The Simulation of Utopia in Dave Eggers' *The Circle*: A Critique of Deception and Power in Digital Society

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the role and impact of simulation in the dystopian fiction, *The Circle* by Dave Eggers by highlighting how the characters in the novel are deceived by the illusory realities which results in a distorted perception of the world around them. The theoretical foundation of this research lies in the concept of *Simulacra and Simulation*[1] given by the French sociologist and cultural theorist, Jean Baudrillard, which provides a

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[1]Baudrillard, Jean. 1994a. *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press.

framework for understanding how technology can create a simulated reality that diverges from the physical world. Through a critical reading of this novel, this study reveals how the company's technology creates a world that is seemingly perfect but is ultimately deceptive and examines its implications on the characters' sense of identity and self-worth when they become trapped in a simulation that ultimately erodes their individuality and freedom. This study further reveals how Dave Eggers uses simulation of the social media networking to critique the dangers of surveillance capitalism and the illusion of total transparency in the modern world that has lost authenticity and individuality in the quest for having recognition and validation of our existence.

Keywords: Simulation, deception, technology, transparency, illusion, individuality.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

This novel, *The Circle* by Dave Eggers is an apocalyptic story examining the potential dangers posed by gadgets and networking sites in a time of constantly increasing surveillance and control. The story revolves around a twenty-four-year-old girl, Maebelline Renner Holland who secures her ideal placement at an influential technological firm, The Circle that felt like heaven to her on her first visit. Mae, the protagonist is portrayed as a naive and idealistic young woman who is anxious to be part of The Circle and make a positive impact for her family and on the world. She is first overwhelmed by the workplace atmosphere and the rigorous demands of her position, but she remains focused to break through and make an impression for herself. Beyond the Circle's frontiers, it appears that to her that everything was turmoil, disappointment and grime and she realized that she never wanted to be or work anywhere else than this place. As Mae becomes gradually ensnared in The Circle's world, her life begins to change, she develops a closer relationship with her colleagues, gains confidence, becomes more confident and transparent but as the plot progresses, we as readers are made to realize the true

cost of the company's vision for a completely transparent and interconnected world allows no space for individuality and authenticity.

1.2 WRITING STYLE OF THE AUTHOR

With his precise and straight forward style, Eggers creates a dystopian future where 'Everyone will be tracked, cradle to grave, with no possibility of escape'[2] and where nobody has the right to disappear this totalitarian nightmare that constantly tracks each activity of the people around the world for monetizing it for their interests. Dave Eggers presents the novel in a way that it seems natural and horrifying to the reader as it opens the debate for 'social media gone mad' and the quest for online validation in the modern world that is both convincing and troubling. Dave Eggers has employed a satirical technique while naming the places inside the company based on places of historical relevance, the simulation models offered by it including TruYou, PastPerfect, SoulSearch, SeeChange etc. or labelling of the founders as Three wise men, who were trying to take over the world through their company. "We will become all-seeing, all-knowing" [3]. Dave Eggers has employed characters who give a better understanding of the two different worlds that he seems to be talking about, one being the part of the simulated reality that consists of people like the two wise men, Eamon Bailey and Tom Stenton, Mae and the other circlers and the other world being the people who do not wish to be a part of this world that seems to perfect to be real and infringes people of their basic human right of privacy including Mercer, Mae's parents and Tyler Alexander Gospodinov, the founder of the company.

Eggers, Dave. 2013a. *The Circle*. Penguin UK.

[3] Ibid.,

1.3 *THE CIRCLE'S* COMPARISON WITH OTHER DYSTOPIANFICTIONS

The Circle is usually described as comparable to contemporary dystopian fiction novels such as George Orwell's 1984 and Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. In the words of Ron Charles in the *Washington Post*, "*The Circle* is *Brave New World* for our brave new world. Fast, witty and troubling." [4] In his novel, Dave Eggers explores a future where conformity becomes the norm and people lose their individuality while trying to fit in the standards set up by this simulated reality of social media. He writes about a world which advocates, 'Secrets are lies, Sharing is Caring and Privacy is theft.' (303) These statements may appear appealing at first glance, but upon closer inspection, we can see that our habit of constantly sharing everything on our social media platforms in order to gain recognition and validation for our existence is transforming us into socially autistic beings who gain a sense of accomplishment by quantifying ourselves in terms of the number of likes, comments, and followers on social media platforms.

Moreover, these lines have an uncanny resemblance with George Orwell's *1984* where he quotes, 'War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength'[5]. These two pieces of literature are totalitarian nightmares of what might occur if the government or any other institution gains complete control (Orwell).Orwell writes about Thought police, Oceania's covert police force that investigates and bring down thoughtcrime, i.e., private and political opinions that haven't been approved of by Ingsoc's authority, meanwhile Dave Eggers talks about

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[4] Ron Charles, "Dave Eggers's 'the Circle' Is a Relentless Broadside against Social Media Overload," *Washington Post*, October 1, 2013, sec. Books, https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/dave-eggerss-the-circle-is-a-relentless-broadside-against-social-media-overload/2013/10/01/5587dc24-27a7-11e3-b3e9-d97fb087acd6_story.html.

[5] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Penguin UK, 2013).

SeeChange cameras which are placed everywhere around the world, "To the average person they look like weeds, or some kind of stick. Anything. They are unnoticed." (63) [6]

Surveillance is thus, widespread and all-encompassing in both works. Every aspect of people's lives, including their talks, activities, and even thoughts, is monitored by the government or the circle, respectively. Another important aspect of contemporary culture examined in *The Circle* is surveillance. In the course of the text, the Circle manages a series of technologies aimed at tracking across the entire technologically advanced world. Although the Circle keeps tabs on the entire world, its representatives, especially Eamon Bailey, propagate the concept that monitoring is beneficial and that exposing oneself to be watched over ultimately leads to enlightenment. He said, "I truly believe that if we have no path but the right path, the best path, then that would present a kind of ultimate and all-encompassing relief. We don't have to be tempted by darkness anymore." [7] (291) Bailey's transparency doctrine is nothing more than a veiled version of the old totalitarian adage, "If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear." The Circle, in sharp contrast to Bailey's ideas, demonstrates how surveillance and a culture of transparency work.

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[6] Dave Eggers, *The Circle* (Erscheinungsort Nicht Ermittelbar: Knopf Publishing Group, 2013).

[7] Ibid.,

1.4 SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SIMULATION OF REALITY

Courtesy: https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-media.asp

If we go by the googled definition, then we can say that' social media is a digital technology that facilitates the sharing of text and multimedia through virtual networks and communities.' [8]

Social media had originally been designed to link people all over the world, eliminating boundaries, separation, and lack of contact, but the question now is whether it is still achieving that objective. Nowadays, social media is about developing many online personalities and suffering from delusions rather than erasing barriers. It is plentiful in filtered photographs and people who hide their fears and warped self-image behind filtered social media accounts that are quite far from reality.

As Jean Baudrillard as said," Melancholic and fascinated such is our general situation in an era of involuntary transparency." [9]

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[8] Maya

[9] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981; repr., Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994).

Because we are so accustomed to recognizing people solely through their filtered profiles, we ignore the fact that our flawless social media profiles and filtered photographs are merely slivers of who we are and should not be perceived as the entirety of who we are. As Baudrillard has said,

"It is very difficult to photograph individuals or faces. It is impossible to bring someone into focus photographically when you are so little able to get them into focus psychologically. Human beings are such sites of mise-en-scéne, such complex (de)construction, that the lens strips them of their character in spite of themselves. They are so laden with meaning that it is almost impossible to separate them from that meaning to discover the secret form of their absence." [10]

One of the major pitfalls of the social media is that people have started connecting the social media validation to their self-worth and studies have shown that the more one spends time in these social media apps, the more likely are they to fall into the traps of anxiety and depression. Social media is reliant on the idea of perfection and idealism and thus it's very likely for people to fall into the comparison-trap [11] and these provoking assessments with different people could lead to doubt in oneself, eventually contributing to mental health disorders and the similar incident occurs with the protagonist of the novel, Mae Holland, whose entire existence and self-worth is dependent upon the content (in terms of everyday data) that she is displaying in front of her audience.

