

**HYPERREALITY AND THE SIMULACRA: A  
TECHNOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION OF  
COVID-19 IN SARAH HALL'S *BURNTCOAT*  
AND JODI PICOULT'S *WISH YOU WERE  
HERE***

**BY**

**AROOJ FATIMA ABBASI**



**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES  
ISLAMABAD**

**September, 2023**

**Hyperreality and The Simulacra: A Technological  
Dystopian Representation of COVID-19 in Sarah Hall's  
*Burntcoat* and Jodi Picoult's *Wish You Were Here***

By

**AROOJ FATIMA ABBASI**

B.S Hons, NUML, 2019

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**In English**

To

FACULTY OF ARTS & HUMANITIES



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, ISLAMABAD

© Arooj Fatima Abbasi, 2023



## 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 Arts & Humanities for acceptance.

**Thesis Title:** Hyperreality and The Simulacra: A Technological Dystopian Representation of COVID-19 in Sarah Hall's *Burntcoat* and Jodi Picoult's *Wish You Were Here*

**Submitted by:** Arooj Fatima Abbasi

**Registration #:** 80-MPhil/Eng.Lit/F-20

Master of Philosophy  
English Literature

English Literature  
Name of discipline

Dr. Asma Haseeb  
Name of Research Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Supervisor

Dr. Muhammad Safeer Awan  
Name of Dean (FAH)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Dean (FAH)

Date\_\_\_\_\_

## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I Arooj Fatima Abbasi

Daughter of Saeed Ahmed Abbasi

Registration #

Discipline English Literature

Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Hyperreality and The Simulacra: A Technological Dystopian Representation of COVID-19 in Sarah Hall's *Burntcoat* and Jodi Picoult's *Wish You Were Here*** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in 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 a degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

---

Signature of Candidate

---

Name of Candidate

---

Date

## ABSTRACT

**Title: Hyperreality and The Simulacra: A Technological Representation of COVID-19 in Sarah Hall's *Burntcoat* and Jodi Picoult's *Wish You Were Here***

The research deals with technological dystopia which is a new variant of dystopia where hyperreality and simulacra dominates the modern world. The study applies the theoretical frameworks of Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) and Neil Postman's *Technology: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* in the selected texts which are Picoult's *Wish You Were Here* and Hall's *Burntcoat*. People used to spend the majority of their time at home looking at screens since they were not permitted to leave their homes during COVID-19. Technology reliance has exacerbated the dystopia, which has essentially led to simulacra and hyperreality. It appears to dehumanize characters by causing them to lose their uniqueness and originality while also blurring the distinction between reality and representation. Simulation therefore appears more authentic than the genuine thing. This research is purely qualitative. The major focus is on textual analysis of primary and secondary sources as illustrated by Catherine Belsey. In both novels, the characters are trapped in hyperreality, which plays a crucial part in the rise of technological dystopia. It is concluded that due to technological dystopia, characters in the novel become so immersed in the simulated universe that they perceive representations as real without distinction, preferring the unrestricted power of illusion and its consequences over the constraints of reality.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter   | Page          |
|---|---------------|
| <b>THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM.....</b>  | <b>ii</b>     |
| <b>AUTHOR’S DECLARATION .....</b>   | <b>iii</b>    |
| <b>ABSTRACT .....</b>   | <b>iv</b>     |
| <b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>  | <b>v</b>      |
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>   | <b>vii</b>    |
| <b>DEDICATION.....</b>  | <b>viii</b>   |
| <br><b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>   | <br><b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 Background of the study .....   | 1             |
| 1.2 Introduction .....  | 1             |
| 1.3 Thesis Statement .....  | 4             |
| 1.4 Research Objectives .....   | 4             |
| 1.5 Research Questions .....  | 5             |
| 1.6 Significance of the study .....   | 5             |
| 1.7 Delimitation.....   | 6             |
| 1.8 Organization of the Study .....   | 6             |
| <br><b>2.LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>  | <br><b>8</b>  |
| 2.1 Works related to <i>Burntcoat</i> .....   | 8             |
| 2.2 Works related to <i>Wish You Were Here</i> .....                                      | 12            |
| <br><b>3.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>   | <br><b>16</b> |
| 3.1 Theoretical Framework .....   | 16            |
| 3.2 Methodology .....   | 18            |
| <br><b>4.DEHUMANIZATION AND LOSS OF INDIVIDUALITY IN THE<br/>SIMULATION UNIVERSE.....</b> | <br><b>21</b> |
| 4.1 Diana O’Toole: Trapped in Hyperreality .....  | 22            |
| 4.2 Between the real and hyperreal .....  | 26            |

|  |   |           |
|--|---|-----------|
| 4.3  | Exploring the Blurred Line between Reality and Hyperreality in Diana's Experience ..... | 29        |
| 4.4  | Loss of authenticity in the simulation universe.....                                    | 32        |
| 4.5  | Diana's self-realization .....  | 34        |
| 4.6  | Conclusion.....   | 36        |
| <b>5.CHARACTERS IN <i>BURNTCOAT</i> TRAPPED IN THE HYPERREAL WORLD .....</b> |   | <b>37</b> |
| 5.1  | Nomi's Quest: escaping the Hyperreal Enigma .....                                       | 41        |
| 5.2  | Blurring the line between real and simulated world .....                                | 44        |
| 5.3  | Role of Media in creating a hyperreal world.....  | 46        |
| 5.4  | Conclusion.....   | 52        |
| <b>6.CONCLUSION .....</b>  |   | <b>54</b> |
| 6.1  | Findings of the research .....  | 54        |
| 6.2  | Social Implications .....   | 56        |
| 6.3  | Recommendations for Future Researchers.....   | 57        |
| <b>Works Cited.....</b>  |   | <b>58</b> |

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I offer praise to Allah because without his help, I would not have been able to do this challenging task.

I am thankful to Prof. Dr. Muhammad Safeer Awan, Dean of the Faculty of Languages, and Prof. Dr. Inayat Ullah, Head of the Department of English for their cooperation during the whole process.

I want to convey my sincere gratitude and affection to my late father, Mr. Saeed Ahmed Abbasi, who constantly motivated me to continue my education, as well as to my mother, who has helped me during all of my years of academic study. I also want to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Asma Haseeb, who has continually pushed me to think beyond the box and brought out the best in me. She has consistently provided good and useful advice and has been really helpful in times of need, and I am truly appreciative of this despite having to read through screeds of incomprehensible lines. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to my sisters and brother, who supported me during the whole research project despite their own hectic work schedules. I am grateful that the English Department at NUML provided me with the academic and creative space I needed to complete this thesis.

