empirical reality in order to get free and true agency. Similarly, in *Pattern Recognition* the characters are too become the victim of constructed empirical reality which was constructed through social media. In *Spook Country* it was the capitalists who construct the empirical realities for the common people and I have used this model to unveil the hidden mechanisms that control the human agency which ultimately leads to threat the human real.

A central tenet of critical realism is the differentiation between structural and emergent properties. Structural properties are the enduring elements of the social systems that shape and constrain individual actions. Emergent properties, on the other hand, arise from the interactions among these structures, leading to new phenomena and possibilities (Bhaskar 1979). This difference is very vital for understanding how technological infrastructures in cyber culture both impose constraints and offer new opportunities for human agency. In the primary texts of this dissertation, on one hand, it is technology that threatens the humans real as the cyborgs seem replacing the humans by fracturing their

identity; on the other hand, the characters also take full advantage of the technology in order to assert their agency as technology appears in the form of emergent in these texts.

Though there is no deny of the significance and usefulness of critical realism yet it is criticized for potentially limiting the role of individual agency. However, Bhaskar's followers especially Margaret Archer and Andrew Sayer have extended Bhaskar's ideas to address this gap. Archer's morphogenetic social theory studies how structures and agency interact during the social change, highlighting the role of reflexivity and social practices (Archer 1995). Sayer's theory of structuration emphasizes the dialectical relationship between the structure and agency but has been criticized for ignoring the power dynamics. (Sayer1984). Taking these stances with Bhaskar's concepts would enable me to investigate how the individuals negotiate with the technological systems in the cyber culture in the selected cyber culture works of my dissertation.

Critical realism offers broad scope to study cyber culture when it is integrated with the notions of post structuralism and feminism. These perspectives add insights into discursive power, social construction, and gender dynamics, broadening the scope of critical realism's analysis. (Hartsock 1983; Butler 1990). For instance, Manuel Castells' analysis of digital technologies through critical realism discovers how these technologies reinforce the existing power structures while also offering the avenues for resistance and social change (Castells 1996). Similarly, David Lyon's study of digital surveillance and concerns of privacy employs critical realism to examine the ethical implications of the technological advancements (Lyon 2001).

Critical realism also addresses the epistemological challenges put forth by digital technologies. Scholars like Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin have used the lens of

critical realism to see how digital media shape knowledge production and influence our understanding of reality, or in other words they investigate how media and social media construct the empirical reality (Bolter & Grusin 1999). The construction of transitive knowledge and the formation of empirical reality on the base of the transitive knowledge through digital media are very skillfully presented in the novels that are under discussion of this dissertation. The characters of these novels are in the influence of digital media, they believe in the empirical reality that digital media presents. The media control their agency in a way that they even do not realize that they are not independent in their thinking. For instance, Tally the main character of *Uglies* opts herself to go for operation so that she may achieve the perfection which is set by the authority. In fact this operation snatches the tendency of free thinking from her. She thinks that after the operation she will be free which is actually totally opposite.

The lens of critical realism has also been used to study the dynamics of the digital labor with in the capitalist economies. Christian Fuchs' study addresses the impacts of digital technology on the labor relations, capital, and power with in cyber culture, providing insights in to the structural constraints and the emergent possibilities for resistance (Fuchs 2014). This frame work also covers the formation of the virtual communities and social networks, as demonstrated by Howard Rheingold's work on digital platforms and collective identities (Rheingold 1993).

Bhaskar's critical realism represents a significant shift from traditional empirical and idealist approaches, offering a comprehensive understanding of reality that accommodates both the observable phenomena and the deeper structures that underpin them. This theoretic perspective is very suitable and crucial to study complex social and



cultural phenomena, such as they are found in literature. To grasp the complete impact of Bhaskar's ideas, it is necessary to examine the core tenants and components of his critical realism and how they can be used to analyze the literary works particularly how they are used to analyze the primary texts of my dissertation.

### **3.2.1. Ontological Stratification**

Bhaskar introduces the concept of ontological stratification which divides the reality into three distinct but interrelated domains: the empirical, the actual, and the real. The 'empirical' domain encompasses the observations and experiences we have of the world. It includes everything that is directly observable and perceptible, such as the experiences of the characters, the ideas of the characters that are developed in the novel, and the perceptions of the characters in the literature. The 'actual' domain refers to all those events that occur in the narrative, regardless of whether they are observed or not. When these actual events are observed and experienced by the characters in the literature, they form the empirical reality for the characters. Though the actual event is one, it is not necessary that the empirical reality formed on it will also be same or one, since it is experienced and observed by more than one, so each one can perceive his or her own empirical reality. The 'real' domain is the most profound level, containing the underlying mechanisms and structures that generate the events and phenomena. These mechanisms are not directly observable but are inferred through their effects. In literature they include social, psychological, economic, political, technological, and religious forces influencing the characters and plot development. In the current study, I will explore how the real mechanisms form the empirical reality for the characters which they want to control. The study will explore how the individuals reach to the real. The study will

figure out how the actual events are used to create the desired empirical reality by using the digital media and other technologies. In the *Uglies*, the identity formation is used as real mechanism to shape and construct the identity of the individuals according to the will of the powerful structures. Similarly, in *Hopscotch* religion, economy, and patriotism have been used as mechanisms to control the agency of the individuals. Through These mechanisms, the empirical reality is formed. The characters initially take this empirical reality as real reality but when they are exploited by the above mentioned mechanisms, they begin to explore the real and ultimately they succeed in restoring their free agency which introduce them the real. Brandification, fashion, and media appear as hidden mechanisms in *Pattern Recognition* and in *Spook Country* respectively.

### **3.2.2. Generative Mechanisms**

The concept of generative mechanisms is pivotal in Bhaskar's critical realism. According to Bhaskar, the underlying structures or forces that produce the observable phenomena are the generative mechanisms. Societal norms, technological advancements, and psychological forces that drives the character's behaviors or plot progression can be taken as generative mechanisms in the context of literature. In the current study, I will explore the generative mechanisms that play important role in shaping the agency of the individuals especially in the cyber culture. I endeavor to find all those mechanisms that help the individual to restore the real.

### **3.2.3. Epistemic Relativism**

Another key aspect of critical realism is epistemic relativism. Bhaskar acknowledges that knowledge is fallible and context-dependent. This suggests that our understanding of reality is influenced by our own cultural, social, and historical contexts. This notion invites the readers to investigate how different social structures, religious powers and cultural values directly or indirectly affect the thinking of the characters in the narrative.

#### **3.2.4. Transitive and Intransitive Knowledge**

Critical realism suggests that there are two types of knowledge, the transitive knowledge and intransitive knowledge. For Bhaskar, transitive knowledge is the knowledge that is produced through human activities, such as theories, interpretations, and narratives. This includes the various ways in which literature is analyzed and understood. Intransitive knowledge, on the other hand, pertains to the objective reality that exists independently of our knowledge. This includes the real structures and mechanisms that influence both the creation of literary works and the experiences depicted within them. In literary analysis, bridging the gap between the transitive and intransitive knowledge involves in examining how the text reflects the deeper realities and structures. For instance, analyzing how a novel portrays the impact of technology on human agency requires understanding both the text's narrative transitive knowledge and the real-world mechanisms influencing this portrayal intransitive knowledge. This approach helps uncover how literature both reflects and critiques the broader social and cultural context from which it emerges.

This approach enables me to analyze how these selected novels depict the interactions between the characters and the broader forces shaping their experiences. By uncovering the underlying mechanisms and structures, the study reveals the complex interplay

between human agency and social forces, and what ways the characters have adopted to restore their free agency which was controlled by certain social forces with the help of different hidden and independent mechanisms who formed the empirical reality for the individuals. Now, I discuss the other theoretical perspectives that I use to find the answers of my research questions. As stated earlier, these perspectives will help me to use the critical realism in this research. These concepts have broadened the scope of my research.

### **3.3. Jane Kroger's Theoretical Framework on Identity Formation**

Kroger's perspective on identity formation provides significant insights into how individual construct and negotiate their identities with in complex socio-cultural contexts. Her work on identity offers a framework for examining how characters in contemporary literature, particularly with in cyber culture narratives; navigate the fluid boundaries of identity amidst technological influences. By integrating Kroger's perspective with realism, I aim to explore how identity formation is used as an independent mechanism to control the agency of the characters in novel the *Uglies*. It will help me to investigate how the empirical reality is formed about the desired identity of the individuals in the primary texts of my research. Kroger's study on the identity formation is grounded in a developmental perspective that emphasizes the role of identity development as a dynamic and ongoing process. Her work builds on Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, extending it by focusing on cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of identity. Her work highlights the interplay between the individual identity formation and broader cultural and social contexts, making it particularly apt for analyzing contemporary literature that addresses complex socio-cultural dynamics.

Kroger's theory postulates that identity formation involves a series of stages where individuals engage in self-exploration and identity commitment. This process is marked by a tension between discovering various aspects of self and committing to certain identities based on personal experiences and social inspirations. In her model, Kroger identifies key stages of identity development, including the exploration of different roles, values, beliefs, and the eventual commitment to a cohesive sense of self. This work offers a lens through which to analyze how characters in literature cope with their identities in response to societal and technological changes. Kroger asserts that on the very outset it is society that provides the identity to its members, by introducing them different identities with the help of social institutes, such as educational, religious, and recreational social institutes. According to her, these identities are purely designed by keeping in the view what kind of persons the society requires. They the social and structural powers manifest the identities through games, media and social media to convince the individuals that these are the identities that are very appropriate and useful for them. Kroger believes that such practices at the part of society are made to achieve collective conformity. This activity checks the free agency of the individuals. According to Kroger the individuals require otherness to compare their identity so that they could question their constructed identity. This stage according to Kroger comes in one's life at the age of adolescence, when one confronts with the other than the identity they are imposed by the society. This comparison allows the people to think beyond the empirical reality of their identity so it marks the beginning of free thinking at the part of individuals. Thus, Kroger's perspective of identity invites the researchers to investigate how identity formation is

used to shape the thinking of the individuals and how this process is used to create conformism in the society.

This model along with Bhaskar's ideas of stratification of reality, aid to explore the role of identity formation as an independent mechanism to shape the thinking, identity, and to control the free agency in the *Uglies*. The role of technology in helping the social forces to give the individuals its own desired and fix identity is also to be determined in the *Uglies* by using this model. The protagonist of the *Uglies* measures the different stages of identity formation identified by Kroger to form her real sense of self, or in other words, she has managed to restore her free agency when she finds the other in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of novel. Thus, this model will help me to explore and analyze the *Uglies*.

Kroger's work with Foucault's concept of power and discipline is incorporated to understand how identity is constructed and regulated in cyber culture. Foucault's focus on pervasive nature of power and its effects on individual behavior complement Kroger's exploration of identity development by highlighting the ways in which technological structures and societal norms influence identity formation. This combined approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of how characters' identities are shaped by both external power dynamics and psychological processes. Briefly speaking, this integrated approach enhances the analysis of identity in one of my primary texts, offering a richer interpretation of the complex interactions between self-concept, technology, and agency.

### **3.4. Francis Fukuyama's Concept of the Human Real**

Since the current study focuses upon the threats that technology poses on the human real in cyber culture, it is very crucial to address the notion of human real and from where I have taken it. I took it from the ideas of Fukuyama. Fukuyama's concept of 'human real'

is very pivotal to understand nature of human identity, human agency and its interaction with technological and societal changes. Fukuyama argues that the essence of human agency encompasses such as free thinking, emotional depth, and memory. His notion of the 'human real' emphasizes the core qualities that define humanity beyond mere social or technological constructs. This notion offers a very useful lens for analyzing how characters in *Uglies*, *Hopscotch*, *Pattern Recognition*, and *Spook Country* cope with their sense of self in the face societal norms, and technological pressures where they are transformed into cyborgs and their real has been under severe threat. In *Uglies*, this theory can be used to investigate how the societal imposition of physical transformation affects the protagonist's understanding of her own humanity. The novel depicts a dystopian future where individuals undergo surgery to conform to societal standards of beauty, raising questions about the impact of such transformations on one's sense of self and intrinsic human qualities. Fukuyama's concepts help in understanding how these external modifications challenge the characters' inherent sense of self identity and emotional depth. It is the transformation that snatches the quality of free thinking from the characters in *Uglies* that results in challenging their real.

Similarly, in *Pattern Recognition* and *Spook Country*, Fukuyama's idea of the human real is very appropriate for examining how characters interact with and are shaped by technology and other hidden mechanisms. These novels set in a world where technology increasingly mediates human experiences, potentially eroding traditional aspects of human identity such as memory and personal agency. Fukuyama's perspective provides insights into how characters' engagements with technology, media, fashion and brandification might influence their understanding of what it means to be human,

particularly in a society where technological integration is pervasive. The characters find meanings of their lives when they go for human feelings and passions. The characters feel satisfaction when they distinguish themselves from the machines. Thus, this concept of human real propounded by Fukuyama provides a path to restore the humanity in the cyber culture where the boundaries between the machines and the humans are very rapidly being blurred and it is being promoted that the human emotions must be put to silence. The main characters of *Hopscotch* are also in the world where the human feelings of compassion, empathy, and sacrifice, losing their vigor, as these emotions have nothing to do in cyber culture where the humans have already been transformed into cyborgs. However, the characters soon realize that the apathy is the quality of machines so they go for compassion, sacrifice, and sympathy that give them peace, happiness, and success.

### **3.5. Michel Foucault's Theories on Discipline and Power**

Foucault's work discipline and power mechanisms provide a critical lens for analyzing the institutional and social controls depicted in the primary texts of this thesis. Foucault's this work highlight how social institutions regulate behavior and shape individual's identity through disciplinary practices. In *Hopscotch*, Foucault's ideas can be applied to examine how the institutional structures and the imposition of social norms affect characters' actions and their sense of self. The novel's depiction of institutional discipline and its impact on the freedom of agency aligns with Foucault's examination of power dynamics and control mechanisms in society. This perspective is very apt for analyzing the impacts of surveillance and disciplinary practices on the freedom of the characters in *Spook Country* as well. The novel sets in a world where surveillance, pervasive presence of digital media, and technology shape the individuals' perception and behaviors.



Foucault's ideas illuminate the practices in which these disciplinary mechanisms create a sense of control and constrain individual agency, offering a clear understanding of how characters navigate their environment under constant surveillance. The concept of panoptic eye enables the researchers to find how constant fear of the authorities the individuals' free thinking is checked. The role of panoptic eye to create conformity in the society is depicted in *Uglies*, *Hopscotch*, and *Spook Country*, but the panoptic eye in all these novels appear in different guises.

### **3.6. Michele de Certeau's and the Spatial Practices**

De Certeau's concepts, particularly those concerning spatial practices, provide very significant insights for studying the relationship between the individuals and their environments in literature. De Certeau's ideas revolve around the ideas of tactics and strategies within spatial practices, which are crucial for understanding how individuals face and resist imposed structures. De Certeau distinguishes tactics and strategies. Strategies refer to the methods and plans employed by institutions or powerful entities to exert control and impose order. These strategies shape environments and dictate how spaces are used, often reinforcing hierarchical structures. In contrast, tactics are the innovative and often subversive methods individuals use to face and occasionally subvert these imposed structures. Individuals employ tactics to create spaces of autonomy and personal meaning within the constraints set by strategies. This interplay of strategies and tactics can be observed throughout the selected novels, since in each novel, the characters are under the strict surveillance of panoptic eye, the individuals can be seen searching some possible ways or methods to evade the panoptic eye. The characters seem finding the spaces by applying various tactics. In most of the time the characters find these dark

spaces where they could exert their own free agency. It is observed that De Certeau's notion of dark spaces is the only best possible way which can ensure the restoration of free agency of the characters in the presence of the challenges posed by technology, surveillance, and digital media in cyber culture. For instance, in *Uglies* the protagonist's resistance to the social norms regarding beauty and conformity can be viewed through the lens of De Certeau's tactical maneuvers against the dominant strategic imposition of the panoptic eye or powerful structures of society she lives in. Similarly, in *Hopscotch*, the quest for dark spaces can be felt in every character's efforts. Three out of four friends in this novel, challenge the strategic methods of BTL a law enforcement agency. De Certeau's idea of 'walking as a method of spatial practice' is very appropriate. This notion is used to discover the characters physically and metaphorically move in their environments. For instance, the way characters traverse or inhabit different spaces reflects their personal resistance or compliance with the powerful structures. In *Pattern Recognition* and *Spook Country*, the wondering in the urban places, and appearing in virtual spaces will be interpreted through the lens of De Certeau to discover how characters assert their agency and resist the dominant technological and commercial forces. His concepts provide a way to understand the subtle forms of resistance and adaptation that characters employ, offering a deeper insight into the interplay between agency and structure in the literary depiction of cyberculture and identity.

### **3.7. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" (1990)**

The discussion on the cyber culture cannot be accomplished without considering the role of globalization in shaping the thoughts, actions, and aims or goals of the individuals. Globalization is a very powerful mechanism that directly or indirectly influences the

social structures. It has changed the outlook of digital media, fashion, and even the concept of identity. Globalization also challenges the agency of individual; therefore, it is very crucial to consider its role in shaping the agency of the individuals living in cyber culture. The globalization as mechanism is very obvious in *Pattern Recognition* and *Spook Country*. “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy” (1990) of Appadurai serves as a lens to understand the impact of globalization on the characters of the primary texts because it provides broader concepts and different approach to study globalization. Appadurai identifies five main categories ethnoscaples, technoscaples, financescaples, mediascaples, and ideoscaples that provide the perspective to see the role of globalization in shaping the social and cultural dynamics. Ethnoscaples, according to Appadurai, refer to the movement of people across borders, including tourists, immigrants, refugees, and other mobile groups (Appadurai 297). In *Pattern Recognition*, it is the ethnoscaples that force the protagonist not only work to promote international brand but also they force her to follow the fashion of global brand. Similarly, in *Spook Country*, There are more than one character who have to leave their countries and have to follow the culture of global metropolises that result in creating the identity conflict. Thus ethnoscaples are very powerful mechanisms that control the global conformism by constraining the free agency of the characters in both these works. Technoscaples encompass the global flow of technology and machinery, which influences both individuals and institutions worldwide (Appadurai 1990). In *Pattern Recognition* and *Spook Country*, the integration of cutting-edge technology and its impact on society is central to the narrative. The novels highlight how technological advancements not only transform economic and social structures but also shape characters’ perceptions and

interactions. Appadurai's concept helps to analyze how these technological flows disrupt traditional boundaries and create new forms of control and agency. Financescapes refer to the global flow of capital and economic forces, including the complexities introduced by digital currencies and financial markets (Appadurai 1990). In the context of the primary texts, influence of global economic forces is evident in the way characters engage with and are affected by financial systems. The novels tell how economic power dynamics and the proliferation of digital currencies affect personal choices and social structures, reflecting Appadurai's notion of how global capital impacts local realities. Mediascapes involve the global distribution of media content and the flow of information across different media platforms (Appadurai 1990). The prominence of media in shaping perceptions and realities is a recurring theme in the novels. For example, *Spook Country* deals with the pervasive influence of media on identity and reality, illustrating how media technologies and narratives shape characters' understanding of their world. Appadurai's framework helps to assess how media representation influences the characters' experiences and the broader cultural context.

In the light of above concepts that serve as lens to study my primary texts, in the forthcoming chapters, I try to analyze the aforementioned novels one by one in separate chapters. The concepts discuss above serve as essential theoretical props without which the study cannot be completed as the research questions remain unanswered.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **IDENTITY FORMATION: A TOOL TO SUBJUGATE HUMAN AGENCY**

#### **4.1.1 Introduction**

This chapter analyzes how the trilogy portrays the transformation of cyber culture, which strips individuals of their 'sameness' and 'historical continuity,' leading to a loss of identity and internal conflict. The imposed docile identity obscures the covert operations of power structures that manipulate identity formation and restrict free agency.

Using the concepts of displacement, memory, and the body as tools, this chapter examines the journey of various characters toward identity. The trilogy's events are treated as the actual domain of reality, while the characters' responses represent empirical

reality. McCollum and Crojour's ideas on identity formation, along with Foucault's and Crojour's critical notions, are employed to unmask the forces manipulating human agency.

#### **4.1.2 Identity and Young Adult Literature**

In Part I of the trilogy, the analysis focuses on *Uglies* (2005), investigating the role of cyber culture's beauty standards and cosmetic surgeries in shaping identity. Foucault's theory of the docile body is taken as a lens to reveal how power structures enforce conformity, shifting individuals from free agency to imposed sameness. The overlapping and mingling of different reality domains are also explored, demonstrating how media, education, and social platforms construct an empirical reality that is often mistaken for the real and intransitive.

Adolescence is a very pivotal, sensitive, and transformative period of one's life. It kindles, galvanizes, and hosts physical, psychological, and emotional vicissitudes and transformations in one's life. One tries to excavate deep into oneself to explore one's reality, identity, and agency. When an individual tries to explore, at that very moment, society endeavors to inculcate its norms, beliefs, values, and traditions in young adults. It is the first time that young adults confront their social and political agency and; thus, experience a unified and well-formed identity. This pivotal age offers the writers of young adult literature an opportunity to investigate how these changes affect adolescents and how they react to such transformations.

Young adult (YA) literature, as Rudd (2010) notes, often explores how identity is formed within specific contexts and shaped by larger social structures. This phase is crucial for individuals as they experience the awakening of free will and agency, often challenging

societal norms that threaten their subjectivity. McCallum defines subjectivity as an individual's personal identity, shaped by external coercion and conscious agency, and formed through interactions with social norms, philosophy, education, and language.

Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) suggests that society maintains control by instilling dominant ideologies through institutions like the family, education, and media. Unlike Repressive State Apparatuses, which use force, ISAs subtly shape beliefs and values to ensure conformity. In *Uglies* (2005), this is depicted through the Special Circumstances, who control individuals by implanting chips in their minds to suppress diversity and free will, as seen in the fate of David and his parents.

#### **4.1.3 Westerfeld and Young Identity Literature**

YA literature, especially dystopian fiction, often reflects the traumas and struggles of young adults as they navigate identity formation amidst these societal pressures. Writers use dystopian settings to expose how superstructures manipulate identity to undermine free will, particularly in cybercultures, where modern technology either introduces new modes of identity formation or reinforces traditional ones.

Considering the above facts about dystopian literature and YA literature, I have selected a trilogy of YA fiction written by Scott Westerfeld *Uglies* (2005), *Pretties* (2005), and *Specials* (2006). Westerfeld himself asserts that “[a] lot of YA are about identity”. He claims that YA literature offers various ways and suggestions for adults on how to live in a transformed society. According to him, science fiction also possesses questions like why should one follow the rules? Why should something happen in a particular way? And why is this identity given or thrust upon us? According to Westerfeld, “Science fiction is about thought experiments. What does it mean to tell stories set in a different

place than this one? How does that affect our world? It's a completely philosophical enterprise" (Westerfeld 2009). Westerfeld manifests his theory about science fiction in most of his cyber culture work. The under-discussion trilogy is the story of young adults' social, psychological, and physical journey to seek the real identity which could warrant their subjectivity, free will, power, and agency.

#### **4.1.4 Westerfeld and Identity Formation**

Unlike science fiction of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> that only envisaged the apocalypse, the fiction of Westerfeld has sought the real identity of posthumans by resolving the problems that threaten their reality. The protagonist of the trilogy is endowed with the identity of "ugly" in the first book. Owing to her transitive knowledge, she is to despise her identity. It means her first identity that is formed through education is that she is ugly and naturally looksdown upon. Her next identity is "pretty": an empty-headed but physically epitome of perfect posthuman: an identity that can be called imposed docility. Her final identity is a "special": a cyborg, who has power and agency, who is full of confidence, and who is leading the world: who is a cyborg yet retains the real of human which is pure love, passion, self-sacrificing, and compassionate. This subject matter of Westerfeld fulfills all the requirements of a dystopia in YA literature. In this dystopia, Westerfeld exhibits how subjectivity is influenced by technology and what transformation humans undergo in the posthuman era.

This dystopia falls in the category of critical dystopia (a subgenre of dystopian literature that not only portrays a bleak future society but also offers a critique of contemporary social, political, or cultural issues) since it provides an open ending and it does not leave its protagonists in despondency and total bleakness, with no room for hope and striving.



Instead, it incorporates the new vision and hope in the protagonists. It liberates the protagonists from subjugation. (Baccolini and Moylan<sup>7</sup>; Bradford et al.<sup>60</sup>). This dystopia differs from Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) or Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) as in both these fictions, the protagonists were left in the lurch and there was no chance of redeeming themselves and apocalypse was inevitable. In this trilogy, the protagonist, Tally, embraces many identities and each identity poses different challenges. She has to strive hard to redeem her free will and agency. In each phase of identity, she has to interact and face the technology as well as she has to adjust to new transformation without losing what Fukuyama calls humanness. In each period, her empirical experiences form an identity that she has to forfeit as soon as she goes to 'real' and she realizes that the knowledge is transitive.

#### **4.1.5 Role of Institutions in the Formation of Identity of the Characters in *Uglies***

To understand what identity was thrust on the character by her social structures and what identity she has acquired by her free will, one has to use the retroduction method as underpinning to study the events of Tally's life: one has to peel off different strata of reality to know the role of substructures and independent mechanisms in the formation of the identity of Tally and other major characters. In *Uglies*(2005), Tally's identity is initially shaped by education and media, leading to a lack of free will and the formation of her identity through transitive knowledge. Her sense of self is constructed by external forces, leaving no room for personal agency. In the second book, Tally and other young adults are reduced to a state of imposed docility, becoming posthumans who lack the courage or will to challenge the powerful regime. They mistakenly perceive the manipulated, empirical reality as intransitive, unaware that their identities are imposed

upon them. As a result, they lose the essence of what it means to be human. By the third book, Tally's identity transforms into that of a cyborg, where her physical body dictates her sense of self. However, she eventually regains her true human identity, reconnecting with qualities like freedom and compassion, thereby revitalizing her real being.

In the real world, adolescents often look to family, media, fashion, social media, friends, love, career ambition, and the journey from the known world to the unknown as hallmarks of their identity. Their free will, or subjectivity, comes into play when they must choose between conflicting paths. Similarly, Tally and her peers face these challenges in their own identity transformation. However, their world represents a futuristic society where technology transforms humans into posthumans, and efforts are made to impose docility on them to prevent any threats to a totalitarian society.

Themes exploring the influence of technology on children and young adults are recurrent in young adult and children's literature (Hintz and Ostry 2003; Bradford et al. 2008; Applebaum 2010). Western adolescent literature often focuses on posthumans, particularly in the context of cloning and genetic science. For example, in *Unwind* (2007) by Neal Shusterman, a dystopian future society allows parents to have their children "unwound"—a process where their body parts are harvested for transplantation. The novel explores posthumanism and the ethical implications of genetic manipulation, following teenagers targeted for unwinding as they struggle for survival and autonomy in a world where their humanity is commoditized.

On the other hand, American science fiction writers not only include cyborgs as a subject matter of their fiction but also point out how cyborgs transform one's thoughts and reality. Theorists such as Chris Hables Gray and N. Katherine Hayles advocate that

humans are already turned into posthumans and some of them have been transformed into cyborgs. Artificial bones, limbs, medical implanted appliances, psychopharmaceuticals, and implanted RFID chips that regulate and monitor our health have made us real cyborgs. (Gray, Mentor, and Figueroa-Sarriera 1995; Hayles1995). As soon as we plunge into the realm of the internet, we are no more ordinary humans rather we turn into cyborgs and experience a novel and different identity which is connoted as “terminal identity” (Bukatman 1993). For Bukatman, this terminal identity is a transitory state where identity is eclipsed and a new identity emerges that is fabricated by cyborg technology.

#### **4.1.6 Passive Identity: The Threat to the Real in *Uglies***

This term can be incorporated with *Uglies* (2005) trilogy as the identity fashioned in *Uglies*(2005) is finite and unalterable as well as it cannot develop beyond its designed parameter. The posthumans of Westerfeld are indebted to modern culture as the Pretties are formed to follow the social norms without any question and are the emblem of ideal physical beauty. They are formed by using the technology that is employed in cosmetics and surgeries for the beautification of the body. So, they cannot think or act beyond the program they are given. Similarly, Specials are fashioned on the model of the latest fighting gadgets and machines. In each transformation, the characters do not cross the infringements or boundaries of their defined identity. Consequently, they have to strive to resurrect their real beings. *Uglies* (2005) is a documentary record of the facts of how human potentialities are suppressed to subjugate human agency through the use of technology.

The fear of technology, the loss of identity, and the subjugation of humans by cyborgs are recurring themes in cyber culture literature, often depicted through social media, popular culture, and science fiction. This genre frequently portrays the struggle to maintain human identity against the invasive and transformative power of technology, where the human body becomes the battleground for control.

*Uglies* (2005) exemplifies this conflict, showing how technology is used to suppress human potential and enforce a designed identity on individuals, stripping them of free will. The novel highlights the tension between maintaining one's true identity and succumbing to a technologically imposed one, ultimately exploring the broader implications of how technological transformations threaten human agency and the essence of humanity.

In the broader context of cyberpunk literature, these themes have evolved from the depiction of aliens and body-snatching in 1950s films to the direct confrontation between humans and posthumans in modern narratives like *Doctor Who's Cyberman* and *Star Trek's Borg*. Despite the advancements in technology, the underlying fear remains the same: the loss of human identity and agency in the face of a technologically dominated future.

#### **4.1.7 Displacement and Identity in *Uglies* (2005)**

Building on the themes of identity and the struggle against technological domination, Westerfeld's trilogy aligns with contemporary cyber fiction by depicting a posthuman society where technophobia threatens human identity and agency. While earlier cyberpunk literature often left humanity at the mercy of technological forces, current narratives, including *Uglies*(2005), offer a more nuanced approach. Westerfeld explores

how humans can reclaim their true selves amidst the pressures of a technologically driven world. Rather than fully embracing the posthuman transformation, *Uglies*(2005) positions posthuman as the “other,” a contrast to what is naturally human. The posthuman body, shaped by technology, stands as a stark reminder of what humanity risks losing, reinforcing the importance of maintaining human continuity and agency against the encroachment of technological control. This sets the stage for analyzing how the “real” in *Uglies*(2005) is gradually displaced by the artificial, revealing the underlying tension between human identity and technological influence.

Westerman’s trilogy emulates the current cyber fiction by portraying a posthuman society where technophobia destroys the potential intimidations for the identity and agency of the human who is ambivalent towards terminal identity. However, in current cyber fiction, the writers, through their protagonists, postulate possible measures that can ensure the revitalization of their real and would liberate them from technophobia. *Uglies* (2005) encompasses the idea of how humans accomplish their continuity as humans. Westerfeld does not give leverage to the formation of posthumans, but at the same time, posthumans in *Uglies* function as others in the identity process of the human: here, the posthuman body is the epitome of what the technology has contrived, as compared to what nature has created.

Building on the exploration of identity in the context of a technologically driven society, Bukatman discerns that in posthuman formation, the Cartesian dualism of body and mind has given way to embodied mind which produces new ways to understand corporeality (Bukatman 208). The presence of cyber culture that provides modern methods of production bids new challenges for the identity formation of individuals. At the same

time, it offers to mull upon the question of what it means to be human in this transformed cyber society: as stated earlier, the body plays a pivotal role in the identity formation of adolescents. Their focus on their body is very intense. They idealize the perfect body and try to mimic the appearance of their ideal body. They use cosmetics, surgeries, machines, and special diets as well as physical exercises to look gorgeous and unique. This notion of achieving the desired or imagined shape of one's body directly influences the formation of one's identity. Since the body is the fundamental entity in the life of an adolescent, it renders and enhances very crucial qualities in the adolescents such as confidence, elation, competition, love for truth and beauty, frustration, anxiety, aggression, and love for liberty.

The trilogy, on one hand, exhibits how cosmetic surgery and youths' obsession with the body incorporates the formation of their identity; on the other hand, it depicts the fears of the consequences of the body's transformations with the help of technology that ultimately deprives of or can deprive human of feeling humanness. In this connection, Elaine Ostry rightly observes, "biotechnology is used as a metaphor for adolescence...and adds a dramatic dimension to the changing adolescent body and the identity crisis that arises from it" (Ostry 222). For Erik H. Erikson, an identity crisis crops up when it appears to individuals that they lose their "sense of personal sameness or historical continuity" (Erikson 17).