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[10] "It Is Very Difficult to Photograph Individuals or | PhotoQuotes," photoquotes.com, accessed May 4, 2023, https://photoquotes.com/quote/it-is-very-difficult-to-photograph-individuals-or-.

[11] Leon Festinger, "A Theory of Social Comparison Processes," *Human Relations* 7, no. 2 (1954): 117–40.

1.5 SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Courtesy: https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/11- september/comment/opinion/what-is-wrong-

with-surveillance-capitalism

There's no denying that social media services like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram have been collecting our data. Our taps and likes direct progressively targeted content directly to our screens. These social media sites are responsible for creating an innovative form of the capitalist system known as surveillance capitalism. Under the surveillance capitalism label, these platforms deliver "cost-free" assistance in return of tracking the customer's behavioural patterns.

Even though some of this information is used to improve services, the vast majority is used to create advertising, which Shoshana Zuboff refers to as "prediction products. "Marketers predict how consumers will behave and what they will spend their money on in the future. Profit sharing is no longer offered to customers.Instead, they package and sell themselves.

 The novel, *The Circle* underlines the negative repercussions of surveillance capitalism. It depicts a society in which privacy is being eroded, personal boundaries are continually broken, and people's lives are constantly being investigated. As Mercer, the protagonist's ex-boyfriend said, "I've never felt more that there is some

cult taking over the world." The characters in the book wrestle with conformity, loss of autonomy, and the possibility of abuse of power by The Circle and its personnel.

As the French sociologist and cultural theorist, Jean Baudrillard quotes, "We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning." [12]Many of the Circlers seem to be preoccupied with collecting and sharing information, without necessarily reflecting on the deeper meaning or significance of that information. This could be seen as a commentary on our current culture of social media and online sharing, where many people are constantly consuming and producing vast amounts of information but may not necessarily be taking the time to reflect on its significance or meaning.

The novel ultimately suggests that the pursuit of a perfect, interconnected world may ultimately lead to a loss of meaning and purpose in life. The characters become trapped in a simulation of their own making, unable to escape the pressure to constantly be connected and validated by their online presence. This pressure is reinforced by the company's motto, "Knowing is good, but knowing everything is better."

This relentless pressure to share and curate every aspect of one's life leads to a loss of privacy and a sense of self. According to the French sociologist, Jean Baudrillard, "There are dangers to the use of hyperreality within our culture; individuals may observe and accept hyperreal images as role models when the images don't necessarily represent real physical people. This can result in a desire to strive for an unobtainable ideal, or it may lead to a lack of unimpaired role models" [13]. In the similar fashion, Mae Holland, the protagonist of the

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[12] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981; repr., Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[13] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981; repr., Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994).

novel, becomes increasingly obsessed with her online presence, spending more and more time interacting with others online and less time connecting with people in the real world. She becomes disconnected from her family and friends, and even starts to question her own thoughts and feelings, as they do not fit with the "norms" of *The Circle's* online community.

Literature Review

This novel depicts social media as a simulation that, while tempting from the front, is utterly false in practice and causes people to act, think and feel different due to its close resemblance to reality. According to data, there are around 8 billion people in the world and 4.9 billion of the population are active users of social media. This is a huge amount, and these figures also indicate that one in three persons worldwide and more than two-thirds of internet users both use social media. Social media has deviated from its original motto of connection and is entirely about idealism and celebrity culture these days.

In a famous podcast of Joe Rogan with Naval Ravikant, an Indian American entrepreneur, he claims that social media is weaponized, and the best minds of our generations are figuring out the ways to addict the large masses who rely upon social media to be seen, heard and validation for their existence and the modern struggle is to draw boundaries and resist these addicting sites. [14]

'It's not you. Phones are designed to be addicting' [15] read a YouTube video with more than 2 million views, where an ex-google design ethicist, Tristan Harris who claims that these days everybody is living a Truman's show sort of life which is fabricated as per our individual interests, yet we fail to recognize it. According to

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[14] "The Most Destructive Thing Social Media Is Doing - Naval Ravikant #Shorts #Joerogan #Naval," www.youtube.com, accessed May 4, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/shorts/bhieOcf86dE.

[15]"It's Not You. Phones Are Designed to Be Addicting.," www.youtube.com, accessed May 10, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUMa0QkPzns&pp=ygUzaXQncyBub3QgeW91ci4gcGhvbmVzIGFyZSBkZXNpZ25lZCB0byBiZSBhZGRpY3Rpbmcg.

Tristan, phone and social media platforms are not made to help us but to hook us. These apps simulate the feeling of human interaction to engage people to spend more time online. Push notifications are personalized, and a similar experience occurs with Mae, the protagonist of the novel who is both anxious and tempted to hear her own voice as a push notification for surveys at the company.

Margaret Atwood, *New York Review of Books,* [16] wrote that it is an insightful novel with notions on the creation and destruction of privacy, the growth of corporate ownership of privacy, and on the potential repercussions associated with such ownership upon the subject of Western democracy.

As per the *Sunday Mail (Australia)*, this novel *The Circle* could be labelled as horrifying in scope and it can have anyone screaming in amass horror and frustration as when we look at the world around us, we can clearly see how likely this future can be. If the social media users do not keep a critical eye on their social media usage and the effect that it has on their mental health and sense of self and individuality, then we will never be able to escape this matrix of virtual reality without allowing it to erode our privacy. According to the *Foucauldian Surveillance* in Dave Eggers *'The Circle,* [17] this company show how disciplinary practices, especially surveillance, can blend behavioral patterns. The story first shows how technology that monitors human activity seem harmless**,** but ultimately violates human freedom by spotlighting a culture of transparency. The Circle's

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[16] Atwood, Margaret. "When Privacy Is Theft | Margaret Atwood | the New York Review of Books." *The New York Review of Books*, 26 July 2020, www.nybooks.com/articles/2013/11/21/eggers-circle-when-privacy-is-theft.

[17] *View of FOUCAULDIAN SURVEILLANCE IN DAVE EGGERS' THE CIRCLE.*

archives.palarch.nl/index.php/jae/article/view/4625/4573.

organization misleads consumers and collaborators into forcing them to abandon their former lives and adopt a new, shallow and inadequate system.

In, *Online VS Offline: How Dave Eggers (The Circle) and Ernest Cline (Ready Player One) warn against our relationship with online media,* [18] it is started that this tech-company, the Circle's utopian character stems from the fact that participation is mandatory. Everyone is an investor in society, and building a better society is in everyone's best interest. One aspect of this for her is the elimination of lies and crimes. This circle seeks to build a "participatory democracy" (280) that focuses on the interests of citizens rather than the general interests of the state. As a result, a perfect society is guaranteed. She sees a world without media as a dystopia.

She "still shuddered at her coming so close to her apocalypse" (489). The only time she gets upset about the progress of the circle is when it goes wrong.

In an article based upon *What is wrong with surveillance capitalism?* [19] Mark Ireland argues that the digital revolution has significant side effects, and the tech-companies are making lots of money based on personalizing stuff for their respective users. He wrote that in an interview of the CEO's of four big-tech companies including Google, Facebook, Amazon and Apple, it has been found that proper regulation of power is required as it is generally concentrated in the hands of a few. It was found that Google turned from a medium to access internet into a walled garden that either takes over the competitors or puts them out of business.

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[18]   Idema, T. *Online VS Offline: How Dave Eggers (the Circle) and Ernest Cline (Ready Player One) Warn Against Our Relationship With Online Media*. 2017, studenttheses.uu.nl/handle/20.500.12932/26649.

[19] *What Is Wrong With Surveillance Capitalism*. www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/11-september/comment/opinion/what-is-wrong-with-surveillance-capitalism.

If we refer to Shoshana Zuboff's *The age of surveillance capitalism,* [20] in her prophetic book, she demonstrates how these tech-companies including Google and Facebook save the most intimate elements of our lives through our internet search history, the messages we send, things we "like" on Facebook, and the Fitbit or any other health applications that we use. This knowledge is utilized not only to anticipate our behavior and sell advertising that is specifically fabricated for us but also to sell our personal information to those who shape and modify our thoughts and behavior.