I appreciate you all.



## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to my late father for motivating me and believing in me.  
Daddy, you have always been my hero.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

During COVID-19, airports became silent, borders were closed, stay-at-home instructions were there and other newly normalized obstacles were announced. Moreover, the globe got flatter and more condensed. The way we interact with one another, provide care for others, work and teach our kids has all altered as a result of COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused global changes in attitudes, the economy, medicine, and other areas during the past two years. The devastating coronavirus epidemic brought most of the world's nations to a complete stop. After more than 20,000 people were infected, lockdowns were implemented in key cities in Spain, France, and Germany. As the worrisome situation worsened, the U.K. closed schools, bars, and restaurants and thought about taking even tougher action, including a complete lockdown of London (Kartal).

### 1.2 Introduction

In correspondence, it seems to create a dystopian world. Dystopia is defined as “terrible, unusual, or ill” (Mill). It is not the same as anti-utopia, despite popular belief to the contrary. In essence, dystopia is "bad in practice" while utopia is primarily viewed as "good that can be applied" (Akaya 26). To address the drawbacks of our current age, utopia travels through time and space to solve all of its issues. On the other side, dystopia presents a grim future. The truth is that both utopia and dystopia are critiques of the time and society in which people live. These two sorts of issues are frequently encountered, but they approach them from different angles. Though dystopia suggests that the problems of the present will worsen into catastrophes in the future, utopia imagines that these issues will be resolved. In the utopian narratives, there is optimism and hope for the future but in the dystopian narratives, there is a pessimistic attitude (Gökşen 188).

The future portrayed in utopias and dystopias are intended to be possible scenarios without discounting the likelihood that things would go smoothly or poorly. In contrast to utopia and anti-utopia, dystopia describes a society that either develops

as a result of unfortunate occurrences or exists to serve the needs of a certain segment of the population (Gordin et al. 13–14). We appear to live in a dystopian post-apocalyptic world. The extent to which these opportunities are realized also depends on the people's civic, social, and moral obligations. In this way, dystopia rejects the notion that mankind will ever achieve perfection (Vieira 18). Because of our sheer reliance on technology, COVID-19 has given rise to a new type of dystopia, a technological dystopia. Public places and social interactions were symbolically altered to encourage "compliance" with the "new normal," in which we were advised to avoid direct human contact and instead urged to seek solace in our private digital universes for both treatment and escape (Briggs et al.).

Our reliance on technology and smartphone addiction was already problematic enough. However, in the COVID-19 era, technology's metallic hold on human life accelerated much more quickly than before. In essence, COVID-19 is bringing about the technological dystopia we have long feared. People are mesmerized by the manufactured joys of technology. We are now utterly reliant on technology. It has become impossible for us to distinguish between actual life and our imagination since we are so engrossed in it. What is the truth? Does reality exist? How can one tell what is real from what is made up? In today's modern society, it appears to be rather tough to provide answers. In correspondence, it is unclear where the line between reality and imagination is drawn, as well as which facts, events, or ideas our minds deem genuine and which ones fall under the category of imagination. The creation of reality in the simulation universe and the effects of new communication technologies on human existence are both significantly influenced by the internet and new communication technologies

The creation of hyperreality in the virtual world and how new communication technologies impact human existence are both significantly influenced by the internet and other new communication technologies. According to Baudrillard, hyperreality is created by models of a real without origin or reality (Simulacra 1). As a result, everything in this world can only come into being by its infinitely reproducible representation. The modern world is the desert of the real itself as a result of the widespread use of these models (Simulacra 1). In contrast to utopia and anti-utopia, dystopia describes a society that either develops as a result of unfortunate occurrences or exists to serve the needs of a certain segment of the population (Gordin et al. 13–14).

We appear to live in a dystopian post-apocalyptic world. It explains how simulations of reality are influencing us and how we see the world more and more. A vision that is not genuine but is intended to be viewed as real is called a simulacrum. This concept is defined by Jean Baudrillard in *The Precession of Simulacra*: Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential person, or a material. It is the creation of a hyperreal by models that has no source or reality. It is no longer a matter of emulating, copying, or even parodying. It is a matter of exchanging the real for the real by using the real's signs (1-2). His main examples are Watergate, Disneyland, and psychosomatic sickness. Similar language is used by Fredric Jameson in his description of the simulacrum, which states that it serves a special purpose in what Sartre would have termed the derealization of the entire environment of everyday reality (34).

Our society is becoming more technologically advanced and communication-based, but it is also becoming more hyperreal—that is, we are seeing the world in ways that are progressively distinct from how it is in reality. Technological dystopia has created hyperreality and simulacra in which it is not possible to distinguish what is real and what is not.

The technological dystopia emerging in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic can now be seen as a new variant of dystopia, creating a world that appears to be both technologically advanced and apocalyptic. In the wake of the COVID-19 viral pandemic (2020), the result in sales and production of apocalyptic fiction, particularly novels, has bloomed since such works could make sense of the encounter with the present epidemic in real life.

The current study intends to find out how technology surrounds human life which makes them dehumanized by losing their individuality, disregarding their real vision of the world and the authenticity of the human being by creating hyperreality in the simulation universe. It makes individuals lonely in technological developments and society moves away from reality in a critical way. In these dystopian novels, characters are controlled by technology. Moreover, technological dystopia is creating hyperreality and simulacra. It features heightened issues like dehumanization, loss of individuality and change of human behavior and attitude. They act whatever they watch on media which results in making them lose their individuality. This sense of being watched controls human actions and expressions. It dehumanizes an individual by depriving his freedom of behavior. Amidst the exploration of hyperreality and simulacra, the research

also investigates their implications on the human experience, particularly in terms of dehumanization and loss of individuality. While the research title emphasizes the centrality of hyperreality and simulacra, the inclusion of these broader socio-cultural themes enhances the depth of analysis, providing a nuanced understanding of the dystopian representation presented in the chosen texts. Through this focused examination, this study aims to uncover the intricate layers of reality, simulation, and their impact on contemporary society. The COVID-19 era is dominated by technology in which social and cultural values are shaped and changed with signs and symbols. The research will also analyze how technological dystopia shifts the behaviors, values and needs of characters. The technological dystopia may have resulted in hyperreality and simulation universe which can change human behavior as well as attitudes and how people see themselves and the world around them.