Unlike earlier science fiction, in *Uglies* (2005) the characters do not despise being transformed into posthumans, rather they are eager to embrace the identity of being posthuman. They are swayed to believe the posthumans are immune to diseases and even the ravages of old age. They are sure that they will achieve perfection as far as the beauty

of their body is concerned. However, they cannot escape from the thoughts that are fraught with the fears of losing their humanness or the failure of the operation might result in missing the desired target of a perfect body. This causes anxiety and frustration in *Uglies* (2005). It is a common practice that adolescents are made pretties through a special operation as soon as they turn sixteen. But before the operation, they are given the identity of Ugliers. The adolescents despise their identity as Ugliers and fear that they might be denied the opportunity to transform into their desired and longed-for identity, which they perceive as their own free choice. This fear characterizes Tally, the main character, who is so engrossed and devastated by the idea of being pretty that she breaks the norms of the fictional world, and challenges the authorities by secretly visiting the pretty town before her sixteenth birthday. As a result of her disobedience, she fears “being caught...and never being turned pretty at all” (Westerfeld25).

In the book, powerful social structures like Special Circumstances use the prevailing notions of beauty to construct the desired identity of their people. In part one of the Trilogy, the cult of beauty is used to meet set targets. At the outset, one can see that in the world of *Uglies*(2005), the body is understood as neither natural nor ideal, and it is regarded as normal to seek its perfection with the intervention of technology. Therefore, every teenager anxiously looks forward to the operation sponsored by the government and has no objection to it. Nobody ever thinks that the operation could be a managed and designed tool to secure the conformity of the majority of the population. This uncritical acceptance reinforces conformity, as the operation becomes a means of ensuring that individuals comply with societal standards and relinquish their unique identities for a homogenized ideal. As identified by David’s parents that during the operation a chip is

installed into the mind of the one undergoing the operation. The government takes advantage of a natural inclination towards physical beauty. They use beauty as a lack. In *Uglies*(2005) the ideal image of the perfection of one's body results in the feeling of lack in individuals, who thus willingly yield themselves to authority because they consider the operation a source to achieve their ideal.

Anne A. Balsamo deems cosmetic surgery a peculiar method of regulation that exploits aspirations to redress the ugly and undesirable features of the body that do not meet the required standard of beauty set by society: "When a woman internalizes a fragmented body image and accepts its "flawed" identity, each part of the body becomes a site for the "fixing" of her physical abnormality" (Balsamo 56-57). However, in *Uglies*(2005) it is not only women who are the victims of the notion of "abnormality" rather all the population is made to believe that they are "abnormal" and are persuaded to embrace their "flawed identity," so they undergo operations in order to be transformed into "normal". They regard their natural bodies as pathological and for them, the only cure is to replace their natural body with "augment nature" and construct "natural" beauty (Balsamo 71). It is obvious in our world that people are not immune to mutability and the change that follows, especially when it restricts the human body. This is because it makes us feel human and is a unique and pivotal marker of our identity: "The most tangible feature of what it is to be human, encapsulating our humanness in form and providing an outlet for humanity" (Scott and Dragoo 2). This kind of possession and attachment with own body is not present in the world of Tally, since in the context of the fictional world, the body is regarded as a liability and the reconfiguration of the body is seen as natural. It is espoused that the natural body is not the natural body, rather the reconfigured body is



regarded as the normal and natural body. It is through social constructs that the ideal epitome of a perfectly beautiful body is familiarized. This is where the role of the social structure appears, as it manipulates independent mechanisms to produce a transitive knowledge that appears as an empirical reality to the people of the very society.

In *Uglies*(2005), the narrative of ideal beauty is produced by social institutions. Using the idea of beauty, the social authorities like educational institutes form the identity of their people, and the identity that the adolescents form appeared more as an imposed and docile identity than an agency premised on free will. With the help of social constructs, the idea is propagated among adolescents that they are ugly and that ideal beauty can be achieved by allowing the state to operate on them, which will transform them into a pretty state where everybody is perfect and nobody is ugly. As a result of the operation, everybody will enjoy equal status where the real of human will not face any discrimination and it will leave no possibility to be despised merely on the basis of appearance. They are made to believe that in the past it was appearance that created problems: “Yeah, yeah, I know,” Shay recited. “Everyone judged everyone else based on their appearance. People who were taller got better jobs, and people even voted for some politicians because they weren’t quite as ugly as everybody else. Blah, blah, blah.” “Yeah, and people killed one another over stuff like having different colored skin.” Tally shook her head. No matter how many times they repeated it at school, she never really believed that one. “So what if people look more alike now? It’s the only way to make people equal” (Westerfeld 44-45). The children are motivated to take part in morphing programs where they learn how to refashion the body, and they are taught how to recreate their image by making it an ideal. This activity is enough to reassure them about their

flawed identity. Through this transitive knowledge, it is inculcated in them that it is upon them to decide what will be the most appropriate and perfect transformation of their body. The games and morphing programs are the actual layers of reality and out of this actual reality, the empirical reality is fashioned. This empirical reality is thrust upon them which postulated the facts that becoming pretty will be a free choice and it will never distort the real of human rather it will help them to accomplish their humanness.

In the novel, young characters refashion features such as hair, lips, and noses, but the coercive state prioritizes conformity over individuality. Shay exposes this deception, telling Tally, “It’s stupid. The doctors do pretty much what they want, no matter what you tell them” (Westerfeld 41), and dismisses the activities as a waste of time. Naomi Jacobs argues that individuals may feel they are free in their choices, but their actions are often a repetition of imposed subject positions, with the notion of unity or self-identity reflecting their subjection (Jacobs 93). Thus, in attempting to reshape their identities, individuals fall prey to the state’s agenda through self-surveillance.

In the novel, the training reinforces the objectification of the body, teaching adults to view their bodies as mere objects. They are led to believe there is no need for emotional attachment to their physical form. Consequently, they accept the state's-imposed identity and actively contribute to the social structure by striving to conform. They enthusiastically engage in games designed to highlight human ugliness and showcase their ideal images. Yet, Shay resists this manipulation, stating, “Making ourselves ugly is not fun,” to which the indoctrinated Tally responds, “We are ugly!” (Westerfeld 44).

Identity formation is achieved through the act of objectification in *Uglies*(2005). For this objectification, the authorities cunningly and effectively use technology, so when an

individual places his or her image, they can visualize their ideal image and their natural image is shown to them as an imperfect image. Shay's face was scanned and "seconds later, two faces appeared on the screen. Both of them were Shay, but there were obvious differences. One looked wild, slightly angry, the other had a slightly distant expression, like someone having a daydream" (Westerfeld 41). Throughout the novel, not only objectification is scaled but it also served as a realization of the follies and shortcomings of her real image. The technology reminds Shay that a special transformation of her real image is required for her to be acceptable to society. Technology is presented as a healer and savior that will rescue her from the inferiority complex and remove the frailties of her body; consequently, providing her with the identity she has been striving for. However, the desire for such an identity is the outcome of a particular social conditioning.

The act of indulging in the games provides the characters with the opportunity to be rescued from the imposed despair of accepting their ugly identity. Tally herself knows that the ideal image formed on the screen will never be materialized, even after her pretty operation, because the decision of her physical appearance is in the hands of the committee of doctors who are to refashion her body, which is, in turn, to refashion her identity. Therefore, her identity is in the control of a controlled and powerful mechanism. The covert mechanism has already instructed the committee to create sameness so that nobody seems different from others. This actual event is supported with the empirical reality that favors the narrative that this operation, on one hand, makes everyone equal and on the other hand it remodels the human body according to the image of perfection. In this way, the subjectivity and freedom of human agency is curtailed. But this structure

is invisible to these people, since they are not allowed to encounter any other identity, which removes the possibility of visible choice for the people like Tally. In the absence of other options, they cannot exercise their free agency and they are left with no option but to surrender in front of the powerful structure to be attired in imposed conformity.

The power of the social ideas regarding ugliness, and the need to 'fix' ugliness, can be illustrated in an instance where Shay tries to convince Tally that to become pretty is to lose one's subjectivity and diversity which could strangle free thoughts. This proves futile however as Tally does not believe in her warnings. Shay says, "We don't have to look like everyone else, Tally, and act like everyone else. We've got a choice. We can grow up any way we want" (Westerfeld 89). But Tally is trapped in the social construct that she is not ready to even think beyond the transitive reality and is unable to visualize any alternative. She replies to Shay, "I don't want to be ugly all my life. I want those perfect eyes and lips, and for everyone to look at me and gasp" (Westerfeld 92). Even in this state, Tally's real was challenged as she felt anxious about her ugliness as she was haunted by fear that she might be refused to be operated upon to attain prettiness.

At the same time, another independent mechanism appears to convince the humans to construct their identity. This turns the cyber society into an arena of battle between two opposing and contrary approaches about how the adolescents will be transformed and what kind of identity will be most appropriate for them. These two visions are about the future of the adolescents: where one wishes to resurrect the free agency by accepting diversity in their thoughts and actions, while the other plots to steal their free will and seek conformity and so-called equality that will suppress any spirit of revolt in them. The

former refuse to become pretty, runaway, begin to live in an area called ‘Smoke,’ and are called ‘Smokeys.’

Two of the Smokeys are former doctors who operated upon *Uglies* (2005) and found that the operation impaired free thinking and paralyzed the subjectivity of the individuals, turning them into docile puppets who could never challenge the authority. The doctors saw this as a pertinent threat to the humanness of the individuals. So, they stood against the imposed identity and broached an open revolt against such docile identity. They have a son, David, who launched a covert campaign against the malicious and totalitarian government. He strived to disillusion the teenagers about the utopian pretty town. He persuaded them to put aside the distorted notion about the depravities of being ugly. He put another choice to them to awaken their slumbering agency. Soon people like Shay began to see some truth in his convictions. Shay was not ready to throw away her freedom, agency and voluntarism to acquire conformity and uniformity which directly hurt the diversity and mutability which was the nub of the real of humanness. Shay, being a sincere friend, offers to sneak Tally to the smoke and avert the operation and subsequently threw back the attire of identity the coercive government wanted them to be wrapped in. However, Tally, being utterly sucked in by the narrative of her society, was unable to look beyond her own content so she rejects Shay’s idea of not becoming pretty. In other words, Tally is quite contented to reproduce the beauty structure by her voluntary actions. Shay informs Tally that she wants to join the runaway group because, “[i]t’s about becoming who I want to become. Not what some surgical committee thinks I should” (Westerfeld 92). It is very obvious that Shay’s real is in danger or she finds her agency is being strangled, so she retaliates and rejects the constructed identity. On the

other hand, Tally remains enamored of the social constructs that beauty incorporates power and those who are not beautiful are left far behind.

Though this construct itself is ironic, there is no other condition against which it can be measured. Thus, in cyber culture, diversity is eliminated, which makes humans more like machines. This is the desire of every powerful social structure, since humans who are like machines are easy to control and manipulate. By stripping the luster of beauty and its direct influence on the formation of identity of individuals, the powerful structures rob the individuals of control over the formation of their identity. This allows oppressive structures to become autonomous in their construction of the identity of individuals and thus indirectly restricts the agential power of individuals. In this way, it allows them to achieve the desired conformity. It is the dream of the programmed and designed social construct of beauty that Tally will willingly surrender in front of them and leave herself at the mercy of a programmed and already determined identity. David rightly unveils the real face of the pretty operation and tells her, “You are all brainwashed into believing you’re ugly” (Westerfeld 276). The state needs docile bodies, because those will conceal the chances of civil disobedience. It does not allow free will that could question the control and power of the state.

However, this agenda of the state to shape the real of its masses requires a population that is compliant with the desire of state to mold their bodies into designed bodies that cannot think and act self-sufficiently. This requires a powerful construct so that the population deems this transformation to be for its own welfare and willingly sacrifice their natural bodies, while preferring the artificial body which alters their real. This docile body has no threat to the affairs of state: as Michel Foucault asserts, “A body is docile that may be

subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault 136). The state uses the independent mechanisms of education and conditioning to put the idea in the common people’s minds that they are ugly or their bodies are defective and shabby. Thus, the real of these people is seen as unnatural and they suffer certain kind of complexes, which pave the way for accepting the transformation of ugly body in to the pretty. Here begins a conflict between the state and those individuals who reject the imposed identity or, in other words, who do not want to bargain their freedom for so-called pretty paradise. Though they are very few yet they put up resistance and endeavor to keep the natural alive and retain the humanness with its diversity and free will. Among these rebels were Shay, David, and his parents.

#### **4.1.8 Otherness and Identity as a Linking Action to Restore Individual’s Real**

While observing and exploring the 'ugly' society, it becomes evident that segregation is inherent and deeply ingrained within it. In the words of Bhaskar, this segregation is actual layer of reality. This actual event of segregation creates otherness in the society. On one hand, this segregation leaves no fear of offence or rebellion of people. On the other hand, this segregation is used by state indirectly as a stimulus to persuade the people to become pretty or to be marginalized. As Michel Foucault postulates, the control of space leads to control of individuals. This kind of society is directly analogous to idea of prison put forth by Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977). According to which, a prison is a demarcated place that then divided in to sections and on next step in to cells. Tally’s city was the imitation of the prison as it was separated from the other cities and further it was divided into the areas for Ugliers and for the pretties. This segregation is scaled on the social stratification where the privileged class

lives separately and the lower strata is not allowed to mix with the higher strata as uglies cannot travel to the space where the pretties are residing. Through this process, the segregation of environment is used as marker of identity: the difference between the environment of the pretties and uglies is the product of posthumanism.

Thus, identity formation is unswervingly caused by posthumanism as a “linking action” in the words of Bhaskar. Linking Actions are the independent mechanisms or activities that are used by different structures (institutions and agencies) in order to meet their aims. They are not the part of that structure. This posthumanism is imposed in ways that challenge the real of the characters in the novel without making them aware of that imposition. This leads to control by the state, as Foucault enumerates, “Disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed. One must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation” (Foucault 143). Therefore, it is very easy to locate the identity of any individual by determining where they reside or how they appear physically. One can clearly envisage that the real of the individuals is no longer the marker of their identity. These boundaries bring forth a clear distinction between the people who belong to the structured society and those who are not the members of those structured society. On one hand, this structured society facilitates control and enforces conformity. On the other hand, it highlights the sense of otherness due to the lack of interaction among the segregated social strata.

This sense of otherness offers humans a chance to reclaim their real humanness. However, the constant and coercive surveillance limits the “pretties” exposure to otherness, as they are confined to their controlled environments. Consequently, they miss



out on the opportunity to experience otherness that could restore their agency. In contrast, the "Uglies" retain their real humanness because they encounter this otherness, which allows them to choose between remaining "ugly" or undergoing the transformation to become "pretty." Thus, Uglies maintain their agency, whereas those who undergo the operation become products of a meticulously planned process executed by institutions such as schools, hospitals, and workplaces.

According to Foucault, these institutions play a special role in the creation of docile body. In the words of Bhaskar, these institutions serve as linking actions that work independently but indirectly to manipulate the agency of the common people of the society since these institutions work in their spaces under a define functions. Now question arises as to from where these spaces are controlled? In fact, it is powerful state that outlines the functions for these spaces. Therefore, they are used as to create desired puppets through inculcating conformity in the common persons of the society. In other words, these institutions are the actual layer and domain of the social reality that help to generate or contrive the empirical reality for the people of the society which ultimately is portrayed as the real (the third strata of reality) reality. The same tactics are employed in *Uglies* (2005) as the schools and media prepare uglies to prepare themselves for the pretty operation. Their manipulation is so ingenious that Uglies are eagerly and anxiously waiting for the miracle of science. According to Foucault, such institutions are controlled by the state so that the state can impose its own will upon the people.

It can also be asserted that the control of space is actually the control of time as state by setting and imposing the strict schedule succeeds in allowing itself to "exercise power over [individuals] through the mediation of time" (Foucault 162). There is a rigid and

well-defined schedule in the ugly town to transform Uglies into pretties which is determined by age as every individual has to wait till he or she reaches the age of sixteen to be operated upon to become pretty. This procedure of “serial space” crafts a hierarchy that persuades the indoctrinated fervent to scale the next level (Foucault 147). The operation is taken as the marker of achieving the required and desired identity. The rewards of the operation are analogous to a promotion up a grade in a school. But a vivid difference is visible in this comparison that in educational institutions, the agency is voluntary because the one who works hard will get through and every individual is free to work or not. On the other hand, in the context of the novel, no one has any option but to allow themselves to be operated on as soon as they reach their 16th birthday. Age is an independent linking action where the agency appears dormant as one cannot decide when to become sixteen.

This is the beginning of a covert program of the state to provide individuals with a ‘mirror,’ where they can find an ideal image to be longed and strived for: just as Lacan suggested in ‘The Mirror Stage,’ where one finds lack in oneself while seeing the image in the mirror and this lack within oneself urges the one to strive to become like the image which for him or her is perfect and ideal. In the novel, the teenagers are convinced that they lack beauty and that ideal beauty resides in the pretty town after the operation. This lack is felt so intensively by the characters that some of them wish to be operated even before reaching the desired or required age. Through media, games, and education they are shown the mirror which reflects the ideal image of beauty. Subsequently, Uglies found themselves incomplete and imperfect. The image is so powerful that nobody can imagine any foible or weakness in the presented image. They even do not realize what

they have to sacrifice to achieve the desired image and overcoming the lack. They are unable to sense the conformity the government and the state seek to inculcate in them.

Through these actual layers of reality, the state constructs the empirical reality for its people which appear for them as a real. In the beginning of the novel, one can clearly and vividly observe the enthusiasm of young Tally towards the ideal beauty of the pretty people. She regards herself as inferior to the pretties and eagerly waits to be transformed in to a pretty as soon as possible. Her real is badly shaken by the state-constructed narrative of real beauty. Though she has no other option, she is so obsessed with the idea of the real beauty that she remains worried that state might not operate upon her and thus she would lose the chance to become pretty and would not be able to remove her deformity, which in actuality never existed. At the same time, she is in the grip of the fear that she would not be able to join her friend, Paris, who is a few months older than her. In her obsession with the given image of beauty, she with the help of her friend Shay sneak in to the pretty town at night without being noticed by security of the pretty town.

Her secret visits also surface as a perfect image of the mirror, which further strengthens her idea of her imperfectness and thus causes anxiety by endangering her real. When she comes across the concretized image of the ideal beauty, she states “There was a certain kind of beauty, a prettiness that everyone could see. Big eyes and full lips like a kid’s; smooth, clear skin; symmetrical features; and a thousand other little clues. Somewhere in the back of their minds, people were always looking for these markers. No one could help seeing them, no matter how they were brought up....The big eyes and lips said: I’m young and vulnerable, I can’t hurt you, and you want to protect me. And the rest said I’m healthy, I won’t make you sick” (Westerfeld 16). The construct of the ideal beauty,

according to Tally, is an amalgamation of perfect youthful appearance and calculated emotional responses that fascinate and mesmerize the beholder.

Thus, this visit of Tally is an actual event in the novel that brings forth the empirical reality for the character. So, Tally thinks that the pretty is the only reality that she must achieve. But this empirical reality has a powerful check on the agency of Tally, which is the nub of the real of the humans. The beauty is another linking action which is very shrewdly contrived into the formation of an actual event which, subsequently, results in the limitation of the agency of the young people. Though Tally finds some activities of the pretties very odd, foolish, and imprudent, she is still overjoyed and pleased to look at the pretties, which further enhances Tally's belief that she is not real, which further aggravates her passion to be shaped. Tally realizes that she "was nothing here. Worse, she was *ugly*" (Westerfeld 7, emphasis in original).

The idea of the beauty is so deep in the pretties, that when they see Tally, they whisper that she is ugly. This differentiating marker endorses the lack in Tally. The situation becomes more embarrassing when Paris, the friend of Tally, instead of meeting her, refuses and is unable to recognize her. Thus, the real of Tally is not taken as real and the operation and the free linking actions before the operation eclipses human emotions such as spiritual love. This results in the formation of apathy in the newly modified humans. So, the natural body faces another humiliation when Tally listens to the derogatory remarks of the pretties as she is returning to the ugly world. The image of the real beauty is so deeply rooted in the pretties and they are unable to get rid of it even after they are cured from the brain lesions. Their abhorrence for the natural body is very dynamic as the rangers (Team of special circumstances) identify Tally as ugly, even though they are lesion free and no

longer are puppets. They are not still free in their thoughts, rather they think as the society asks them to think and perceive. In the persistence of the significance of the appearance and denunciation of the natural body, the characters are led to many anxieties and depressions. They start hating their own natural bodies, which subsequently impairs their agency and thrusts them into the hands of the machinations of the state, though they cannot feel the limitations upon their agency. In a situation where agency is at the mercy of a coercive social system, the real is not more than an empirical real. This real of the humans strips them of their free will and they face psychological and social problems. Their privacy is challenged, as the pretties were always in the grip of strict surveillance, their emotions were dried, as Paris does not recognize Tally, their social activities are already decided, as they are given a schedule beyond which they could not imagine. Thus, they are caged and made in to machines.

Tally's dormant agency starts coming out of slumber when she is shocked by Special Circumstances on her 16th birthday. They inform her that she could not be transformed into a 'pretty,' as there is a serious problem. She is taken to another part of the city where she meets Dr. Cable who is the leader and guardian of the cyborgs. They are challenged by the smoke, who are led by the former doctors and the parents of David, who refused to accept their docile identity as pretty and started living in a remote territory. They know the truth of the operation: that it helps the state impose conformity and docility, ultimately enabling the state to control people and makes it easier to run the affairs of the state according to its whims. Currently, Dr. Cable is deceived by Shay who runs to the smoke and is not ready for the operation. Since these Uglies are also under strict surveillance, the administration knows that Shay and Tally had many adventures together. They are

also fully aware of charismatic spell of the ideal image of the pretty on Tally and how much she was anxious and eager to become the pretty to join her friend Paris.

But one important factor must not be ignored here: Tally was still enjoying all the human feelings and emotions as she escorted Shay in her tricks, “because...it hurt being alone” (Westerfeld 106). Because Tally is a social animal, she is haunted by the fear that she might be left alone, might lose her friends, and be branded as a traitor and perfidious. These fears and pains make her a real human and possessed with real, but she has to suffer since she was not able to forfeit her emotions especially friendship, empathy, self-sacrifice, freedom, and inquiry. Therefore, she refuses to reveal the whereabouts of Shay when she is asked by Dr Cable. For Tally, this would be a betrayal and she would never think of betraying her friend. She also refuses Shay’s offer to join them in the smoke as she had already fallen prey to the narrative of the state.

At this point of the narrative, the agency of Tally confronts of a powerful state institution. At the same time, her identity process takes a new turn. Her identity, which was not fully formed till then, provides another linking action, which is being manipulated by other powerful independent mechanisms. However, Dr Cable knows very well that Tally has only one dream: to become pretty. Therefore, she very shrewdly threatens Tally, “Then I’ll make you a promise to Tally Youngblood. Until you do help us...you will never be pretty. You can die ugly” (Westerfeld 110). This threat creates a conflict in the mind of Tally so she has no option but to surrender to the institution and the cyborg guardians, because she is trapped in a construct of an ideal world of the pretties. Again, it is the pain and fear of being left alone, that causes her to give in and assure her cooperation with Dr. Cable. Since the linking actions are free and work independently, according to Bhaskar’s

model of TMSA, this means that sending Tally to the run away (a group of people who do not want to be operated upon and flee in the remote territory of the country) marked a great milestone for her redemption of her identity. In other words, it helps Tally become familiar with others, which is a pivotal factor for the transformation of her identity. This decision of Dr. Cable provides another blow to dormant agency of Tally. Simultaneously, it generates guilt in Tally that she is betraying her friends. Therefore, she suffers mentally and psychologically in the Smoke. She misses the ideal beauty of the pretty world. In the beginning, she finds it impossible to tolerate and face Ugliers, as well as come to terms with the possibility that she might remain ugly throughout her life if she stays with the smokies.

As earlier discussed, active identity formation, where agency plays a role in the formation of identity, begins with the existence of the other. Tally has never experienced otherness before she is compelled to go to the Smoke to facilitate Dr Cable and her state but, ironically, this experience enables Tally to have an encounter with otherness. In the absence of otherness, identity formation is passive, which is the goal of the state. In order to capture the runaways, Dr Cable exposes Tally to otherness. This provides her with agency to become vibrant and active, thereby challenging the constructed identity that endangers the real of the characters. This identity enables the individual to differentiate himself or herself from the others by realizing what she or he possesses and what the others possess. This helps the individual to understand who she or he is and who the others are: "Organic functions constitute the very core of our experiences of personal identity" (Kroger 8). Prior to her journey, Tally is indifferent to the idea that identity formation relies on encountering otherness. She is unaware of her true self and believes

that her only path to fulfillment is through the government's operation, which promises to transform her into a "pretty." Her perception of identity is passive; she envisions only her own image reflected on her computer screen, and this passive view limits her sense of agency.

In the posthuman era depicted in the novel, identity formation is passive because it alienates individuals from their true abilities, emotions, and free will. Tally's compliance with state policies highlights this passivity. However, her experience changes dramatically when she is sent to the wilderness. Here, encountering the "other"—those who live outside the controlled environment—allows her to observe a different way of existence. This experience, combined with the displacement from her previous life, prompts Tally to confront her own identity and recognize the limitations imposed by the state.

Tally's exposure to otherness and displacement challenges her passive identity and revitalizes her sense of agency. The state's mechanisms—such as the enforced conformity and lack of interaction with otherness—have suppressed her ability to fully realize her human potential. In the wild, Tally's restored free agency contrasts sharply with the restricted identity she had before. The encounter with otherness and the subsequent self-reflection empowers her to reclaim aspects of her true self that the state had suppressed. Thus, the structured environment of the posthuman society threatens the human real by stifling individual agency and personal growth through its controlling mechanisms.

According to McCallum, displacement occurs when characters are “removed from their familiar surroundings and placed in an environment which is physically, culturally, or



linguistically alien” (McCallum 104). McCallum further elaborates by saying that displacement is the manifestation of the alienation of one’s culture, environment, and one’s surroundings. She further believes that displacement may occur psychologically even if one does not leave his or her society. Whatever the form of displacement is it inevitably brings forth the encounter with otherness which is integral and fundamental for the formation of subjectivity and identity. While deliberating the value of these encounter in the formation of identity, Kroger asserts that such encounters highlight the fundamental contrast between the individual and his or her other. These contrasts enable the individual to define his or her identity finding himself or herself separate from the other (McCallum 8). Similarly, there is a possibility that the displacement may originate in the acquisition of agency. These encounters, in the words of Bhaskar, are independent mechanisms that can be used to form or shape the empirical reality. At the same time, however, these mechanisms can also play a pivotal role in the restoration of the agency of humans as they provide a path to think beyond the thinking pattern of the society.

Tally has to experience displacement in the novel many times. For the first time, she experiences the displacement when she is separated from her family in order to get education. This is where she is introduced to the concept of the ugly, informed that she is ugly, and the only way to come out of such tragic situation is to offer herself for the pretty operation. This displacement does not lead to the acquisition of the agency, because it does not offer an encounter with the other which could provide a contrast between herself and the other. This displacement is designed by the closed community, so that there is no chance of the freedom of the agency. Rather, this event is used to create a docile identity. Here education is used to ensure that Tally is ready to embrace

the conformity. This is the beginning of the manipulation of the coercive independent state institutions.

Her second displacement occurs when she surreptitiously sneaks into the pretty town at night to see the ideal society. This experience of displacement made her acutely aware of her otherness as she finds herself to be the other in relation to the pretties. She finds the pretties better and ideal than herself, so she is enthralled by the idea of becoming a pretty. In both these displacements, her agency does not get the scope to perform its role; rather the empirical reality overpowers her free agency. Here, Tally is eager to get rid of her first identity and accept her second identity. When she is shocked that she would not be operated upon, even after reaching the age required for the operation, she experiences psychological displacement. This is because she is alienated from society and left with no identity: she is neither ugly, as she is sixteen, nor is she pretty, because she is denied the operation. She therefore finds herself in a liminal state which causes agony and anxiety.

As stated earlier, the conditioning that enforces identity poses a serious threat to the characters. Therefore, Tally, after knowing that she is not going to be pretty, begins to suffer psychologically. She has been made to believe that all the problems faced by the humans originate from prettiness, so the only way to escape the crises of cyber culture is to escape from the condition of prettiness. According to that narrative, even the war, corruption, prejudice, injustice, and other social evils are a result of ugliness. Therefore, through pretty transformation any possibility of the repetition of history will be circumvented by ensuring the creation of a homogenized society. Thus, it leaves no chance for free will and independent thinking and turns humans into robots. This ensures equality and the nonexistence of hierarchy in the Pretty world of cyber culture. Thus,

with the use of technology, the authorities eliminate otherness which unswervingly captures the subjectivity and agency of the common people, thereby providing the authorities with docile identities via the passive formation of identity. This results in the loss of otherness.

In this situation, McCallum asserts that what is lost is “that sense of a personal identity an individual has of her/his self as distinct from other selves, as occupying a position within society and in relation to other selves, and as being capable of deliberate thought and action” (McCallum 3). Beauty and equality are obtained at the cost of homogeneity. When sameness perpetuates everywhere, it eliminates otherness and the absence of otherness wipes out the existence of any criteria based on difference, which can validate beauty and equality. Thus, if there is nothing left to provide validity, this process actually destroys the very concept of beauty since every concept is based on contrariness. So, sameness essentially robs off the meaning of the beauty from it, because it is otherness that provides the validity to the concepts by illuminating the differences between beauty and ugliness. Sameness designates no otherness which means that there is no beauty, no jealousy, no desire, no ambition or passion, no possibility to make the choices. These are some of the very distinct values and qualities that are purely human and which separate humans from other creations and things, especially machines. In a situation where only sameness prevails, people are no longer humans. Instead, they are just like machines which work according to the program they are installed with and their only quality is conformity.

This situation is realized in the *Uglies* (2005) series, where the pretties are deprived of their subjectivity and forced to live lives of conformity without any rebellion or

challenge. They are objectified by objectifying their bodies. They only engage in pleasure seeking and merry making, and even their pleasure is designed and framed. They are not assigned any duty to create or where they need to use their minds and free will. They enjoy without emotion, and spend their lives without passion. They are marginalized, as they even were not allowed to interact the people of different hierarchy. Instead, they are not allowed to go beyond their designated territory. This is how the state in cyber culture threatens the real of human beings: by infringing their freedom of thought and inquiry. They are not provided the environment where they could participate actively in the process of the creation.

With the help of the conditioning, Ugliers are fostered a peculiar attitude towards their body that their body is an object that is malleable and can be easily replaced. This can be vividly seen in the morphing program where Tally and Shay get an opportunity to create the ideal image of their body, which is a clear indication of the rejection of their natural body. In fact, this attitude towards their natural bodies is disgusting and hateful. Instead of emphasizing mind and spirit in the Uglyville (a place where runaways dwell), it is Corporeality which is emphasized. This is another instance which proves that in the novel the old concept of being the human is disrupted. The body is equated with matter and any kind of emotional attachment to it is denied. Spirit and mind are even considered impediments, since they could potentially revitalize the real of the humans by challenging the objectification of the body and reinvigorating the subjectivity of the human agency.

The experience of travelling by the hoverboard illuminates the significance of the integration of mind and body to Tally. She learns how to quickly align the signals of the mind to the body and how important it is to develop harmony between the movements of

the body and the thoughts of the mind in order to avoid any kind of accident. She realizes that she is the amalgamation of the body and the mind and it is through their combined efforts that she can fly, make any movement or any kind of action. This is what was never taught to Tally in Ugliville or would never be taught in the pretty if she had gone through transformation. Transformation mutes the mechanical relationship of the body and mind. On the hover board, Tally experiences a unique relationship between body and mind as she is more concerned with the performance of body and mind instead of their appearance. This can be summed up as a symbiotic relationship. Tally's journey in the wild enlightens her more about the physical existence of her body.

At the same time, she becomes more aware of the subjectivity of her body during her journey. She experiences pain and aches, hunger and thirst, numbness and energy, which she would never experience in the city or in the cyber culture. This sensation of the body paves the way for the elimination of the objectification of the body and leads to an awareness of that the body is the incarnation of subjectivity. She is exposed to different dangers and problems as she is no longer inside the protection of the city, which is mechanically and technically equipped to protect her body from any possible harm and danger. This exposure of her body to the nature forces her to think about the subjectivity of her body: "This was the wild, she reminded herself. Mistakes had serious consequences" (Westerfeld150). Tally's perception of nature undergoes a radical change: for the first time she observes it independently without any narrative from a vantage point outside her scientifically constructed city. Whereas in the past she termed the sky, "The color of cat vomit" (Westerfeld 1) now, she looks at it entirely in a different prospective, "A band of orange and yellow ignited the sky, glorious and unexpected...but changing at

a stately, barely perceptible pace” (Westerfeld 151). In the wild, Tally is becoming more and more responsive and subtle towards her surroundings. Her retorts and reactions to nature are more human-like, which the city has not nurtured in her because for them, these responses are out dated and would soon be vanished from the human society.