According to the S*ocial Panopticon: Have we become desensitized to surveilling others?* Majority of the people these days are comfortable sharing their lives online and desensitized while sharing some other individual's life.Now we have a new term known as 'chronically online', the word 'chronically ' makes it to look like a disease and which is true, it is used for someone who is out of touch in the actual world and his entire presence is decided by his online presence and validation. As people spend additional time online, the way people interact with each other has also shifted a lot. The term Social Panopticon was derived from the concept of panopticon by the philosophers Jeremy Bentham and Michel Foucault. The original panopticon was concerned with surveilling prisoners in a circular prison surrounding one large watchtower which is always shining lights at all the cells; thus, a watchman can watch every prisoner. However, the people in the prison cannot watch the watchman so they just assume that they are being constantly watched. Foucault expanded this idea to represent society and government at large.

In the age of the internet, this unique idea of panopticism has morphed its meaning and instead of the prisoners being watched, we are the ones under constant surveillance.As per, *Social Media and Baudrillard's Simulation and Simulacra,* we may look at someone's profile and create assumptions about them based on the pictures they post, and our interpretation of these symbols may be incorrect largely about the original person sharing them,

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[20] Zuboff, Shoshana. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. Profile Books, 2019.

as well as the image that the person posting it is attempting to develop. However, because of how we interact with the social media platform, we don't spend much time thinking about every single image we see on our feeds. As a result, even our interpretations of others are simulacra in and of themselves. The image we have in mind is really a simulacrum of a simulacrum, an interpretation of an interpretation in which the original, clearly does not exist.

The famous research paper, ARE YOU LIVING IN A COMPUTER SIMULATION? By Nick Bostrom talks about a highly advanced computer-based civilization that may be responsible to create the reality around us. He argues that the human civilization is most likely to go extinct and we are most certainly living in a computer simulation. He claims that mind itself can be simulated and the conscious mind can exist within computer simulations. To distinguish between an unconscious computer and a conscious mind the Turing Test is used, meaning that if a person cannot differentiate between the two then the computer is to be regarded as conscious and thus, he can conclude that we could be living in a simulation without knowing it.

Also, as per Rene Descartes's idea of the evil genius, he claims that God is powerful, and it can make him believe certain things which are not real. He talks about the possibility of a being that is like God but not God, he could make sure that Descartes could believe and feel certain things. He further talks about a dreaming skeptical argument that often we see things so distinctively in a dream that they almost appear real, the sensation of a dream is so close to reality that he cannot differentiate it from the reality.

From an article about The Rat Race of social media: The Major reason of your Depression, it is found that the urge to fit in these platforms can lead to depression and anxiety disorders. People doubled their work on Instagram to become celeb-gram, posting selfies, foods, fashion, vacations, concerts, and many more. As Naval Ravikant has once told in an interview that Instagram has created celebrity out of everyone, and celebrities are the most miserable people of all times. Thus, we can say that this social media rat race of chasing likes, comments and approval of others is not right for any individual's mental health.

Last reference can be taken from the movie The Matrix (1999) by the Wachowski siblings that talks about a dystopian future where machines have enslaved human beings and taken over the entire world. The matrix is a simulated reality created by machines where their bodies are just used as energy sources, and it is designed to keep people aware of their existence as slaves. Everything appears to be normal, but it is a computer-generated simulation that tricks human minds into perceiving it as reality. It also raises questions about the nature of human perception and the possibility that our senses can be deceived easily, blurring the line between what a simulation is and what is reality.

1.6 Methodology

The text of the novel is analyzed through the concept of Simulacra and Simulation given by the philosopher and cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard in his French book whose original title was Simulacres et Simulation. Simulation has been talked about in various varied cultures including the concept of Maya in Hinduism (the outer world is a cosmic illusion);to the famous Greek philosopher ,Plato's Allegory of the Cave(our perception of reality is limited by our senses and our beliefs, and we can only apprehend true reality through reason and philosophical contemplation);17th century French mathematician and philosopher's idea of the 'Evil Genius' (or the malicious demon)

The concept of Simulacra and Simulation by the French sociologist and cultural theorist, Jean Baudrillard also revolves around the fact that we no longer live in a world of physical objects and direct experience, but in a world of images, signs, and simulations that mediate our interactions with the world. He argued that the media and consumer culture create a hyperreality, in which images and signs are more real than the physical world.

The text of the novel is analyzed through the above given concept of Simulacra and Simulation by Jean Baudrillard to find out the theme of simulation employed by Dave Eggers to explore the impact of technology and social media on people's lives.

Through the characters of Mae Holland and her colleagues at The Circle, Eggers portrays how people become increasingly immersed in the simulated world of social media, virtual reality, and constant connectivity. The

employees of The Circle are encouraged to share every aspect of their lives online, with the company's mantra being "Secrets are Lies, Sharing is Caring."

Through a critical reading of the novel, the focus is laid upon figuring out the use of simulation in the novel by the author and illustrating the impact of social media and digital communication on individuals' sense of self-worth and identity. Additionally, to what extent do these technologies contribute to the formation of a "simulated self". This research is done to illustrate the concept of the hyperreal of Baudrillard through this novel and its relationship with the themes of power, control and manipulation as employed by the company, The circle on the people around the world.

1.7 Research questions

- How does Dave Eggers use the concept of simulation in his novel *The Circle*, and how does this contribute to the deceptive power of the technology company in the story?

- To what extent does *The Circle* illustrate Baudrillard's concept of the hyperreal, and how does this relate to the themes of power, control, and manipulation in the novel?

- How does *The Circle* novel illustrate the impact of social media and digital communication on individuals' sense of self-worth and identity, and to what extent do these technologies contribute to the formation of a "simulated self"?

- In what ways do the characters in *The Circle* engage with or resist the hyperreal environment that they are immersed in?

1.8 Research objectives

- To critically analyze the use of the concept of simulacra and simulation in Dave Eggers' novel *The Circle* and its implications for our understanding of the deceptive power of simulation in contemporary society.

- To examine how the novel *The Circle* uses the concept of simulacra and simulation to explore the theme of deception and how it impacts individuals and society.

- To analyze the various forms of simulation depicted in the novel and their respective effects on characters and the broader society, including issues of surveillance, privacy, and control.

- To investigate the extent to which the novel *The Circle* serves as a cautionary tale about the potential dangers of relying too heavily on simulation and its ability to distort our perception of reality.

- To critically evaluate the usefulness and limitations of Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and simulation as a framework for understanding the deceptive power of simulation in the novel *The Circle*.

Significance of the Study

Simulation has been studied extensively in various fields such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, and computer science. However, there has been limited research in modern literature that examines the deceptive potential of simulation, especially in the digital age. This dissertation aims to explore how simulation can be used to manipulate individuals while maintaining the appearance of control and transparency. The goal is to enhance our understanding of simulation's role in modern culture and its possible effects on both individuals and groups. Specifically, this dissertation seeks to examine how simulation can shape perceptions, influence behavior, and exert power in the digital age. One area that has not been extensively explored is the application of Baudrillard's theoretical framework to analyze the deceptive power of simulation in contemporary literature. While Baudrillard's ideas have been widely discussed in philosophy, sociology, and media studies, there is a need for more research that focuses on their relevance in analyzing modern literature, particularly in the context of the digital age.