In essence, fictional pandemic-based novels frequently depict dystopian futures marked by advanced technology, monitoring, and societal control, reflecting concerns about technology's overuse and possible detrimental effects on human society. These concerns are especially relevant in the context of COVID-19, which has increased technology reliance and virtual communication as a result of social distancing tactics. Pandemic novels act as a mirror for real-world events, providing insights into the societal implications of technological advancements, hyperreality, and the blurring of boundaries between virtual and physical realities, presenting COVID-19 through the lens of technological dystopia.

### **1.3 Thesis Statement**

We now live in hyperreality, a world in which simulations of reality appear more real than real. COVID-19 appears to create a technological dystopia, most likely resulting in a hyperreality and simulated universe. As individuals found escape in the digital realm during COVID-19, they were alienated from reality and trapped in artificial images and experiences. People in the hyperreal environment may have been dehumanized, resulting in a loss of individuality.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

1- To find out the ways through which simulation affects the characters in the novel, *Burntcoat* by Sarah Hall and *Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult.

2- To identify and analyze the difference between simulacra and reality in *Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult and *Burntcoat* by Sarah Hall.

3- To examine the role of simulation leading toward dehumanization and loss of individuality.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1- In what ways does the simulation affect the characters in the novel, *Burntcoat* by Sarah Hall and *Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult?

2- How is simulacra different from reality in *Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult and *Burntcoat* by Sarah Hall?

3- How does simulation lead to dehumanization and loss of individuality?

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

This study holds significance for academics, international stakeholders, and laypeople alike, since it provides a nuanced analysis of the intricate interplay between technology, hyperreality, and human experiences. The research deepens its analysis by incorporating Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation and simulacra, which highlights the proliferation of hyperrealities and the blurring of the barriers between reality and simulation. While the study provides useful insights into how literature reflects and critiques societal concerns in the digital age, it is critical to recognize the limitations of any particular theoretical framework. Furthermore, while the study may provide insight into tackling difficulties faced by technology improvements, it is critical to acknowledge the multidimensional nature of such solutions and the potential unintended repercussions they may have. Furthermore, while the study gives insight on the effects of important events like as the COVID-19 pandemic on technological dystopias and hyperrealities, such studies must be approached with care, given the multitude of elements impacting social transitions. Thus, by embracing a variety of theoretical viewpoints and appreciating the intricacies inherent in societal events, the research intends to create a more thorough knowledge of the digital world and its ramifications for persons and communities.

## 1.7 Delimitation

This research is delimited to an in-depth study of two major novels which are *Burncoat* (2021) by Sarah Hall and *Wish You Were Here* (2021) by Jodi Picoult. Both novelists discuss the technological dystopia increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. These works are studied in the backdrop of Jean Baudrillard's theory, *Simulation and Simulacra* and *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* by Neil Postman. Both are contemporary novels highlighting the current situation of the world facing the COVID-19 pandemic by only focusing on the aspect that COVID-19 has increased the technological dystopia. The rationale for selecting pandemic novels from both America and the United Kingdom, situated in the same age and developing countries, is to thoroughly investigate the diverse experiences and views surrounding the COVID-19 epidemic. By analyzing novels from these two nations within the same chronological and socioeconomic framework, common themes and obstacles can be discovered. It also comprehend how the epidemic has affected individuals and communities in various cultural and social situations.

## 1.8 Organization of the Study

The tentative layout of this research project is designed in a way that it would be divided into five chapters:

Chapter one deals with the background of the study where the COVID-19 pandemic is elaborated to connect it with the technological dystopia. After that, the thesis statement is discussed. Furthermore, the research questions for the present study are posed to carry out the research in a critical manner. The research aims to highlight the rationale of the study and its significance as well. The first chapter ends with delimitation.

Chapter two explains the works which have been already done in this field. Moreover, the contemporary study finds out the research gaps as well. This study reviews the works done by researchers on the selected texts in the technological dystopian world to establish the newness of the research.

Chapter three presents the theoretical framework of the study. Furthermore, it intends to explain the methodology through which the research is carried out. It also shows what kind of research is it. This research is conducted by placing the primary

authors and their contemporary texts in the larger framework of dystopian literature. The study not only focuses on technological dystopia but also traces the elements of hyperreality and simulacra by applying the theoretical framework of Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations and Simulacra* and Postman's *Technology: A Surrender of Culture to Technology*.

In chapter 4 and chapter 5, how technology surrounds people's lives and causes them to forget their individuality while dismissing their true perspective on the world and their inherent humanity is discussed. People feel more alone as technology advances and society increasingly distances themselves from reality. The characters in these dystopian novels are manipulated by technology. They act on what they see in the media, which causes them to lose their uniqueness. Human behaviors and expressions are controlled by this feeling of being seen. By denying him the right to express himself freely, it dehumanizes the person. The COVID-19 age is controlled by technology, which uses signs and symbols to create and alter social and cultural norms. The study also examines how technology dystopia alters characters' needs, attitudes, and actions. Human behavior, attitude, and methods of perceiving, thinking, feeling, behaving, and interpreting oneself and the world around them are all altered by new technology. Likewise, the role of media and the internet in creating the simulation universe are discussed.

Chapter six will conclude the study by presenting the result of the research. Moreover, the findings of the research, social implications and recommendations for future researchers are also discussed.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter deals with the review of literature about the primary texts which are *Burntcoat* by Sarah Hall and *Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult. It not only focuses on the current issues of selected primary texts but also situates the current research in broader terms. At the same time, it identifies and traces the gap which these articles lack.

#### 2.1 Works related to *Burntcoat*

Attar in her research article, “Art and Surviving Trauma in Times of Crisis” explores crises and trauma in the novel, *Burntcoat* by Sarah Hall. It is thought that human character development and artistic expression are influenced by times of crisis and stress. This study focuses on the ways that a Covid-like virus influences the main female character in Sarah Hall's *Burntcoat* to become a well-known artist and create a national memorial in remembrance of the million people who died. The experience of the anguish of loss and the catastrophic devastation, which enable the artist to advance to maturity and creativity, are common sources of creative symbolism throughout the book. Throughout the novel, violent arguments over life's necessities and the horrific socioeconomic conditions in Britain, when the virus took hold, are used to depict themes of struggle and gender oppression (ATTAR). The study explores the deep effects that crises have on the main character, emphasizing in particular the catastrophic destruction that eventually sparks the creation of art. It noticeably leaves out any discussion of how the epidemic influences the emergence of a technological dystopian society and the phenomena of hyperreality.