Outside the city, Tally becomes acquainted with another kind of the beauty in the form of nature which was not introduced to her in the city. But she is still not able to sense that she is also the product of nature and is possessed with a peculiar beauty. Instead, she looks for the completion of her secret mission so that she could be transformed into a pretty. The visit of Tally in the smoke and wild exacerbates her experience of displacement. In adolescent literature, “this displacement of a character can destabilizes and place in question...concepts of personal identity” (McCallum 104). The assertion of this statement suggests that the questioning of the personal identity was not taken as an issue as far as Tally is concerned, because she is very eager to accept her identity of pretty believing that the transformation is just a matter of cosmetic surgery and it has nothing to do with her inner being leaving her inner side untouched and unaffected from it. (Westerfeld 93).

However, the displacement transforms the mode of identity formation from passive to active. The displacement introduces Tally to otherness, which is not a possibility if she has not left her city. Thus, displacement meets another requirement for the active mode of formation of the identity. This is because it is impossible to have an active formation of the identity in the absence of otherness. The sense of self as a distinct entity exists only with the existence of the other: as Kroger notes, the community plays special part in identity formation “recognizing, supporting, and thus helping to shape the adolescent

ego” (Kroger 9). The ugly community plays this role by performing all the above-mentioned actions. But it does not do it to support the adolescents to form their identity, since ugly identity is a temporary one that prepares and convinces the adolescents to acquire new identity of pretty. So, the ugly community is primarily entrusted with the duty to produce docile bodies which do not challenge or object to the formation of pretty identity through passive mode of identity formation. This identity formation is manipulated in the favor of the state, as it is used to produce individuals who would not challenge any program of the state or who would not think beyond the narrative of the state. The state wants to control the individuals by making them conformists. The conformity is achieved through docile bodies and docile bodies are produced by passive identity formation. Thus, the state restricts the agency of the humans.

However, this conformity is not found in the smoke where luckily Tally has discovered the difference between her and others. This introduced her uniqueness that makes her different from others. Her interaction with the others in the smoke gave her opportunity to ponder who she is: “Others now become important not merely as potential sources of identification but rather as independent agents, helping to recognize the ‘real me’” (Kroger 9). Considering this statement in the matter of Tally, the question arises whether in the case of Tally, any “real me” exists because her ugly identity is a mere cultural construct and she is determined to embrace the pretty identity which itself is not an independent identity. However, her encounter with otherness convinces her that she is natural and normal and that her transformation would therefore be abnormal. She finds transformation abnormal since technology would be used to manipulate her memory by reconfiguring it. This reconfiguring directly affects her identity and herself. The

experience of Smoke teaches Tally that being ugly is real and more human. She further learns through the books that it is difference that makes the life of the human beings normal instead of the sameness. So, she realizes that the real beauty arises from diversity. She reads that people who never challenge nature remain content with their physical appearance. She recognizes a marked difference between what her education teaches her and what she experiences herself in the presence of the otherness in the condition of displacement. This experience helps Tally to subvert the narrative that asserts that every unhappiness is due to the ugly appearance.

As stated earlier, adolescence is the most pivotal time for the individuals as it encompasses physical and psychological vicissitudes which ultimately assist in identity formation. Tally's adventure to the Smokies begins when she is going through the critical phase of her life. Tally is conditioned to judge people on appearances. Therefore, the Smokies appear to her as uglies because she identifies them on their appearance. However, her interaction with David, the leader of the Smokies, serves as an independent mechanism that paves the way for the disillusionment of Tally about Uglies. "The boy smiled again. He was an ugly, but he had a nice smile. And his face held a confidence that Tally had never seen in an ugly before. Maybe he was a few years older than she was. Tally had never watched anyone mature past age sixteen. She wondered how much of being an ugly just an awkward age was"(Westerfeld 189). Tally starts enjoying her independent and impartial observation which she was never taught or allowed in the city. These events are an important part of how she attains the redemption of the free agency and begins to behave and see like a human. Her way of perceiving the world gives way to an impartial approach instead of the conformist. She enjoys the evolution of her



perception which lets her evolve towards subjectivity. She not only develops a new and more humane approach and understanding towards her surroundings, but also starts taking herself in a novel existence. This evolution enables her to read the facial expressions of others as something noble and meaningful.

However, although Tally is very warmly welcomed and enjoys the transformation she undergoes, it remains painful for her, as she faces a conflict over whether she should have deceived the smokies for the attainment of the ideal beauty or she should have stayed there. Since her humanness is being revitalized, she is in the agony that she is double-crossing the Smokies. However, the longer she stays and interacts with the Smokies, particularly with David, her liking to nature also develops. As David informs her, “Nature didn’t need an operation to be beautiful” (Westerfeld 230). Considering that David is only mocking the operation of pretty, she is unable to grasp the real meanings however he further elaborates, “What’s inside those matters,” to which Tally replies, “But first you see my face” (Westerfeld 278). At this point, Tally still considers appearance to be the marker of the identity, so for her the human body is the real sign of the appearance. She thinks “maybe he really could see past my ugly face” and when she asks David if he really believed that she was beautiful he assures her, “Yes. What you do, the way you think, makes you beautiful” (Westerfeld 279). Her conditioning does not let her think that she is really beautiful.

Living in the Smokie, Tally grasps the lesson that beauty does not merely rest upon appearance, rather it depends upon what one thinks and how one behaves. Thinking about the pretty operation she passionately and prudently says to David, “I don’t want you to look like everyone else” (Westerfeld 279). This illustrates the change in Tally’s reaction

to the 'pretty construct,' as she denies the pretty operation and comes to prefer the ugly state as a mark of true humanness. She decides to vote for the real of humans and stand against mechanical life that kills diversity and upholds conformity, which ultimately strips off the humanness from the human beings. However, it is ironic that the identity that Tally secures with the consent of her free will, then has to be surrendered because she has to accept the pretty operation in order to facilitate the cure that David's parents have discovered to get rid of the brain lesions. This is the situation, according to Bhaskar, when an independent mechanism transforms the individual in a docility by making them really suffer. Apparently, Tally gives her own consent for the experiment for the cure, but the close reading and analysis of these events, one can vividly observe that Tally is trapped in to the net of another covert mechanism that manipulate Tally for its survival. However, here the agency seems to be freer and more active though it is under pressure from another empirical reality. Her sacrifice is to resurrect the humanness and rejection of the robotic life which offered nothing beyond conformity.

In aligning with my conceptual framework and research objectives, the exploration of memory is integral to understanding the dynamics of the real and human agency. Memory, as a concept, plays a crucial role in revealing how individuals experience and reconstruct their identities in the face of technological and structural influences. According to Bhaskar's critical realism, memory is not merely a passive recollection but an active process that intersects with human agency and social structures to shape our understanding of the real.

Bhaskar's argument emphasizes that memory is pivotal in bridging the subjective and objective dimensions of reality. It helps in reconciling personal experiences with the

broader societal mechanisms that influence identity formation. In the context of the texts under analysis, memory serves as a mechanism through which characters negotiate their identities and resist or succumb to imposed constraints. By revisiting the role of memory, we can better understand how characters reclaim or redefine their agency amid technological and social transformations. This exploration will provide insights into how memory interacts with other constructs such as identity, agency, and social control, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the human real within the narratives.

#### **4.2 Memory: A Powerful Tendency to Restore the Reals of Individuals**

In the third chapter of *The Possibility of Naturalism* (1979), Bhaskar explicates the peculiar powers and tendencies that humans possess naturally and thus how through them humans can be taken as independent natural objects. These properties, which cannot be further reduced, tend to appear as objects of knowledge for critical realism. In other words, these tendencies form agency independent of individuals. Consequently, they constitute the real of the humans. Bhaskar claims, “The powers most naturally invoked here are those that involve consciousness, that is, those states of persons in virtue of which mentalistic predicates are applicable” (Bhaskar 88). According to Bhaskar, it is not necessary that agent himself or herself should fully be aware of the reason behind his or her intentional behavior. Therefore, for Bhaskar, “explanations of human actions may necessarily have recourse both to psychological mechanisms, unavailable to consciousness, and to non-psychological (e.g., physiological and sociological)” (Ibid).

For Bhaskar, the phenomena of consciousness are formed by knowable generative structures. Therefore, the real of the humans is their consciousness and it is revealed through their intentional actions which they do consciously. From this connection,

Bhaskar concludes that the properties that constitute the mind are causal: the “mind is a *sui generis* real emergent power of matter, whose autonomy, though real, is nevertheless circumscribed” (ibid). According to Bhaskar, the concept of an individual is just like an entity which is the combined unit of two predicates; material and psychological. In other words, individuals intervene in natural material by using the powers of doing and acting, but their actions require self-monitoring and they are also fully aware of the act of self-monitoring. This act of self-monitoring is directly related to language, as it is the most apt medium of communication and helps to store information. If an entity is unable to reflect his or her conscious state, and cannot refer to its interior state as a third person, this means that the entity does not possess language. On the other hand, “any x which could use its states of consciousness must possess the capacity to make its own past and anticipated states of awareness the present objects of its awareness. Such reflexivity over time would seem, then, to be a necessary condition for any discursive (non-intuitive) intelligence” (Bhaskar 90). Thus, it can be claimed that the free agent, according to Bhaskar, is the one who is fully conscious of his or her consciousness; he or she can display intentional behavior.

Memory facilitates reflection and self-awareness by allowing individuals to revisit and reassess their past experiences. This retrospection enables agents to understand how they have been shaped by external influences and social structures. By integrating these insights, individuals can develop a more informed and autonomous perspective on their identity. Therefore, memory catalyzes the development of awareness, which is essential for reclaiming and exercising one’s agency, ultimately helping individuals navigate and counteract the forces that seek to impose conformity and docility. This is where the role

of memory comes in the developing or restoring one's agency. In order to restore one's real being, one has to utilize memory. Memory is one of the powerful or natural tendencies that helps the mind grow as a *sui generis*. It is memory that helps agents reflect upon their conscious actions and through it one can view one's past retrospectively. If on one hand memory is used to develop any narrative; on the other hand, with the assistance of memory, individuals can scale their agency.

In the 2nd book of *Uglies* (2005) series, memory plays a pivotal role to remind characters about their reality. Through memory, the characters succeed in recognizing the threats that individuals pose towards their agency, and they restore their real being with the tendency of memory. In *Pretties*, the manifestation of conformity and docility are palpable. One can observe how coercive state agencies control the mode of identity: as Jacobs asserts, "Dystopias understand free agency as based in individuality, and they use every means to destroy any kind of identity that is separable from and potentially at odds with the collective" (Jacobs 92). As stated earlier, the human body and identity are reshaped by using the operation in the trilogy in order to scale conformism. People are persuaded to sacrifice their individuality for the sake of a so-called care free life, full of enjoyment and with ideal beauty. However, due to the controlled environment, the memories of the people are made dormant, and so they are unable to control their identity.

Homogeneity is enforced through cosmetics. People are convinced to believe that they are equal as far as their physical appearance is concerned. Their memories are infused with the concept of the ideal beauty by explicating it through games, advertisements of cosmetics, and glamorous magazines. As far as the ideal of beauty is concerned, the

white face is considered the quintessence of beauty, so an endeavor is made to obliterate the idea of race from the memory which is a peculiar marker of identity. This attempt of transforming everybody so they are the same, not only diminishes the role of race in the formation of identity, but also discredits the significance of ethnicity in one's identity formation.

In the trilogy, characters are made to believe that removing racial markers and achieving equality in physical appearances will guarantee a carefree and pleasurable life. Therefore, otherness is removed from their memories. While controlling their memories, the coercive powers put this tendency (memory) of agents dormant. In the views of Bhaskar, this inhibits their natural tendencies that are essential for them to be independent agents. This attempt threatens the real of these characters, which results in unintentional conformism. They are assured that the miraculous operation would cure them of bad habits as well as free them from all other individual traits such as gender, skin color, height, and eye shape and color. The operation removes the hereditary markers from the people. In fact, the authorities do not want to leave any marker that could rejuvenate the dormant memory of the pretties. The absence of the past memory will compel the characters to be content with the identity that has been fashioned and with the illusion that they are free in opting into such an identity. That is why, when Tally wants to remind Shay about their past, she shoves her off.

After being captured at the Smoke, Tally is taken back to town to transform her into a pretty, and she comes across Shay. Tally could not understand why Shay is not angry with her since she has stolen David from her, "You hated me. Because I stole David from you. Because I betrayed the Smoke, remember?" (Westerfeld 394). But Shay's reaction

shocks Tally as she does not complain. Instead, she says, “But that was all ugly stuff” (Westerfeld 394). Tally cannot grasp what transformation has done to Shay’s agency and to what an extent her memory is obliterated. Even Shay herself is unable to understand the psychological transformation she is going through, which has made her indifferent to the independent and natural tendencies such as jealousy, love, apathy, compassion, regret and pride.

When Tally desperately tries to resurrect her memory, Shay does not respond to her positively rather for Shay, Tally is mistaken. Shay is adamant that she is in a perfect and ideal state, “I’m happier in this body. You want to talk about brain damage?...You’re all full of schemes and rebellions, crazy with fear and paranoia, even jealousy.... That’s what being ugly does.... It’s nice not being all raging with hormones” (Westerfeld 408). Shay in the absence of her natural tendencies becomes the specimen of Foucault’s idea of docile body that has realized the precision of docility. This conditioning is executed with the help of augmented technology. With the help of technology, Shay is shorn of natural human emotions such as jealousy, envy, and anger. However, in the absence of such messy emotions, humans lose their self defense mechanisms and, as a result, become subjugated. David asserts, “Maybe the reason war ended and all that other stuff went away is that there are no more disagreements, no people demanding change. Just masses of smiling pretties and a few people left to run things” (Westerfeld 267). When pretties are dehumanized, they are shorn of their natural emotions which could enable them to take actions willingly. In this state, they lack those natural tendencies that could make them real humans. This echoes Fukuyama’s claims that in fictional dystopias, such as in *New Brave World* (1932), people do not appear as fully human as they do not possess

many of the natural qualities “that we traditionally associate with being human” (Fukuyama 6). While discussing what are the qualities that make humans human, Fukuyama acknowledges the absence of consensus but sums up by stating that love, making family, caring, friendship, feeling pain, compassion, making moral and difficult choices are these qualities (Fukuyama 6). Here one can find equivalent characteristics of humans in the views of Bhaskar and Fukuyama. What Fukuyama calls qualities, Bhaskar calls natural tendencies and powers. Both are agreed that in the absence of these tendencies or qualities, humans are deprived of their humanness. They are, in the words of Foucault, fashioned into docile bodies and are no longer enjoy intention or free agency.

The pretties do not object to the loss of their free will. Shay and company do not protest against the unauthorized changes in their bodies, which are deliberately and treacherously contrived and accomplished through brain lesions that detach from the brain the part which contains those human tendencies. In fact, these lesions impair the memories of the pretties so they cannot recall their past, back when they enjoyed separate and individual identities along with voluntarism. The impaired memories of the pretties entangle them in the present: consequently, they became very happy in their condition. Here, the state uses identity formation as a covert mechanism to control the knowledge and through the construct of knowledge or transit reality, it imparts false information in the memories of the common people. Thus, with the aid of the implanted memory these institutions control human behavior, the expansion and ripeness of intellect and free thinking. As Hayles explicates, when the recondite, posthuman body is perceived as a construct, it espouses that knowledge is also regarded in the same way (Hayles 85).



Despite the controlled memory of the pretties, the characters struggle hard to restore their memories instinctively: as it is natural and innate in the humans that they resist the unnatural and unreal. Shay tries to reawake her memory by exerting pressure on her body and manages to restore why she is there, what happened in uglies, and how she has been betrayed by Tally. She says “It’s because of you that I’m here in the city, Tally. All those stories I used to tell? They were bogus. What really happened is that you followed me out to Smoke to betray me, right?” (Westerfeld 142). As it is suggested by Foucault that knowledge is power and it is a construct (Foucault 1977), the state apparatuses use these constructs to configure the memories of the people. By using the knowledge, they put information about the need for cosmetic operations in the minds of adolescents through education, and thereby prepare their memories for the transformation. There is then another construct that is imparted in the pretties which induces them to remain indifferent from uglies as they are inferior to them and suggests that uglies would jeopardize their carefree and happy life. Thus, by using repressive stratagems, the authorities instigate fear regarding the uglies, who are seen as stupid and absurd, and their every action is irrational and it can take them back to wars.

On the other hand, Specials (one of the sub agencies of what previously referred to as Rangers) are portrayed as their saviors and well-wishers. Nobody ever dares to defy them, rather their dresses, their faces, and their actions are idealized: “Specials kept themselves well hidden. Their job was to protect the city from outside threats, like soldiers and spies back in the days of the Rusties” (Westerfeld 19). An empirical construct is generated about the Specials: that they are powerful and they are essential for protecting the pretties from external aggression and any kind of danger. The Specials do

not mix with the common pretties, rather they work secretly. The faces of the Specials are also designed purposefully to create terror in the minds of the pretties. Thus, by using the empirical strata of reality, the memories of the pretties provide the authoritative image of the Specials. The pretties do not think otherwise. In the case of Specials, though they have mixed feelings about them—as Tally when encounters a Special agent in the very beginning of the second book—they feel a strange kind of fear and anxiety. It is Tally’s memory that enlightens her about the powers and tactics of the Special Circumstances. However, at that time she was in the empirical strata of reality and according to that transitive knowledge pretty state and condition is most befitting for her. Since the Special agency realizes that they cannot utterly paralyze the memories of the pretties as it is their natural tendency, they begin to placate with their memory by instilling the empirical knowledge in it. They manipulate the memory of the people for two perpetual goals: one to construct a collective and conforming identity, and second, to cope with the intimidations of diversity and free choice of the people.

In order to understand the role of memory and knowledge in the life of individual, one has to recall and grasp the connection between power and knowledge theorized by Foucault. He introduces the term ‘power/knowledge’ to claim that power is established through recognized forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and ‘truth’. Truth is a construct of this world; it is constructed only by virtue of multiple constraints. And truth stimulates regular impacts of power. One can observe that each independent society possess a set of truths and doctrines which comprise a regime of truth or its “general politics” of truth. It is only with reference to such types of discourse that a society owns and uses it as a mirror of truth that one can distinguish between true and false statements

(Foucault 1991). These 'general politics' and 'regimes of truth' are the outcome of institutions and scientific discourse, and are reinforced (and redefined) persistently with the aid of education system, the media, and the plethora of economics and political ideologies. It can be asserted, the 'battle for truth' is not for some utter truth that can be explored and believed, but is a skirmish about 'the rules according to which the true and false are separated and specific effects of power are attached to the true'... a clash about 'the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays (Foucault 1991). Thus, one can suppose that through the transitive knowledge, the memory of the common people is formed and shaped. The people think, act, and even imagine through their implanted memory which appears as a prosthetic memory.

The same technique or strategy is employed upon the common people whom Tally meets in the Outside in the third part of *The Pretties*. The tendencies of free thinking and free acting have been paralyzed in these people by confining their memories through transitive knowledge. They are confined to a very limited and wild place. They have been kept away from the modern technology because the specials are conducting research on them. These specials are worshiped by those simple and rustic people. It is their knowledge that assures them that they cannot challenge these powerful gods. Though they are very powerful and gruesome, yet their memory does not allow them to harm the gods. However, on the other hand, they are not ready to spare the people they consider outsiders. Initially, they want to beat Tally when they take her as an outsider, but luckily one of them recognizes that she is not an outsider, rather she is a little or a young god: here it is his memory that informs him that Tally is not an outsider. At first, they take Tally to be an outsider with whom they have a long and everlasting blood.

Tally gains this information through speaking with their religious leader, Andrew Simpson Smith, who can speak Tally's language. Since Tally has knowledge of the pre-Rusties in her memory, she realizes that they believe in divine powers, so she realizes that these people have been kept away from the operation and subsequently they are not acquainted with modern technology. Thus, their 'absolute truth' is still like that of the pre-Rusties. For them, there are two others: one is God and the other is their enemy, the outsider. For the former they have their love, reverence, and their submission, while for the later they have hate, competition, and arch rivalry. In short, their real is threatened as their natural tendency to think freely and to explore beyond their knowledge has been restricted by the Specials. Their memory is restricted due to a desire for revenge upon the outsiders, whereby they seek to kill them, while the outsiders also seek to kill anyone of Andrew's tribe.

When Andrew along with Tally leaves that world, he explains their enmity with the outsiders. He narrates how his father has been killed and now it is upon him to take revenge. In response, Tally poses many questions, one after the other, to Andrew whom he answers with amazement and fondness: "She said. 'Why would the outsiders want to kill your father? Or anyone?' Andrew frowned, as if this was an odd question. 'It was their turn.' 'Their what?' He shrugged. 'We had killed in the summer. The revenge was on them.'" (Westerfeld 174). Later in the chapter we are told that Specials have kept these people confined in that place deliberately as they want to do various kinds of experiments upon such controlled people and environment. They are told that there is no world beyond their world. At the edge of that territory, Specials have fixed some powerful

modern equipment that destroys the nerve system of the humans if they try to go beyond that line. For these innocent people, this is the edge of the world.

During their journey, Andrew tells Tally with firm assurance that there is nothing beyond the edge of the world, as everyone goes to the end of that but never manages to escape from there. Tally asks Andrew, "So what's beyond the edge of the world?" She finally said. He shrugged. "Nothing." "There must be something." "The world just ends." "Have you been there?" (Westerfeld 183). Andrew informs Tally that it is a kind of ritual that every boy goes there one year prior to his manhood age. Tally asks him what is there at the end. Is it a river, desert, or a rock? He replies, "No. It looks like the forest, like any other place. But it is the end. There are little men there, who make sure you go no farther" (Ibid). Tally realizes that it is their limited knowledge that does not allow them to go beyond the edge or it is marked for their memory so that they cannot escape from the blood feud. However, for Andrew, this encounter with Tally is sufficient to come out of his transitive knowledge and to regain his natural tendency for memory and free thinking. When they both reach the edge of the world, Tally finds some powerful equipment like the dolls that can destroy the nerve system of the humans. So they have to return back and Tally escapes from that place through the hover car which the Specials have brought on their routine visit. Thus, this unexpected trip of Tally to the hunter's village unveils the machinations of the transitive knowledge with which the truths and believes are contrived and are inculcated in the minds of the people as the 'absolute truth'.

In the novel, one can observe the controlled memories of the hunters as they cannot think beyond revenge. They cannot even imagine a challenge to the gods or a skeptical approach towards the intrigues and conspiracies of their gods. They are happy in their

confined and closed 'prison' which has impaired their memory and free thinking. However, as soon as Andrew meets Tally, he begins to think that their empirical reality is not the real reality, so he intends to discover the world as his knowledge is enhanced and transformed by Tally. One can conclude that the revitalization of his memory is what enables Andrew to gain access to the real. This portion of the novel also indicates the sufferings of the individuals or the societies when the real of the humans is not present. These people cannot make progress, as it is evident in the case of the hunters. Their physical marginalization is symbolic of their intellectual marginalization. Finally, their free agency is not possible in such environment. Thus, they are nothing but docile puppets in the hands of the powerful structures which achieve nothing but conformism.

If the hunters are conformed by keeping them away from the technology, the Pretties are kept in illusion of freedom, free choice, and happiness through prosthetic memory and empirical reality. Apparently, the pretty town is an ideal where everyone is equal, where there is no jealousy, no hatred, no conflict, no worry, and no competition. In fact, it is a web where one is caught up after the operation and one has to give away one's identity, free agency, freedom of choice, and even human emotions such as love, pain, jealousy, and aesthetic sense which are the essentials for the real humans, according to Westerfeld. Like the hunters, Pretties are also unable to understand that they have lost the natural human tendencies, since the technology manages to keep them always in a trance of forgetfulness. What technology effectively has done is to transform their memory, which is a natural tendency to enlighten one's real. However, in the case of the Prettiest, the role of memory is made limited because the Pretties have no connection with their past. They are eager to think nor to perceive anything freely or willingly about their future. Their

short-term memory keeps them in the present where they enjoy merrymaking. So, the Pretties do not challenge the powerful structures and create favorable environment for themselves and for the others.

In such a scenario, memory cannot work efficiently for forming their identity or free agency as Kroger elaborates, “Identity formation during adolescence cannot be fully appreciated without knowledge of its childhood antecedents and consequent adult states” (Krogger 6). Being segregated and physically marginalized, the Pretties have very limited knowledge, much like the hunters, so their real is bound to be dormant. Since the Pretties’ life is just a plethora of parties and carefree activities, the fear of the future and the purpose for future life is not a worry of the Pretties. Similarly, the absence of past memories and future aims makes their memory fragmented and undependable. Tally, in the Pretties town, faces the trauma of the fragmented memory as her memory is manipulated by implanting new memories and putting the past memory in to slumber. Consequently, her ability to shape her ideas and to construct her thoughts independently is also restricted. Therefore, Tally has to struggle very hard to decipher the letter she wrote herself before coming in the Pretties’ town for the operation. Tally’s memory does not provide her the identity of the Ugly as it is no longer present in her memory as Applebaum relates, “Technology [is] a tool...which can be used or abused, depending on the agenda of those who deploy it” (Applebaum 7). However, this “prosthetic memory”, as Landsberg denotes to it, is penetrable and the experiences, identity, and memories that have been glossed over with plan specific implants can be rescued.

As discussed above, in the book, real human tendencies are suppressed in characters through brain lesions. However, the innate capacity to control one’s body and mind

remains in the main characters even after the operation which transforms them in to Pretties. This effort to seek control over one's own body is the first step to retrieve one's memory and identity. This innate tendency enables them to resist the subjugation of their body and mind. Since it is driven by a natural tendency, their action against it causes unrest and conflict in the individual, and subsequently it invites the rebellion against external forces.

This rebellion can be observed when Tally creates a group of Cutters among the Pretties who inflict the pain on themselves in order to escape from the state of the numbness of the mind which is the result of the brain lesions. They try to challenge the subjugation of their memory and their body. They injure themselves in order to restore their memory. Such actions challenge the norms of the pretties as pretties cannot and should not hurt either themselves or any other. However, it is noteworthy here that this self-inflicting pain does not restore their real, as they are still confined to the pretty town. Still, this challenge enlightens their memory on one hand and it enhances their knowledge about themselves, as they begin to measure the changes that occur in them after the operation. The posthuman reality is not hidden from them. This new awareness helps them to recall the previous reality of the ugly stage. Now they can compare their condition of the Pretty and the previous reality. Ultimately, they arrive at the conclusion that their pretty conditioning has impaired their identity, memory, and their free agency. Their desired body is not an ideal rather it is a kind of prison. This awareness further aggravates their natural tendency of resistance and they begin to challenge their controlled environment.

The lost memory in Pretty is restored by reintroducing the natural emotions and sensations such as hunger, pain, stress upon body and excitement. As soon as the memory



is restored, the natural tendencies of free thinking and free action are also regained by the agents. Tally is the first character who faces this realization when she gets her injured while bungee jumping: "Her head throbbed, but the clarity that had come over as she'd thrown herself off the balcony hadn't faded....Everything felt very real: her intense revulsion at Croy's face, her fear of the Specials, the shapes and smells around her. It felt as if a thin plastic film had been peeled from her eyes" (Westerfeld 38). At this very moment, Tally remembers her visit to the Smoke. She also recalls that Croy has something to give her. Now, Tally confronts the inner conflict as on one hand, it is the implanted reality in her memory about the Smokies; on the other hand, her own genuine memory about them that they are friends and they have helped her to escape. But for her clarity Tally has to undergo pain and stress physically to reconnect her memory. She achieves this through coffee and special food for Pretties. She feels her heart beat fast as soon as she takes coffee and some food Zane gives to her, "It helps if your heart's beating faster" and when she asks, "Helps what?" he replies, "Thinking" (Westerfeld 61). Her memory begins to awake and she recalls the Smoke, David, and her reality before being transformed in to Pretty. But still she wonders because her memory is not clear so she asks Zane, "How come I can't remember? What's wrong with me Zane?" (Westerfeld 64). On this Zane tells Tally that to remember something it is required to repeat it again and again by making it a narrative or story. Another challenge that Tally and her Pretty friends have to bear or confront with is that owing to the programed memory their memory is not reliable, even though they are fully aware of it. As Shay says, while trying to refigure her memory about David, "I hate to bring the whole David thing up, but who

knows if I'll remember it tomorrow, you know? So I thought I'd mention it while I'm bubbly'" (Westerfeld 143).

Another factor that helps Tally to know her real truth is the letter she wrote to herself before her memory was manipulated by the specials. This letter is another form of memory storage or knowledge. This is how Tally tries to preserve her real and to challenge her constructed identity. This letter is an endorsement of real and natural tendency of the humans to express their opinion. Tally was sure that the operation would change her identity and it would impair her memory so in order to keep her real identity she preserves it in the letter. When she receives her own letter, it is very difficult for Tally to believe in it as the writer of the letter no longer exists, at least for the time being. However, Zane convinces her to read the letter so she reads, "You're me. Or I guess in another way to say it is, I'm you– Tally Youngblood. But if you're reading this letter, then we're also two different people" (Westerfeld 88). It is the implanted memory (or the transitive knowledge that Tally has from the Specials) which doesn't allow her to believe in the letter. So, she suffers from agony and mental tension. She is not ready to digest that she ever would wish to become anything else other than the Pretty.

At first, the appearance of the letter complicates the problem of identity for Tally as she is now just like a pendulum between two entirely different selves. As a result, instead of solving the issue, the letter disrupts the process of identity formation and Tally's attainment of free agency. Now, she is hanging between her past real and her new posthuman real, because both are a part of her memory. Tally wonders who she was. This picture of Tally's past appears on the surface of her mind through the restoration of her memory. Though Tally is still not convinced to believe in her past real, it awakens her

dormant memory and brings Tally to a point from where she can begin to challenge the constructed identity, which is the first leap towards free thinking and choice. It is a natural tendency towards moral responsibility that persuades Tally to believe in the content of letter. Similarly, it is her innate desire to discover the truth that urges her to allow herself to unravel her memory. Thus, she arrives at the conclusion that the reality of her being pretty is just a machination of the powerful regime and becomes adamant to rescue not only her real but the real of all others who are in the illusion that they are free agent; as Landsberg asserts, “memories are less about authenticating the past, than about generating possible courses of action in the present” (Landsberg 183). Though the letter is written in the past yet it serves the present to urge Tally to do something concerning the threats of the future. Thus, the knowledge in the form of the memory here helps the individual to restore her free agency and subsequently manages to keep her real alive.

This restoration of memory informs Tally about her purpose of coming to Pretties town so she starts devising ways to escape from the prison and she very soon manages to secure the freedom as she, Zane and other Crims (Group of playful people) run away from the Pretty town. However, she is then stranded in the wild as her hover board crashes in a world deprived of technological facilities. Inhabitants of the wild are confined to a well-controlled and marginalized environment. They are not allowed to seek or acquire knowledge beyond that world, so their freedom is also checked. Tally’s encounter with these primitive humans introduces the tendencies and qualities of the humans before transformation as posthumans. Tally succeeds in grasping the real tendencies of free humans and poses many questions to a posthuman scientist when he arrives for a research mission. Tally’s appearance makes him believe that she is a pretty

and therefore not capable of free thinking, but he is shocked when Tally poses question after question. He is “perplexed that a new pretty was asking questions instead of whining about getting home” (Westerfeld 312). Tally further shocks him, “Pretty? Think again.” She smiles. “I’m Tally young blood. My mind is very ugly. And I’m taking your car” (Westerfeld 313). Her boldness, her aggression, her threatening tone and her knife equate her with the primitive humans or the real humans so the pretty scientist gets scared and does not resist in front of her. Tally claims to be a real when she is leaving the world of Andrew as she says, “Don’t look at me that way...[I]like a...God. We’re just humans” (Westerfeld 315). One can evidently notice the confidence, courage, resolution, and free will in the actions, thoughts and words in the wild.

Tally fully resurrects her real in the wild so she decides to leave the wild and carry on her mission to reach the new Smokies. When she meets David in the new Smokies, David seems perplexed and refuses to kiss her as she appears pretty. However, she assures and comforts him by telling him that though she is physically a pretty, on the inside, she is truly ugly or a real human and she has already taken the medicine prescribed by his parents and hence she is fully cured from the lesions. She remembers the promises she made with David in the Smoke and recalls them in front of David.