CHAPTER TWO

Unveiling the Simulated Self: Exploring Character Transformation in Dave Eggers '*The*

Circle
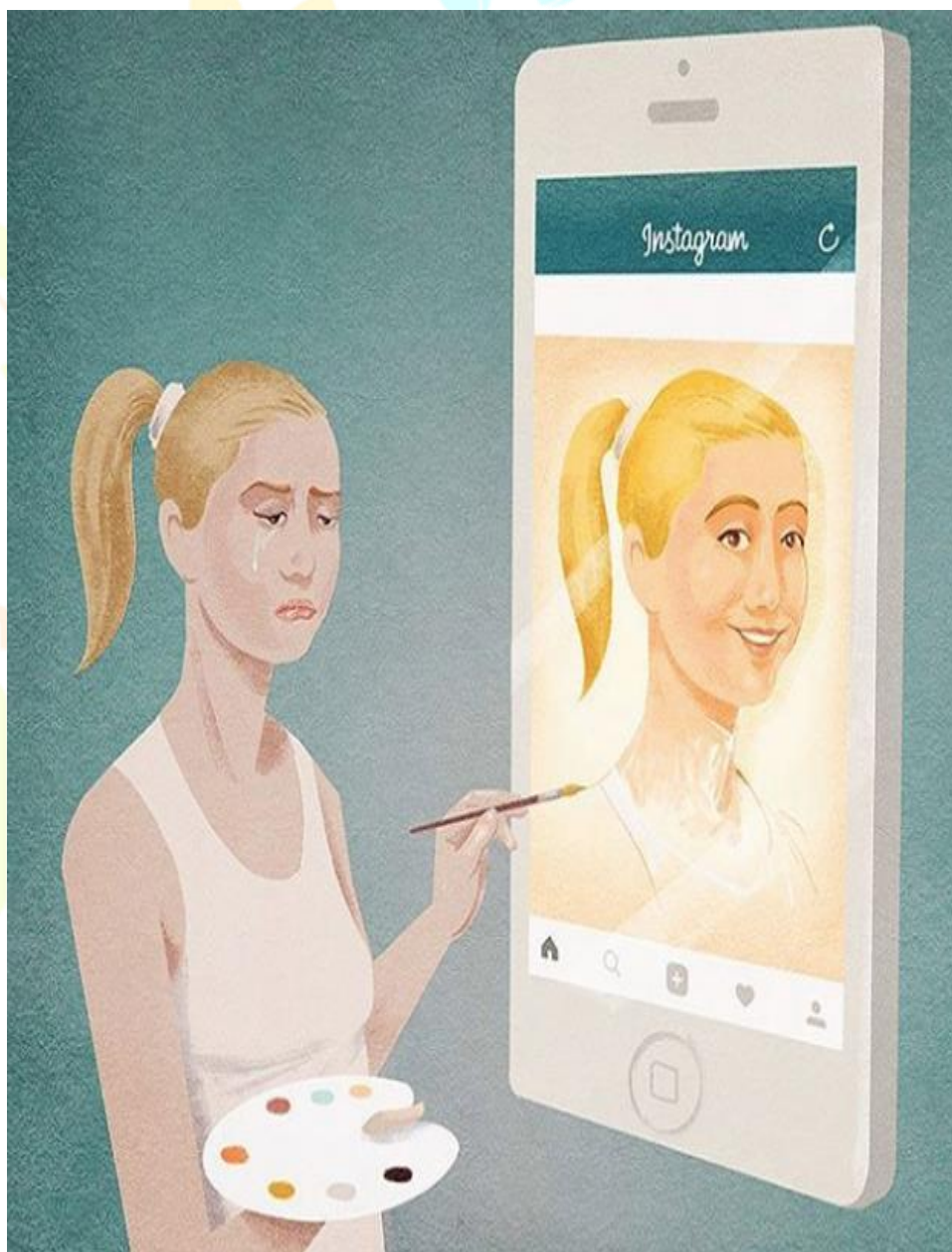
Courtesy: "Marco Melgrati | Illustrator," another startup story, n.d.,

https://www.anotherstartupstory.com/marcomelgrati.

This novel starts with a lovely quote from the novel *East of Eden* by one of the greatest American writers of the twentieth century, John Steinbeck, 'a giant of American letters' [21] and it reads,

" There wasn't any limit, no boundary at all, to the future. And it would be so a man wouldn't have room to store his happiness."

The above given line is insightful and liberating as it is true to the present context as well as the novel, *The Circle,* in the modern internet-age, we have access to pretty much everything around us and any information can be googled and find out in mini-seconds but in some way or the other, the humans have lost the access to their own self and their happiness while trying to fit in this simulated hyperreality created by the social media apps around us; that expects us to create an unrealistic image of our lives that we curate and cultivate for the validation of our existence online. This dystopian fiction by Dave Eggers is really an eye- opener for the current generation that is too immersed in the online world, thereby getting separated from their individuality and authenticity. The protagonist, Maebelline Renner Holland is not just a fictional character but a social archetype or symbol for majority of the general who is reliant on social media for boosting their self-esteem, and fabricating a simulated self that has no connection to the original whatsoever. Baudrillard has said," Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: A hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless

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[21] Wikipedia contributors. "John Steinbeck." *Wikipedia*, Apr. 2023, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Steinbeck.

the map that precedes the territory - precession of simulacra - that engenders the territory." [22] This story revolves around a young twenty-four-year-old woman who was unsure about her life choices as she keeps continually transitioning fields of study from studying art to advertising to psychiatry with little desire for embarking on a career in any sector (2) and her growth into the face of the most influential company of the globe, The Circle. From being an extremely self-conscious being who could not stand her watching own high school yearbook photo on the walls of the elevator to going transparent in the public eye with the goal to broadcast whatever she witnessed and contribute to society, Mae has transformed a lot due to the simulation that the company offered her to escape the reality that kept devouring her from inside.

Dave Eggers has created two different worlds by employing contrasting characters within the novel, first being the Circlers, the thousands of people who work at the company and Mae Holland whose lives are entirely controlled by their online presence and the second world consists of people like Mae's parents and her ex-love interest, Mercer Medeiros who avoid being a part of this cult that was taking over the world by surveillance capitalism. Mercer Medeiros and the actual founder of The Circle, Tyler Alexander Gospodinov are the mouthpiece of the author and the reality as well as dangers of being completely transparent and socially active online are discussed in detail by them.

The first impression of the company as akin heaven to her and it is clearly visible through the first line of the novel, MY GOD, MAE thought. It's heaven. (1) [23] The sky was spotless and blue, and everything was carved to perfection in the campus of the company unlike her previous place where she felt like that company was holding back her potential and wasting life. She was suggested by her friend Annie Allerton, in the world's leading company or in her own language, the only company that really mattered at all and was overwhelmed to

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[22] Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press, 1994.

[23] Eggers, Dave. *The Circle*. Penguin UK, 2013.

be a part of even the basic job of Customer Experience which further raises questions about her own perception of self that was distorted and all she wanted to complete herself was a minor position in this mighty place. "Don't worry. I'm happy to be anywhere here." (15)

She started off as incomplete, in the search of completion of her meaning like the 'C' at the middle of the company's logo that made the Second wise men, Eamon Bailey anxious and motivated for its completion. We can observe that the people who are a part of the simulation of the company were chasing completion or perfection whereas the others who were not fascinated by this cult where on the other side of the spectrum and all they wished for is a life where anybody has the right for anonymity and disappear from this simulated world. Eamon's anxiety can be seen through his dialogue with Mae where he said, "See who the 'c' in the middle is open? For years it's bothered me, and it's become symbolic of what's left to do here, which is to close it. Mae has the similar anxiety for being presented as a distorted version of herself that seems to be complete, and she feels that she needed to know everything and be an ideal for her own completion and there are various instances in the novel where the protagonist is agitated due to feeling incomplete and "not knowing" everything.

We can relate this situation to the actual social media space where we enjoy free access to anything in mini-seconds and thus, anything that is out of our reach creates a sense of immediate dissatisfaction in ourselves and that's what happens with Mae. She felt that a matrix of preferences should be presented as the whole of us, and it gives out a distorted image that is incomplete. Our social media profiles are mere simulacrum of ourselves and thus, it can never portray our real essence, Mae can be seen getting upset about her presentation because it displayed a distorted image of herself, and she is so much more than just slivers of her interests.