Pandemics and epidemics have been extensively discussed in literature on a global scale. People and society have been rendered essentially immobile by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study examines the responses of fictitious individuals infected with coronavirus, exploring how the virus affects them, how they interact with each other, and how they cope with their environment. The study focuses on two English novels: Sarah Moss's *The Fell* (2021) and Sarah Hall's *Burntcoat* (2021). The diversity of issues in these works makes them suitable for critical examination. The selected writings portray the victim characters' experiences throughout quarantine. The

study aims to determine how characters were affected by the epidemic by examining their subconscious actions. The research approach this from the perspective of Freudian psychoanalysis. (Dhannoon)

Cummins, in his review of the novel, *Burntcoat* talks about the significance that comes from Hall's ability to focus on the creation of science fiction worlds with horror surprises and a hypersensitive eye for nature which Hall has always incorporated. Furthermore, he draws the attention of readers toward the COVID-19 situation where there are shortages and looting, curfews, and armed patrols as the characters, Halit and Edith experience lockdown in their warehouse on the outskirts of a northern metropolis. The major topic of debate in the Cummins review is Edith and Halit's sex. According to him, these sequences aren't entirely uncompromising, they are high-literary and forthright, with a language that demands attention (Cummins). The mentioned review is regarding the intimate relationship between Edith and her boyfriend. There is no such discussion on technological dystopia or hyperreality.

Lara Feigel in the review, "Love under Lockdown" examines COVID-19, fueled by scientific experiments and ecological collapse which is a revelation of the new lethal viruses that will emerge after the apocalypse. The reviewer argues how Sarah Hall has transformed those fantasies into the novel *Burntcoat*, which is both epic and small-scale and tells the tale of two lovers cut off from a collapsing world. Society around them disintegrates as a result of disease and lockdown. Fighting occurs at food banks and stores that have been burglarized as the virus spreads uncontrollably along lines of ethnicity and poverty. More authoritarian measures are taken by the government in response: military patrols are put in place, and everyone is subject to curfews. The virus and lockdown we've experienced are not like Hall's fictitious version, and if we give in to the urge to glorify disasters, we risk furthering our current dead end. The insights made by Hall concerning sickness and its connections to creativity and sexuality are interesting, though. Feigel points out the dystopian world in the COVID-19 era (Feigel). This review focuses exclusively on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The romantic connection between Edith and her lover is also heavily emphasized in Feigel's review. In addition, the stress of the dystopian condition causes individuals to fight at food banks or when they are quarantined and have to wear masks. However, there is no such discussion on technological dystopia and how it has increased in the COVID-19 era.

Another review of the novel *Burntcoat* by Stuart Kelly ponders upon the mystical reflections about the virus in *Burntcoat*. Its flexibility and the way it is perfectly composed, star-like, and timed for the greatest chaos, for transmission across borders, replication, and forming galaxies of itself are marveled at with aghast. Kelly illustrates a silent rage that how our substance is still the same; even with improving agents and a great sympathy about how one loves individuals who are nearing the unknown. He continues his discussion about the novel by saying that our worst instincts are within us. We keep wearing our cast. Moreover, he points out the virus's consequences by adding that it would be true to examine the similarity between Naomi's state and coping with the virus's consequences. It's not as though the cosmos has never experienced sorrow (Kelly). The review is regarding the consequences of COVID-19 on the behavior and attitude of characters in *Burntcoat*. It is all about the challenges faced by individuals during COVID-19. It is all about the sufferings of the world. Overall, it's a thoughtful piece that challenges readers to consider the complexities of life, disease, and how people react to difficulty. Technological dystopia where simulations and hyperreality dominate is not discussed anywhere in the review.

JacquiWine's journal begins with a discussion of the COVID-19 outbreak and how it has affected the lives of the characters. It also highlights the trauma that the protagonist, Edith, experienced as a youngster. The journal's major focus is on Edith's relationship with her lover throughout the months of lockdown. The journal is fascinated by Hall's lyrical and visceral way of writing about sex. The emphasis is on recreating the physicality of the performance while retaining the emotional depth. These sections are erotic and passionate without ever becoming unnecessary, a credit to Hall's astute artistic and literary judgment (Jacqui). In short, we can say that the major focus is on the intimacy between the two lovers and the trauma that Edith faced during her childhood. There is no such debate on a society that is dominated by technology or hyperreality.

The research article, "Is the Current State of our Societies an Inspiration for Future Dystopian Novels?: Utopia and Dystopia in Sarah Hall's *The Carhullan Army* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*" discusses two dystopian novels which are *The Carhullan Army* by Sarah Hall and *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. The researcher points out the imagination of a bleak future in which men, women, society as a whole, and the environment all experience major setbacks and disasters that

are far worse and much more extreme than the one in which we currently live. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how closely related the imbalances and tendencies in the societies of 1985 and 2007 are to the problems that both writers were greatly influenced by and which are addressed in both dystopian books. As a result, Manton examines several fresh elements in connection to the world of women, power dynamics, human rights, and the restriction of freedom and loss of identity in totalitarian nations. Both novels examined by Manton express a sense of foreboding and a warning of very bad future situations that, if we don't keep an eye on them, may happen in our actual reality (Manton). The researcher has depicted utopian and dystopian worlds but the new variant of dystopia which is the technological dystopia is not mentioned anywhere in his research.

Fernandes in his article examines contemporary British writer Sarah Hall's unique short stories. The article focuses on the author's first two volumes of short tales, *The Beautiful Indifference* (2011) and *Madame Zero* (2017), and also the possibilities afforded by her most recent collection, *Sudden Traveler* (2019). The researcher discusses Hall's focus on a wide range of current concerns, including identity, gender, violence, and mortality. However, he only analyzes how identities are subverted or transgressed in her short tales, as well as how the concept of identity representation combines with other themes to become a key and powerful aspect in the narrative framework. He praises Hall's collections of short stories which offer an intriguing case study since they demonstrate the author's pursuit of a unifying theme and also demonstrate the resilience and vitality of the short story as a genre (FERNANDES). This research is carried out to observe how identities are disrupted. There is no mention of technological Dystopia which has increased in COVID-19.