As soon as they reach their new Smoke, the real challenge and test of Tally begins. She is very happy reunite with her fellows, especially with Zane and David. At first, she is informed that she and Zane have made a terrible and fatal mistake by sharing the medicine between them, because those two pills must be consumed by same person as one pill is to remove the lesions and the other is to remove the negative effects of the medicine. This mistake has brought about terrible effects on David and there is a risk he

will lose his life. Tally, being a ‘real’, suffers a serious guilt and regret. She feels the pain and suffering that Zane is undergoing. She decides to do everything to help Zane. Her compassionate feelings for Zane overcome her love for David so she pledges to prefer Zane to David. All of a sudden, Tally is informed that specials have managed to detect their new Smoke as they had installed a chip in the teeth of Zane during the operation. The mother of David tries her best to remove that chip but to no avail. They decide to sacrifice Zane by leaving him at the mercy of the Specials. Tally does not accept this and pleads to them to take Zane with them but they refuse. Tally has to choose between Zane and David, or in other words, she has to choose between humanity and selfishness. Tally decides to stay with Zane and surrender herself to the Specials. This demonstrates her free agency. Zane too attempts to persuade Tally to go with the Smokies but Tally remains firm in her decision so the Specials arrive there. This free act of Tally is influenced by no external agent or power but by her natural tendency. Thus, she succeeds in restoring her natural tendency that is essential for the real humans. This does not mean that real humans do not face any problems or conflicts: rather this diversity of the problems and conflicts and the response of the agents make them real and a source of beauty along with the meaningfulness of human life.

#### **4.3 Cyborg Identity; A Real Threat to Natural Tendencies of Humans in *Specials***

The third part of the *Ugly*(2006) series is very complicated as far as Tally’s search and quest for her real self is concerned. On the one hand, in this part of the trilogy, Tally’s transformation is accomplished; on the other hand, her real and natural tendencies that inform her humanity are challenged as Tally has to face a conflict between her cyborg identity and her real self, as her body and her inner self appear in conflict with each other.

The new transformation has nothing to do with her natural and humane tendencies, but these tendencies have not been entirely diminished. Here, Tally has to fight with external forces as well as with her duality in order to attain her free agency. We meet Tally transformed into a cyborg as she has been fashioned into a Special whose responsibility is to destroy the New Smoke and preserve the wild. Thus, it is an attempt to deprive Tally off her humane tendencies and emotions.

Tally is bestowed with special features and qualities when transformed into a cyborg. Her body is purposefully designed to frighten and intimidate others. She is, “cruel beauty” having “cruel features”, her face is shielded with “pulsing tattoos that [web] her flesh in scintillating black lace” fixed into it are her “wolfen eyes” and when she smiles she exposes her “fangs” (Westerfeld 18). At the beginning of the novel, Tally and her companions criticize the uglies, which, for the Cutters, represents a covert mission to distribute medicine aimed at curing brain lesions. This effort is aimed at liberating people from being controlled by technology. Tally seems perturbed by this, as she is trying to adjust to her new identity. However, it is difficult for her to put aside her natural and real tendencies. As in the past, Shay comes to rescue her, as she can feel the inner fears and apprehensions of the others. Another fellow assures her, “They’re only Uglies” (Westerfeld 8). At the same time, Shay informs them that all Uglies should not be taken clueless or stupid as pretties are, “[h]owever, zitty and uneven their faces, Uglies’ eyes [are] sharp, full of nervous stabs of awareness” (Westerfeld 9-10). Since Uglies have not undergone the operation, they are real humans with their natural tendencies and human qualities.

Shay can smell human emotions, and Tally is endowed with the capability to read the thoughts of the humans. This allows her to observe their thoughts, “The jealousies and the hatreds, rivalry and attractions written on their faces” (Westerfeld 9). The lens of technology influences the perception and self-awareness of the individuals, such that they cannot perceive accurately either themselves or the world. They can only see what the technology wants them to see. Tally’s perception lacks the sensation which is impaired through transformation. The heightened sensation of Tally places her in a unique condition of being that can be regarded as ‘other’; her discernment of this world is no longer considered as “human,” instead her perception is guided by technology. All the emotions, tendencies and qualities that are the peculiarities of Ugliers have been removed from Tally during the process of transforming into the Specials. So, Tally is no longer experiencing the world independently. Rather she conceives the world through the planted program of technology that challenges her real being.

Because the cyborg operation strips away all human frailties, as well as natural tendencies, it ironically restores some of Tally’s special tendencies that have been suppressed when she was pretty. These include clarity, rationality, confusion and numbness. Her human qualities are therefore to some extent resurrected: “Tally’s memories were perfect now, not like when she’d been a bubblehead, confused and muddled all the time” (Westerfeld 8). At the same time, her real is affected as she is subject to an implanted program that generates heightened sensibility, which they term “iciness.” This iciness does not allow them to feel emotions and feelings within themselves. Consequently, this produces conflict between their cyborg bodies and their ugly souls, where their real faces the trauma of duality. However, there is possibility that

even the Specials can restore their buried memories as they are not fully cut off from their past knowledge. It can be said that the memories and past knowledge of the Specials are sent to their subconscious which can come up if the individual Special breaks the shackles of Iciness.

Tally's iciness begins to melt down when she and Shay secretly meet Zane to discover the cure for brain lesions. Tally does not know about the terrible plight of Zane before meeting him. Between the medication and his operation, Zane loses his control of his body and is crippled. At the outset, Tally does not believe in her senses which expose Zane's frailties by enlarging them. This shock resurrects her past, especially her feelings for Zane, such that she, unlike the other Specials, begins to see Zane through human eyes: "Tally dropped her eyes to the floor, wishing she could turn off the perfect clarity of her vision, she didn't want to see all these unsettling details" (Westerfeld 82). This blow is enough for Tally to tear off her cyborg tendency, so she afterwards begins to sense and experience the life through her natural tendencies rather than just take the world as a store of information accessed through heightened sensibility. In other words, this is the turning point of Tally's life as a Special because Tally emerges out of her Iciness: "Tally took a deep breath, trying to get her anger under control. She let her senses expand, until she could hear the wind playing in the pine needles. Scents rose up from the water—the algae on its surface, the ancient minerals down below" (Westerfeld 94).

Fully awakened, Tally becomes aware that she is physically no longer ugly as she is a cyborg. She uses this technological transformation to resurrect the reals of the humans and to free them from conformism. She has realized though she physically is not a real human, she still has to keep her sense of the real alive by keeping her emotions, feelings,



and humane qualities alive. She feels very sad about the plight of Zane. As it is stated earlier that the Cutters feel their real by inflicting pain on themselves, Tally also does this and reaches the depth of her real being as soon as she hurts herself by the knife of Shay. This injury introduces Tally with her permanent tendency (memory), which even the operation after the operation, cannot be destroyed perpetually so it is the time when it is revealed to her and she discovers, “Deep inside her were threads of permanence, the things that had remained unchanged whether she was ugly or pretty or special—and love was one of them (Westerfeld 95). This is the point when Tally confronts her duality: as her inner self is eager to embrace her human qualities, but her cyborg body does not wish to be returned to normal human form. Instead, she desires that Zane should be able to acquire a cyborg body so that he can enjoy and relish such heightened sensibility and Iciness. In other words, Tally is not ready to sacrifice her modified and configured body, but she is also adamant not to give up her natural tendencies like memory, love, jealousy and anger.

The dichotomy of the body and soul complicates the situation for Tally. As far as Zane is concerned, he wants the real Tally. He tells her “You can do it again,” and when she inquires what he means; he replies, “Undo what they did to you” (Westerfeld 85). Zane thinks that Tally’s free agency can be achieved, but it depends upon Tally’s own wish. This belief and struggle of Zane to restore Tally from subjugation to technology represents the believe of the author, Westerfeld, that real human tendencies will always show resistance against the efforts and machinations of technology to subjugate and marginalized humans. Zane succeeds in convincing Shay to help him to escape from the Specials. She arranges the escape and, being deeply in love with Zane, willingly

accompanies them. Tally also tries to save and protect the Cutters from the Specials. She wishes to rescue herself from the guilt that she has again betrayed Shay, but that irony of fate plays with her, as Shay questions her sincerity and lambasts her, “*Did you think it all through and then realize we should split up? Or had you already decided to stick with Zane, no matter what?*” (Westerfeld 170, emphasis in original). Tally tries her best to disprove these allegations and pledges that she is loyal to the Cutters but to no avail. Shay is certain about her convictions about Tally, and lashes out, “I really thought you’d changed. But you’re still the same self-centered little ugly you’ve always been” (Westerfeld 170). Shay further alleges that even post transformation, Tally remains a normal human who cannot see beyond her own self-interest.

Shay’s anger and jealousy, Tally’s guilt and love are those human qualities or frailties that eclipse the cyborg identity of both the girls. Apparently, they are in the web of the collective identity which can ensure the conformism but essentially both Tally and Shay are enjoying free agency since they are employing their natural tendencies and human qualities to take actions and to make the decisions even in the presence of their cyborg bodies. However, even in the presence of free agency, Tally faces anxiety and conflict between her identity as a Cutter and her own real being. The cutters are a group where their identity is collective like a beehive. Being a member of the Cutters, Tally cannot think and take any action independently, otherwise she will be left alone. This induces the fear that Tally bears in herself throughout the trilogy. On one hand, she does not want to leave the Cutters and on the other hand, being in the influence of the humane qualities, she does not find herself comfortable in such a confined and controlling society.

This agony and conflict aggravate when Tally and Zane are cut off from the cutters in the wild. Tally being both Special and a member of the Cutters group feels empty when she loses the contact with the cutters. The fear of being alone again grips her as she realizes that she is no longer “we” but “I”, and she is not trained and programmed to cope with this situation. “This is an exaggeration of the typical adolescent feeling of being separated from others, and from oneself, a feeling which resonates with adolescent readers” (Westerfeld 226). Since Tally never goes out of the group after becoming its member, she does not get any opportunity to resurrect her suppressed identity and agency. Therefore, she enjoys the experience of limited agency but in the wild comes across a chance to let her dominant self-emerge and eclipse her collective identity. At first, Tally is not willing to grab this opportunity as she feels upset and alone in the absence of the other cutters. Her reaction is normal as she is not ready to get rid of her cyborg body. Her body refuses to accept her pre cyborg identity.

Tally’s real is again threatened in the wild, as she can feel and see something beyond her current programmed personality but she does not want to have it. When she and Zane are alone in the wild, she hesitates to have any contact with him as she thinks that this relationship may compel her to leave her cyborg identity. However, she does not succeed in doing so and her intimacy with Zane begins again in the wild. Though she has a cyborg body, her heart and mind still possess human qualities and tendencies. This wild environment molds her into a normal human with free thinking and peculiar feelings and emotions. She herself notes that she appears less Special in the wild. She further realizes that her special identity is not an individual’s identity rather it is a collective identity. She feels alone and incomplete in the wild as she does not have any direct contact with other

member of the group. She realizes that her Special identity is suppressing her real being and is designed to help the coercive regime achieve conformism through technology.

At the same time, she suffers mentally because she is out of the group which means that she is without identity. In order to fill this void of identity, she has to go back to her past memories and knowledge that has faded during the process of making her special. Now she has Zane with her, who can fill her void with intimacy and she feels that she needs Zane but at the same time she also craves for the cutters. However, Tally is fully aware that she cannot get both Zane and the cutters. This is a psychological dilemma that a cyborg has to confront with. Tally cannot decide whether she should follow her cyborg body's call or the demands of her heart which is still a normal human's heart. She cannot decide which her real is. At this crucial juncture, Tally follows her heart and chooses for Zane, rejecting her posthuman identity and her mechanical real. This also endorses her free agency. Acceptance of Zane frees her from the repulsive feelings about his body that she feels because of her heightened sensibility and iciness. She finds that Zane is a real human even though he has a cyborg body. Zane is another character whose individuality is directly shattered by the technology. When Zane's treatment from the lesions goes wrong, it badly affects his body which is an indication of how devastating technology can be if it goes wrong. Zane suffers physically and psychologically. For instance, at the end of the second part, the Smokies were not ready to take Zane with them as Dr. Cable was reaching to them. So, he and Tally were captured. Here in the wild, he thinks that he is a burden on Tally. He remains passive throughout the third part of trilogy. At the end he has to sacrifice his life as he cannot stand between the technology and the humans. Death is the mark of the threat the individuals have when they confront powerful technology.

Seeing and feeling Zane's precarious and debilitating condition, Tally believes that only remedy for him is to transform him into Special as well.

However, the death of Zane gives birth to another conflict in Tally, because her real is again threatened by the humanness he reawakens in her. Though she cannot feel the physical pain in the presence of her modified body, her mind not only feels pain, but also urges her to take revenge upon the system and the state. So, pain proves to be another independent linking action that shapes the real of Tally. However, Tally cannot confront these two forces (the subjectivity of her body and the subjectivity of her mind) and therefore finds herself in an identity crisis. The loss of Zane for her is equivalent to a loss of self. This dilemma of the dual cyborg identity has to be fixed in order to overcome the crisis of identity as Braidotti asserts, "As a hybrid, or body-machine, the cyborg, or the companion species, is a connection-making entity; a figure of interrelationality...that deliberately blurs categorical distinctions" (Braidotti 200). As Tally takes her cyborg body to be natural, she cannot forfeit her body and simultaneously cannot put to sleep her humanness. Though she does not feel the bodily pain, which is an essential part of being human according to Fukuyama, she can feel the pain in her mind as she cannot bear the death of Zane and thus decides to take revenge.

Fukuyama suggests that the most striking qualities of humans are their reaction to the loss, death, sufferings and the pain because in the absence of such troubles, the human emotions and feelings of compassion, sympathy, tolerance, love, courage, and heroism, cannot be possible. Anyone who is not exposed to such troubles or is unable to face them, does not have strong character and is unable to have develop any affective relationship with living or dead humans (Fukuyama 173). Machines cannot feel pain and suffering, no

matter how much they are programmed to. As Miccoli claims, “As humans, we are ultimately woundable because of our bodies. Technology, on the other hand, is immune because it has no body” (Miccoli 29). Tally begins to sense her real as she meets Zane in Specials. She, at the same time, confronts her cyborg identity as she is the combination of the machine and human mind. She is fully aware that she cannot throw out her cyborg identity in order to achieve the free agency, as she does not find herself in any kind of physical control. Instead, she accepts her cyborg body as natural and seeks to use her powers to restore the humans’ real.

She cannot forfeit the body, which provides her many comforts as human and therefore confronts the reality of her cyborg body. She decides to take full advantage of her modified body in achieving free agency and illuminating her real faculties of humanness as predicted by Fukuyama. This time, the technology appears as a linking action to help an individual restore her free agency by challenging the coercive powers of the state who previously has been contriving the conformism through these linking actions. When Tally fails to transform Zane into a cyborg, and bears the loss of Zane after his death, she suffers the mental pain and the pain restores her memory and enables her to recall her reality before she was modified into a cyborg. Unlike a machine, Tally does not get tap into her iciness, rather her human real urges her to contrive a solution for this unwanted and uninformed conformism.

Tally finally decides to go back to her city and settle the issue once and for all, by usurping the powers of her makers and setting the humans free from such covert conformism. Ironically, Tally even though achieves her free agency and scales her free identity, still she has to follow an ideology as Kroger claims at this juncture, one requires

commitment to “become faithful and committed to some ideological world view” in order “to affirm and be affirmed by a social order that identity aspires” (Kroger 27). Thus, Tally affirms her acceptance of her cyborg identity by returning to her city and simultaneously acknowledges the ideology of remaining human by soul and mind even in the cyborg body. Her final acceptance of cyborg identity indicates that Westerfeld believes that one can restore one’s real despite one’s cyborg body. Tally overthrows Dr. Cable’s power and control and begins to lead the city. She creates a revolutionary manifesto that ensures no conformism, honors all human diversities, and guarantees free agency for everyone.

## CHAPTER 5

### INFLUENCES DISRUPTING CHARACTER INTEGRITY IN *HOPSCOTCH*

#### 5.1. Science Fiction, Cyber Culture and Human Agency

In recent years, science fiction has gained prominence as a high-level literary genre due to its rich diversity in style and themes, particularly its intersection with modernist and postmodernist literature. This genre has attracted significant attention from theorists such as Donna Haraway, Fredric Jameson, and Jean Baudrillard. Annette Kuhn (1990) characterizes science fiction as a "privileged cultural site for enactments of the postmodern condition" (Kuhn 178), underscoring its role in portraying a society transformed by rapid technological advancements. Science fiction not only explores the dilemmas faced by individuals in a rapidly evolving cyber culture but also critiques the inadequacies of social values and norms in guiding these individuals through technological challenges.

Despite its acclaim, science fiction, particularly the cyberpunk subgenre, has not received the recognition it merits in third world countries. Roger Luckhurst (2005) notes that science fiction often borrows from mainstream literature in a "belated, derivative, and degraded form" (362). Cyberpunk, introduced in the mid-1980s, addresses pressing issues such as posthuman anxiety, human-machine conflicts, and identity crises. Yet, influential works by authors like William Gibson, Kevin J. Anderson, and Scott Westerfeld have remained underappreciated in these regions, often dismissed as lowbrow literature.

Cyberpunk fiction vividly portrays the impact of technological advancements on individual freedom and identity. Unlike 1960s science fiction, which projects a distant



future, cyberpunk brings future and present concerns into close proximity, examining how powerful mechanisms exploit technological progress to curtail personal freedom. Cavalaro (2000) describes cyberpunk as an amalgamation of "the rational and the irrational, the new and the old," reflecting a society where individuals are often disconnected and controlled by abstract networks (10-11).

In *Hopscotch* (2002), Anderson exemplifies these themes by depicting a cyber culture fraught with dilemmas and powerful mechanisms that subtly shape individual destinies. The novel explores how these mechanisms, though not always visible, control and manipulate individuals, leading them to struggle to maintain their sense of reality against overwhelming interference. Anderson's portrayal aligns with critical realist theory, which examines how superstructures (cultural, ideological, and institutional aspects) influence and shape human agency and identity within evolving social contexts.

By integrating insights from theorists like Kuhn and Cavalaro and employing critical realism, this chapter aims to explore how *Hopscotch* reflects and critiques the interaction between technological advancements and individual agency. Through this lens, the chapter will analyze the novel's depiction of powerful mechanisms and their impact on human freedom and identity, offering a nuanced understanding of the cyberpunk genre's contribution to contemporary literary discourse.

Before examining the novel, I introduce those approaches and terms of critical realism which I have used as the tools of analysis in this chapter. Since I aim to explore the relationships between the structures and individuals, I have applied my research tools one by one on the main characters of the novel. Unlike post structuralism and constructivism, Critical realism asserts that the real world exists and it does not depend on the knowledge

to be acknowledged neither does it requires any construct to be explained. For Critical realism, knowledge is meaningful if it is directly about the real world, instead of any understanding or any construct about the world. This claim liberates one from vicious circularity of epistemological approaches. This stance of critical realism advocates the primacy of ontology. I have analyzed the novel by using ontological approach. The different events and actions of the characters be directly examined to find how social structures play with human agency and how do these characters suffer and struggle to come out of certain dilemmas.

Critical realism offers a dynamic approach to causality, distinct from constructivist and positivist perspectives. Constructivists, by focusing on ‘constitutive’ analysis, overlook the inherent causal nature of what is constituted. Positivists, conversely, often simplify causality as mere regularities or constant conjunctions of events, which fails to account for the complexities of social and natural phenomena. As Kurki (2008) and Bhaskar (1997) argue, critical realism views causality as multifaceted, residing not only in empirical outcomes but also in deeper, often unseen mechanisms that shape those outcomes.

Bhaskar's stratified ontology proposes that reality is composed of multiple, interrelated layers—empirical, actual, and real. The empirical layer encompasses observed experiences, the actual layer consists of events that occur, and the real layer includes underlying mechanisms that generate these events but are not always visible. These mechanisms, while not directly observable, can be inferred through the analysis of empirical and actual occurrences. Critical realism thus aims to uncover these deeper causal structures to better understand the complexity of causality.

In my study of *Hopscotch* (2002), I use critical realism to explore how independent mechanisms influence causal relationships within the novel. By examining the empirical and actual elements of the narrative, I aim to identify the real, underlying mechanisms that shape the characters' experiences and the novel's portrayal of cyber culture. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how these mechanisms affect individual agency and societal dynamics.

It is difficult to study or to saturate these domains of reality separately, still one can do it by studying the actual first, then one can point out the empirical domain; ultimately, one can unveil the real. I have followed the same pattern while discussing *Hopscotch* (2002) to expose powerful structures and generative mechanisms that directly affect the human agency in the novel. To see the reality in stratification directly links the approach of critical realism with the structural or emergent powers approach that not only takes any social phenomena or transformation having its own particular and distinctive qualities and properties, but also as emergent out of a particular social, temporal, historical, or political conditions. The emergent comes out of 'lower levels' that provides them with the necessary and required conditions such as cultural, social or physical resources. However, it is not possible to reduce 'higher levels' to these conditions. For instance, a social transformation is caused by some economic crisis due to its causal relationship but it cannot be reduced to its prior condition. Critical realism endorses the imperishable character of social relations.

Social structures, unlike natural ones, are inherently tied to human agency and are not independent entities. Bhaskar's model, "TMSA," highlights this by asserting that society is both the condition and outcome of human activity, with social structures being

relatively enduring and spatio-temporally anchored. Although human agency allows for freedom, it is influenced by and interacts with various mechanisms that shape and control actions. This dynamic is evident in Anderson's *Hopscotch* (2002), which illustrates how individuals navigate and are constrained by these structures. This research examines how individuals are affected by these social structures, using concepts from critical realism and Bhaskar's model to analyze how structures influence, control, and sometimes liberate individuals through their actions.

*Hopscotch* (2002) depicts cyber culture society with its all dimensions which is highly advanced in technology where everything is computerized. Artificial intelligence is as common as social media. The society is so advanced that people can swap their bodies with each other. Old people can swap their bodies with young people. Similarly, the sick and rich can swap their bodies with healthy people by paying a certain amount of money: “A person could be anyone or anything here, for a limited time—provided the desired body type was available. Pick a physique, swap with someone, wear it for a while, see if you like it” Everyone has an ID patch from the help of which their real identity can be traced. There is a bureau that is law enforcement agency which oversees matters relating to the clashes or quarrels that pop up between two persons who swap their bodies. Apparently, it seems that the society is completely transformed.

Consequently, the super structures (economic, religious, or educational institutions) of the society, which according to Bhaskar do not vanish because they are natural, have paved the way for some kinds of new mechanisms. But in actuality, this does not happen and the older mechanisms are still there with their governing force as Bhaskar predicted. Those super structures fully utilize the advanced technology to manipulate the agents or

human agency. They appear more covert. One can still observe the role of religion, economic institutes, and philosophy of art and other powerful social constructs. The novel revolves around four characters: Teresa, Garth, Eduard, and Dragon who are orphans. They grow up together in a monastery called Falling Leaves. They love each other and are very fast friends. They remain in monastery till they have learned an art and acquired the required knowledge and skill which could enable them to earn for themselves. After leaving the Falling Leaves, the characters face different challenges that turn their real into a situation where they become docile toys in the hands of the social structures (workplace, or friends circle) which they reproduce with their conscious actions. Thus, their agencies are controlled through their actions which according to Bhaskar are mediatory relations.

## **5.2 Religion: A Covert Mechanism to Threat the Real of Teresa**

Beginning with Teresa, “her build was broad hipped and Rubenesque, her hair rusty auburn, her eyes green-blue” (Anderson 1). Teresa's journey, as depicted by Anderson (2002), embodies the complexities of individual agency within the framework of social structures, particularly the powerful influence of religion on her life. For instance, Anderson describes Teresa's initial guru, Soft Stone, as embodying the qualities of love, compassion, and humanism, which instill moral values that shape Teresa's worldview (Anderson 1). Soft Stone's nurturing guidance is evident when Teresa reflects on the lessons imparted, demonstrating a deep connection between her actions and the moral framework established by her first guru.

However, as Teresa encounters subsequent gurus and religious ideologies, her autonomy becomes entangled with external forces, particularly the coercive nature of religious

institutions. Anderson skillfully portrays religion as a formidable social mechanism that dictates Teresa's actions and beliefs (Anderson 1). This is evident in Teresa's repeated involvement with various religious and philosophical groups, each exerting control over her decisions and perceptions of reality.

Teresa's quest for meaning intersects with the emergence of advanced cyber culture, where religion remains a potent force shaping individual identities and societal norms. Through Teresa's interactions with the Splinters, who revere the computer network Com as a deity, Anderson explores the fusion of technology and spirituality, highlighting humanity's perennial search for existential answers (Anderson 23). This convergence of religion and technology underscores the dynamic nature of belief systems in response to evolving cultural paradigms.

Moreover, Teresa's disillusionment with mundane tasks and longing for connection with Soft Stone underscore the existential void created by shifting social dynamics. Her yearning for guidance and purpose reflects the enduring influence of religious leaders as guiding stars within the fabric of society (Anderson 23). This poignant moment underscores the transformative power of religious authority in shaping individual aspirations and desires.

Teresa's journey, as depicted by Anderson (2002), reveals the intricate dynamics between individual agency and the coercive influence of social structures, particularly within the realm of religion. Initially drawn to the pursuit of philosophical meaning and spiritual fulfillment, Teresa's encounters with various religious groups reflect her longing for connection and purpose (Anderson 28). This search leads her to the Sharetakers, a

religious group promising community, acceptance, and mutual sharing—a stark contrast to her previous experiences (Anderson 39).

Under the leadership of Rhys, Teresa becomes ensnared in the ideology of the Sharetakers, relinquishing her autonomy in exchange for a sense of belonging and divine purpose. Anderson portrays Rhys as a manipulative figure, exploiting Teresa's devotion for his own gain (Anderson 64). Teresa's empirical reality—the subjective experiences and emotions she undergoes—becomes increasingly intertwined with the dictates of the Sharetakers, blurring the line between personal agency and external influence (Bhaskar 1975).

Despite mounting evidence of exploitation and abuse within the Sharetakers enclave, Teresa's allegiance remains steadfast, reflecting the powerful grip of ideological control (Anderson 77). Rhys's violent behavior and disregard for Teresa's well-being expose the dark underbelly of the utopian facade, prompting Teresa to confront the harsh reality of her exploitation (Anderson 106).

As Teresa struggles with her disillusionment and seeks to reclaim her identity, Bhaskar's concept of empirical reality comes into focus. Teresa's beliefs and experiences, shaped by the manipulative tactics of Rhys and the coercive influence of the Sharetakers, illustrate the subtle yet pervasive nature of ideological control (Bhaskar 1979). Her eventual departure from the Sharetakers enclave signifies a rupture in the constructed empirical reality, as she confronts the truth of her exploitation and asserts her agency in breaking free from oppressive structures (Anderson 79).

Teresa's journey through the intricacies of philosophical ideologies like philosophy of happiness and social structures reveals the relationship between individual agency and external influences. Initially, her immersion in the teachings of Soft Stone within the confines of the monastery underscores the vulnerability of individuals seeking meaning and purpose in the face of existential uncertainties. Soft Stone's nurturing guidance fosters in Teresa a reliance on external sources for validation and enlightenment, setting the stage for her susceptibility to manipulation by charismatic leaders like Rhys (Anderson 23).

Rhys's exploitation of religious rhetoric to assert dominance over Teresa and the Sharetakers exemplifies the insidious nature of ideological manipulation within oppressive social structures (Anderson 64). Teresa's unquestioning loyalty to Rhys, despite experiencing exploitation and abuse, underscores the powerful grip of indoctrination and the erosion of individual agency under the guise of religious fervor (Anderson 106). This highlights the pervasive influence of social structures in shaping not only belief systems but also behaviors and identities, illustrating the precarious balance between autonomy and coercion in religious contexts.

### **5.2.1 The Revitalization of Teresa's Real Through Critical Inquiry as a Linking Action**

However, Teresa's encounter with Arthur introduces a critical rupture in her passive acceptance of imposed ideologies, challenging her to question the validity of external authorities and reclaim agency over her beliefs and actions (Anderson 129). Arthur's pantheistic philosophy emphasizes the intrinsic value of individual autonomy and the sanctity of the human body, providing Teresa with a framework to resist oppressive



norms and assert her independence (Anderson 141). This marks a pivotal moment in Teresa's journey as she begins to unravel the layers of ideological manipulation that have constrained her perception of reality and identity.

Through her interactions with Arthur, Teresa undergoes a process of self-discovery and empowerment, transcending the confines of religious dogma and embracing a newfound sense of self-determination (Anderson 159). Arthur's philosophy serves as a catalyst for Teresa's liberation from oppressive structures, empowering her to challenge societal norms and forge her own path towards self-realization.

In the broader context of cyber culture, Teresa's journey serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of ideological manipulation and the importance of critical inquiry in navigating complex belief systems. As individuals navigate the virtual landscapes of cyberspace, they must remain vigilant against the allure of charismatic leaders and the seductive promises of religious dogma, recognizing the potential for exploitation and manipulation inherent within these systems. Only through a steadfast commitment to critical thinking and self-awareness can individuals safeguard their autonomy and reclaim agency over their beliefs and identities in an ever-changing digital world.

### **5.3 The Nexus of Surveillance and Financial Exploitation Endangers the Real of Eduard**

Eduard is arguably the most pitiable character in Anderson's *Hopscotch* (2002), suffering the most from the cyber culture's pervasive control. His agency is significantly influenced by the Bureau of Tracing and Location (BTL), a powerful structure that dictates his actions, leading him to endure severe physical, psychological, and social exploitation. Eduard's situation illustrates how he becomes a puppet in the hands of these social

structures and mechanisms, trapped between conflicting forces that manipulate his agency through their machinations.

Eduard's life is marked by his complex interactions with these structures. After leaving the monastery with Teresa and Garth, he demonstrates his skill in body swapping—a sign of his transition into adulthood. Despite the Splinters' provision of modest jobs and stipends for their wards, Eduard remains dissatisfied. Seeking greater financial gain, he turns to body swapping to alleviate the suffering of those who fear surgery or cannot tolerate their ailments. For example, he swaps bodies with a business tycoon who is critically ill but needs to attend an important meeting. In this arrangement, Eduard endures significant physical pain, nausea, and fever, while the tycoon benefits from Eduard's temporary health.

Eduard's ability to avoid traditional work for weeks or even months by enduring the physical suffering of others highlights both his desperation and the extent of his entrapment within these social mechanisms. As he navigates these challenges, his experiences reflect the broader themes of exploitation and manipulation by powerful social structures and mechanisms in the novel. "Eduard n't have to work a real job for weeks, perhaps even months, if he scrimped. He loved the freedom and independence. He could endure it" (Anderson 16).

Eduard wants freedom and an unrestricted life so he does not take a serious or important job. In this situation, he becomes easy prey for those with a lot of money. In the cyber culture, the rich enjoy their lives at the expense of those who do not have sufficient resources to meet their expenses. So, the class structure of society also threatens the real of those who belong to a lower economic class as they are vulnerable in front of the elite.

The elite enslave the bodies of the poor whenever they are in danger or when they find something which does not suit their own body. They do this by hiring the body of lower strata and use that body as their own possession. Although Eduard thought and even claimed that nobody had ever pressured him to do any kind of deal, it was his luxurious desires that persuade him to throw himself into such dangerous situation.

Eduard also idealizes the phantoms who live for hundreds or thousand years by buying bodies or by snatching the healthy bodies, or by swapping again and again. These people are the most selfish and have no emotions. Such people transform themselves so much that they turn into machines. As Eduard explained to Daragon: “Trading themselves into younger bodies, healthy physiques, doing whatever it takes to stay alive. Imagine, some of the Phantoms are supposed to be five and six hundred years old!” (Anderson 34). Eduard expresses his longing for becoming a phantom in front of Daragon. His friends warn him again and again not to indulge in such dangerous deals by swapping his body for money, as he could at any moment be trapped with catastrophic repercussions.