She started as a someone who was largely fascinated by the utopia created by the company and by the end of her first day at the campus, she has already started feeling as' Outside the walls of the Circle, wall was noise and struggle, failure and filth' (30). She started off pretty well under the guidance of her new team leader, Dan and trainer, Jared who seemed to be talking about creating the customer experience as humanly as possible for

the customers, 'We never want the customer to think that they are dealing with a faceless entity, so you should always be sure to inject humanity into the process.' (49) She was amused by the idea of 'No robots work here' but if we have analysed this statement and link it to social media then we can have a precise look at what the social media by creating a hyperreality which seems too real to be a simulated version of it. As it has been said that the media represents the world that is more real than our individual experience of reality and people have lost the ability to distinguish between reality and mere simulation. This might seem weird at first to realise that people are connecting their self-worth with some customer experience replies but the instances surrounding this can be seen throughout the novel and some of it are given as under:

"It sure would mean a lot if you were to recommend Helena for a job there at the Circle. No pressure but we're counting on you!" (374)

The above given sentence opened a stream of varied thoughts especially when we look at 'We're counting on you.' Mae has received the above given text from a stranger, and it is generally believed that we can count on just our close comrades and thus, hearing this from a stranger sound eccentric to the reader but it also talks about the deconstruction of the word ' friend', if we go by the definition of the word , we can find that it means, ' someone with whom one has a bond of mutual affection, typically one exclusive of sexual of family relations.' Introduction of these social media apps has really dissolved the meaning of friend in the first place, not it's no longer someone who you can rely on but someone who has access to your social media profile and that's pretty much everyone around you.

As Baudrillard has once said," Postmodernity is said to be a culture of fragmentary sensations, eclectic nostalgia, disposable simulacra, and promiscuous superficiality, in which the traditionally valued qualities of depth,

coherence, meaning, originality, and authenticity are evacuated or dissolved amid the random swirl of empty signals."

The conversation with the stranger who was pitching for his daughter did not end here but he kept on texting further.

"Mae? Edward again. Can you reassure Helena that you'll look at her site sometime soon? She's a bit upset now. Just a word of encouragement would be helpful. I know you' re a good person and wouldn't intentionally mess with her head, you know, promising to help and then ignoring her."

The first phrase gives us the exact idea about how much people attach their emotions to the text replies of random strangers who they even have not met. The younger generations are at a clear distance from the basic sense of connection that they have started feeling miserable and controlled by somebody' s actions who is on the other side of the world.

The similar experience has happened with Mae when she was at a dinner table with her parents and her friend, Mercer and all she was doing was looking at her screen for the validation of people who couldn't care about her existence and then, Mercer says something that was really eye opening at least for the current generation who has lost touch with their original surroundings and it says,

Mercer: "You no longer pick up on basic human communication clues. You're at a table with three humans, all of whom are looking at you and trying to talk to you, and you' re staring at a screen, searching for strangers in Dubai." (260)[24]

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[24] Dave Eggers, *The Circle* (Erscheinungsort Nicht Ermittelbar: Knopf Publishing Group, 2013).

Mae: "You're not so pure, Mercer. You have an email account. You have a website. (260) [25]

Mercer: "Here's the thing, and it's more painful to say this to you. But you' re not very interesting anymore. You sit at a desk twelve hours a day and have nothing to show for it except for some numbers that won't exist or be remembered in a week. You're leaving no evidence that you lived. There's no proof." (260) [26]

As per the analysis, Dave Eggers has chosen Mercer for most of the liberating discourse that serves as an eye-opener for the reader. Eggers points to the dystopia created by this technology that has made people closer to the different corners of the world but farther away from the people who care about them. As per a recent report titled "DIGITAL 2022 – Global Overview" by a New York based agency [27], an average internet user aged 16 to 64 spends six hours and 58 minutes online per day which is seven hours approximately and about three in ten United citizens accept that they are mostly constantly online and which is a disease and now we have a new term for it and that's 'chronically online'. As per the Urban Dictionary [28], this term is mainly used for someone whose entire life revolves around their cell phones and they have no real life outside their social media handles that serve as a pretence of a life that does not exist in the real sense.

Jean Baudrillard in his work *Simulations* has said that "Reality no longer has the time to take on the appearance of reality. It no longer even surpasses fiction: it captures every dream even before it takes on the appearance of

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[25] Ibid.,

[26] Ibid.,

[27] "People Spend Daily Average of Seven Hours Online Worldwide," People spend daily average of seven hours online worldwide, n.d., https://www.trtworld.com/life/people-spend-daily-average-of-seven-hours-online-worldwide-54765.

[28] "Urban Dictionary: Chronically Online," Urban Dictionary, 2021, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=chronically%20online.

a dream." [29] Postmodernism stands mainly about the blurring of the difference between reality and fiction and social media completely supports this narrative. Naval Ravikant, the Indian American entrepreneur has once said in an interview that the most destructive thing that social media is doing is it is making celebrities of all of us and celebrities are the most miserable people of all time as their entire life is just for show and their self-image is largely based upon the compliments that they receive from others and it is more fragile than it looks. As an insult can blow away their entire self-image. As Mercer her love interest says that she has nothing except for some numbers to show and that stands for the current celebrity culture and how people are getting crazy over the number of likes, comments, shares and subscribers on their platforms. Social media started off as platforms for connection but in the current scenario, they are employing techniques to be more addictive and real so the users may never escape their illusion. You might have found yourself scrolling randomly for hours without any cause or purpose and how you feel after that is completely miserable and drained. The famous neuroscientist, Andrew Huberman, created an analogy of a dog digging the ground continuously to the humans on social media who keep on scrolling social media randomly even they are not getting anything from it. If we were to look at us through the lens of an experiment as we were an animal who is just digging randomly looking for a bone," We'd think that the animal is sick..., it's digging and looking in the same corner in the anticipation of finding something. That's sad, that's us."

The algorithms of social media work function on the most powerful ways to engage people for a longer time and keep them doing certain behaviours that in turn benefit these companies. Like Baudrillard has said, "You no longer watch TV, it is TV that watches you (live)," or again: "You are no longer listening to Don't Panic, it is Don't Panic that is listening to you"—a switch from the panoptic mechanism of surveillance (*Discipline and Punish* [Surveiller et punir]) to a system of deterrence, in which the distinction between the passive and the active is abolished. There is no longer any imperative of submission to the model, or to the gaze "YOU are the

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[29] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(E), Cop, 1983).

model!" "YOU are the majority!" [30] This quote is directly applicable to our use of cell phones, and we can therefore say that we no longer use or watch our mobile screens, but it is the screens that are using and watching us and they have created these big tech-giants who are making profit by registering our private details through our text messages, the emails we send, our search histories, the content we like and share and even our health details from apps like Google Fit etc.
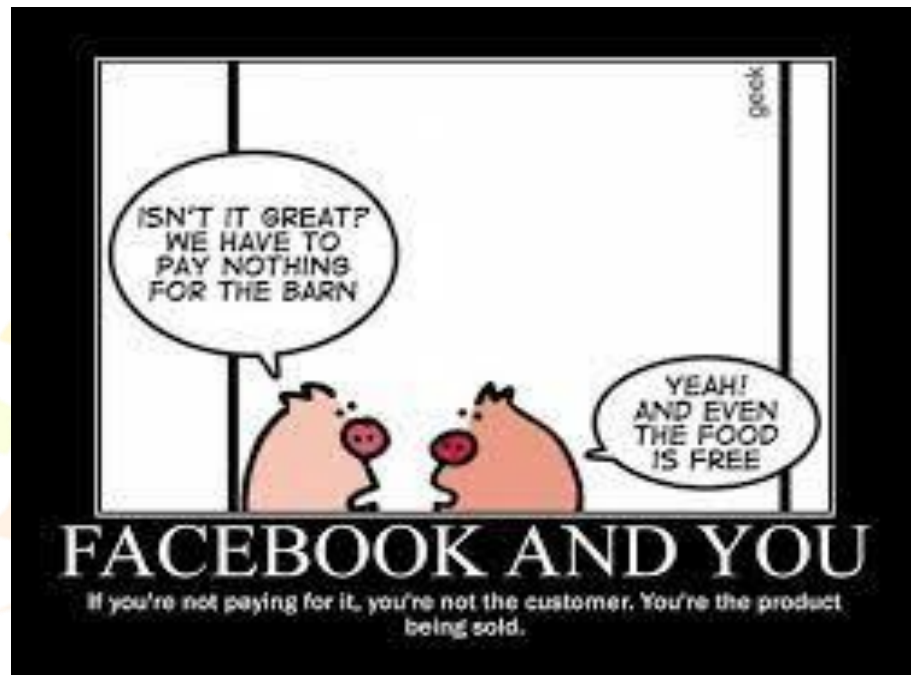
Courtesy: "Avertissement de Redirection," Google.com, 2023,

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.reddit.com%2Fr%2Fexplainlikeimfive%2Fcomments%2F2m3f05%2Feli5_if_something_is_free_you_are_the_product%2F&psig=AOvVaw3ZhRceLSiV05G3XJfMM4oL&ust=1683349957756000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CBMQjhxqFwoTCPDMlLe13f4CFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD.