Researcher in his research article explores a unique, sentimental twenty-first-century trend in the agricultural-community novel regarding rural England. It traces its origins to the early 20th century when a very firm tradition of rural fiction flourished. This tradition is comparable to the current renaissance in nature writing in some ways, particularly when it comes to the effects of the First World War on farming communities and rural life, as well as the social repercussions that followed in the interwar period. By underlining present concerns about extinction and participation in its causes, the researcher demonstrates a historical comparison that how Sarah Hall and Melissa Harrison revisit this tradition while updating it (Head). The above-mentioned

article explores the tradition of rural fiction but it lacks the shift toward a technological dystopian world.

One more researcher in his article discusses the style of Sarah Hall and also depicts the pastoral genre in the majority of her writings, drawing on its complications to describe and analyze relationships between humans and non-humans as well as to revisit and disrupt its traditions. Furthermore, it continues to discuss the Anthropocene's difficulties which are made evident through the pastoral as an artistic and ethical medium. In the researcher's opinion, Sarah Hall's *Haweswater* and *The Wolf Border* provide an alternate pastoral trajectory that enables her to depict the difficulties of the contemporary environmental catastrophe by drawing on the pastoral genre's historical roots. As it is the formalized analysis based on themes of Sarah Hall's fiction in the context of the latest materialist philosophies. The researcher aims to demonstrate how the reemergence of the rustic style is a means for Hall to illuminate the genuine content of the countryside that frequently goes overlooked. The ontological hierarchy that permits human subjects to reify nature, the actual working and living situations of land workers, the political ideology motivating rewilding efforts, and the representation of the environment are all important factors. With the help of this alternative pastoral trajectory, literature is better equipped to investigate, question, and reflect on the current environmental issue and our place as naturally intertwined beings (Pompie). This article explores the pastoral genre in the writing of Sarah Hall. The depiction of hyperreality in the modern era is not mentioned anywhere in the research.

## **2.2 Works related to *Wish You Were Here***

Researcher in the article discovers the novel, *Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult as a light-hearted diversion from the epidemic, but it turns out to be much more than that. The researcher emphasizes the epidemic which has a significant negative impact on Diana's life. Murray continues to stress on the protagonist's life, Diana who can comprehend what she needed to do to be happy in the new post-pandemic world. The researcher explains the experience of Diana in the Galapagos, even if it is debatably not anything that ever occurred but her journey plays a vital role in shaping her personality. Murray explores the details of Diana's life when she returns to New York in vivid and riveting detail. The main focus of this study is the struggle of Diana and her acceptance of her hallucination. She is unable to accept the fact that she never went to Galapagos and whatever she experienced was not more than a dream. In short,

Murray in the article examines the journey of Diana living with hallucinations (Murray). The researcher has not explored the reasons for Diana's hallucination or linked it with hyperreality.

A reviewer in her review of the novel, *Wish You Were Here* considers it as a meditation on discovering joy in life, in being present, and in discovering and rediscovering what counts. She draws the attention of her readers toward relationships, purpose, and love that count amid a pandemic, not the upcoming meeting, job project, or purchase, at a time when dread is running wild and isolation is a major aspect of existence. Her main focus is on the protagonist Diana and her experiences that capture all of this, and although none of her insights are radically presented, they are still conveyed in a way that seems reassuring and upbeat. Lisa mentions *Wish You Were Here* as a pandemic novel. The information provided on COVID from the views of healthcare professionals, survivors, and relatives of those who passed away feels plucked from the news, and (Lisa). The reviewer has shed light on many aspects like relationships, love, and the purpose of life during the COVID-19 pandemic. But it lacks the discussion on the domination of technology which creates the hyperreal world full of simulations and images.

The next research article, "Self-Control in Jodi Picoult's *Small Great Things*" demonstrates Ruth Jefferson's restraint in Jodi Picoult's *Small Great Things*. This investigation was qualitative, and the results are conveyed in words. This study used Jodi Picoult's novel *Small Great Things* as its data source. The researcher employed Sigmund Freud's psychological theory of personality, which holds that each person's personality is composed of three parts: the ego, the superego, and the id. Numerous discoveries from this study offer numerous lessons for all people, especially for our social lives, which occasionally have connections to the issues in the *Small Great Things* novel. These findings not only advance current research but also add to it. As mentioned in this study's discussion of self-control, Ruth Jefferson, the main character in this book, exemplifies self-control in how she approaches every issue, including accusations, discrimination, humiliation, and even the legal process that traps her but isn't her mistake. Being indulgent, having high self-esteem, having personal qualities, having high self-defense, overcoming, and being low-profile are the six aspects of self-control that Ruth Jefferson's outlook reflects. These results lead to the conclusion that Ruth Jefferson's self-control in the novel *Small Great Things* by Jodi Picoult is

measured by her inner emotional fortitude (Runtukahu et al.). The entire research is on the psychological aspect. The dystopian elements have not been explored throughout the research article.

The article, “The Maternal Dilemma and Nuptial Ordeals in Jodi Picoult’s Fiction: The Lens of Maternal Feminism” is a research article by Muhammad Ayub Jajja and Ayesha Akram in which they talk about illusion that does not exist, and being unselfish is an obligation rather than a choice. In her 2009 novel, *Handle with Care*, the article discusses the talent of Jodi Picoult and how skillfully she depicts this scenario. In the context of raising children with exceptional needs, the article explores some crucial themes about motherhood and matrimonial bonds. The tale begins with a powerless mother desperately trying to save her dying daughter before edging progressively into a difficult marriage and unhappy relationship. The struggle of the mother is illustrated by the researcher who is willing to use any legal or illegal methods to save her daughter's life. This research looks at why being a mother is still the position that is least regarded and what variables cause motherhood to suffer because of the other jobs that mothers fulfill in the family. Since it also addresses a similar mother problem, another supporting source by the same author, *My Sister's Keeper* (2008), has also been taken into consideration. An in-depth critique of Picoult's argument is conducted under the theoretical umbrella of maternal feminism advanced by Andrea O'Reilly.

Haupt in her review talks about our familiarity with what occurred on that day—the day when normal became extinct. The researcher continues to explore Picoult's imagined world where Diana, a Sotheby's art specialist, and Finn are getting ready for their trip to the Galápagos, where Diana hopes Finn will pop the question. The hospital needs Finn, a surgical resident at New York-Presbyterian, to help combat this mystery new infection that is starting to spread around the city, so he says he can no longer go. After more than a month on the island, Diana and Gabriel finally consummate their growing romance. They come together at a beach to start again as friends when things grow awkward. She eventually awakens at a hospital which is located in New York. Finn with a heavy heart, informs her that she has been on a ventilator for five days and has nearly passed away. The review points out the difficulties characters face during the COVID-19 era. The review has not discussed anything related to her obsession with simulacra or images which made her lost in the hyperreal world.