One day, an aristocratic lady ensnares Eduard with the assistance of her lawyers. She hires Eduard to go through an extraordinary surgery in her place in return for a hefty money. Eduard does not consult with a lawyer and is manipulated because he cannot understand the complex and complicated terms and language of the legal agreement. One of the lawyers very politely warns him of the seriousness and danger of the surgery, “You are aware of the risks, Mr. Swan? Madame Ruxton’s surgery is very serious, and you are being asked to undergo it for her. Your survival is not guaranteed. We estimate a twenty-five percent probability that you won’t live through the operation” (Anderson 47). However, after making it certain that, in the case of his death, the lady has to pay three

times the sum to his beneficiaries Garth and Teresa, Eduard sign the deal. When he came to his senses, he finds Daragon in his room who has been keeping an eye on him as soon as he came to know from COM (center of massive data storage). Daragon was worried as he knew the risk that Edward had taken. His suspicion proves right as, on the day when doctors declare him fit and out of danger, the legal team of the lady makes excuses to prolong the deal through ambiguous legal terms. Sensing ill intentions, Daragon reminds them that, according to the agreement, Eduard was fully recovered and therefore his body should be given back but, as expected, the lady refuses and her lawyers endorsed her stance by using legal terms. One of the lawyers tries to justify their point by citing the reports of the doctors, “We have here depositions from the medical professionals who have inspected the body. It still has severe liver problems, as well as the potential for total kidney failure within the next year. The pulmonary system remains at greatly diminished capacity” (Anderson 60). Another lawyer proves their right to the body of Eduard by showing the signed agreement signed. Another attorney cites the original contract. “Mr. Swan signed a contract that specifically requires him to remain in Madame Ruxton’s former body until full recovery” (Anderson 60). However, Daragon uses his authority and fights with them: he cleverly threatens the lady and her lawyers, and the lady has to accept that her plan has been exposed and she needs to swap back with Eduard. Thus, again a powerful structure intervenes in order to save an individual from the clutches of another structure. If Daragon had not been the powerful inspector of BTL, the rich and powerful lady never have returned the body of Eduard.

Like Teresa, the suffering of Eduard does not stop here; rather, it deteriorates further, causing him to be increasingly distanced from his agency. In fact, his next adventure

makes his life a complete mess. When Daragon secures Eduard a job at Ob (Dragon's chief), unknowingly Dragon throws Eduard in a deep net. Daragon regards his chief, Ob, as a father-like figure and he idealizes him. When his chief says that he is in dire need of a caretaker for his body, Daragon, in order to save Eduard from another misadventure, suggests that his boss hire Eduard as caretaker of his body. The chief accepts the offer and hires Eduard to look after his body, which is a tiring and hard task. Every morning the chief swaps with Eduard and starts his daily work; on the other hand, it is Eduard's duty to exercise, have a good diet, and take all other measures that could keep that body healthy. Eduard starts his work with utmost sincerity, diligence, and zest. However, soon Eduard becomes alarmed regarding the precarious condition of his body. He feels something mysterious, strange or uncomfortable whenever he got his body back from Ob.

This turns out to be the result of a drug called Rush-x: a very powerful drug that energizes individuals who thereafter feel a powerful stimulus and passion for life. One day, when Ob was very disturbed and fed-up, he unintentionally took a capsule of Rush-x, which not only energized and inspired him but also provided him with a stimulus of life. Since he was fully aware of the side-effects of the drug, he knew that he could not use it in his own body, as this drug; "Rush-X gradually caused a body to disintegrate, scrapping the neurons and causing a condition akin to multiple sclerosis" (Anderson 138). So, he enjoys the drug whenever he was in the body of his caretaker. It was the cruel treatment of Ob with his caretaker's body that means he has to change caretakers before they realize the terrible situation. This is what Ob does with Eduard, "He cracked a capsule of pearlescent frozen fire with his teeth then tucked it under his tongue. He rode the racehorse of energy that burned destructive flames through Eduard's flesh. As the

euphoria hit, a smile froze on his face” (Anderson 139). It is the gardener of the chief who informs Eduard about the drug addiction of Mordecai Ob, which stuns Eduard, who is unable to tolerate this kind of exploitation by those he considers law-abiding and trustworthy.

He first thinks to discuss this with Daragon, but he knows that Daragon is brainwashed by Ob. Therefore, he will not be able to convince Daragon that his chief is a devil and parasite in the guise of an angel. Eduard therefore decides to pay back Ob with his own coin. He goes into the secret room of Ob while Ob is away and finds four capsules of rush-x. When Ob returns, Eduard swaps with him having already devoured as much as four capsules of rush-x. He thinks “This be the last time. First, though, Ob gets a taste of his own crimes. A suitable threat, a humiliating revenge” (Anderson 192). Ob announces the end of his contract with Eduard and swaps with him. As soon as Ob gets into his own body, he is shocked to taste the drug. Before he reacts, Eduard victoriously and contemptuously days “How do you like the taste, Master Ob? I know what you’ve been doing to me, but this time it’s your own body being damaged. Four capsules should be just about enough to make my point. Enjoy the sensation” (Anderson 194). Ob gets his own medicine and passes away.

This action pushes Eduard further into the ditch, and his real is dragged into another world, where the only way to survive was to take inhuman actions. Now, Eduard had to run from place to place as Daragon and the bureau were chasing him. At first, he was forced by Teresa to take her body, so that he could escape from the bureau. As a result of these actions, he found himself trapped in a powerful structure where his agency was strangled and where he kept on making wrong decisions which did nothing but just

aggravate his situation. Wherever he went, he was spotted by Daragon or the Bureau. He also came across the phantom and spent some time with him, before they were again spotted. When the phantom died, Eduard managed to escape in the body of an old man who was on his death bed. At this stage, he wanted to meet his friends last time, so he went to Garth who gave him his own body to meet with Teresa. At last, Eduard was arrested by Daragon and it was decided that his mind be uploaded to COM to serve humanity. His body was auctioned and bought by Lady Ruxton, before then being bought by Garth himself, who hoped that on the day of execution he could swap with Eduard and quietly be executed instead of Eduard. These are the actual events that shaped the destiny of Eduard that apparently seemed governed by free choice and freedom of Eduard. It also seems that Eduard was himself responsible for his sufferings and tragic end. But this is not the full and complete story, as the real structures and mechanisms have yet to be identified.

### **5.3.1 Apathy: A Linking Action to Challenge the Real of Individuals in *Hopscotch***

The actions and events discussed above produced different reactions and experiences for each of the individuals, in ways that reflect the stance of Bhaskar that actual events can cause different empirical realities for different people. One cannot understand the suffering of Eduard without understanding the emotional and intellectual experiences he underwent. First of all, it was Eduard's training in the monastery that inculcated his love of freedom and adventurous life. He, being simple, straightforward and innocent, was easily trapped by the clever and Machiavellian lawyers of Lady Ruxton. This shows the apathy of one's social class towards the other class in a social structure as the upper class feeds itself on the expense of the lower class. The same thing happened with Eduard in

the episode of a business tycoon who bought the body of Eduard to attend an important meeting and, as a result of which, Eduard had to bear the disease in his body. This highlights an important and powerful mechanism—the economy—that controls the agency of the individuals and subsequently challenges the real of the individuals. One has to participate in economic activities in order to survive in cyber culture. The more the cyber culture offers advanced technology, the more it demands money. Consequently, every individual wishes to enjoy every bit of the technology which then develops a special kind of competition between the people.

Eduard was caught in a similar net and faced terrible suffering, especially when he worked as a caretaker of the body of Daragon's boss. Since Ob enjoyed a high and esteemed place, he spoiled the lives of three poor and simple people. This also shows how the upper class sucks the blood of the worker class. In such social structures, the agency of one class is in the control of the other class: it is tragic that the dominant class experiences apathy for the class upon which it is fed. When Ob was addicted to Rush-x, he knew that the drug was life-threatening. He callously and selfishly started enjoying the drug while in the bodies of his caretakers and never felt any guilt. "Ob had seen dying Rush-X addicts and vowed never to let that happen to his own body, no matter how badly he wanted chemically induced thrills. Then he'd remembered his personal caretaker, and the solution had come to him" (Anderson 138). On the other hand, Eduard had to face physical and mental agony and pain due to the use of rush-x by Ob, "His muscles were unusually sore, and even his bones felt somehow bruised. "I should take better care of my own body," he said out loud, looking at the walls" (Anderson 135).



Daragon completely failed to understand the misuse of the power by BTL and the chief of BTL. He could not understand the covert actions of the bureau, even when Ob unveiled that the bureau's warning of slipping during the swapping was a concocted lie: Ob shocked Daragon by saying, "Just a well-intentioned fiction that we put into propaganda stories released regularly to COM news nets. The sinister threat of having your mind detached and floating through space adds just a touch of uncertainty. We can't prevent body-swapping, but we can certainly make it seem more risky" (Anderson 137). Daragon also did not believe that Ob was an addict of rush-x. It was his empirical experience that he was not ready to look into all proofs and logics that Eduard gave him through Teresa and Garth to prove that Ob is a parasite and a member of powerful structure who plays with the people of lower strata. However, by close examination, one can reach to the real which controls the actual and empirical.

The real, in the case of Eduard, is the powerful bureau which did not come out into the open, but played and manipulated the agency of common people. The bureau hypnotized people either making them believe that bureau was a very important and necessary for the welfare of the people, as they did with Daragon, or exploiting them with their power and covert actions, as they did with Eduard. In both cases, it was bureau that checked the free thinking and actions of the agents. So the agents suffered both physically and psychologically. Daragon was conflicted as to whether to believe in the tale of Eduard or the narrative of Ob. He even did not want to see the execution of Eduard. It was again due to the impact of the BTL philosophy that his friendship dwindled with Teresa and Garth. Similarly, Eduard faced catastrophic situations in his life at very young age because of the power of a structure. However, as Bhaskar suggested that there are some

powerful mechanisms beyond the structure that can play an important role to link the structure with agents.

### **5.3.2 The Role of Empathy to Restore the Real of the Characters in *Hopscotch***

In the case of Eduard, it was the economy that worked as an independent mechanism. One can lose his freedom in front of the rich or bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie in order to survive, develops apathy with respect to the proletariats. The real is retrieved only when apathy is replaced with empathy. This happens at the end of novel, when Daragon does not arrest Teresa, who tries to prevent the operation of the execution of Eduard by reaching the central room in the body of a guard. At the same time, Dragon begins to feel for Eduard. To resolve the issue, Eduard's life was consumed in a struggle between two different structures fighting for their survival. Each structure was not ready to forfeit the apathy for the other structure which did not allow the agents to keep their real alive. Another significant thing that appears during the analysis of these events, is that the real is in disarray when the characters try to reproduce what they had learned earlier in the initial socialization in the previous structure. This disarray can easily be observed in Eduard's actions and their consequences. Thus, one can derive another conclusion: that the real is also in the conflict when one agent shifts from one structure to another structure, as happens with Daragon, who was required to follow an entirely different ideology in BTL that was (sometimes) contrary to what he had learned at Falling Leaves monastery.

### **5.3.3. Commodification of Art through Patronizing the Artist: A Mechanism to Challenge the Real of Garth (An Artist)**

Garth is one of the three orphans who succeed in setting the goal of their life, and he does so much earlier than his friends. He listens to his inner voice and thus decides to become

an artist. The first opposition to him achieving this goal arises out of the monastery. Garth secretly starts working on a mural in the basement of the monastery, in order to surprise his friends and their mentor Soft Stone, but he is caught by another monk. The administrator orders Garth to paint the entire room and remove his mural work. However, Soft Stone consoles him and encourages him to carry on with his work. She gives him a new dimension to think about as an artist, and also guides him to what should be the aim of a real artist, as she said, “An artist needs to do more than create pleasant scenes. Use your art as a lens for viewing all facets of life. You can’t just imitate what you see, you must first understand the thing. This understanding gives your art a life of its own” (Anderson 13). After leaving the monastery, Garth continues to pursue this goal. He doesn’t have access to advanced equipment, like high-tech creation and conceptualization gadgets, as he cannot afford them. Instead, he uses old traditional material and tools. He wants to paint what he sees and feels. “He drew anything and everything that caught his eye. His art became a user’s manual for his life, a way to sort through and understand and put his own perspective on everything he saw” (Anderson 14).

One day, Garth observes a belly dancer and becomes inspired. She offers to dance with him. Garth is unable to dance like her, but requests to swap bodies with her, so he can learn the dance. She accepts his request. Garth feels a strange sensation in the body of belly dancer. He, within 15 minutes, improves a lot. He rushes back to his studio to record what he felt. This incident brings about a revolution in the life of Garth, as he begins to look forward to hopscotch with different kind of people in order to get firsthand experience of their lives. However, he cannot do this, because he cannot afford to pay those people to swap with him. Thus, like Eduard, his wishes are limited, because of a

lack of money or resources. He is unable to reach the people he wished to paint. So, lack of finances stifles his desires. Thus, he did not create what he wanted to create. “Garth decided that sitting in a street market with other amateurs and hobbyists never bring serious attention to his paintings. It was time to make sacrifices for his art, and only a serious investment kick him up to the next level” (Anderson 69). Garth quits his ordinary job as an industrial painter. He works day and night for four days and produces his art. He invests all his savings, and the gift Eduard had given him from the money he had saved from Madame Ruxton’s surgery. Garth rents a small shop for three days to use as a gallery for his first exhibition. He uses all his sources to publicize his exhibition. His art shows the reality of common people working in the market, common customers, and Teresa’s different bodies as all having spiritual beauty, but he is unable to draw a big crowd towards his gallery. His friends, Eduard and Teresa, came and encouraged him. His old friend, Pashnak, arrives and buys a painting.

When he is about to close the gallery, he sees Daragon and his chief coming to his exhibition. The chief himself wants to become an artist, but cannot realize his passionate dream because of lack of finance. He regrets that he could not make sacrifices for his passion. He appreciates Garth’s work and passion and offers to be his patron. He offers a large sum of money as a stipend, which Garth accepts. Garth starts his work as he no longer worries about his livelihood. First of all, he decides that he wants to see some exotic places or some natural beauty to capture, so he goes to Waimia, an exotic sea shore. However, at Waimia, he suffers a terrible accident while playing in the sea waves. A strong wave overpowers him and he barely escapes drowning. He was sure that he would not survive, but Soft Stone sends a signal to an emergency medical center which

arrives at the last minute and rescue Garth. This incident opens up a new horizon for Garth as an artist. Instead of looking for just exotic or imaginative natural beauty, he realizes that the real function of art is to portray the inner feelings and experiences of the individuals in their daily routine. “As he sat shuddering, it became clear to him how trivial his own quest for inspiration had been. He had to do more than just visit pretty landscapes. He must work harder at understanding people if he ever intended to produce art that has an impact on humanity” (Anderson 102). Garth realizes that the reason for the failure of his first exhibition was not due to a mere lack of publicity, but because his work lacked depth. All his works which were masterpieces to him had lacked the real depth, beauty, soul and manifestation of actual experiences and feelings, “bland and derivative—images that were captured, yet not tamed. Not interpreted. He’d been showing only external things. No depth, no point, no heart. He hadn’t infused it with a “soul,” with any part of himself” (Anderson 102).

Garth, therefore, starts again from beginning with new fervor. He knows that it is only possible to capture the experiences of everyday people with the help of hopscotching. His aim is to paint all of humanity. As he does this, sometimes he has to bear a loss or agony. For example, an obese man tries to run away with the healthy body of Garth when Garth hopscotched with him in order to experience the obesity. However, Daragon comes to rescue him in time and warns him not to take such a risk again. Garth also purchases all the advanced gadgets that are required for painting and recording the experiences. Eventually, he is ready to launch another exhibition. This time he is fully supported by Ob and a marketing company and the exhibition is a great success. Spradley, a professional publicist, makes Garth a super star. In a year’s time, Spradley introduces

another artist whose work is totally opposed to that of Garth, but still has a great and grand reception. In this new artist's exhibition, Garth floats his new idea of LOSS which is immediately rejected by Spradley. This makes him sad and worried. However, Garth continues his work and finds that the message of his art is that there should not be apathy in the humans in order to remain real.

The actual domains of Garth's real make it seem if he is free and doing or taking every action independently. It seems that Garth reproduces learning from his social structure willingly. But the story is not as simple and straightforward as it appears. Garth's empirical experiences are different than the actual events. From the very outset, Garth has to face opposition from his home as he was forbidden to paint in monastery. This leads him to suffer psychologically. His suffering is aggravated when he was compelled to work as industrial painter. The failure of his first exhibition makes him realize that in cyber culture, the artist cannot flourish simply on the basis of his talent and art. Rather, there are other mechanisms that play an important role in promoting him. The success of his second exhibition is mostly due to professional marketing. He also realizes that financial assistance is very essential for the survival of the art and artist. At the same time, he realizes another reality of life of art: that he needs to show what the audience wanted to see. The patrons were not free to portray what they wished to create because they were hired by powerful structures.

To conclude, it is apt to say that certain independent mechanisms control the art which might otherwise seem to be under the control of the free thinking of the artist. However, it is media, money and patrons who force the artists to create what they suggest them. The real of artists is also threatened in the cyber culture where media and powerful

organizations directly influence artists and their works. As it was Stradley who tried to thrust his opinion upon Garth what he should have created and what he should have abandoned. When Garth informs him that he is working on a new idea to create LOSS, Stradley rejects the idea: “Garth, you did your brash debut with FRUSTRATION. That’s okay. It was an ‘angry young man’ piece—not pleasant but profoundly moving. Everybody’s entitled to one of those. The critics loved it, you got plenty of attention, and you made your audience. But nobody wants to pay credits for a show that’ll depress them. LOSS? Who the hell wants to see that?” (Anderson 221). Similarly, it is not some kind of humanitarianism that forces Ob to make Garth his patron, rather it is his unfulfilled desire which he wants to see fulfilled via Garth. He manipulates Garth in ways that make it evident that powerful mechanisms do not give artists the liberty to express their emotions freely. This indicates how these super structures covertly mold the thinking of artists. One can observe the agony and anxiety of Garth when he is unable to realize his dreams. The failure of Garth’s first exhibition unveils another sorry fact of cyber culture: that powerful mechanisms form the taste and choice of common people about art. In the first exhibition, the minds of people are not captured properly by social media, so people do not consider his art worth appreciating. In the case of second exhibition, the stage is set and people are made curious about the upcoming exhibition, so the money works and Garth is made a hero. Thus, art and artists in cyber culture depend upon money, media and some secret agencies to be recognized. However, art gets its recognition even in the culture if it displays and promoting humanism.

#### **5.4 Cult for BTL: A Tool to Subjugate the Real of Daragon**

In the novel, Daragon is the one who suffers the most as he is manipulated by the RSAs and ISAs. He is brainwashed so perfectly that he does not even realize that he is in thrall to the powerful structures. The super structures use him for their survival. Similarly, the advanced technological changes torment him mentally as well as physically. He is the character whose goal in life is set up by the structures. He is the one who never dares to go or think beyond his social learning; thus, he reproduces the structures the way those structures persuade him to produce. The actual events show us that Daragon's character is the most manipulated one in the novel. From the very outset, Daragon knows that he has no natural ability to hopscotch with anyone. However, he possesses another ability: he can identify whether someone is in their original body or has borrowed from someone without looking at his or her ID patch. This ability enables him to save the monastery from being occupied by BTL.

BTL is a powerful institution with responsibility to regulate the laws and rules of hopscotching. The BTL is also used for surveillance to maintain law and order. They are very powerful and no one can challenge them. The chief wants to occupy the building of Fallen Leaves for his own purpose. The administration of the monastery tries their best to convince the chief of BTL that he should take some other building, but this is in vain. At this point, Soft Stone makes a deal with the bureau by offering Daragon as he could prove to be a special asset for the bureau owing to his peculiar ability of recognizing the real persona of people. The monks have nothing else to offer the bureau so Soft Stone offers the bureau this option as she knows the needs of bureau: "the BTL be desperate to have what this young man could do. Quite desperate. Soft Stone knew they could use Daragon to save the monastery" (Anderson 21). They accept the offer and Daragon is



used by one structure to survive. But he is assured that this is in his favor as most people want to join the bureau as career.

Daragon joins willingly as he does not want to refuse Soft Stone. He is given special status in the bureau as well. After his training, the chief takes him under his own supervision. Daragon saves Eduard from Lady Ruxton, Garth from an obese person, and Teresa from Rhys by using his position in the bureau. He considers the chief Ob to be his mentor and father and never thinks of disobeying him. He could never think that bureau or chief would exploit anyone. With the help of COM in the bureau he wants to locate his parents as he wants to know why they abandoned him. He requests Jax, a data hunter in COM, to find not the body who bore him but the actual soul who had left him. “No, the body won’t tell me anything. I want to meet the person who made the decision to give me up. I want to talk to the woman—” (Anderson 86). Jax is unable to find any clue of his biological father, but is successful in tracing his biological mother. Jax tells Daragon that his mother is in Club Masquerade in a young body and Daragon rushes there.

Daragon finds his mother but is shocked that his mother shows no interest in him, except for sex as she tries her best to entice him into a sexual act. She did not think about him. For her it is just the past and she does not care about the past. She has no regret depositing him in the Monastery: she tells him it was someone else who gave birth to him as she hired someone else to deliver the baby. She traumatizes him further by telling him that his father was a phantom, “You’ll never find him. He knows how to vanish, and it’s been years. How long has it been” (Anderson 91). This revelation shatters his illusions. Thus, cyber culture causes the trauma of lost identity in him.

Later, when Eduard kills his chief, he is unable to see that Eduard is not guilty rather he thinks that Eduard has broken his trust and snatched his father from him. He meets his birth father when he is chasing Eduard. His father is the phantom who died in his arms as he could not swap with him. His father expresses no affection or fatherly love towards him. Instead, he is selfish, and tries to use Daragon to save his life by emotional blackmailing. “My son? Won’t you please swap with me? Do that for your father” He took a long breath. “Save me if you can” (Anderson 261). These events cultivate apathy in Daragon that is directed against all structures except the bureau. In the end, Daragon manages to come out of this apathy as he does not arrest Teresa when she tries to prevent Eduard’s execution. He succeeds in seeing things beyond the constructs or socialization of structures. Like the other characters of the novel, Daragon’s actions also seem to be taken from the free will of Daragon. It seems obvious that the sufferings of Daragon are the results of his volunteer actions and he controls his own destiny.

Daragon cannot hopscotch, and when he first learns this, he considers himself a useless person. However, this inability is fully utilized by Fallen Leaves and he starts believing that he is a lucky person. Again, the training in BTL and the special guideline of the chief of the bureau are enough for him to form the opinion that BTL is doing a sacred duty to protect the common people, especially the individual who were involved in the disputes of swapping. He performs his duties with complete sincerity and devotion. He was not ready even to be skeptical about the misuse of the power of the officers of the bureau. He is very proud when he saves Eduard from the conspiracy of Lady Ruxton. He expresses his love and feelings in a passionate manner, “I may have been gone a year, Eduard, but I’ve tried to keep tabs on you and Garth and Teresa. You worry me the most, though— as

usual. Impulsive, cocky, reckless. Is this really the way you want to live?” (Anderson 62). He is very happy when Ob hired Eduard for his caretaker. He even loved his chief more passionately when the chief made himself Garth’s patron. However, he suffers humiliation when he thinks that his friend Eduard killed Ob. He is also infuriated on learning that Teresa gave her body to Garth and a large amount of money to Eduard to run away from the bureau. Till the end, he remains in conflict between his duties as a true friend and his obligations as inspector of BTL. His apathy towards Eduard and his other friends makes him depressed. Thus, it is the empirical experiences of Daragon that causes his sufferings.

Through these empirical experiences it is easy to reach to those structures and mechanisms that hurt the real of Daragon. First of all, the administration of the monastery took advantage of Daragon’s natural inability to save their building. This shows how such mechanisms play with the agency of a man to keep themselves alive by using the narrative of sacrifice. Then BTL controls the thinking of Daragon and he thinks and does what is transplanted in him during the training. He neither refuses nor suspects his chief to do any task. Daragon is misused by his chief as he compells Eduard to take the job of caretaker for the body of the chief. Daragon even could not understand the hidden activities of bureau when Ob stops him to arrest Roberta an antiCOM terrorist. Daragon is unable to sniff the intrigues of Real mechanisms when Ob reveals the fact to him that there was no disease like slippage during the swapping. It was just a narrative of the BTL. “We try to scare people out of swapping too much. Take slippage, for instance. You realize, of course, that the disease isn’t real?” (Anderson136). Daragon is so taken in by Ob that he finds story of his drug addiction and exploitation of his caretakers to be

ridiculous and false. Thus, these covert mechanisms form the thinking of Daragon and make him a loyal and committed officer of the bureau. Although he undergoes mental stress and agony, these structures remain indifferent to their agents. Daragon being a true human also suffers in cyber culture where the concept of family and parenthood is diminished. He is very conscious and curious to know about his biological parents so he requests Jax, a COM data hunter, to find his parents. Daragon feels dismayed and shocked because his mother does not have any passionate motherly feelings for him. Rather, she tries to seduce him for sex. "He had looked forward to this moment for such a long time, but his mother was not at all the person he had expected. He had imagined a heartfelt reunion, long conversations, a reconnection. Not this" (Anderson 91). He realizes that body had just become a machine and the old concept of feelings for the relations such as children or parents died away. He is disillusioned and starts to live by suppressing his feelings. However, another mechanism that gives all the characters some kind of passion and aim for the life is their friendship. When Daragon succeeds in overcoming his apathy towards his friends he gets somewhat relieved. He also learns to think beyond one's structures.

In the end, it can be deduced that Anderson has portrayed the cyber culture in this novel in ways that seem true and possible. He does not present a complete utopian world, rather he presents one that could happen in our near future. We are told that the society is completely computerized. People can swap their bodies with one another without losing their persona. Everything is computerized from medical to engineering, from commerce to agriculture, from sports to art, from diet to recreation. In these circumstances, one might think that society be ideal: that people be free and there be no tension, depression,

disease, exploitation, and no crime. But the writer has very vividly exposed the difficulties, problems, traumas, and exploitations that individuals have to undergo even in a highly advanced cyber culture. Even in these circumstances, there are some powerful mechanisms and structures that restrain and limit the freedom and free will of the individuals.

These mechanisms work through structures and control of the thinking, actions and passions of individuals. The very first powerful mechanism is religion that plays havoc with the life of Teresa. The religion's domination in the cyber culture seems somewhat odd, but religion has also transformed itself. Rhys does not talk about any divine god or life after death, rather he evokes religion in terms of the ideas of sharing, helping, and serving humanity. After falling into Rhy's trap Teresa loses the capacity for rational thought and begins to follow him blindly. She considers Rhys a sacred cow. She works day and night without much reward. She becomes a total slave who is not even free to choose her sex partner. This exploitation by Rhys breaks the idealism of Teresa and leaves her broken inside. Thus, religion threatens Teresa's real. However, the timely intervention of another structure and mechanism saves her. It is friendship that works to rescue her.

Moreover, it is not just religion that causes the suffering of characters in the novel. Another mechanism that restricts the liberty of individuals is money. Eduard is the victim of a social structure defined class division on the basis of money or resources. In such structures, the elite class exploits the have nots. Eduard has to undergo the surgeries, live sick, or take care of the bodies of the rich and elite class to earn his livelihood. He is very badly treated to the extent that his body is made addicted of the drugs. He has to sacrifice

his life for the crime of the elite. Eduard even enters the world of crime because of the upper-class, as he has to run from place to place to save his life from the bureau whose chief was killed by him. Eduard did not intend to kill the chief; it happened by chance. However, Eduard does not belong to upper-class, so nobody considers him innocent. The chief, who was the real perpetrator, had washed all the proofs that could prove Eduard innocent. Thus, it is another structure that had corrupted the life of an innocent being.

Andersen further unveils the reality that art and artists are also in the grip of these powerful structures and mechanisms. Garth has to rely upon the marketing and wealth to become a famous artist. He has to work as a patron of the chief, such that his freedom was also checked. And the owner of marketing company does not approve the work of Garth for his latest exhibition, and sought to dictate to the artist. So, like Teresa and Eduard, Garth also suffers, but he also produces a powerful message: that one should not keep the feelings of apathy for other people and structures to make one's and other's lives happy. Daragon is manipulated by a powerful bureau that claimed to maintain law and order in the society. Daragon is so deeply trapped in the narrative of the bureau that he makes the bureau a sacred cow. He develops a very strong apathy for all other structures and institutions, so it makes him suffer himself. He has to lose his true friends and their trust for the sake of the bureau, while for the bureau he is nothing more than an instrument. The collapse of parenthood in the cyber culture also creates anxiety in him. He does not get from his biological mother and father what he wishes to have from them. So, the mechanism of body swapping renders human beings closer to machines. However, he regains his real when he gets rid of the feelings of apathy. In the end, it is the friendship and the realization of the covert operations of the structures of the

individuals that help them to think freely. So, they start thinking rationally and coming out of their own boxes. They get reality that it is the only way to achieve their real agency.

### **5.5 Dark Spaces: Appropriate Spaces for the Manifestation and Restoration of Agency of Individual in *Hopscotch***

Throughout history, humanity has tried to maintain the balance between individual agency and societal norms, which influence decisions from everyday choices to profound existential questions. Émile Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), examines how societal norms constrain and shape individual decisions.

The concept of "agency" varies across fields. Psychologically, it refers to control over one's actions (Bandura 2006), while sociologically, Anthony Giddens (1984) defines it as the capacity to effect change. Without this capacity, individuals are disempowered. Historically, agency has evolved from ancient Greek philosophy, which emphasized control and moral responsibility, to the Renaissance focus on individual freedom as seen in Pico della Mirandola's work (Mirandola). The Enlightenment further emphasized rationality as central to freedom, though rational decision-making alone did not guarantee true freedom (Williams, Gantt, & Fischer 2021).

Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1864) challenged Enlightenment thinkers like Hegel, Kant, and Rousseau by arguing that people often choose irrational paths motivated by deeper principles beyond mere rationality. The rise of technology and robotics has further complicated the notion of agency, merging human and machine capabilities and giving rise to modern concepts like the cyborg and posthuman, as discussed by Donna Haraway and N. Katherine Hayles. However, alongside technological advancement came the

pervasive surveillance of individual actions. Michel Foucault (1926-1984) introduced the concept of the "panoptic eye," symbolizing constant surveillance and control over individuals' behavior. The panopticon, originally designed for prison surveillance, represented a structure of power aimed at regulating human actions (Foucault 1980).

In contrast, Michel de Certeau argued that individuals could evade the watchful gaze of the panoptic eye, which he likened to "the solar eye" or "the god." De Certeau described the pleasure of viewing the world from an elevated perspective, akin to that of Icarus flying above the earthbound masses. He coined the term "dark spaces" to denote areas where individuals could operate beyond the purview of surveillance, engaging in spatial practices that challenged established norms and regulations (Certeau 1984).

De Certeau's concept of spatial practices sheds light on the contemporary dilemma of living in a technologically surveilled world. In this context, a utopian urban discourse emerges, suppressing dissenting voices and undermining traditional values. Human agency and freedom of expression are constrained and surveilled, necessitating conformity to societal norms and regulations (Certeau 1984).

Kevin Anderson explores these themes in his work, depicting a world where human agency coexists with technological surveillance. Characters navigate a paradoxical landscape, where freedom and panopticism intersect, as they strive to assert their agency within the confines of a cyber-society.

The world has transcended into a cyborg era, where the science fiction of a remote future has become the present. Consequently, Kevin Anderson's novel, *Hopscotch*, explores the dichotomies between the panoptic surveillance and the characters' endeavor of spatial



practices. With the progress in the field of technology, the world has become a 'theoretical simulacrum' where the workings and behaviors of individuals are under constant scrutiny and inspection. In spite of the fact that people have become connected communicatively, it has put every individual's activity under unceasing inspection, which de Certeau calls the phenomenon of inspection, the 'voyeur god' or the 'solar eye'. He transforms himself into something glorious and exalted by distancing himself and separating from the total masses. This development in the technological domain has conspicuously demonstrated itself in the field of literature, where the boundaries for imagining beyond the imaginable are possible. Kevin Anderson's science fiction novel, *Hopscotch*, demonstrates a world where individuals have gained the power to transfer their minds from one body into another. A person could become anyone for a decided time by exchanging their bodies. It constructs a world where apparently human beings can be anything; however, in reality, their every move is kept under check by an organization.

The Bureau of Tracing and Locations (BTL) acts as the panoptic eye, or in de Certeau's terms, 'the solar eye' and 'the voyeur god' that keeps a strict check and significant data regarding each individual mind's switch from one body to another. The highly organized monitoring and tracing ability of this 'solar eye' can be inferred from the following lines in the novel where Daragon is introduced to the chief of BTL for the very first time. The function of BTL in the novel seems to be similar to what a voyeur god does. By the aid of COM, they store and can trace everyone's location and activity, in addition to the use of invisible surveillance cameras. 'The BTL used a broad spectrum of methods for locating

and tracking people as they moved through a society where physical appearance and identity could be made meaningless by body swapping' (Anderson 18).