It is a popular saying that if you are not paying for it online, then you are the product and you are being sold and that's what happened with the protagonist Mae, who was overwhelmed by those free dorms, free delicious foods, events and even free health insurance for her father who was suffering from multiple sclerosis but she

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[30] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981; repr., Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994).

was unaware of the fact that everything comes with a price either written or hidden and the hidden price was the installation of the SeeChange cameras in her parent's home and every activity of theirs as being recorded and saved in the cloud. Dave Eggers has created this plot to focus on the illusion of transparency that we have considered as normal in the present times and this 'creepy desire' to share everything online has caused disastrous effects on the people around the globe. From someone who does not have the time to read all the congratulatory messages on her first success to someone felt an overpowering sense of achievement and hope for posting random zings and comments to increase her participation rank, Mae has travelled a long journey or deception and getting stuck in this illusion.

'But she could not sleep. Now, thinking about how much better she could do, she logged on again, this time on her tablet, and pledged to work till two in the morning.' (191)

The above given line points towards the social media trap that surrounds us and the endless efforts that we do to rise in this social media rat race where everyone wants to go ahead of others for some imaginary price or accomplishment that is nothing but some social media numbers and they have no real meaning attached to them. Mae could not sleep because she was afraid to be in the later participation rank of the company and she attached a sense of meaning and accomplishment to it.

Social media has massaged us like a Skinner's pigeon [31] validated by these people who won't even acknowledge her presence, and this can be seen throughout the novel especially when three percent of the circlers vote in the Demoxie voting session that Mae Holland is not awesome. Despite of thinking about the ninety seven percent of people who found her awesome or atleast voted to be, she couldn't get herself to think

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[31] Smithsonian Magazine and Marina Koren, "B.F. Skinner: The Man Who Taught Pigeons to Play Ping-Pong and Rats to Pull Levers," Smithsonian Magazine, n.d., https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/bf-skinner-the-man-who-taught-pigeons-to-play-ping-pong-and-rats-to-pull-levers-5363946/#:~:text=The%20psychologist%20used%20a%20device.

about anything other than those 3 percent of the circle. She even started doing her Maths that they are around twelve thousand circlers and that means that almost 368 people are among those that don't like her.

'She became lifeless. She was feeling humiliated...She has been devastated...and craved solitary to gather up her thoughts.' (405)

She had not been certain she had the strength to do it. She had been around to be attacked. She'd been wounded. Who were those people? What precisely has she caused against those people? They hadn't seen her. Did they, or didn't they?

It can be analysed that Mae was badly affected by those three percent of the audience who might have sent a frown to her just for fun and the pain that she faced continued to expand its wings further.

'There was a pain in her, a pain that was spreading its black wings inside her..., primarily from the 368 people who apparently hated her so much they wanted her gone.' (410)

She got deeply affected by that three percent and went to the deep darkness of her mind and assumed the worst, she took that frown personally and assumed that those people wanted her dead and to frown at her like that is equal to a murder and maybe those 368 people who wished that she should not have been born. This experience was like what Naval Ravikant has explained that a self-image built on compliments and validation from others id the most fragile can easily be blown away by a minor dislike or disrespect that the user takes as a threat to his/her sense of self. Social media has massaged us to think of likes and dislikes as a sort of positive enforcement or reward and thus, people are editing pictures by multiple filters to be likeable and accepted by the general masses. We, no longer have the individuality like in earlier times but rather or we are forced to confirm to the social media standards that are not even real.

According to Baudrillard, "Everywhere one seeks to produce meaning, to make the world signify, to render it visible. We are not, however, in danger of lacking meaning; quite the contrary, we are gorged with meaning and it is killing us." We as the postmodernist generation is giving undivided attention and meaning to everything around us and that's why we are the most vulnerable from our previous generations who lived their life rather than documenting and editing things that hod no real life relevance.

Josiah: "My problem with paper is that all communication dies with it. It holds no possibility of continuity...It ends with you. Like you're the only one who matters...It's just maddening, thinking of how much knowledge is lost every day through this kind of short-sightedness." (187)

If we look at this dialogue, then we can observe how Josiah, Mae's colleague calls random information as knowledge whereas information can never be termed as knowledge.

Courtesy: https://quotefancy.com/quote/28164/Arthur-C-Clarke-Before-you-become-too-entranced-with-gorgeous-gadgets-and-mesmerizing

A similar instance can be seen when Mae delivers the speech in front of the circlers where she acclaims that the information is generally free of cost and "We all have a right to know everything we can. We all collectively own the accumulated knowledge of the world." (302) and then she quotes her famous slogan 'Privacy is theft', which is intentionally used by the writer Dave Eggers to propagate the agenda of the company, The Circle and social media in general.

CHAPTER THREE

Navigating the Hyperreal:

Exploring Eamon and Mercer as Symbols of *The Circle* and the Real World

Courtesy: Wendy Rose Gould, "Are You in a Social Media Bubble? Here's How to Tell," NBC News, October 21, 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/better/lifestyle/problem-social-media-reinforcement-bubbles-what-you-can-do-about-ncna1063896.

Mercer Medeiros and Eamon Bailey stand for two different perspectives on the use of technology and its impact on the society in the novel *The Circle*. Eamon Bailey was the face of the company, 'accessible, genuine and loud' (25) who loves to talk and connect with people all around the globe and then, there is Mercer Medeiros who was entirely on the different side of the spectrum and loved his peace without being attached with social media validation and sharing stuff online. Eamon Bailey served as one of the Three Wise Men as well as one of the founding members of the business, whereas Mercer was the protagonist's preceding love interest and an owner of a company that produces chandeliers out of dead animals.

Both of them are completely different from each other as far as their point of view towards technology is concerned, towards the final moments of the tale, Mercer attempts to live as a hermit, whereas Bailey seeks to connect with every corner of the globe. in a single unifying place where he could be able to contact anyone at any given time and can easily watch their details on the SeeChange Camera. Eamon wished for a world where there is no anonymity whereas Mercer wished for a world where anybody has the right to disappear and not be seen at all times. Eamon thought of a world where there is nothing to hide and every possible information is made available to everybody around the globe,there will be no secrets or anything that can tie anyone down as he believed that 'secrets are the enablers of antisocial, immoral and destructive behaviour. Do you see how this is?' (289)

Furthermore the most important aspect of secrets is that they are incredibly hazardous when stored as part of us, but they are unable to harm us when everybody learns about them.. He believed that it is only the things that we hide from our family or friends that get us in trouble and thus, there should not be any secret in a perfect world. Eamon was a believer in the ' perfectibility of human beings' (291) and claimed that we could become

limitless and endless if we become our best selves by releasing the inner burden of secrets and lies because they disable us to live upto our actual potential. Eamon gave the idea of "ALL THAT HAPPENS MUST BE KNOWN" and talked about this in almost every speech infront of the Circlers that 'transparency leads to peace of mind' Mercer, on the other hand, believed that we weren't created to discover everything that happens.

Mercer: " We are not men to know everything, Mae.Did you ever think that our minds are delicately calibrated between the noon and the unknown? That are souls need the mysteries of night and the clarity of day? You people are creating a world of ever-present daylight, and I think it will burn us all alive."