The research article written by Muhammad depicts how the fight between humanity and the communicable COVID-19 virus is revealed within an evolutionary framework in Jodi Picoult's *Wish You Were Here* (2021). Since Darwinian symbols and themes dominate the novel from the onset, it offers a Darwinist lens through which the story's events may be analyzed. However, "Darwinian" in this research refers to both Brain Boyd's idea of evocriticism, a more modern application of Darwin's evolutionary presumptions, and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. The researcher contends that the conflict between people and the COVID-19 epidemic is an evolutionary fight for survival within the Darwinian framework the tale creates. This research first explains the Darwinian and evolutionary context that the story reinforces, stressing Darwin's theory of evolution and such newly developing literary movements as literary Darwinism and evocriticism. This is done to demonstrate the validity of the assumption. After that, it examines how the story uses the same evolutionary ideas to explain how the virus spreads quickly to secure its survival and how the characters, on the other hand, adopt adaptive behaviors to fend off the pandemic. Most importantly, the study demonstrates how Picoult inspires a more upbeat outlook about the pandemic's future. Lastly, it highlights how this work of fiction serves as an adaptation due to its capacity for simulating. The above research is carried out through the lens of the Darwinian framework. As researcher discusses the conflict between the COVID-19 pandemic and people. It lacks the tracing of elements like hyperreality and simulacra in the technological dystopian world.

The above research articles lack the exploration of elements of technological dystopia such as hyperreality and simulacra. The current study focuses on the COVID-19 age in particular, where technology is crucial to the dehumanization of society since it controls it. It causes a loss of individuality. Additionally, how technological dystopia has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and the way it is producing simulacra and hyperreality have been discussed in this study.



## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Theoretical Framework

This chapter primarily deals with the theoretical framework and methodology chosen to conduct research. I have selected *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) by Jean Baudrillard as my primary theoretical framework to carry out the research. Jean Baudrillard was a French philosopher, sociologist and cultural theorist. His work is most directly related to post-structuralism and the early postmodern movement. It inspired the concept of hyperreality. It has been discovered by the early semiotic research of Baudrillard that in this modern era, the consumer society is full of signs and symbols that should be decoded. To work on this concept, he created the groundwork for his study which is *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981). I have selected his concept of hyperreality to explore the blurred line between real and simulation or representation. As Baudrillard says, “Hyperreality is created by models of a real without origin or reality” (Simulacra 1). This concept assists the research in examining the modern and technological era in which characters are living and has changed the truths and realities with symbols and signs. Moreover, whatever characters experience is merely a simulation of reality. Baudrillard contends that a technological era is influenced by films, TV, social media and other forms of platforms. Anything that we watch on such platforms is the representation or simulation of reality that is not real but seems more real than real. Besides, he draws attention to the simulation process. As a result, the things are represented by simulations or representations and such simulations become more real than the actual real. The various forms of simulations lead to hyperreality in which the line between real and simulations becomes blurred. Therefore, we are only able to experience planned realities. For instance, edited war documentaries or reality shows.

I have also incorporated Baudrillard’s three orders of simulacra in the chapter *Precession of Simulacra*. In the first order, an image plays an important role in representing reality. In the second order, the boundary between reality and simulations

or representations becomes blurred. In the third one, simulacra is the ultimate simulation. The connection between reality and representations is replaced. As a result, it becomes almost impossible to distinguish between real and simulation which causes hyperreality.

The other element which is taken out from Baudrillard's theory is his concept of Simulacrum. The idea of hyperreality by Jean Baudrillard is quite connected to his concept of Simulacrum. He states that in simulacrum, reality is replaced by its representations. He notices that this contemporary world is full of simulacrum as false images or representations replace reality in such a way that people are not able to differentiate between what is real and what is not. Hyperreality is defined in the four phases of the signed order. The first phase of sign order is Reflection. It is possible to state it as an authentic copy or image which signifies the authenticity or reality (6). The second stage is Mask. It is the perversion of reality. The depiction is not real which is why it may be known as an unfaithful copy (image). Illusion is the third stage. It is the absence of actual reality where the representation acts as an original copy. In the fourth phase, simulation has no connection with reality which is why it is known as a Pure Simulacrum (representation). In addition, he states that the representation is the reflection of an actual reality. It disguises the actual reality. Moreover, the lack of actual reality is also concealed as it is a pure simulacrum. Baudrillard being an expert media theorist elaborates that hyperreality affects media-associated society. The specific elements of Baudrillard's theory fit well to explore the lives of characters in this technological era and their extreme reliance on media which influence their minds.

The other theoretical framework that has been taken is *Technology: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* by Neil Postman. He published the book in 1992. It defines the progress and features of a technopoly. The theorist outlines that a technopoly is a technological-dominated society in which the culture finds its approval and orders from technology. It is categorized by the technology that generates excessive information. Besides, it provides direction and purpose for people living in a technologically dominated society.

I have focused on only one type of technology which is technopolies. The other two types are using cultures and technocracies. Each one of them is generated when new technologies appear by competing with old cultures typically for supremacy of their viewpoint. In the technocratic time, only economic thought was able to be

controlled but in the technopoly, it can influence cultural and philosophical thought too. With the help of technopoly, I have traced the elements of technological dystopia. As Postman states technopoly changes the perspectives of people regarding the world and also about themselves where they cannot find any reason to think differently. Outside of this monopoly, individuals who are not part of it are enticed to believe in the deceptive "wisdom" supplied by new technology, which has little significance to the normal person (9, 11). It is not only a state of culture but also a state of mind. Technology seems to offer characters freedom and creativity. But in reality, it changes their perspectives and viewpoints.

Characters' daily lives are influenced and controlled by communication technologies in the world they live in today. Through Baudrillard's idea of hyperreality, this research demonstrates to the world our constant confusion about what is genuine and what is manufactured. The modern day's visuals and indications. The majority of the time, we live in a world where phony realities and absurdities are the norm. Neil Postman's book *Technology: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* will aid in the development of knowledge about technology dystopia, which essentially changes people's demands and conduct humans. Additionally, it describes how technology influences us. Technology has always been in control of humans, and as a result, we frequently ignore a reality as well as facts. People's thoughts and points of view are continually captivated by hyperreality or manufactured realities. Due to the effects of hyperreality and consumerism, the images and signals do not represent the truth; rather, they corrupt reality as a whole and result in pure Simulacrum.