When Daragon is being given an introduction to what he be dealing with in BTL, Mordecai Ob again describes the workings and mechanisms of data collection. 'COM infiltrates every aspect of our lives from finances to entertainment to the national infrastructure. Therefore, information about everyone's daily activities can be found somewhere in all of those databases. You need only look for it' (Anderson 30). Eduard, one of Daragon's friends, vocalizes his paranoia with his friends as they reunite at the Club for a daily meet up. "I wonder if he spies on us.' Eduard flicked his dark eyes from side to side in a comically paranoid furtive glance. 'It's what Beetles do'' (Anderson 12).

Eduard, Teresa, and Daragon embark on a journey of resisting and defying the widely accepted discourse and venture to obscure themselves from the 'panoptic' or the 'solar eye'. The search for 'dark spaces' facilitates and expedites them in enforcing their human agency. Daragon's inability to hopscotch like others puts him in an inferiority complex and a constant urge to please others. However, his ability to recognize a person's true identity without the aid of ID patches intrigued the BTL, who took him in and raised him to be an ideal 'Beetle' (a BTL officer). In spite of being brainwashed and drilled with BTL ideals, he still manages to avoid the gaze of the 'solar eye' or the 'panoptic'. These spatial practices materialize themselves in the novel on several occasions.

In the first incident, Eduard becomes entangled with an affluent CEO who pays him to hopscotch with her for a life-threatening surgery. Due to his impulsive nature, Eduard signs a legal document without adequate knowledge of the terms. The issue arises when the CEO refuses to hopscotch back into her original body, prompting Daragon to use his

position in BTL to coerce her to swap back. "Just keeping an eye on my friends," Daragon says, smiling down at Eduard in his BTL regalia. "COM found your name on this contract when the records were filed, and I just wanted to make sure nothing . . . accidentally happened during your surgery" (Anderson 82).

Daragon's ability to track Teresa using COM databases demonstrates his spatial practices. He uses confidential information regarding Teresa's whereabouts to locate her after she escapes from Rhys and his Sharetaker's cult. "Teresa lifted her bruised eyes to Daragon. 'How . . . how did you know?' Eduard leaned closer to Teresa. 'He spies on us'" (Anderson 145).

Throughout the novel, Daragon retains his freedom to act of his own will, manipulates the databases, and take liberty of the resources when needed, akin to how he retains his freedom to act. Even towards the resolution of the novel, Daragon tells Garth how he can manage updating his identity after Eduard's uploading into COM. "Yes, I know it's you, Garth. You don't think your little scam with Madame Ruxton could stay hidden from me?" Abashed, Garth looked at Daragon. "I think I'm going to need a bit of help from the Bureau to get my identity straightened out again" (Anderson 405).

Daragon's character accomplishes freeing himself from the psychological chains of BTL's brainwashing by helping his friends, who BTL considers the 'walkers'. De Certeau's postulations regarding the maintenance of free will under the 'panoptic' are substantiated. Teresa, another character in the novel, possesses an extremely inquisitive nature that drives her to question life's purpose. These questions spark her curiosity and lead her to impulsively join the Sharetaker's group, where she later realizes the hypocrisy of the leader, Rhys. Teresa's existential questions challenge the conventional discourse in

society. All her life she has grappled with unanswerable questions but found no answers. "Each person had a different answer to that question, and Teresa needed to find her own. Instead of searching for someone to hand her the solutions, she should have been searching inside herself" (Anderson 403).

Her encounter with Arthur guides her towards finding answers to her questions and sets her on the right path to understand the meaning of her existence. Arthur explains the significance of the 'body', which the cyber society has jeopardized. His views on the complexity of the human body make Teresa realize how she has neglected to prioritize her own body.

Discussions with Arthur unveil a new perspective for Teresa, aiding her quest for answers. These meetings at the fountain behave as de Certeau's 'dark spaces' and 'spatial practices'. She forges her own path, shrouded in the dark space, finding the meaning of life and establishing her free will. "Once you know the details, you can't help but worship the complexity. This delicate and intricate machine is far superior to any mechanism human beings have managed to devise. Okay, just look at your fingerprints, at the blood vessels beneath the skin. See your pores," Arthur explains, marveling at the intricacies of the human body (Anderson 167). The reasons for Teresa's admiration of Arthur and his philosophy lie in the pristine nature of his answers. He values his own body, which the cyber world has risked. Teresa's existential journey culminates with her realization that "the meaning of life is to make life have a meaning" (Anderson 403).

Furthermore, Eduard embodies de Certeau's 'walkers', defying boundaries and conventional ideology in the cyber world of Hopscotch. He acts on his own accord and free will, distrusting the narrative presented by BTL, the 'solar eye' in the novel. Eduard's

actions and inner dialogues reveal his skepticism towards BTL's surveillance. "I hate being predictable," Eduard expresses his mistrust and suspicion of being observed and evaluated by COM and BTL (Anderson 11). In a world where freedom to be anyone takes precedence over surveillance, Eduard evades conformism by rejecting BTL's ideals and paradigms. Despite appearing impulsive, he successfully evades BTL's surveillance cams and trackers, challenging their double standards and hypocrisy. His resolve to become a phantom, then his subsequent decision to sacrifice himself for his friend, showcases his agency and adherence to de Certeau's concept of 'spatial practices' (Anderson 352).

In conclusion, the examination of Hopscotch through the lens of agency reveals a rich tapestry of characters grappling with the constraints of surveillance and the quest for individual autonomy. Kevin Anderson's narrative intricately intertwines with the philosophical discourse of Michel de Certeau, illuminating the profound tensions between control and resistance in a technologically dominated society.

The characters of Daragon, Teresa, and Eduard emerge as protagonists navigating the intricate web of surveillance imposed by the Bureau of Tracing and Locations (BTL). Their actions epitomize the essence of agency as they strive to carve out spaces of freedom amidst the omnipresent gaze of the panoptic eye. Daragon's manipulation of BTL's resources, Teresa's existential quest for meaning, and Eduard's defiance of conformity all exemplify the indomitable spirit of human agency in the face of technological hegemony.

Furthermore, the notion of "dark spaces" elucidated by de Certeau serves as a symbolic battleground where the characters assert their autonomy and challenge the status quo;

Teresa's encounters with Arthur and her subsequent self-discovery, Eduard's defiance of BTL's surveillance, and Daragon's moral dilemmas all underscore the transformative power of agency in reshaping one's destiny.

Through its narrative depth and philosophical underpinnings, *Hopscotch* invites readers to contemplate the intricate interplay between technology, surveillance, and individual agency. It prompts us to reflect on the enduring human quest for freedom and self-determination in an increasingly surveilled world. In essence, *Hopscotch* serves not only as a captivating tale of rebellion but also as a profound meditation on the complexities of human agency in the digital age.

## CHAPTER 6

### IMPACT OF SURVEILLANCE AND COMMODIFICATION ON URBAN LIFE IN GIBSON'S WORKS

William Gibson, a seminal figure in cyberpunk and science fiction, has significantly shifted his narrative focus from futuristic to contemporary settings. Initially known for his *Sprawl* Trilogy, which explored a distant future, and later *The Bridge Trilogy*, which depicted a near-future America, Gibson's *The Bigend Trilogy*—*Pattern Recognition* (2003), *Spook Country* (2006), and *Zero History* (2010)—departs from traditional science fiction's future-oriented narratives to tackle the early 21st century. This transition has sparked considerable debate regarding the genre classification of his work.

While Gibson's earlier trilogies were set in speculative futures, *The Bigend Trilogy's* present-day setting challenges conventional science fiction definitions. Critics argue that this shift reflects a broader trend where science fiction increasingly addresses the present rather than predicting the future. This approach, described as a form of "double vision," combines realistic elements with speculative ideas, suggesting a new genre that blends realism with science fiction. Scholars like Anna McFarlane note that Gibson's focus on the haptic and affective dimensions of human experience in this trilogy emphasizes the embodied, physical aspects of life, contrasting with the disembodied visions of cyberspace in his earlier works.

This change aligns with broader cultural critiques that science fiction should reflect and analyze current socio-cultural issues rather than merely extrapolate future developments. As noted by critics such as Veronica Hollinger and J.G. Ballard, the genre now often explores the present as a reflection of historical and cultural dynamics, rather than a

distant, speculative future. This shift underscores a growing recognition that the future and past have converged in the present, influencing how science fiction addresses contemporary concerns.

*The Bigend Trilogy* of Gibson begins with the publication of *Pattern Recognition* (2003). In this book, one can explicitly identify the shift of Gibson from imagining the future to portraying the present. While justifying this shift, Gibson appears to endorse the stance of Hollinger and Ronay who describe the “formerly autonomous” status of the future, “I don’t know if I’ll be able to make up an imaginary future in the same way. In the ’80s and ’90s—as strange as it may seem to say this—we had such luxury of stability. Things weren’t changing quite so quickly in the ’80s and ’90s. And when things are changing too quickly, as one of the characters in *Pattern Recognition* (2003) says, you don’t have any place to stand from which to imagine a very elaborate future” (Nissley).

Gibson’s intentions are the driving forces that coax him to project the present as manifests in an elaborate passage from the first novel of *The Bigend Trilogy* ‘*Pattern Recognition* (2003)’ which serves as the mouthpiece of Gibson as the pivotal character of the novel speaks, “[We] have no future. Not in the sense that our grandparents had a future, or thought they did. Fully imagined cultural futures were the luxury of another day, one in which ‘now’ was of some greater duration. For us, of course, things can change so abruptly, so violently, so profoundly, that futures like our grandparents’ have insufficient ‘now’ to stand on. We have no future because our present is too volatile. We have only risk management. The spinning of the given moment’s scenarios.” (57). This speech is made by Hubertus Bigendm who is the founder and executive of Blue Ant, an advertising company, whose business ventures he introduces on another occasion in front



of the protagonist Cayce Pollard as “brand vision transmission, trend forecasting, vendor management, youth market recon, strategic planning” (21).

Bigendis the epitome of post-modern capitalism. He possesses the uncanny capability to commodify whatever comes his way, whether it is art, media, globalization, or any cultural artifice. He even entraps Cayce by using her to commodify art and promote branding, even though she hates such commodification: to the extent that she is allergic to branding and commodification. However, she still succumbs to the traps of Bigend, who, like the true culmination of capitalism, is never satisfied with what he has acquired by rather wishes to dominate every field of business, especially the field of fashion, marketing, art, and media. In order to satiate his ever-increasing wish for cutting-edge culture, he plays with the subjectivity of his employees, most of whom are free-lancer bohemians. He pushes them into the gray areas of uncertainty without telling them that they are being used for some secret missions: consequently they are entrapped in gray zones between big finance, the secret service, the military, the international art scene, and organized crime.

This manipulation of the subjectivities of real humans through the mechanisms of globalization, augmented reality, the commodification of art, and fashion branding provide Gibson with the substance of not only *Pattern Recognition* (2003) but also his other two novels *Spook Country* (2007) and *Zero History* (2010) of *The Bigend Trilogy*. In these novels, all the characters appear subservient and obedient to their bosses, but at the same time, they seek their freedom and agency: most of the time they even manage to find some space for their innate wish of agency and subjectivity along with happiness. However, this does not mean that they succeed in throwing away the chains that confine

their agency. Still, with the help of some linking actions and the tug of war between different covert and powerful mechanisms, they find ways to increase their subjectivity. Similarly, the gratification to receive from their work also differs from character to character. For Bigend, it is the power to dominate and manipulate; for Hollis and Tito it is the exchange of currency, ideology and money; for Milgrim, it is drugs that serve as a source of happiness. However, one thing in common for all these characters in *Pattern Recognition* (2003) is that they all are on the hunt for free agency and real subjectivity, even though they are being controlled by powerful covert mechanisms that, for their own part, are struggling for survival.

It is therefore very appropriate for Gibson to wrestle with the present as the present is rapidly transforming itself which leads to instability. Another factor that plays a pivotal role in inspiring Gibson to turn to realism in science fiction is the notion of the present in contemporary society, which is also drastically changing. Contemporary society remains more concerned about the present and struggling to keep pace, therefore they feel the future infuse in their present as the present does not succeed in creating a strong foothold. John Clute falls back on *Bigend's* interpretation of the future and the present in his analysis of *Pattern Recognition* (2003) by asserting that "SF is no longer about the future as such, because 'we have no future' that we can do thought experiments about, only futures, which bleed all over the page, soaking the present" ( 403). Frederic Jameson claims that *Pattern Recognition* (2003) takes Gibson to the zenith of his career. According to him, owing to a peculiar trait to comprehend the complex realities of the present, this novel enjoys a unique status in science fiction: "the representational apparatus of Science Fiction is sending back more reliable information about the

contemporary world than an exhausted realism” (Fear 105). Gibson traces his inclination to move closer to the present in one of his essays and expresses his stance by stating that it was so because of his realization “that imaginary futures are always, regardless of what the authors might think, about the day in which they’re written” (Distrust 45).

When, ultimately, Gibson decides to work through the present in his *Bigend* trilogy, he very explicitly exhibits the intricate present with its historical and social backdrop. He does this by highlighting how various ever-present structures collide and at the same time support each other and thus play their roles in transforming the social and individual reality amid the ever-evolving technology, ever-fluctuating economy, always volatile international politics, and ever progressing art and media. The present under discussion in the two novels *Pattern Recognition* (2003) and *Spook Country* is a place in which capitalism has routed communism, sophisticated information systems surveilled society, and human identity has become inextricably dependent and wrapped up with the totalizing impetuses of economic and technological progress. The future imagined in the first two trilogies of Gibson has materialized in the first decade of the twenty-first century where the boundaries have vanished between binaries such as reality and simulation, humans and machines, labor and the self, and organic and artificial.

In the words of Bhaskar, this is a time when the empirical outlook of the real has been entirely reshaped, though the real mechanisms still exist and they have been surreptitiously playing with the agency and subjectivity of the real of the humans. The desire of achieving total conformism, universality, and incarceration of free-thinking, still prevails among the powerful who are themselves lured by covert structures. These structures use independent mechanisms to meet the above-mentioned goals. Gibson in his

Novels *Pattern Recognition* (2003) and *Spook Country* (2007) introduces those mechanisms and structures that challenge the subjectivity and agency of humans by luring them into the exchange of currency, such as the quest for domination and popularity, the hunger for money, passion for ideology, and addiction to drugs. The independent mechanisms that trick real humans are, according to Gibson, the myth of globalization, the commodification of art, augmented reality, and the media's glamorization. The covert structures or organizations that have the strings in their hands at the back of the stage are MNCs (multinational corporations), international power politics, Secret surveillance agencies, and underworld mafias.

In the novels under discussion, the characters find themselves ensnared by any of the above-mentioned mechanisms so they work as the promoters and tools of these powerful structures. However, unlike in the earlier novels of Gibson, the characters of *Pattern Recognition* (2003) and *Spook Country* (2007) manage to keep their real as they create some space for their agency that ultimately provides them the subjectivity. I will discuss all those independent mechanisms one by one to find how they threaten the real of the characters, at the same time it will be observed how these characters keep their real alive, which provides a potential means for readers to cope with the new dimensions of cyber culture. Since the setting of these novels is in the present so the historical events that occurred in this period would also be hinted at in the discussion in order to reach the real which is according to Bhaskar the main layer of reality.

### **6.1. Dystopia of Globalisation**

The dream of universality and globalization was woven by modernism and it materialized in the twenty-first century owing to technology which has broken down the geographical,

cultural, and economic boundaries with the revolution of the internet, social media, and ultra-modern and ultra-fast means of transportation. Art, fashion, sports, and even education have reached beyond the margins of regionalism, and nationalism, owing to the commodification and brandification of these entities. Social media has moved a new spirit into the process of globalization.

This scenario has brought the people of all over the world very close together, which has intensified the interdependence of the people on cultural, social, and spatial fronts. The flow of money, the movement of people, the trade of goods, the introduction of art and fashion, and the transforming of ideas across the globe has never been observed in such a great magnitude and at such a rapid speed as it is going on in the present. This rampant flow of men, money, and goods has invited cutthroat competition between corporations and big powers, which drag humans into their personal rat race by playing with their agency and individualism ((Steger 2009). Considering the rapid transformation of the world into a global village, a philosophic debate has emerged as to whether globalization affects humans positively or negatively. As a result of the debate, two contradictory stands appear: one set of theorists regards globalization as the death of nationalism, regionalism, and diversity. They claim that globalization is a trap of American imperialism, which serves the cause of capitalists as it spreads transnational capitalism, promotes consumerism, paves the way for hegemony of some particular culture and ideology, and is a clear threat to the regional cultures (Harvey 2005; Klein 2000). It has destructive consequences as it promotes commodification. materialism, and only the values of dominant culture and civilization (Barber 1995; Ritzer 1993).

Alternatively, there are several researchers who conclude that globalization brings positive consequences without overlooking that powerful global corporate organizations and multinational media enjoy the power to shape the thoughts and lives of individuals as well as nations. They claim that homogeneity will be balanced with heterogeneity (Appadurai 1996; Robertson 1995). They believe that the mass transition of people and goods would pave the way for a hybrid culture where every culture would be given the proper share and the interaction of the vast number of people of various cultures will ultimately give birth to a global conscience that would be useful for the entire humanity (Pieterse 1995; Tomlinson 1999). Despite the difference in both these stances regarding globalization but one thing is common in them that they consider globalization to be fast approaching. It is a structure where flow and flexibility replace fixity and linearity (Bauman 1998; Castells 1996).

In order to understand the different factors that play a pivotal role in globalization, the prominent theorist of globalization, Arjun Appadurai, puts forward a framework in his essay 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy' (1990). According to this essay, one can approach to the flow of people, capital, goods, and art can be studied under five different intermingling and overlapping categories; 'ethnoscapes', 'technoscapes', 'financescapes', 'mediascapes', and 'ideoscapes'. Ethnoscapes refer to "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest-workers, and other moving groups and persons" (Appadurai 1990: 297). Technoscapes refer to the technology of the latest kind which is being used by individuals, industry, and governments all over the world. It signifies all the machinery and gadgetry that is moved and configured all over the world: in short, it

signifies the flow of technology which was not previously possible. The financescapes refers to the flow of capital in the form of money and finance across the globe. This becomes particularly complicated with the inception of digital currency which is often hidden. On the contrary, mediascapes are very prominent and visible as it allows to transfer the of images carrying information through the latest media technology throughout the world within a few moments.

The last category, according to Appadurai, is the ideoscape. It is intermingled or overlapped with mediascape as it is introduced and promoted through media. However, it signifies the ideology of the state and the ideology of the different social and political movements. Thus these factors envisage the imagined global world and globalization can be analyzed by exploring these categories. In the words of Bhaskar, these categories are linking actions that support the independent mechanism of globalization. Gibson deliberately opts for the setting of globalization for his novels *Pattern Recognition* (2003) and *Spook Country* (2007) in order to expose the hidden structures and their actions to mold these independent mechanisms in their own favor. The globalization in these novels threatens the real of the characters by making them indifferent to their regional culture, by snatching their emotions, and by using their weakness, however, it also provides ample opportunity for those characters to express their agency and ultimately manage to claim space for their own agency.

Many a times writers weave the dream of globalization, characterizing it in terms of an ideal urban life in urban vicinities that are endowed with diversity, hybridity, ultra-modern technology, economic hubs, media centers, and civic amenities (Stassen 2001; Florida 2002). They envision cities as melting pots of cultures and ideas, facilitated by

advanced technology and robust infrastructure, where economic activities thrive and media influence is pervasive. These urban centers are seen as epitomes of the benefits of globalization, showcasing the blend of cultural heterogeneity and modern conveniences that define contemporary globalized living (Mitchell 2000; Castells 1996). So far as these representations are concerned, it appears that globalization will flourish only in urban spaces and cities. The metropolis appears as the center of globalization as they are the center of the flow of money, media, people, and technology. Therefore, when Gibson articulates the future in the present or imagines the future of globalization, he sets his novels in the metropolis cities such as London, Moscow, Tokyo, and Paris. These cities are presented as they are living characters who work like humans and play pivotal roles in the main scheme of the plot of the novels. The cities control and shape the desires, careers, and aims of the characters. The cities spy on the protagonists of the novels. The cities provide the characters very little space for their agency at the end of the novels, which endorses the assertion of Gibson that cities not only work as covert mechanisms for the transnational capitalists and suspicious agencies, but that they have something for the individuals to showcase and perform their subjectivity if they manage to escape from the close surveillance of their masters. Considering the urban megalopolises' independent mechanisms, I will discuss their role as complicit players of a great game.

These cities directly or circuitously pose solemn challenges to the real of individuals, regional cultures, and national identities. These metropolises threaten the free choice of individuals through the massive flow of brands, controlled art and media, and capitalistic exploitation. Such urban centers of global exchange invite confrontations between indigenous idiosyncrasies and globalization. The consequences of such confrontation are



the end of indigenous idiosyncrasies and the flourishing of homogeneity, proving a stern challenge to the real of local and regional identity. Finally, these megalopolises serve as the emblem of the culture of a particular country and thus promote the very culture at the expense of the demise of all regional and national cultures which is a grave challenge for the real of nationalism.

In Gibson's novels, the portrayal of cities as living, breathing entities intricately tied to global capitalism and surveillance aligns with the broader discourse on globalization's impact on urban life. The idealization of metropolises as centers of cultural diversity, technological advancement, and economic vitality (as noted by Stassen, Florida, Mitchell, and Castells) contrasts sharply with Gibson's depiction of these urban centers. While globalization promises vibrant, hybrid urban spaces, Gibson highlights a more insidious reality: cities that, while embodying the benefits of global connectivity, also act as mechanisms of control and surveillance. The metropolis in Gibson's works is not merely a backdrop but a formidable force that shapes and constrains individual agency, often threatening local and regional identities with its overwhelming flow of capital, media, and technology. This dynamic illustrates a tension between the promised utopia of global cities and the dystopian control exerted by these urban environments, revealing the darker side of globalization where cultural homogeneity and the erosion of local identities challenge the authenticity and autonomy of individuals.

In *Pattern Recognition* (2003) and *Spook Country*, the entire actions of the plots occur in big cities. They are the forum for the flow of capital, business activities, and media coverage and media activities. They are thus complicit with the covert structures. As Carl Abbot argues, global megalopolises, like Tokyo, London, or New York, serve in

Gibson's trilogy as "the nerve centers, control centers, information nodes—the places you need to be to stay in touch, to be part of the action" (125). The role of cities as powerful manipulators and facilitators are inherent in the plot of both these novels as they set in a global reality where all the political players, business competitors, and media goliaths find the space and opportunities to manifest their skills. Cities provide the site and facility for every action in the novel making themselves pivotal and indispensable for the plot narrative and for the themes. The cities' instrumentality in expediting the global exchange and flows is denoted by their advanced infrastructure, strategic economic activities, and cultural dynamism. As Gibson elaborates in *Pattern Recognition* (2003), the cities are factually patented on "a clean, uniformly dense substrate of pipes and wiring" (130), to ensure the global exchange and global flows. The cities in the novels, act like the villain for the agency of individuals through their complicated networks of surveillance as one comes across CCTV cameras, drone technology, secret devices of recording, and secret public and private intelligence agencies. The cities provide save heavens for the secret missions of capitalism, guerilla market warfare, and evasive surveillance to exploit the majority in pursuit of the common goals of the global corporate sector.

The introduction of GPS technology has made the surveillance of individuals on a large scale very easy. This is especially true when that technology is made available for the public and is used to monitor and watch the employees of the corporate sector. The protagonist of *Spook Country* (2007) informs the reader that in 2000 the American Govt has permitted the public to use GPS, which previously was only used by the military. She further cautions that GPS will cause paranoia in the people as it will break down the

boundaries between the private and public life of individuals, creating the fear that they are perpetually in the gaze of the big boss. Every individual is under severe surveillance as well as being part of surveillance, because they are instructed to keep an eye on others in both novels. So, the one who is spying on someone is also being spied on by someone else. In the presence of such evasive surveillance, the threat to the real of individuals is enduring. The cities are modeled in the light of Foucaultian logic of panoptic social control (see Chapter 4 for details), where going against the dominant discourse is out of the question and where the technology does not leave any space undetermined.

Cayce, the protagonist of *Pattern Recognition* (2003), resides in the global metropolis and thus is always under surveillance. This makes it for her hard to challenge the dominant discourse. This scenario embodies the contemporary moment, echoing Wetmore's observation that we inhabit a time and space where capitalism has prevailed over communism, intricate information systems oversee and regulate societal functions, and human identity is intricately linked with the pervasive influences of technological and economic advancement. Cayce is a freelancer marketing agent who is highly experienced at tracking down the patterns of the fashions of subcultures, while also being allergic to brands. Her job involves surveillance as she is hired by a mysterious business tycoon who wants Cayce to track down the maker of a series of video clips that appear on the internet through social media and have been attracting the attention of millions creating a stir. The pursuit of the fragmented video clips is for Bigend, Cayce's employer, who has commercial interests as he takes them as representative of "the single most brilliant marketing ploy of this young century. And new. Something entirely new" ( 67). On the other hand, Cayce's fascination regarding the videos is not driven by any

capitalistic goal, rather it is an effort on her part to come out of the trauma of the memory of the incident of 9-11 which took her father, who has been missing since every day. Her father was a CIA agent and was at the World Trade Center on that catastrophic day. The demise of her father causes trauma for her and she unconsciously starts to describe and search for the meanings of the footage which leads her to join the F.F.F. (Fetishes Footage, Forum).

She does however succeed in hunting down the ‘maker’ of the videos: a Russian girl, who like Cayce suffers loss and trauma as the result of an assassination attack on her parents. Nora, the maker, turns out to be mentally and physically impaired as a result of an explosion. She has turned to editing fragmented videos of surveillance circulating on the internet, and is meticulous in her activity. It is the media surveillance that informs Bigend about the interest of Cayce in the video clips, and so he manipulates this private browsing of Cayce and the traumatic suffering of Nora as a marketing ploy. Bigend is the emblem of how the corporate sector and global transnational capital intrude into the private lives of individuals. Cayce, who carries a serious grudge against capitalism, has been lured into its service as she helps Bigend to commodify art. This would not be possible if there were no media surveillance, because she is only identified by her employer as she is found visiting the F.F.F. more frequently than anyone else. Thus it can be asserted that in these (smart) cities, it is near to impossible to escape the panoptic gaze of disciplinary technology.

In developing this connection the interpretations of Geyh are very appropriate when he talks about the cities in Gibson’s works, “Gibson’s cyberspace must be seen as a form of disciplinary mechanism, a grid creating a striated space allowing simultaneously for

intelligibility, surveillance, and control” ( 105). Foucault too hints at the emergence of surveillance cities in the guise of utopian idealism of urban heaven in *Discipline and Punishment* (1975) (75-79). The covert utilization of surveillance to work for transnational capitalism is manifested in this regard. For example, Cayce travels from city to city searching for the maker, but where ever she goes, she cannot escape from the panoptic gaze of disciplinary technology. Her apartment is searched and broken into by private agencies. Similarly, her cell phone and personal computer are closely watched by those whose financial interests are directly attached to her. One noteworthy thing here is that Cayce herself is fully aware of the fact that she is in the eye of surveillance agencies, therefore she does not protest against such evasive watch by the global corporate companies. This indicates how individuals are prepared to be watched because of threat of terrorism. The acceptance of such a panoptic gaze on the part of the people is due to the formation of the empirical layer of reality. The affinity between the urban life of the novel and the spatial logic of order and discipline figured out by Foucault is very evident.

One thing that is very clear is that the panoptic gaze of technology is not the only influence on the agency of the individuals such as Nora, Cayce, and Cayce’s boyfriend: owing to the intrusion of agencies and employers these individuals also suffer from complexes, paranoia, and phobias. This is especially apparent when these characters knowingly become the tools of a great game against their own wishes. In Cayce’s case, this is when she is compelled to support commodification and the promotion of brands despite the fact that she is deeply allergic to them. However, as stated earlier in the chapter, Gibson in these novels also present an optimistic vision and suggests some possibilities to overcome those powers that limit the reals of the characters. The journey

of Cayce to trace the maker is also a journey offering her subjectivity and creating the space for her agency by dodging the logic of discipline, or, in other words, by avoiding the panoptic gaze while simultaneously obeying and following that discipline and order. Whenever Cayce wants to come out of the artificiality of the urban or corporative environment she goes for long walks in the densely populated streets of London or supermarkets in Tokyo.

It is on one of her walks that she comes across a person whose specialty is knowledge of old computers, and they reveals the whereabouts of the maker of the films Cayce is looking forward. This information does not reach the boss of Cayce, as she has managed to escape from the surveillance of her employers. She manages to dodge the panoptic gaze as she does not record the information in any of her gadgets. Though she is followed on many occasions by groups of secret services, such as KGP officers, or sometimes by private secret agents, she does not allow them to gather any piece of information linking to her affiliation and association with that person who had privileged information about the maker of the films. This happens in the novel because Cayce knows that she is always on the radar of national and international secret agencies, so whenever she has to take some decision that could trap her and could endanger her job, she first of all breaks the net or at least creates a space where those mechanisms will not regard her actions as very serious. She ingeniously keeps her trip to Moscow secret from her boss to meet the maker Nora. Cayce after discovering that the maker enjoys the freedom of her agency, does not inform Bigend about the accomplishment of her goal. Moreover she decides to settle at one place with her boyfriend which is another refusal and denial of the logical order offered by the globalization through the metropolises.

To understand the free space that Cayce creates in the ordered and discipline propounded by Foucault in *Discipline and Punishment*, one has to grasp the stance of Michel de Certeau from the chapter “Walking in the City” compares the everyday experience of seeing the city from the top of the trade center with the panoptic gaze of Foucault where the height transfigures the gazer into “voyeur,” “a solar Eye, looking down like a God” (92). But this omniscient standpoint is no more than a persuasive narrative that “creates readers, makes the complexity of the city readable, and immobilizes its opaque mobility in a transparent text” ( 92). According to de Certeau, there are some elements of daily life which are invisible from such a height that they fail to have any kind of acceptance in the main discourse. Consequently, they resist textual elucidation, for him, these are “spatial practices”. Spatial practices relate to the “individual mode of appropriation” as opposed to the “collective mode of administration” concentrated on by Foucault and create the “multiform, resistant, tricky and stubborn procedures that elude discipline without being outside the field in which it is exercised” ( 96). Considering these spatial practices as the reason for the resurrection of Cayce’s agency, one can identify ‘walking in the city’ as one of those spatial practices which are invisible to the eyes of panoptic gazes and which thereby help Cayce to meet her goals and even appear not to defy the set discipline or the main discourse. Thus Gibson wants his characters to use these spatial practices to seek whatever agency and freedom in this techno-capitalism and globalization one can have otherwise it always works for the interests of the corporative structures.

In William Gibson’s *Pattern Recognition*, the notion that everyday experiences often go unnoticed or unrecorded by media and technology becomes a key to understanding how characters like Cayce Pollard navigate their agency and interact with the "real." Cayce's

observation of mundane yet significant moments—such as a leaf falling unnoticed while she watches the 9/11 attacks on television—illustrates a gap between the lived reality and the constructed public narrative. These gaps in media coverage and technological recording reflect what is excluded from the dominant discourse, highlighting how certain realities remain unacknowledged and hidden from public view.

Gibson uses these overlooked moments to critique how media and surveillance shape our understanding of reality. By focusing on the overlooked and the unrecorded, Gibson exposes the limitations and biases of mediated experiences. The idea here is that while the media and surveillance technology construct a dominant narrative that often overshadows individual experiences, these gaps offer spaces where personal agency can flourish. For Cayce, these gaps are not just voids but potential sites for reclaiming her individuality and personal history, which are otherwise subsumed by the overpowering influence of global capitalism and technological control.

The concept of "pockets" within the city refers to these overlooked spaces—areas that exist beneath the radar of extensive surveillance and media scrutiny. These pockets become crucial for Cayce and others who seek to maintain their sense of self and agency. They represent spaces where individuals can express their personal truths and resist the homogenizing forces of global capitalism. By finding and inhabiting these pockets, Cayce navigates a path between conformity and resistance, leveraging these gaps to assert her individuality and engage with a more authentic version of reality.