Mercer has given the most powerful views regarding the social media simulation that has made a world of daylight at all times whereas we, as humans need rest and time to reflect, sleep and have our brain cells rested.Our brains are tiny in size and thus, they should not be made to store every detail of the world otherwise it will not work.He constantly wished for a time when people decide to rise against this cult and join him in his journey towards living in the darkest forest where no surveillance is yet put forth. Mercer and Ty are the two strong voices of reason in this novel, and they keep on discussing the ill-effects of the completion of this technology that can happen if they do not resist the completion process and let the Circle take over the world. The Circle has the power to bury any information within two seconds and can easily ruin anyone in less than five minutes.

As Baudrillard has said in *Simulacra and Simulation,* about media that, media "carry meaning and counter meaning, they manipulate in all directions at once, nothing can control this process, they are the vehicle for the simulation internal to the system and the simulation that destroys the system" [32]

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[32] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981; repr., Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994).

And as Tyler, the founder said that mob rule will not lead the world anywhere but in great trouble and the Circle needs no completion as completion will lead to totalitarianism and then the owners of the company will have the absolute control over the knowledge of the world and "if you control the flow of information, you can control everything. You can control most of what anyone sees and knows." (482) and nobody can go against their system as they have the absolute control over everything.

'And there was a wonderful thing that tended to happen, something that felt like a poetic justice: every time someone started shouting about the supposed monopoly...soon enough it was revealed that the person was a criminal or deviant of the highest order.' (240)

Tyler and Mercer warned Mae about this multiple times in the novel to get out of this artificiality, but she was so drowned in this hyperreal world that she could not stop herself from being a part of this deception. Mercer from the beginning of the novel to the very end kept on debunking her social media myths but she was too self-absorbed to pay any heed to his views. Mercer has a great way to compare this social media with the fast food industry who have hacked the way to addict people to their products. Social media apps , video games, and fast food, use a similar technique to make people stuck on their products and that is addiction, all of them are of no real use to the people consuming them or spending their time on them but they are made to feel the relevance of these objects.

As Baudrillard has said this in his book, *Cool Memories,* [33] "The futility of everything that comes to us from the media is the inescapable consequence of the absolute inability of that stage to remain silent. Music, commercial breaks, news flashes, adverts, news broadcasts, movies, presenters—there is no alternative but to fill the screen; otherwise, there would be an irremediable void." All these things just fill in the void and have

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[33] Jean Baudrillard, Chris Turner, and Emily Agar, *Cool Memories* (London ; New York: Verso, 1990).

no relevance attached to them. As Mercer said that it is not nourishing to be drowned in this social media world all the time.

Mercer: "It's not nourishing. It's like snack food. You know how they engineer this food? They scientifically determine precisely how much salt and fat they need to include to keep you eating. You're not hungry, you don't need the food, it does nothing for you, but you keep eating these empty calories." (134)

Dave eggers has creatively mocked the social media addiction by comparing it with the overeating of junk food that does no good for the human body but people tend to eat and get sick, that's what social media is doing to us, we feel diminished, hollow and sick after a digital binge but we do not stop ourselves from getting engaged in online activities as the we are massaged like the pigeons who keeps on pecking for a reward and these little rewards by social media make us believe that we are relevant and valid. Eamon keeps on advocating about the relevance of knowing everything and every human experience should be made available to everyone whereas Mercer and Tyler advocate the necessity to be present in the real world around people who actually care about us rather than pretending to be friends online. The deconstruction of the word, friend, has really left the original bond as meaningless, now we are calling random people across the globe as friends who would not actually care about us in the first place. Mercer talks about the fog that we experience while talking online and terms it as a 'third-party assault' (131) The human interaction has changed a lot due to social media and it is always filtered. People sit together but they are not present in the moment but rather focused on somebody else across the globe and anybody who doesnot spend much time on social media is not considered to be social. Mercer says that these social media tools create unnatural extreme social needs and There is an unfamiliar desperate need infecting everything around us.
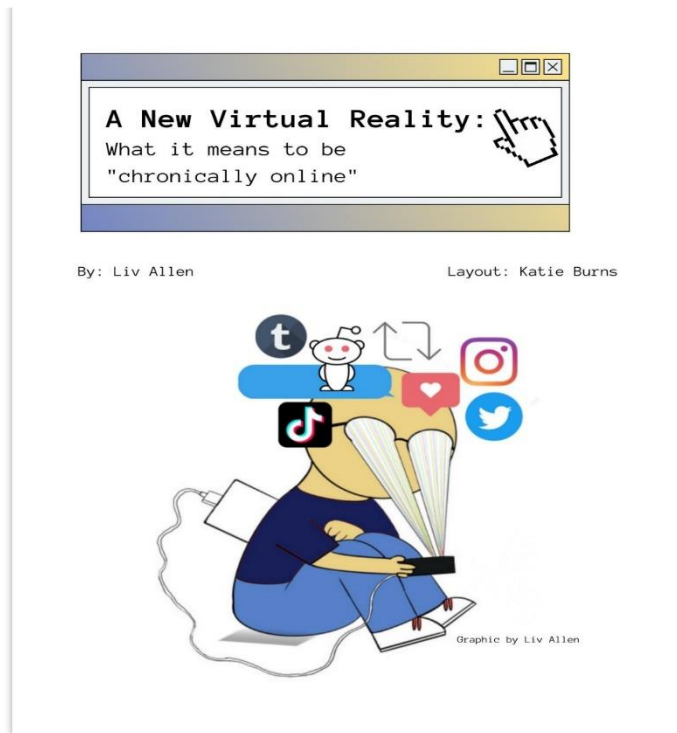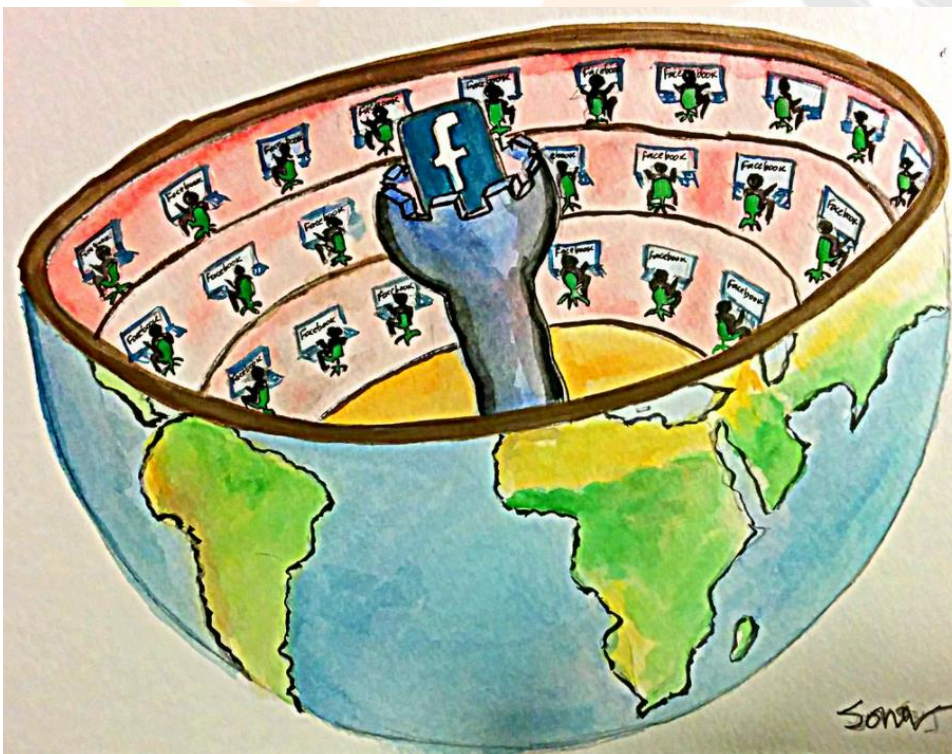
Courtesy

https://issuu.com/idmag_sc/docs/idmag_spring22/s/17543383.

While Bailey talks about a perfect world, Mercer constantly debunks the utopian vision laid by the company. "It's the usual utopian vision...I mean...everything you guys are pushing, it sounds perfect, sounds progressive, but it carries with it more control, more central tracking of everything we do." (259)

He feels that it is people like Mae who donot know what they are doing collectively, and the strange part is no one is forcing anyone, there are no oppressors or physical control, but people are voluntarily willing to tie to these leashes and they have become very socially awkward due to this inverted mirror world. According to him, sitting in the front of the screen and smiling and frowning in front of the screen makes people believe that they are living a fulfilled and fascinating life which is usually not the case as virtual experience can never compare to the physical experience of the mountains of Nepal or the depths of the sea.