### **3.2 Methodology**

The methodology behind this research is purely qualitative. The present research examines, *Burncoat* by Sarah Hall and *Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult. It is a qualitative research. The method used for this research is textual analysis of the primary and secondary sources as highlighted by Catherine Belsey. Extra textual knowledge is constantly involved in interpretation. A part of it is general cultural knowledge and the other part of it is gained from secondary sources (160).

The research is carried out by figuring out language, narrative techniques and symbols found in texts to explore how characters got trapped in hyperreality and simulation universe.

By focusing on language, the researcher has examined the language used by the authors in the novels to describe technological advancements, dystopian elements, and the blurring of reality and simulation. Moreover, the study has also identified recurring symbols or motifs within the texts that represent themes of technological dystopia and hyperreality. Besides that, it analyzed how these symbols are used to convey deeper meanings on contemporary society's relationship with technology by finding symbolic representations of virtual spaces, artificial environments, or digital artifacts that serve as manifestations of hyperreality within the narrative. In the correspondence, these steps are used to distinguish between what is real and what is simulated, as well as to see how the characters are affected by the simulation.

Moreover, narrative techniques help the research to analyze the fragmented narratives that mirror the fragmented nature of hyperreality, where past, present, and future blur together. The focus is also on the metafictional devices that challenge traditional notions of reality and representation within the narrative. By identifying the patterns, contrasts and repetitions in language, symbols and narrative techniques, the study highlights the key themes or motifs related to technological dystopia and hyperreality. The focus is on the contrasts between the real and the simulated, the natural and the artificial, or the authentic and the fabricated within the texts. These patterns, repetitions, and contrasts contribute to the overall thematic development of the texts.

Making sense of a text does not involve imagining anything from it or extracting its meaning. The goal of textual analysis is to comprehend this information from the text. According to Belsey, this is possible by "understanding the process of interpretation as the effect of a relation between a reader and a text" (166). She contends that there is never a single explicit meaning to something and that it is impossible to conclude since there is always something to contribute to the research using textual analysis because it may be extensively studied via all potential approaches.

The research has traced the elements of simulation and hyperreality in the selected texts to see how these texts make the characters lose their sense of individuality by becoming dehumanized. Moreover, the research intends to highlight the technological dystopia which is likely to increase in the COVID-19.

The researcher has applied the theory of Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) and Neil Postman's book, *Technology: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (1992). By applying the concepts of Jean Baudrillard, the research can find out the elements of dehumanization, loss of individuality, dependence on technology, hyperreality and simulacra as well. The study has also found the ways through which the characters in the selected texts are trapped in hyperreality. Jean Baudrillard's theory regarding the four orders of simulacra would further assist in media and the internet's role in creating hyperreality. The first kind of simulacra has discovered the posts on social media that accurately reflect the actual circumstances surrounding the protagonist's unconsciousness. The second order has been taken into account remarks that depart from reality. Such statements include several interpretations creating a simulation. Additionally, it has generated multiple realities based on how individuals see the world. There are remarks in the third order of simulacra that exacerbate the misinformation. The researcher has explored how different hyperreal representations are produced by it. The other theoretical framework, *Technology: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (1992) would further elaborate on the increase of technological dystopia in COVID-19. The study has also defined the features of a technopoly. It is a society that is dominated by technology. Postman contends the necessity for defenses so that significance from information can be found. Furthermore, he states the information should be limited. Technopoly is the dominance of science in which there is no actual ethical direction. Only practical thoughts are important (79). Technopoly, according to Postman, cannot bring about order and purpose, and when it attempts, "pain and stupidity... are the consequences" (Kjantzen).

Additionally, it has described how technology has influenced us. Postman's concept would also support the study of the character's development in a technological dystopian world. The conclusions are based on how the researcher interprets the selected novels in the context of the proposed theoretical framework.

## CHAPTER 4

### DEHUMANIZATION AND LOSS OF INDIVIDUALITY IN THE SIMULATION UNIVERSE

Jodi Picoult is a very renowned American author known for her thought-provoking novels and short stories. Her works mostly highlight ethical dilemmas and complicated themes. Her writing revolves around multiple genres such as family tales, drama and literary fiction. She often talks about social issues. She is famous for being a versatile writer as she can create multiple- perspective narratives. Her stories are very engaging and impactful. She is celebrated for her contribution to contemporary literature as she addresses challenging themes in a captivating manner.

She is recognized as a top New York Times bestselling author. She has written thirty novels. Some of her famous work includes *Mad Honey*, *Wish You Were Here*, *Small Great Things* and *My Sister's Keeper* etc. The novels of Picoult were translated into thirty-four languages in thirty-five countries. Her four novels which are *The Pact*, *Plain Truth*, *The Tenth Circle* and *Salem Falls* were used as scripts for television movies. *My Sister Keeper* novel has also been made into a movie released by New Line Cinema. Furthermore, she has also written five issues of Wonder Woman for DC comics. Apart from that, she has also received numerous awards. Some of them include the New England Bookseller Award for fiction, a Lifetime Attainment Award for mainstream fiction which was given by Romance Writers of America, the NH Literary Award for wonderful literary merit, the Sarah Josepha Hale Award and the ALEX Award from YALSA. Moreover, she is also a subsidizer of the Carole Shields Prize for fiction. It is awarded to female fiction authors.

The novel, *Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult is about the COVID-19 pandemic. It started on 13 March 2020 when the cases of COVID-19 were reported in the United States. Diana is the protagonist of the novel who is a very ambitious girl. She worked for Sotheby's on art acquisitions. She decided to go on a trip to Galapagos with her boyfriend Finn. Unfortunately, being a doctor, he was unable to go as he had to take care of COVID-19 patients. It is her journey to explore the world alone. The

novel's surprising conclusion reveals that Diana never visited the Island and that it was all a delusion on her part. When she awoke off the ventilator, she became aware of it.

#### **4.1 Diana O'Toole: Trapped in Hyperreality**

*Wish You Were Here* is written during the COVID-19 pandemic breaking out, at a time of global crises around the world. "Last night Broadway theaters had shut down performances for a month, after an usher tested positive for Covid, out of an abundance of caution" (10). In March 2020, as the coronavirus situation intensifies in New York City, Diana O'Toole, a young associate specialist at Sotheby's, and her boyfriend, Dr. Finn Colson, face a sudden dilemma.