This nuanced analysis introduces a new configuration of the real within Gibson's urban landscapes. The real is not confined to the empirical narratives dictated by global media and technological surveillance but exists in these hidden, often mundane spaces. These



pockets allow individuals to experience and perform their subjectivity in ways that subvert the dominant narratives. They are not just escape routes but active sites of resistance where the real persists despite the overarching control exerted by technological and capitalist systems.

In essence, Gibson's depiction of these pockets within the metropolises offers a critical commentary on how agency and the real are negotiated in a globalized world dominated by surveillance and media control. It highlights a dynamic interplay between visibility and invisibility, conformity and resistance, where individuals can assert their autonomy by navigating the gaps left by dominant discourses and technologies. This argument underscores that the real, as understood in Gibson's work, is an emergent and contested space, continuously shaped by and resisting the forces of global capitalism and technological control.

The myth of techno globalization is also criticized by Gibson in his novel *Spook Country* (2007). The novel is set in the most cutting-edge metropolises where advanced technology is used to produce secret plans to create unrest, and to manipulate events in the favor of hidden structures. The cities in the *Spook Country* (2007) are the ontological reality of the epistemic understanding of Erving Goffman who claims that the world is constituted of indiscernible frames and channels. (1986). Bobby, an important character in *Spook Country* (2007), expresses the idea that the world's intricacy increases daily as numerous frames and channels intersect and intertwine. Each frame subtly aims to reflect the subject's identity, drawing them into these hidden frameworks and pathways. Like the characters of *Pattern Recognition* (2003), the characters of *Spook Country* (2007) are fully aware that they are being charted by many secret agencies, even beyond government

agencies, for example F.F.F. (Frame, Footages and Fetishes). They are implicated in covert missions, sometimes with their consent, and most of the time they are forced to work for corporations. The plot is interlaced with three characters who embark on secret missions given to them by secret agencies, but without having any sense of the ultimate purpose of their missions. At the same time, when these characters exhibit obedience to their masters, they are seeking pockets where they can participate in the spatial practices to ensure their agency. The techno-disciplinary powers and panoptic gaze always persist in their minds, so they are prepared to sneak through the gaze of the discipline.

One of the three intersecting plots revolves around Hollis Henry, who is the former vocalist of Curfew, a fictional cultish band. Henry is now an imminent music journalist, who is hired by a magazine Node. It is thought that Node seeks to chart the diverse cultural trends in fashion. Hollis is given the task to write about "various things artists were finding to do with longitude, latitude, and the Internet" (Gibson 27). Her covert task is to discover and interview an accomplished fashion artist who is equally adept in locative art and dexterous in military navigation systems. Her employer is no other but Bigend who was the boss of Cayce in *Pattern Recognition* (2003). This indicates that the task assigned to Hollis is important to the corporations. Like Cayce, Hollis is also under stringent surveillance. The second character who plays a pivotal role in the novel is a young Chinese Cuban, Tito: a crime expediter who assists in transporting information from one place to another through an iPod. Tito is no more than a mere puppet as he does not know what he is transferring and the accomplishment of each task just leads to another. This compels him to travel around the globe without stopping in any place, so he cannot develop any kind of relation with the culture or people of any territory. Thus he

has no culture as he keeps on traveling from city to city. Wherever he is sent, he has to reestablish his existence. He is subject to surveillance, so he has few opportunities of determine the pockets of free spatial practices.

The third layer of the plot is about a drug addict, Milgrim, who is proficient in Russian as well as the Volapiik language. He is lured to decode a secret messages sent by Tito to his boss, Brown, who claims to be a secret agent of the CIA. Brown suspects that the information that Tito is transferring has something in it which could be embarrassing for the USA, because it will document the American misadventure in Iraq. Therefore, he seeks to track down the information by offering Milgrim drugs. Both Brown and Milgrim do not know that those who are on the radar of their surveillance already know about their activity, so they trick them by spreading misinformation through messages. All the groups are pursuing a secret shipping container that is being guarded. Nobody knows exactly what the container contains or why it is so important for different groups such as fashion artists, secret agencies, and media organizations. The readers are informed only at the end of the novel that the container is loaded with the money embezzled out of US funds supposed to be spent on the rehabilitation of Iraq following the US invasion. An old man, with the aid of Tito and Chombo, tricks those who want to launder the money by marking the container with trace elements, which makes money laundering impossible. Consequently the money is not used by the war profiteers. This brief overview of the plotline story demonstrates knowledge about the power of technodisciplinary panopticon in the public discourse of urban life in global metropolises. It appears that the association of individuals with the panopticon is inescapable. This leads to a very painful experience for individuals who do not have any space for breathing.

Every single character has been under the global surveillance machinery, either as a tool to spy or as a target to be spied upon.

More often than not the characters realize the power of secret surveillance only very late and when they do, it proves an excruciating experience. For example, in the case of Milgrim, who becomes isolated from the real world and is not accustomed to operating in the "borderland territory between unlikely truths and likely falsehoods" (Thomas 2010). Such obligatory covertness causes trauma and shock for the individual as he or she experiences strangeness. Milgrim blindly believes in the narrative of Brown and follows his orders without objection. Thus, Milgrim believes in the empirical layer of reality as a true reality. The Old man (a mysterious and enigmatic figure with connections to various undercover activities and intelligence operations) plays with the actual layer of the reality of the container to form the empirical reality about it. This manipulation of the layer of actual reality to form the desired empirical reality on the part of covert mechanisms and structures is very predominant in the Western world currently.

This manipulation of the actual layers of reality into the construct of empirical reality is foreshadowed as a conspiracy theory by critics such as David and Jason Freeman who claim that this century is "a new age of paranoia" (Freeman and Freeman 154). This suggests that conspiracy theories work to threaten individuals about their future if they do not conform to the expectations of public discourse. Milgrim is the emblem of restricted thought in the manner of conspiracy theory as he never dismisses any supposition of Old Man, rather he eagerly agrees with the narrative given to him regardless of how odd or irrational it is, "If Brown had declared the Queen of England to be a shape-shifting alien reptile, craving the warm flesh of human infants, Milgrim would not have argued"

(Gibson 78). Thus, it is the passivity of the lazy society that distorts the fabric of collective life as well as the free agency of individuals. Jamie Bartlett rightly accuses its (lazy society) adherence to "kneejerk, lazy cynicism" (Bartlett 2010).

Gibson suggests that there might be a way out of such a situation by excavating the truth with the help of technology. The only way to reach the real of any conspiracy theory is to be rational: this demands inquiry that is not overwhelmed by the reality formed and projected through the media. Gibson very ingeniously names chapter 34 of the novel 'Spook Country' which articulates the feelings and responses of Hollis where media is governing with complete ubiquity and where every individual is surveilled "words do not have obvious referents and 'possession of information amounts to involvement" (Gibson 175). When the tendency of rationality awakens in Hollis, she questions her boss and suspects his lifestyle, his car, his headquarter, and more specifically his motive to infringe with every matter. She realizes that terrorism, global security, and all other fears are in his hands: they are constructs that are infused in the mind of the people through media and other covert mechanisms. Note the following passage where Hollis is talking to herself and thus manages to create a spatial practice that frees her from paranoia, "Bigend and his James Bond villain's car, his half-built headquarters to match, his too much money, his big sharp curiosity and his bland willingness to go poking it wherever he wanted. That was potentially dangerous. Had to be. In some way, she'd never really imagined it before. If he wasn't lying, he'd been paying people to tell him about secret government programs. The war on terror. Were they still calling it that? She'd caught some, she decided: terror. Right here in her hand, in Starbucks, afraid to trust her own phone... "net of telephony, all digitized, and all, she had to suppose, listened to. By

whoever, whatever, made the sort of things Bigend was poking at its business. Somewhere, she had to believe, such things were all too real Maybe now, they already were. Listening to her” (Gibson 149).

Bigend exploits Hollis when he engages her to write an article for a magazine that is yet to be launched. Bigend works like the covert agencies, and remains in search of the anomalies, enjoying the games of invisible structures. He serves as a power that shapes public discourse. Hollis has to identify the hidden frames of this world and restore her agency, layer by layer. First of all, she accepts the empirical reality of the discourse so she appears as an obedient follower and works with keenness so that she will be selected for the secret mission. She molds herself according to her employer’s wishes. Soon she begins to see the world with a rational eye, as she recognizes some drastic discrepancies between herself and Bigend: whereas Bigend loves to exploit others and enjoys having power over them, she does not want to have control over others. She does not use her ability in locative art (Locative art refers to a genre of art that uses location-based technologies, such as GPS (Global Positioning System) and augmented reality, to create artworks that are experienced in specific physical locations.), but Bigend shapes the thinking of common people through this augmented reality. The most conspicuous difference between them is the ability to form empirical reality, which both the characters are about to do, but only Bigend applies it. This realization is the outcome of her tendency to rationality which eventually wins free agency for her. On seeing the real of the fashion and media industry, Hollis discovers the spatial practices to feel her subjectivity. Her decision to rejoin the Curfew is one of the pockets in the techno-disciplinary spaces. Like Cayce, decides to stay with her friends and work together.

However, Hollis's real agency and subjectivity are resurrected only in the third novel of the trilogy *Zero History* (2010). It is also a crucial point to remember that at the end, Hollis shocks Bigend as he does not think that Hollis could leave him. This event suggests that Gibson, like Bhaskar, believes in linking actions that sometimes could downplay the major structures. Her decision to settle in Los Angeles is either an independent action in response to globalization or it is a product of the knowledge of the utopic heaven of globalization. At the same time, she develops within her the critical thinking abilities to determine that conspiracy theories and terrorism cannot be eliminated without collective global efforts. The war of Iraq with its detrimental and apocalyptic outcomes provides a way for those who can apply independent thought to perceive the hidden structures that profit from the war, whether they are weapon suppliers, oil dealers, or global military in the form of Nato. Bigend's interest in Chinese cars exemplifies Bhaskar's assertion that autonomous mechanisms can manifest as other autonomous mechanisms. Despite being an emblem of capitalism, Bigend collaborates with its antagonistic force. This collaboration underscores the notion that covert mechanisms often work together to maintain the status quo of public discourse, as described by Foucault.

## **6.2. Global Cities and Homesickness**

The social, psychosomatic, spiritual, and emotional bond between humans and their homes has not decreased since its inception in early human history. For sociologists, home is the cradle that provides the primary facilities of shelter, primary education, food, social sanctuary, and identity. For psychologists, it is a refuge against emotional trauma, a platform for catharsis, an institution for self-cognition. For spiritualists, it helps to

gratify the spiritual longings. Home is an integral part of one's personality. One cannot be apathetic towards the home as it sees and stands with the individual in cataclysmic circumstances as well as in ecstasies. It is the home where one is stripped of any kind of pretentiousness. Owing to such vivacity in one's life, home has been the subject matter of literature from Classic Greek to today.

In Gibson's works, characters grapple with homesickness in a globalized world, where the idea of 'home' is elusive. Cayce finds solace only in the F.F.F. forum, while Hollis and Hubertus Bigend struggle to connect with their temporary residences, feeling displaced and emotionally adrift. This homesickness, rather than being rooted in nostalgia, reflects a yearning for a future home that fulfills the comforts the present one fails to provide. It embodies the tension between past and future, complicating identity formation as characters realize they cannot return to a past home that no longer exists.

Philosophers like Kant and Hegel, along with Edward Casey, suggest that homesickness arises from the clash between past and present selves. Casey sees it as a creative, place-based experience that offers insight into a world irretrievably lost. Sociologists, on the other hand, link homesickness to large-scale migration, urbanization, and globalization, with Jean Starobinski identifying it as a byproduct of urbanization.

In *Pattern Recognition* and *Spook Country*, this 'global homesickness' reflects the double displacement of being cut off from native ties and forming new, non-native affiliations. It is a painful realization that stability, wholeness, and the idea of returning home are near impossible, leaving individuals floating between a national past and a global future.



When the novel *Pattern Recognition* (2003) opens, we meet with Cayce who is in trauma as she is still unable to find the dead body of her father who was supposed to have died during 9/11. Her father worked for an American intelligence agency, but they did not undertake adequate efforts to recover his body. Being home exacerbates her feelings of loss as she is unable to overcome memories of her father. Another dilemma that haunts her is that she is unable to free herself from freelancing even though she is allergic to brands and their commodification. She is attracted by the viral video clip so she, like millions of other people, begins to describe video clips. This marks a transition in her life as she begins to feel at home as soon as she joins F.F.F. Fetishes:Footage:Forum, a forum that participates in an open debate about 135 video clips showing a couple embracing. However, it is not clear in focus and so invites multiple extrapolations for the people which bring them closer. It “has a way of cutting across boundaries, transgressing the accustomed order of things” (20). The forum becomes an integral element of her life fulfilling her need for something that is assuring: it is like an augmented reality of a physical place in one's life such as a café: a place that is beyond time and space. (4).

Cayce's shift from a physical home to a cyber-home gives birth to questions and stirs as many debates, such as about the possibility of whether a cyber-home be a home since lacks a stable location. Is it a home or a group of people? Or is a home an ever extra loaded combination? Can it live up to the idea of home expressed by Levinas' idea of a dwelling: the “privileged role of the home does not consist in being the end of human activity but in being its condition”; it is an “event” (1969).

It has already been established that Gibson's characters, in both novels, are aware of the entanglements they are in and the extent to which they have free agency to create a space

for themselves. Most of the time they appear to accept the mores of public discourse. However, this does not mean that these characters leave themselves at the mercy of these covert mechanisms. Instead, using the tendencies of memory, rationality, and impartial inquiry they create pockets in the discourse, and through these spatial practices they strip the control of the powers from their free agency. The very first step in restoring the real is sensing the entanglement or the dilemma: as in the case of global homesickness, one must feel the displacement. Cayce is very conscious about this dilemma as she does not like her freelancing job as is very uncomfortable with the simulacra designs of the big brands: “She is, literally, allergic to fashion” (8-9). Despite her hatred, she earns her livelihood from this “violent reactivity to the semiotics of the marketplace” (2). Her trauma does not force her to leave her job: instead, she like a professional she adapts to it and tries to balance herself through negative and positive experiences, chains of uneven shocks that Berlant takes as “crisis ordinary” (2001).

The idea of the “crisis ordinary” is that, crises are not always extraordinary events but can be an inherent part of life. It emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing these ongoing challenges in order to effectively navigate and cope with them. In other words, instead of succumbing to the trauma, the individual must confront with it by habituating in it, which Cayce does very fruitfully as her allergy opens the new horizons for her by fetching for her a job that paves the way for her far and wide traveling along with substantial financial gains. This response enhances her finances but also compels her to travel all over the world, making her feel for displacement “jet lag” or “soul delay” as a matter of daily living ( 126). However, this traveling, later on, provides her a pocket for spatial practice as well as it giving her the opportunity to seek reality with her own

eyes, rather than through the screen. Further, this traveling appears as a linking action that can downplay the structure's mechanism. It is Cayce's profound affiliation with F.F.F. that introduces to her the real bonding of home and its inhabitants for the first time as previously she did not have any association with native institutions or any native cultural group or any place.

However, this situation still has some very serious drawbacks as it does not ensure any kind of privacy and it permits the entrance of others any prior permission which possesses the risk of some new conflicts and tension. Ironically, this home does not keep Cayce beyond the panoptic eye but instead provides easy access for her surveillance. This is most apparent when a regular commenter who is an employee of Blue Aunt disguises herself in a self-formed identity as Mama Anarchia and begins to give the details of Cayce's movements and online activities to the Russian intelligence agencies. Later on in the novel, it is Mama Anarchia again who intoxicates Cayce with a drug to extract information about the identity and whereabouts of the filmmaker from her and she nearly kills her. Thus, this online home with its fluidity, uncertainty, instability, and lack of surety is a problematic home. It is a space where nothing is certain as to whom one can trust, to whom one can let come in, or with whom one can share her feelings, or what to believe and what to discard. In such a conflicting, confusing, and demanding atmosphere, one is left with no option but to strive perpetually to enforce one's agency and to keep her identity thriving.

One can imagine why Cayce feels at home when she is in the forum of F.F.F. because it offers her a space where she can enforce her agency and her activities would not be rendered as something distressing for the public discourse as it is not real rather

augmented. Another interpretation is that it is in the forum where Cayce begins to think rationally and dispassionately, which is again a giant leap to restore her real agency. At the same time this tendency leads her to sneak out of the clutches of the empirical layers of realities, which is also essential to reach to the real layer of the reality. Another standpoint to see this fascination of Cayce for this online home elucidates the loss of faith of Cayce in the physical global homes causing the trauma of global homesickness. This extraordinary craving of Cayce for the forum indicates digital global homesickness. Cayce's extensive electronic communication aggravates her digital global homesickness because this persistent communication underpins the person or place that is at present not accessible, "the immediacy that phones and the Internet provide means that those away from home can know exactly what they are missing and when it is happening" (Matt 259).

In global cities, online communication is very easy and swift. It ensures a growing familiarity that ultimately augments the craving of more and frequent interaction through electronic gadgets or social media apps such as email, Facebook, Instagram, etc. In such a context, global homesickness haunts one if one disconnects from one's online affiliation even if only for a brief period of time. The frequent communication on the F.F.F. helps Cayce to solve the mystery of the filmmakers, for which she was hired by Bigend. Her wish to trace the filmmaker grows more potent with her special intimacy with the Forum which invokes both her tendency to feel for the others and her displacement. The anxiety of her antipathy to fashion logos compels her to remain in constant touch with people on the forum.

When she starts to have private and personal interactions with the people who are regular commentators of the footage, this provides a way for her to reach the filmmakers as she comes across an ex spy of the Cold War on the forum. She lures him with her very personal emails to extract the secret information about the filmmakers and so she reaches out to them. Her decision to interact with that agent is purely her own and comes out of her commitment to the forum. This decision demonstrates her free agency and she keeps her interaction with that secret agent away from the panoptic eye. The highly desired first meeting of Cayce with the filmmakers comes the dreadful shock that the filmmakers are twin Russian who are also traumatized by displacement like Cayce. They survived a bomb attack on their powerful family which takes the lives of their parents and left Lora severely crippled both mentally and physically. Both are living in hiding and make films to manifest their displacement and loss. Both, like Cayce, are the target of global terrorism which pervades in global cities. Cayce wishes to meet them face to face as she wonders whether they are humans or machines. Her desire to physically meet them illustrates the limitations of an online home, which cannot fulfill all the aspects of an ideal home. Once more, she relies on her inclination to write emails, using them to plead and persuade them to allow her to visit, questioning, "Who are you? Where are you? Are you dreaming? Are you there? The way I'm here?" (Gibson 256). Stella agrees to meet Cayce face to face as she feels that they are going through a similar kind of trauma due to the shared loss of family and displacement from home. So their common sufferings bring them closer. Cayce meets with them in their secret dwelling which is their studio as well. Both are in exile and suffering from the excruciating pain of exile. They are haunted by the fear of future global terrorist attacks. This articulates the disastrous impacts of

globalization, particularly in the global metropolises. This face-to-face meeting is an opportunity for all these three characters to let their physical bodies, especially their faces, register their feelings of pain. It is also a place where the eyes of the panopticon, like Mama Anarchia, cannot watch them. Cayce sees that the sister who has been not severely injured still has had her face deformed, “It is Stella’s face, but some fault bisects it vertically, not quite evenly. There are no scars, only this skewing of the bone beneath” (Gibson 314). Cayce reveals the miserable physical and mental plight of the main filmmaker Nora as highlighted by the fact that despite of dozens of operations the surgeons are unable to extract a T-shaped piece of claymore mine that was made in the U.S.A.

A T exists in one of the film clips that Cayce interprets. Cayce grasps the reality of T which has been interpreted by the world as an inconspicuous map of the city but is actually Nora’s consciousness “bound to the T-shaped fragment [of the Claymore mine] in her brain” (*Pattern Recognition* 305). Nora, through fragmented pieces of film, articulates the memories of the loss of family and the pain she is undergoing. This filmmaking gives her the meaning of her existence and has kept her alive. Thus her tendency to remember and her ability to take some rational actions fulfill her need for her home. Her dark and hidden wound expresses itself through the film footage: it unveils the suffering that individuals experience because of globalization. At the same time, it serves as a linking action that opens a peculiar road of possibility. The powerful structures, when colliding with the individuals, invite many anxieties as happens with Nora, her sister, and Cayce. However, the collisions and fear of such collisions compel the individuals to search for new horizons and ultimately they find one of them: as for Cayce

it is the fear and anxiety of the allergy of Fashion logos that helps her to determine another way to live. She finds a new horizon in the form of the Forum, Nora finds her horizon in film making, and Stella in promoting and making them viral. Thus an awareness of their difficulties enables these characters to feel for new horizons. This feeling awakes the tendency of free thinking and finding a place out of the public discourse to create a pocket for themselves. The meeting of Cayce and the filmmakers is one of the pockets where Cayce finds the answers to the questions she has been looking for. Cayce cries and feels for the sisters. She solves the mystery of the film Footages and expresses her feelings for the others and herself in her cries that naturally come out as she leaves the studio of Nora. She manages to come out of the allergy and the unusual attachment to the Forum as well as she succeeds in obtaining the pension of her father with the aid of some relations of Nora's sisters. Her global homesickness is also resolved as she decides to live with her boyfriend in Paris.

### **6.3. Places versus Non-places**

If *Pattern Recognition* (2003) explores the traumas soon after the catastrophic incident of 9/11, *Spook Country* (2007) according to Gibson is “about the deep end of the Bush administration and the invasion of Iraq” (pre 19). *Spook Country* (2007) takes its readers to three global metropolises where war profiteers, locative art, and commerce play hide and seek in the context of severe security surveillance. We meet three individuals struggling for their agency and identity against global surveillance while simultaneously confronting global homesickness. They are conscious of the reality that their strings are being controlled and pulled by some underground powers. At the beginning of the novel, they are in the trance of the empirical reality. It is crucial to be familiar with the point that

all these characters, right from the beginning of the story, are in a covert struggle as first a linking action and later on as an independent emergent against the powerful mechanisms. They are not volitional agents in the beginning, rather they are trapped or lured into the scheme by their masters. Hollis Henry is implicated in the game of Bigend by being employed as a freelance writer for a fashion magazine *Node* that is sponsored and financed by Bigend, who wants her to discover the products of the locative art and its working. For this concealed and surreptitious assignment, Hollis has to travel to various global cities triggering a unique sort of global homesickness for her. The 2nd major character whose strings are in the hands of the war profiteers is a freelance spy who comes from Chinese Cuban origin. He has been assigned the furtive task to deliver information from one place to another through an electronic gadget without having any clue of what has been stored in it. He is the emblematic of the treatment of individuals as they are mechanical tools of some greater machinery who are to work like an automatic tool. He too is the victim of the psychic anguish of homesickness. The third individual who is seduced by the covert agencies is a drug addict who is profoundly adept at an international language called Volapuc which is used by those who have desired who launder embezzled money from the U.S. Iraq war. The third individual is hired to translate the messages of those profiteers into English so that they can reach the container before the war profiteer would use it. Owing to these secret and travel-demanding tasks of the characters, they cannot think of owning a permanent home due to the risk of being noticed, so one cannot find any permanent address of these characters. They are the same as global capital which constantly flow from city to city: they keep on shifting from hotel



to hotel or from one apartment of the company to another, which can never be taken as the replacement of a home.

The company provides a residence to its employees in the form of a gigantic apartment of four floors in Vancouver, where they share their tasks, their performances, the mysteries of their missions, and the narratives that have lured them into these tasks. It is the place where they can take a rest. Through this facility, the global giant forms an image of home so that the characters do not have to confront the myth of globalization and can feel at home by forming an affiliation with this home, which is the empirical identity of an actual home. The question that appears on the surface is whether this home embodies all the qualities of the home that one contrives in one's thoughts? The answer is lurking in its depiction that the home, in spite of all the major amenities, fails to embody the spirit of the real home, “glassy concrete floor” for the garage, an elevator with “doors of brushed stainless,” and “two flights of giddily suspended stairs,” made from slabs of “frosted glass” (*Spook Country* 253-54). Overall, the apartment “might have been the central concourse in the national airport of some tiny, hyper-wealthy European nation, a pocket Liechtenstein” (*Spook Country* 254). This suggests that the home does not resemble an actual home, though it is a physical space and place. To comprehend this concept of place which on one hand is a place, but it can be also defined as a non-place, one has to be acquainted with the theoretical perspective of ‘places and non-places; propounded by Marc Augé who believes that places can be called non-places even they physically exist.

Non-places, such as “airports and railway stations, hotel chains... and finally the complex skein of cable and wireless networks,” enable a peculiar “double movement” of the traveler and the traveler’s inward attention” (pre 23) Such dual movement reflects a

concentration on the singular silhouette of self-possession in which an individual like Hollis capitulates herself not to milieu but to passive considerations of “identity-loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing” (pre 24) Though Augé agrees that the attempt to integrate the non-places directly into the individuals' identity repertoire is very difficult, one cannot defy the active role of these non-places in the identity formation. Non-places like the Blue Aunt apartment in Vancouver do not integrate with Hollis' self directly, but they serve as the emergent spaces for her orientation. These places, on one hand heighten the fear of displacements and on the other hand, they urge Hollis to search for a real home. These non-places make her desire stable places. These places have the tendency to attract so they lure Hollis towards the corporate family of Bigend, where Hollis can revitalize herself.

However, their fascination is also unstable. Hollis soon finds herself repelling rather than advancing toward these home, as she starts her journey from the empirical layer to the real layer of reality. Hollis's perpetual journey introduces her to these non-places everywhere. Sometimes this aggravates the trauma of her displacement and homesickness, while at other times they serve as a mirror convincing her that she does not require anything other than these luxurious hotel rooms or apartments. At the beginning of the novel she wonders about her state where she is residing in a luxurious hotel and is still not sure if she is really “technically still be considered homeless? It felt like you could, she decided” (*Spook Country* 4) The matter of the fact is that she is homeless as she does not own her personal and private home, so she soon realizes the fact that these places are unstable. Her displacement and homelessness are not akin to the radical homelessness of refugees, immigrants, or war victims rather her displacement

embodies her detachment from her cognitive orientation and her physical distance from her acquaintances in her profession and her communal affiliations.

Hollis' cognitive displacement is visible in the fact that though she decides that she wants to be a writer, we never find her writing. Instead, she is engaged and entangled in traveling where she talks, observes, and collects the information but never composes it into the work of writing. Though she never recalls the curfew; she never manages to convince her that she is no more with the curfew, and at the same time, she keeps on missing her previous job and friends which can be asserted as global homesickness. Her global homesickness is also manifested in her futile attempt to log in with her Blue Aunt PowerBook as she does not find any "trusted network". We read, "The phrase 'trusted networks' briefly made her feel like crying. She wasn't feeling as if she had any" (Gibson 283). In her global homesickness, she does not give in, rather she keeps on joining the dots to reach the product of the locative art. She carries on with her job of tracking the container that contains in it the stolen money. In the end, she succeeds in labeling the container and she discovers the hidden patterns of locative art along with its products and thus accomplishes the task given to her by Bigend. Her trauma of displacement keeps her busy in her work and at the end she finds her agency and rejoins the Curfew as a way of resolving the global homesickness. In short, global homesickness works as an enforcer of the tendency and free thinking that helps Hollis to find the pocket for spatial practice which provides her with the opportunity to come up with an independent agent. Hollis through the process of rational thinking and memory, succeeds in grasping the empirical reality of home constructed by the global powers according to them home is a marked physical space for some tools in the machine of globalization. The boundaries between

hotel rooms, company apartments, and personal homes are blurred. Home is built to accommodate the cyborgs, not humans. Therefore, the rudiments of the human real are neither accredited nor provided, such as emotional refuge, personal space, and communal environment. However, Hollis's disapproval of the hotel rooms and company home as a real home marks her independent and impartial understanding of a real home. Hollis is in search of a home where she can escape from the panoptic eye and where she can be an independent agent rather than a contrivance of the covert mechanisms. Moreover, she believes that the home endows the physical and emotional space for the individuals to extricate the real and the empirical, which is very vital to redeem one's real.

Gibson's shift in the present has been philosophically and socially vindicated in *Pattern Recognition* (2003) and *Spook Country* (2007) as Gibson not only articulates the intricate, complex, and conflicting relationships of structures, mechanisms, and humans in ever-changing and evolving technology, but also proposes a physical itinerary for the journey of the individuals to gain free agency and a subjective identity. Gibson exhibits life in the global metropolises with its dark and secret missions, where powerful mechanisms pull the strings of the in both these novels. Along with government agencies, private secret agencies, with their professional surveillance networks, are ever present as a panoptic eye watching over public discourse. One can envisage every linking action, every emergent, and every mechanism readily or inadvertently working for the preferment of globalization since the empirical reality of globalization claims it to be the sole reality of the current century. Individuals are treated as capital flow whose constant mobility is deemed pivotal for the thriving of globalization. The individuals such as Cayce, Nora, and Stella in *Pattern Recognition* (2003) and Hollis, Tito, and Milgrim in *Spook Country*

(2007) are the victims of evasive surveillance, commodification, economic exploitation, and global homesickness.

The characters in these books are forced to work for global corporations who seduce them financially or emotionally, or who play on their addictions to power or drugs. At the beginning of the novels their free thinking, memory, and their subjectivity are obscured and eclipsed by the dominance of the empirical reality around them. The tendency that gives them some slight freedom is their conscious awareness that they are entangled by their bosses. This cognitive learning enables them to see the reality of the mirror or ideal image framed in that mirror, and they soon realize that they are being implicated by their string-pullers. The next step of the itinerary for the restoration of their agency is to invoke the tendency of rationality which they obtain through their impartial analysis of the environment. First of all, they come face to face with their shortcomings: Cayce acknowledges her allergy to the fashion logos of the brands; Hollis confronts her fear of being unable to write what she wants to write. They are fully aware of their limitations as well. This cognition aids them in confronting the powerful structures and mechanisms. They know that they cannot bring revolution, rather they go for evolution by remaining part of the public discourse and at the same time trying to create the space they require to perform spatial practices. Cayce does not leave Bigend, despite knowing that he is manipulating her for his own interests. She discovers the means to reach the filmmakers by using the forum of Bigend. She manages to keep her discovery secret from him. Her remedy for her allergy is also sought out during the task of finding the filmmakers, thus she defies the main discourse but not on a large scale, but instead by creating a space within it by using linking actions such as walking in the streets, having a connection with

the people of the online forum, through personal and private emails, and by making it sure that such activities are not recorded by the surveillance gadgets. Similarly, in *Spook Country*, Hollis first of all feels displacement and homelessness in the hotel rooms and the company apartments. She works with Blue Aunt company with complete zeal and commitment as she goes city to city to accomplish her assignment that suggests her obedience and submission to the public discourse or the powers of global metropolises. However, she in the course of novel succeeds in restoring her agency as in the end her decision to rejoin her previous affiliation the Curfew is predominantly her own.

Thus for Gibson, the true and viable itinerary for reaching the destination of free agency and subjective identity is to invoke rationality, to see things beyond their empirical reality, and finally to create space in a restricted techno-disciplinary system to indulge in spatial practice that allow limited but certain agency. Gibson suggests that we fight the system while remaining part of it: otherwise the restoration of one's real is not possible. His stance is neither over-optimistic nor gloomy pessimistic. It also endorses that even in the technological gulf the real of humans cannot be very easily drowned or technology cannot swallow the real of humans, rather the real will always exist until the tendency of memory, rationality, and feeling for others will embody the humans.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

This chapter aims to address the answers to my research questions by analyzing three works of cyberculture. Each novel presents distinct perspectives and interpretations, resulting in diverse answers to the research questions. Consequently, this chapter provides a separate conclusion for each novel, highlighting their unique contributions and insights into the themes under investigation. The chapter explains how Bhaskar's concepts of empirical reality, transitivity and intransitivity, linking actions, independent mechanisms, and TMSA help the researcher to find the hidden and overt structures that control the agency of humans. The chapter throws light on the sufferings of the individuals when their agency is controlled. The chapter has brought out all those independent mechanisms and linking actions that are used by the characters to restore their real. The chapter has highlighted different ways that the characters have adopted to restore their agency. The chapter focuses on the transformation that the researcher has suggested. Finally, the chapter concludes by shedding light on the significance of the findings of this dissertation. The chapter is a very brief overview of the entire dissertation.