While Eamon advocates about knowing everything and the perfectibility of humans, Mercer believes that we are not meant to be perfect or know everything, our brains are not designed like that. Eamon's idea of transparency through the SeeChange cameras as exactly like the panopticon's concept of Michael Foucault who

gave the idea of the social panopticon in his book *Discipline and Punish*[34] which says that individuals are constantly being controlled and monitored through various forms of surveillance by the state and society and this constant awareness of being monitored creates a sense of self-regulation in individuals to mould their behaviour to conform to societal norms and be acceptable by the general public and same happens with Mae, Annie and Mae's parents would moulded their behaviour to be acceptable to the general audience of Mae who were constantly watching her online after she went transparent. Mae was always worried about being as ideal as she could be in front of her audience, and this left adverse effects on her mental health. 'She'd given up soda, energy drinks and processed foods...Since she's gone transparent, she'd become more noble. People called her a role model.' (329)

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[34] "Discipline and Punish - Google Search," www.google.com, accessed May 6, 2023,

https://g.co/kgs/oEyCLs.

Courtesy: "The Digital Panopticon: How Online Communities Enforce Conformity," Virginia Review of Politics, n.d., https://virginiapolitics.org/online/2021/12/4/the-digital-panopticon-how-online-communities-enforce-conformity.

But she somehow felt more influential than before and this fake sense of accomplishment and validation was allowing her to heal from her low self-worth atleast through her sight but she had forgotten the difference between real and simulation by then and has started assuming this life as the real world. Her friend Mercer eventually dies but she could not think about the real effect of what had happened in front of her eyes due to her own mistake and Annie, her friend was alive on the hum of machines,but she somehow felt more influential than before and this fake sense of accomplishment and validation was allowing her to heal from her low self-worth atleast through her sight but she had forgotten the difference between real and simulation by then and has started assuming this life as the real world. Her friend Mercer eventually dies but she could not think about the real effect of what had happened in front of her eyes due to her own mistake and Annie, her friend was alive on the hum of machines due to these technological models but all she could think about is to know more and more about everything around her without leaving any corner. Even after loosing all her closed ones, she was still so drowned in this hyperreality that she could not go beyond it and even felt annoyed when she could not know about the thoughts of her friend, Annie who was in coma and felt that the world deserves to know about her thoughts and it is unfair if she keeps it to her own mind.

She was even warned by Tyler that the completion of the circle is just a totalitarian nightmare and it will not do any good for the society or the community as they say. Bailey believes that life will be better and perfect when every soul is connected and there should be complete and uninterrupted access among all humans but his idea was not everybody should have the 'right to disappear and anonymity' but she was unaware that the world will exactly be like that tank where the transparent shark has eaten up every other creature who was living peacefully in separate tanks and everything that goes into this tank of complete transparency with this shark like company will be turned into ash in a fraction of time. Tyler consistently told her about the effects of this company

including the death of her friend and her separation from her parents but all she could think about was knowing and having more.
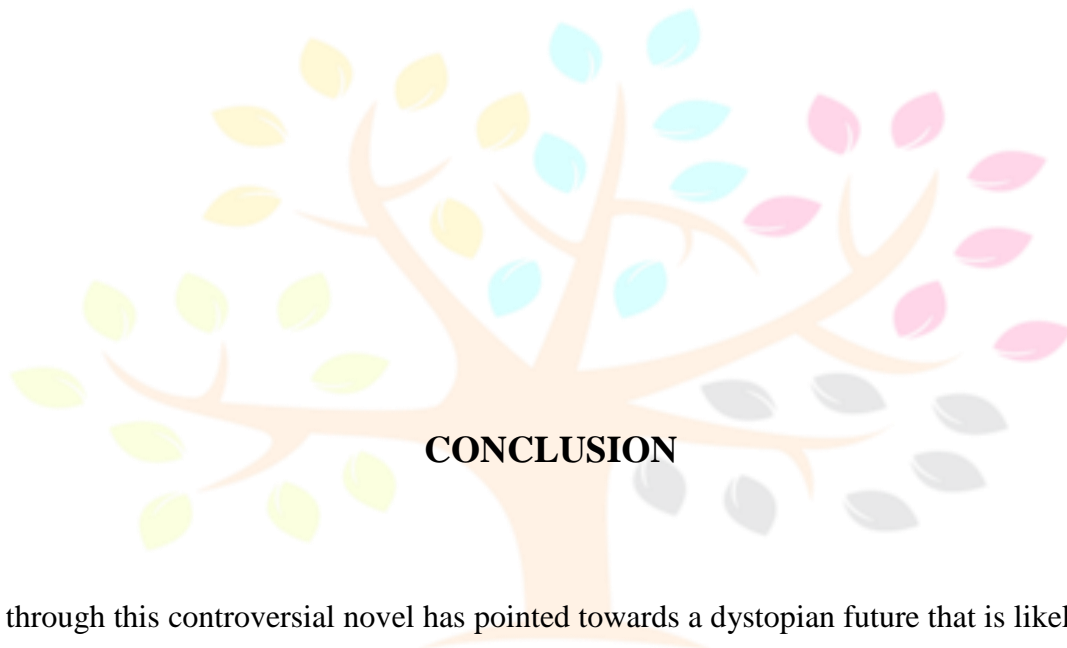
CONCLUSION

Dave Eggers through this controversial novel has pointed towards a dystopian future that is likely to happen if we do not look at the social media apps around us with a critical eye and stop being drowned in our cell phone screens, searching for random strangers online rather than spending time with our parents and friends who actually care about us rather than someone who just knows us through our social media profile which is actually just a simulacrum of our identity and it is nowhere near our real identity and as the protagonist, Mae says that the matrix of preferences of someone can never account to be presented as the whole of them, which is the truth of our social media profiles as we just know a few slivers of the online persona but think that we know the whole of them and that is the deception that lies within this hyperreality that the social media has created for all of us. Dave Eggers went too far to point out to the extreme harsh behaviour that human beings are capable of, moreover its an old saying that everybody is capable of negative capabilities and thus, to avoid messiness and chaos around us, we should move towards social media primarily for fun. If we look at the interview of any founder of social media apps, we can see that they have made these apps mainly for fun and thus, we should be

treated as such, rather than getting emotionally attached to the number of likes, comments or any other positive reinforcement that we may find through these apps. The protagonist, Mae had low self-esteem and thus, she kept on chasing power and validation from the outside world, thereby neglecting the fact that no amount of outside validation can fill in the gaps in our heart unless we believe ourselves to be worthy of the things around us. This celebrity culture on social media has made us create unrealistic versions of our lives online which is nowhere near to the actual reality and now its high time that we start living in the real life rather than being stuck in a simulation of the world. As Baudrillard refers to the current generation as, 'melancholic and fascinated' and this melancholy arises from the need to fit in the ideals laid on social media and be as perfect as a circle which is not possible to achieve for a normal human being. The fear of missing out leads people to believe that they will be abandoned by others if they are not updated with the social media recent news but in the real life, these things hold no relevance. The writer doesn't want the people to live like a hermit, but they should learn to differentiate between what is real and what is a real simulation. We are constantly searching for more and more information online about others and what is recent in their lives which eventually makes us fall in a comparison trap if somebody else is doing better than us. Maybe we should realise that the social media life is not real and nobody is living the life as perfect as it looks on social media where everyone is too flawless to be real. Mercer dies due to his friend's quest to prove her technology's superiority, but she overcomes it like Mercer was the one who was at fault, additionally her parents flew away from their original place because they do not wish to be a part of this world that has eradicated the concept of their privacy. However, Mae was unaffected and still wishes for the completion of the circle that was the cause of her friend's death and separation from her parents. This research portrays the pitfall of technology and how these social media apps are creating an ever day-light world which has no time to rest, reflect and cool-down. It is a message for the upcoming generations to stand against this cult and free themselves from these leashes.

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