The twenty-first century encompasses the evolution with the tempo of revolution, where the transformation in the realm of material culture is stirring with such a miraculous and rapid swiftness that does not allow the spectrum of non-material culture (ethical, moral, and humane values and code) to configure them according to the transformation of the former. We witness the fashions and trends in art, media, dress, and hairstyles, keep on evolving in a short span of time. Similarly, we witness the barrage of new models and

designs of mobile sets, auto-mobiles, culinary machines, and surveillance gadgets with every passing day to comfort, aid, and secure us. This revolution of techno-culture has eroded the boundaries between humans and machines posing some ominous challenges and threats to the agency and subjectivity of humans. This momentous crisis has arisen when technology, as an independent mechanism, is implicated in social structures to enforce discipline or to cement its place at the top as a panoptic eye. This clandestine scheme of powerful structures encroaches upon the agency of the individuals which ensues their struggle for the revival of their agency. This antagonism between structures and individuals is chronic but the vigor it demonstrates in the current century has aggravated the crisis. Foreseeing the graveness of this skirmish, writers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have exhibited very vividly the anxieties, traumas, and anguishes that individuals have to confront in a cyber-culture where technology is usurping the freedom, subjectivity, and agency of the individuals. These writers, in their works, suggest the itinerary for the journey of the individuals to obtain their destiny of free agency. Especially the writers of science fiction are at the forefront in highlighting this collision of technology and humans.

This dissertation has investigated the ever-growing rift between the structures and the individuals in the novels; *Uglies*(2005) by Scott Westerfield, *Hopscotch* by Kevin J Anderson, and *Pattern Recognition* (2003), *Spook Country* (2007) by William Gibson through the application of the theoretical approach of critical realism espoused by Bhaskar. Krojer's views on identity formation, Fukuyama's notion of the human real, Foucault's vision of punishment and discipline, and Michele De Certeau's idea of spatial practices have been implicated in this dissertation as a means to explore the answers to



the questions raised in the thesis. The current dissertation has dealt with the questions; what traumas and anxieties the individuals have to experience when their real is challenged by quelling their agency in the selected cyber culture works? What itinerary do these characters opt for their journey to restore their free agency and subjectivity? What are the covert real mechanisms that complicit the structures to enforce the individuals to conformism in selected cyber culture novels? The works of three writers Scott Westerfeld, Kevin Anderson, and William Gibson have been separately deliberated through the lens of the same questions. The sole motive behind the separate deliberations is the setting and phases of the life of the characters are not analogous rather they are different in *Uglies*(2005) the protagonist and other major characters are in the phase of adolescence, the characters in *Hopscotch* are in the phase where they have recently bid farewell to their teenage and in *Pattern Recognition* (2003) and *Spook Country* (2007) the characters are professional and fully grownup. This suggests that the enigmas and challenges for their real, along with the remedy for their crisis, vary from character to character as they exist in different phases of life which have distinct physical, emotional, and social bearings and needs. Furthermore, the entanglements or the traps the powerful structures introduce to seek control and conformism of the individuals do not match with each other.

The dissertation, first of all, focuses on the challenges of adolescents and their journey to achieve real agency in the trilogy of *Uglies*(2005) by Westerfeld. The novel exhibits the conflict between the structures and agency of individuals. Since agency and free choice are the core tendencies for human real according to Bhaskar, they are controlled by the powerful structures such as Special Circumstances in the novel. The characters of the

novel struggle against the social structures to restore their agency. The Structures use the technology as a linking action to control the agency of the individuals. This perpetuate fight between the structures and the individuals poses many challenges for the characters. They are trapped by the empirical reality constructed by the powerful structures. They are convinced to believe in transitive knowledge as intransitive knowledge and reality. The characters have been made the docile puppets so that the conformism can be achieved which is the desire of the powerful structures. The characters do not think freely. Their memories have been erased. They do not feel pain after the operation. The feelings of friendship, love, pity and hate have been removed from their brains. It means that they are no more human according to Bhaskar. In other words, their humanness is taken away from them. In such a situation These Characters undergo serious anxieties. First of all, Tally and her age fellows are convinced that they are uglies. They begin to hate their identity. The only thing that these teen agers wishes to get is the beauty which can be achieved with the help of operation. When they are operated upon, they cannot think differently, so they cannot experience the diversity. They do not challenge the said rules and values as soon as they join the pretty society. They are transformed into machines. When Tally challenges their identity mode, she has to face very strong opposition. She has to lose her friends Zane and David. She suffers anxiety when she tries to restore tendencies such as free choice, memory, and love for diversity. One can conclude, that the characters refuse to live life-like machines. When she realizes, that the empirical reality is not real strata of reality, she starts to strive to restore her agency. This is where the TMSA begins to act. Bhaskar believes that the two or more structures use linking actions and independent mechanisms to keep their hegemony. These social activities give

space for the individuals to restore their agency as it offers the individuals free choice to work with one or the other. This is where another structure comes into existence. Here the agent restores the agency. Tally's journey begins to restore her real when she is told that she will not be operated until she works as a spy to reach the smokies who have challenged the Special Circumstances by refusing the operation. When tally visits the smokies, she faces displacement as well as otherness which provides her an opportunity to choose between the operation or not to be operated. Here, she finds another empirical reality and by using retrodution she reaches the real strata of reality of the concept of beauty and why the operation are made upon the adolescence. She uses identity formation as a linking action to restore her real. She plays with the very independent mechanism that is technology to overthrow conformism. By becoming a cyborg at the end She has modified TMSA as instead of making a new structure she has restructured the already present structure where she overpowers the technology and succeeds in restoring her humanness. She achieves her human real by following the tendency of memory, feeling of love, and compassion. However, instead of forming a new structure, she restores her agency in the already present structure by replacing the role of Dr Cable. She allows more free agency and freedom of choice which help the individuals to keep their humanness alive. Her acceptance of her new identity of cyborg for herself endorses the fact that she does not despise the technology as a human rather she has used it to keep her real alive. Here one can arrive on the conclusion that technology can be used to for the welfare for the humans in cyber culture. It is not technology that poses the threat to the humans in cyber culture rather there are some structures that use it to control the human agency, so the individuals should make efforts to unveil that structures by unpacking the

different strata of reality formed by these structures. The individuals can use the technology to reach the real of any construct which Tally, Zane, David, and his parents do effectively in the novel. Identity formation is used by them as linking action to understand the empirical reality created by the coercive structure Special Circumstances. The concept of otherness, the displacement, and the tendency of memory have been used to reach the real of the Special Circumstances. They realize that the state wants that its people do not go for diversity; it wants conformism. Instead of using force, it uses the technology, media, and education to convince its people that they should embrace the standard ideology of beauty. The state provides them the identity itself. In this process, the characters have to sacrifice their qualities of humanness, so the difference between the machines and humans vanish. This is how the human real is challenged in the cyber culture. To conclude the answers to first research questions, it can be said that the characters suffer anxiety, inferiority complex, mental and physical torture, and emotional exploitation when their real is challenged. The characters restore their agency by using technology and identity formation as linking actions, they use memory to restore their identity. Moreover, the state has used media, technology, and identity formation to achieve conformism and control on human agency. In order to see it in the novel let's have a brief overview of the analysis.

Westerfeld manifests his theory about science fiction in most of his cyber culture work. The *Uglies* trilogy is the story of young adults' social, psychological, and physical journey to seek the real identity which could warrant their subjectivity, free will, power, and agency. Unlike science fiction of the mid-twenties that only envisaged the apocalypse, the fiction of Westerfeld has sought the real identity of posthumans by resolving their

problems that threaten their real. The protagonist of the trilogy was endowed with the identity, ugly, in the first book, which she was to despise owing to her transitive knowledge which for her was intransitive. Her first identity was formed through education that she was ugly and naturally looked down upon. This obligatory identity cultivates many conflicts and complexes in her such as complex of imperfection, fear of being ugly, phobia of being reviled, and anxiety of the apprehension of losing her boyfriend. This fleeting identity squeezes her subjectivity as she is ready to be implicated in the covert plans of the coercive agency to destroy the smokers who do not embrace the identity endowed on them and have formed their independent regime. She does it to get rid of her transitory identity. Her tendency to memory, her rationality, and her ability to see beyond the empirical reality remain latent in these earlier stages.

Her next identity, pretty, is an empty-headed but physically perfect posthuman identity, which can constitutes imposed docility. In this identity, her faculty of thinking and her free agency are utterly confined as she is transformed into a cyborg where her humanness collapses as she does not have any humane feelings such as friendship, jealousy, and compassion rather she embodies the feelings of apathy which typifies the machines. Furthermore, her final identity is a special cyborg that has power and agency; who is full of confidence; and who is leading the world. She is a cyborg but still retains the real of human which is pure love, passion, self-sacrificing, and compassion. In this dystopia, Westerfeld exhibits how subjectivity is influenced by technology and what transformations humans might undergo in the posthuman era. It also highlights to what extent a human can retain its humanness in posthuman conditions. This dystopia falls in the category of critical dystopia since it provides an open ending and it does not leave its

protagonists in despondency gloom and total bleakness, which leaves no impetuses for hope and striving. It incorporates the new vision and hope in the protagonists. It liberates the protagonists from subjugation (Baccolini and Moylan 7; Bradford et al. 60).

In this trilogy, the protagonist Tally embraces many identities each of which poses different challenges. She has to strive hard to redeem her free will and agency. In each phase of identity, she has to interact and face the technology as well as adjust to new transformations without losing her humanness. In each period, her empirical experiences form an identity that she has to forfeit as soon as she goes to real and she realizes that the knowledge is transitive. In order to understand what identity of Tally was thrust on her by her social structures and what identity she has acquired by her free will, one has to use the retrodution method to all those events of Tally's life. One has to peel off different strata of reality to know the role of substructures and independent mechanisms in the formation of the identity of Tally and other major characters.

In the first book, Tally's identity is formed through education and media. Thus, here her free will is totally neglected and through transitive knowledge her identity is formed. In the second book, imposed docility is the identity of Tally and other young adults. They are posthumans who have no courage and will to challenge the powerful regime. They believe that the empirical reality is intransitive reality. They even do not know that their identity is imposed. So these posthumans lose the real of humans in the second book. And the third identity of Tally is a cyborg where her body forms her identity and at the end, she revitalizes her real being as she turns back to human qualities such as freedom and compassion for other humans. In the real world, adolescents take the family, media, fashion, social media, friends, and the journey from the known world to an unknown

world, love, and career ambition as an emblem for their identity. They need a model or another for their identity. Their free will or subjectivity comes into play when they have to choose between two opposites. Tally and her fellows also found themselves in the same situations for the transformation of their identity. But their world was the world's future where technology was used to transform humans into posthumans and where the efforts were going on to form an imposed docility upon the posthuman so that they could not pose any threat to the society which appeared as a totalitarian one.

Throughout the novel, all the major characters feel for their real. In the first part, Tally longs for human company. She was ready to fulfil the promise of her friend Shay. When she reaches Smoke she develops an intimacy with David who was previously the friend of Shay. This invoked feelings of betrayal in Tally. She felt displacement in Smoke and at the same time, she was in conflict about whether to support the special circumstances by sending them the signal or she should have stood with the Smokies. She was very badly injured emotionally in the second part when she was left alone for Zane. Similarly in the third part, her pain was unbearable when Zane was taking his last breath. However, the otherness, the memory, the pain, and the compassion for the humans, are the tendencies that earned the freedom of agency for Tally endorsing the assertions of Fukuyama about the real of the humans. Thus, Westerfeld advocates for the idea that one cannot dismiss one's transformation owing to the revolution of technology but instead has to keep the characteristics proposed by Fukuyama thriving so that one's real remains integral. Fukuyama considers the most striking qualities of humans are their reaction to loss, death, suffering, and pain as in the absence of such troubles the humane emotions and feelings of compassion, sympathy, tolerance, love, courage, and heroism, cannot be

possible. Anyone who is not exposed to such troubles and unable to face them does not bear strong character and is unable to develop any affective relationship with living or dead humans (173). Machines cannot feel the pain and sufferings no matter how much they are modeled according to humans as Miccoli claims: “As humans, we are ultimately woundable because of our bodies. Technology, on the other hand, is immune because it has no body” (29).

Tally begins to sense her real as she meets Zane in *Specials*. She at the same time confronts her cyborg identity as she is the combination of the machine and human mind. This time she is fully aware that she cannot throw out her cyborg identity to achieve free agency as she does not find herself in any kind of physical control rather she accepts her cyborg body as natural and she wants to use her powers to restore the humans real. She confronts the reality of her cyborg body where she cannot forfeit the body since the body provides her many comforts as a human. So she decides to take full advantage of her modified body to scale the free agency and illuminate her real faculties of humanness as predicted by Fukuyama. This time the technology appears as a linking action, in the words of Bhaskar, to help an individual restore her free agency by challenging the coercive powers of the state who previously enforced conformism through these linking actions. When Tally fails to transform Zane into a cyborg and bears the loss of Zane as the result of his death, she suffers mental pain and the pain restores her memory and enables her to recall her reality before she was modified into a cyborg. Unlike a machine, Tally does not get trapped in her iciness rather her human real urges her to contrive a solution for this unwanted and uninformed conformism. So, Tally finally decides to come



back to her city and settles the issue once and forever by usurping the powers of her makers and setting the humans free from such covert conformism.

Ironically, even though Tally achieves her free agency and scales her free identity she still has to follow an ideology. As Kroger claims at this juncture one requires a commitment to “become faithful and committed to some ideological worldview” in order “to affirm and be affirmed by a social order that identity aspires” (27). Thus Tally affirms her acceptance of her cyborg identity by returning to her city and simultaneously acknowledges the ideology of remaining human in terms of soul and mind even in the context of a cyborg body. Her final acceptance of cyborg identity indicates that Westerfield believes that one can restore one's real despite one's cyborg body. So Tally overthrows the power and control of Dr. Cable and starts ruling the city. She gives a revolutionary manifesto that ensures that there will be no conformism and all the diversities of humans will be given due reverence and there will be free agency for everyone. Thus Westerfield acknowledges the reality that forfeiting the technology and revolting against the powerful structures is not a practical solution for the challenges for the human real. Rather, they should endeavor to be adept in the technology and try to adjust to it considering it the reality. At the same time, they should never let the primary faculties that are integral to be a human, in the work of Bhaskar and Fukuyama, perish in the gulf of technology. They should display their role as an independent agent, linking action to transform the structure as Tally does at the end of the novel by presenting the manifesto that has humane notions and ideas as intrinsic principles for human society even in the cyber culture.

While analyzing *Hopscotch*, I have the same questions to answer. The characters are just entering their practical lives as their education and training have recently concluded so the conflict of agency and structures is different than that we have in *Uglies*. However, the controlling forces or structures have used the same methods to restrict the agency of the individuals in cyber culture as technology is still working as an independent mechanism in this novel too. Technology along with ideologies are also used as powerful mechanisms to control the agency. The problems and troubles the characters face in this novel are also different when their real is challenged. Initially, the characters are unable to differentiate the various strata of reality and take the empirical reality as a real reality, so they fall victim of several ideologies, which the governing structures want them to follow. Similarly, the characters do not understand the reality of transitive knowledge rather for them there is no difference between transitive and intransitive knowledge so they remain unaware of the covert structures or the covert designs of overt structures to control their agency. This unawareness on the part of the characters leads them to reproduce the structures that keep their real checked, as they cannot think beyond the philosophy of their governing structures. The characters believe that they are reproducing the social activities independently of their own free will and choice. Such thinking develops apathy for other structures and ideologies in the characters which is a quality of the machines. This feeling leads them to behave like a tool that works like a machine. They are exploited by the powerful structures. They are in prison without knowing it. The structures have used independent mechanisms such as religion, earning, and patriotic duties to indulge the individuals in the activities to reproduce the structures thus making them just dependent agents. Consequently, these characters suffer. Their suffering is the

result of their agency being confined in the absence of free agency their real is threatened. All four major characters in the novel are trapped by the structures through the formation of empirical reality that results in the submission of these characters to the ideology of these structures and thus they become just dependent agents who have the role of reproducing the structures. This conformism to their respective structures restrict their agency. For instance, Teresa is victimized by religion. She is physically and emotionally exploited by her leader. Garth, an artist has to produce his art according to his master. Daragon, though works for BTL to resolve the issues relating the body swapping but actually, he works for his boss. They do their best to follow the structures but in this process, they are emotionally fractured. They become so naive that they cannot rescue themselves rather some other structure or some other mechanisms have to come to rescue them. For instance, Teresa is rescued by another structure BTL and another mechanism in the form of Arther who is the follower of another ideology that gives the body and soul of humans equal importance. Eduard is rescued by Garth and Teresa. Similarly, Daragon's agency is restored by Teresa. Actually, in the absence of free agency, apathy is developed in these characters. The characters also restore their agency by searching the spatial places in their respective structures. The characters do not understand that they are imprisoned in the structures' ideologies so they do not strive to free themselves. But when they find some spatial places, they begin to question the empirical reality. This helps them to use their memory and free will to investigate the ideology that is imposed on them which leads them to unveil the reality of transitivity and the empirical reality of the ideology of their structures. When they start questioning the transitive reality of their structures, they stop to reproduce the structure or to play their role as agent to reproduce

the structures. On the next step, they remove apathy and adopt sympathy, which is one of those qualities that are essential for humanness according to Bhaskar. Thus, in this novel, the characters have restored their agency by finding spatial places in their respective structures. They have questioned the empirical reality of the ideology they are inculcated by the governing structures. The awareness of the difference between transitive knowledge and intransitive knowledge compels the characters to reach the real of those structures that manipulate their agency. In the end, the characters manage to restore their humanness when they adopt the humane values in the cyberculture. They use technology as an independent mechanism to promote humane values and ensure the free choice of agency. As far as the answer to the third question of this dissertation is concerned, the real structures, which control the human agency are again not technology rather they are religious institutes, law enforcement agencies, and the organization that controls the art and artists. It means the characters cannot leave them permanently so they have to live there but they should not allow these structures to make them their puppets through empirical reality and transitive knowledge. The characters should keep their agency free by finding spatial places where they can hide from the panoptic eye which would later on prove a source of change. A brief review is given below to comprehend the answers of these questions.

Anderson in *Hopscotch* (2002) vividly depicts cyberculture. This unique work has brought the future and present closer to each other by portraying the lives of individuals who face certain dilemmas in a cyber-culture that is replete with the latest developments and miracles of science. Anderson endeavours to pinpoint those mechanisms that shape the destinies of individuals. These powerful mechanisms are not easily visible. One has to

explore these mechanisms by analyzing the actions, thoughts, wishes, and achievements of the individuals in the novel. Anderson not only unveils the covert mechanisms in this novel. He also very acutely reveals the sufferings of individuals who become puppets in the machinations of those mechanisms. The novel presents, in a gripping manner, the struggle of individuals to keep their real alive by resisting the excessive interference of mechanisms. On the surface level, it appears that every character of the novel enjoys freedom and constructs their fate. The suffering which every character experiences is the outcome of their own free choices and actions. But in reality, they are entangled in the unseen net. When they find the reality of their interdependency, they strive to come out of the trance of the powerful constructs. Most of the characters, at the end of the novel, manage to rescue themselves from the clutches of powerful mechanisms.

*Hopscotch*(2002) depicts cyberculture society with its all dimensions, which is highly advanced in technology where everything is computerized. Artificial intelligence is as common as social media is in our present society. Society is so advanced that people can swap their bodies with each other. Old people can swap their bodies with young people. Similarly, the sick and rich can swap their bodies with healthy people by paying a certain amount of money. A person could be anyone or anything here, for a limited time—provided the desired body type was available. Pick a physique, swap it with someone, wear it for a while, and see if you like it. Everyone has an ID patch from the help of which their real identity can be traced. There is a bureau that is a law enforcement agency that sees the matters relating to the clashes or quarrels that pop up between the two persons who swap their bodies. It seems that society is completely transformed. However, the superstructures of the society, which according to Bhaskar, do not vanish

because they are natural have also paved the way for some kinds of new mechanisms. As Bhaskar predicts, the superstructures retain their governing force. Those superstructures fully utilize advanced technology to manipulate the agents or human agency. They are covert. One can still observe the role of religion, economic institutes, philosophy of art, and other powerful social constructs. The story of the novel revolves around four characters: Teresa, Garth, Eduard, and Daragon who are orphans or parentless. They grow all together in a monastery Falling Leaves. They love each other and are very fast friends. They remain in the monastery till they have learned an art and acquired the required knowledge and skill which could enable them to earn for themselves. After leaving the Falling Leave, all characters face different challenges that turn their real into a situation where they become docile toys in the hands of the social structures which they reproduce with their conscious actions. Thus, their agencies are controlled through their actions which according to Bhaskar are mediatory relations.

In the end, it can be deduced that Anderson has portrayed the cyber culture in this novel which seems true and possible. He did not take us to a completely utopian world rather one can feel that all the happening of the novel can happen soon. We are told that the society is completely computerized. People can swap their bodies with one another without losing their persona. Everything is computerized from medicine to engineering, from commerce to agriculture, from sports to art, from diet to recreation. In these circumstances, one might think that society would be an ideal one. The people would be free and there would be no tension, depression, disease, exploitation, and crime. The writer has very vividly exposed the difficulties, problems, traumas, and exploitations that individuals have to undergo even in the cyberculture, which is highly advanced. Still,

there are some powerful mechanisms and structures that restrain and limit the freedom and free will of individuals. These mechanisms work through structures and control the thinking, actions, and passions of individuals.

The very first powerful mechanism is the religion which played havoc with the life of Teresa. Religion's domination in the cyber culture seems somewhat odd but religion has also transformed itself as Rhys did not talk about any divine god or life after death rather, he used it by propagating the ideas of sharing, helping, and serving humanity. Teresa after falling into the trap of Rhys lost rational thinking and began to follow him blindly. She considered Rhys a sacred cow. She had to work day and night without much reward. She became a total slave and she was not even free to choose her sex partner. This exploitation of Rhys broke the idealism of Teresa and made her broken from the inside. Thus, religion threatened Teresa's real. However, the timely intervention of another structure and mechanism saved her. It was the friendship that worked to rescue her. It was not just religion in the novel that caused the suffering for the characters rather another mechanism that was money or earning for livelihood also bound and restricted the liberty of individuals.

Eduard was the victim of the social structure where one can find class division based on money or resources. In such structures, the elite class or the haves exploit the have-nots. Eduard had to undergo surgeries, live sick, or take care of the bodies of the rich and elite class to earn his livelihood. He was very badly treated: his body was made addicted to the drugs and when he told his friend Daragon, he refused to believe him. Eduard sacrificed his life for the crime of the elite. Eduard even entered the world of crime because of the upper class as he had to run from place to place to save his life from the bureau whose

chief was killed by him. Eduard did not want to kill the chief but it happened by chance. However, Eduard did not belong to the upper class so nobody even the law did not consider him innocent as the chief who was the real perpetrator, had washed all the proofs that could prove Eduard innocent. Thus, it was another structure that had seduced the life of an innocent being.

The writer further unveils the reality that the art or the artist was also in the grip of these powerful structures and mechanisms. Garth had to rely upon marketing and wealth to become a famous artist. He had to work as a patron of the chief so his freedom was also checked. The owner of the marketing company did not approve the work of Garth for his latest exhibition, rather it was he who wanted to dictate the artist. So, like Teresa and Eduard Garth also suffered but he gave a powerful message that one should not keep the feelings of apathy for the other people and structures to make one's and other's lives happy. Daragon was manipulated by a powerful bureau that claimed to maintain law and order in society. Daragon was so deeply trapped in the narrative of the bureau that he had made the bureau a sacred cow. He developed a very strong apathy for all other structures and institutions so it made him suffer himself. He had to lose his true friends and their trust for the sake of the bureau and the bureau he was nothing more than an instrument. The collapse of parenthood in the cyberculture also created anxiety in him. He did not get from his biological mother and father what he wished to have from them. So, the mechanism of body swapping turned human beings nearer the machines. However, he regains his real when he gets rid of the feelings of apathy. In the end, it is the friendship and the realization of the covert operations of the structures of the individuals that helped them to think freely. So, they started thinking rationally and coming out of their boxes.



They got the reality that it was the only way to achieve their real agency. Thus, every character revitalizes his or her agency not earlier than they manage to discriminate transitive reality from intransitive reality and similarly they are enabled to determine the very thin difference between the empirical layer of reality and the real layer of reality. This they achieve when their tendencies of memory and rational thinking are also revitalized. Like Westerfeld Kevin, J Anderson also encourages his characters to create roads themselves by remaining the active agent of the system till they become an independent mechanism as in the case of Daragon who, after reaching the top post of BTL, started using it for the betterment and welfare of the common people. Anderson advocates the flourishing of humane values like compassion, empathy, friendship, and love to combat the inhuman values surge owing to the media's art and religion's commodification.

*Pattern Recognition* (2003) and *Spook Country* (2007) are set in the immediate present where the characters are the victims of evasive surveillance, tools of corporative agencies, allergic to global brands, complicit to the underworld mafia, and traumatized by homesickness and homelessness. At the very outset, every character appears satisfied with his or her job and surroundings as Cayce is eager to work for Bigend who hires her to trace the makers of anonymous film clips viral on the internet. Bigend an emblem of the corporative structures wants to use these film clips for marketing. Soon we figure out the trauma of Cayce as she despite having an innate ability to identify the successful logo for the giant brands develops hate for these logos of global brands. She wants to do away with her profession but her financial compulsions and her emotional intimacy with the forum F:F:F: do not let her challenge the public discourse so ironically she has to carry

on with her job whether she likes it or not. The more she works the more her allergy surges. She experiences displacement as she finds solace only when she joins the online community F: F: F: at the same time, she acknowledges that she is not a human but rather a cyborg who works for fashion without putting her emotions in it. Her attraction to online forums articulates her indifference toward the real world. The cognizance about the perpetual surveillance and the docility in the hands of corporative structures deepens her complexes and enlightens her about her inability to challenge the public discourse. The tough and constant routine transforms her into a tool of a machine that works automatically which is the demand of the corporative structures. Thus, isolation, allergy, homelessness, and trauma of the memories are the anxieties for Cayce that her surroundings do not feel. Her real is threatened as she cannot exercise her tendency of rational thinking, and her subjectivity is undermined as she is unable to share her feelings with anyone. Instead of working as an agent or an emergent, she is an entity in the global metropolises whose agency and identity are determined by corporative and global structures. Thus her ability to discriminate is also eclipsed. These are the embodiments of the real according to Bhaskar and Fukuyama, when these faculties are put into slumber or passivity it is conspicuous peril for the real of individuals. Nora and her sibling Stella are helpless in the powerful structures. Two antagonistic political discourses have deprived them of their free agency and idyllic home as their parents have perished in an apparent terror attack that left them brutally injured. Nora suffers physical and mental impairment as she is completely paralyzed. Stella's face is warped. They are in a state of trauma. Their movement is constrained as they are compelled to shelter in hiding. Their catastrophe resonates with the plight of all those individuals who are made scapegoats in

the conflicts between two different discourses or structures against their free will. One concludes that in *Pattern Recognition* (2003) when the real individuals are relegated they suffer from the trauma of homesickness, isolation, displacement, maladjustment, and fear of evasive surveillance. The investigation deciphers the real structures behind the sufferings of the individuals in *Pattern Recognition* (2003) that asserts the role of technology as an independent mechanism is very pivotal in constraining the agency of the real sense through technology the structures like corporative organizations and global capitalistic agencies build the empirical reality that bolsters their discourse. It is the spell of the empirical reality that Cayce agrees to work for Bigend despite her disliking brands and their logos. Again it is the empirical reality that does not let Cayce think beyond the mores of public discourse. Gibson not only exposes the threats that the real face through the covert structures with the help of mechanisms like technology and media rather he chalks out a practical scheme to scale the minimum level of free agency through the efforts of characters like Cayce and Nora. Cayce achieves her goal of free agency by invoking the tendency of rational thinking that enables her to see the world beyond empirical reality. This she does when she comprehends the real motives of Bigend who is the emblem of corporative structure. This rational ability works as a linking action, which ensues her to find a spatial practice that evades the panoptic eye of the techno discipline. She creates her personal space such as sending personal and private emails to the ex-agent of the secret agency, by allying with the person who guides her to reach the filmmakers. So instead of revolting the structure she manages to embrace the agency by hitting the spot that provides her the pocket to exercise her free will. At the end of the novel, we meet an entirely transformed Cayce who is no longer allergic as well as she has

decided to have her home in physical space rather than on the internet in cyberspace. As far as Nora is concerned, she follows Gibson's notion of passive optimism that disseminates the idea of taking some positive out of negative, so she uses her memory of her family and the tragic incident to create the film clips to protest against the violence where the innocent and guiltless individuals perish as well. Her plight is the image of the individuals who have been implicated and dragged into a greater game of power against their will. However, her creativity in art gives her space in the public discourse as her film clips transform Cayce by ensuring her bliss and security in the forum where her film clips are discussed. This suggests that Nora travels from an utter impairment to an independent emergent who can transform the structure as well. *Spook Country* (2007) envisages the precarious predicament of the characters trapped in the discourses of globalization and capitalistic forces.

Hollis, Tito, and Milgrim are at the mercy of their employers. They hardly know what their bosses will extract from their assigned missions. They are not trusted as they are always under the watch of the panoptic eye. Technology infringes on their personal space making them cyborgs as Tito is used to transfer an electronic gadget containing some information from one place to another without having any clue of the information stored in it. Similarly, Milgrim is to decode the language for secret communication. Hollis does not know that her boss has nothing to do with the magazine *The Node* for which she has been hired rather she has to reach the product of the locative art and its procedures. They do not have any stable home rather they move from hotel to hotel or from one apartment of the company to another apartment of the company aggravating the sense of homelessness. They do not have their subjective goals but they are implicated in the

discourse of global metropolises that need conformism, the flow of capital and labour, and constraints on freethinking. In such techno-discipline discourse, the suffocation of the real is always on the cards as it paralyzes the real tendencies of the individuals who can earn free agency and subjective identities such as freethinking, rationality, memory, and the ability to overthrow the mask of empirical reality. Hollis like Cayce suffers from trauma of homelessness, displacement, and maladjustment. She is closely surveilled so she cannot go against the set patterns of the discourse she exists in. However, she overthrows the lens of the discourse of globalization by exercising the ability to discriminate between the empirical layer of reality and the real layer of reality. She finds a crack in the discourse where she can enjoy her free agency as she decides to join her previous affiliation the Curfew a rock musical band. She decides that she would stay in a physical place and would not be a docile toy in the hands of Bigend rather she will do business with him on equal terms which could nourish the interests of both parties. Briefly, Gibson's characters confront the dilemma of displacement, the trauma of homesickness, the enigma of isolation, and the allergy to the commodification of art when their real is infringed and surveilled by the panoptic eye in the techno-disciplined global metropolises. However, Gibson never aspires his characters to subvert the structure and discourse where the characters exist rather he proposes the idea of passive optimism for restoring free agency. Gibson suggests the characters develop a dialogue between the antagonistic forces and try to hit a space that is ignored by the panoptic eye to have free breathing for the real. For Gibson, this space is created with the conscious efforts of the individuals when they realize that the reality introduced by their discourse is not real but rather a layer of empirical reality.

This dissertation argues that we are incyberculture and the novels discussed in this dissertation have not portrayed the future as science fiction is supposed to do. The characters are unable to assert their free will as hidden structures have used the technology to entangle their agencies. So technology, instead of playing the role of a linking action has transformed itself into one of the independent entities like agents, structure, and culture. So technology with the corroboration of the hidden structures constrains the agency. So I claim that the model of TMSA needs to be remodeled by placing technology parallel to structure, culture, and agents. It is also gathered from the discussion that human real is truly endangered as it happens with every protagonist of the novels explored in this dissertation. When their real is threatened they experience displacement, anxiety, alienation, emotional numbness, physical pain, homelessness, and allergy to cyberculture. This indicates that whatever the advancement enhances society, the total peace and accomplishment of the happiness still resides with the humane feelings and emotions, which further suggests humanness will be everlasting and the writers, intellectuals, and philosophers would keep on promoting it. These characters revitalize their real by restoring the fundamental tendencies that make them humans such as memory, rational faculty, and ability to see things without being eclipsed by any kind of narrative. This dissertation highlights how hidden structures manipulate technology and AI to threaten the real of humanness and further invites everybody to investigate rationally what can be the covert structures that play havoc with their agency. A key point that surfaces on the pages is that each character does not leave the structure or each character revolts against the structure or the powerful forces rather they remain in the public discourse and find some ways to transform the structure. This conclusion

encourages us to accept cyberculture with all its miracles and challenges. Since the characters are aware of their constraints, especially regarding their agency. It endorses the assertion that in the presence of such cognition, the total demise of the agency is out of the question. Thus this dissertation does not leave us in the postmodern anxiety rather it suggests, guides, and instructs how one can adjust in this ever-changing world.

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