They wanted to go to the Galapagos Island for vacation, but Finn, who works at a hospital, could not take time off due to the urgent situation. They saw the advertisement online which persuaded them to go on the Galapagos trip. Finn and Diana became extremely worried about the extensive financial commitment related to their trip, which they found through an online advertisement. Advertisements also play a significant part in the hyperrealistic world order; they have a strong impact on people's senses and transport them there, impairing their ability to discriminate between reality and its representations. Diana says, "But we've been saving up for four years, and thanks to a deal I found online, we managed to fit a trip into our budget" (22). Living in the hyperreal world, people seem to depend solely on technology, where their actions are mainly determined by the stimuli encountered in the digital realm. Such language is used to describe technological advancements. According to Postman, technopoly is the dominance of science in which there is no actual ethical direction. Only practical thoughts are important (79). Media and pictures that influence our opinions of what is worthwhile and attractive might sustain hyperreality. The media's hyperreal depictions of wealth may contribute to people's dread of losing money by encouraging them to appreciate money more for its symbolic worth than for its practical use. Even, she was worried about the money too. For her, going to Island was more important so she decided to go on vacation. It shows the influence of online advertisements on her. We are living in the modern world which is full of images and simulacra. For us, the things that are shown in the form of representations on screens, in the hyperreal world are more significant. Even though, we do not realize that when it changes from real to representation. We are easily influenced by the internet or media. Whatever we see on it, we consider it real without knowing the real story. After watching the advertisement

online, Diana decided to travel to the Galapagos alone when the cases of COVID-19 were at their peak. Diana reached the island of Isabela when the authorities decided to impose a two-week border closure for quarantine purposes.

When she arrived at her hotel, she took a bath to refresh herself. “After I shower, I braid my hair, connect to the shitty hotel Wi-Fi, and try to FaceTime Finn” (26). Subsequently, she tried to connect to the hotel's Wi-Fi network as she wanted to Facetime her partner, Finn. However, she was disappointed, as the internet connection was unstable. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, technological devices became essential tools for people to maintain connections with their loved ones. It was already troubling enough how much we relied on technology and were addicted to smartphones. However, technology's dependence on human existence advanced far more swiftly in the COVID-19 period. COVID-19 is essentially ushering in the technological dystopia we have long feared. Technology keeps people engrossed in their artificial pleasures. We now depend entirely on technology. We are so absorbed in it that we cannot tell the difference between real life and our fantasy. What is reality? Does reality continue to exist? How can one distinguish between the real and the imagined? Nevertheless, this reliance on technology also has certain drawbacks. For instance, in Diana's case, her preoccupation with taking pictures and seeking stable internet connectivity appears to overshadow her ability to fully immerse herself in and enjoy the trip. “I edge closer toward it with my camera, thinking I can send a picture to Finn” (27). The novel frequently indicates Diana's obsession with a hyperreal world, wherein her primary focus lies in capturing images and maintaining digital communication with her boyfriend.

Hyperreality is a state in which it is impossible to tell the difference between reality and simulation, frequently as a result of the overpowering impact of media and technology. Simulacra is the imitations or depictions of things that are the representation of reality. The act of clicking a photo with a camera to send it to Finn depicts a situation where the person is interacting with a mediated image of reality as discussed in the above text. It is possible to think of the image the camera is taking as a simulation of the actual situation. This action might be considered as a little illustration of how technology can distort human perceptions and promote hyperreality. A technological dystopia may be observed in the context of the remark of utilizing a camera and the purpose of sending a photograph. Technology frequently takes center



stage in dystopian novels, dominating or adversely affecting the lives of the characters. In the scenario, when someone considers it mandatory to click a photo and share it, this textual line of Diana may convey a sense of monitoring or the intrusive nature of technology. It may also represent a loss of privacy or control over one's own experiences. By focusing on language, the researcher has examined the language used by the author in the novel to describe technological advancements. Technological devices play a vital role in representing the dependence of technology on the characters. Moreover, it highlights the theme of technological dystopia.

There is a notable emphasis placed on the significance of images, the availability of Wi-Fi connectivity, and the desire to maintain constant mobile connections. The concept of sharing pictures can be seen as a portrayal of the simulacra that dominates the hyperreal world. Baudrillard argued that the boundaries between reality and simulation have become blurred which leads to the creation of a hyperreal realm in contemporary society. Moreover, hyperreality is more significant than the actual reality in the technological era. Hyperreality is the creation of a reality without origin or actuality through models (Baudrillard 1). As Diana says, "I'll send pictures, I vow" (25). Diana's obsession with taking pictures may symbolize the hyperreal world. When people share pictures on social media platforms or through digital communication, they are sharing representations of experiences rather than the actual experiences. These pictures become simulacra, detached from their original context and transformed into symbols or signs, gaining significance in the hyperreal realm. Simulacra are imitations or depictions of things that may or may not have originals (Baudrillard 1). In essence, when someone promises to "send pictures," they are promising to make and distribute these representations. Each image they provide serves as a kind of simulacrum, a replica or representation of a certain event or experience. This illustrates how simulacra—digital pictures or representations of reality—become essential to our interactions and comprehension of the world, and how technology and communication frequently center around them. The repetition of the words like images, pictures and WIFI highlights how prevalent technology is in hyperreality, where people become trapped and the line between reality and simulation becomes more blurred.

As this novel is set during the COVID-19 pandemic, there are several textual references to the dehumanization and how it is leading to the loss of individuality. People are under surveillance all the time in the novel. They somehow believe whatever

they see on the news which represents a picture of reality which contributes to creating a hyperreal version of reality that may lack a concrete foundation in authentic events or experiences. The way they believe everything told by media is simulacra that shapes their perception of reality. According to Baudrillard, “Extreme and exaggerated forms of meditation have led to a disjunction between reality and unreality” (167).

There is one more textual line that depicts the concept of dehumanization. “The news anchors, who are parroting the press secretary, who is parroting the president” (24). Diana reassured Finn that the COVID-19 pandemic would be ended in two weeks since she had watched the TV and the news anchors comforting people. The aforementioned statement demonstrates how mindlessly individuals consume news and media. They believe anything they are told to be true. People have no freedom of choice and they are manipulated in a way that blurs the line between reality and simulation of reality. People in the COVID-19 era were disconnected from the real world. They were connected with others through technological devices. They tend to believe whatever they are told through news channels or any online resources. As Finn says, “I’m all for taking precautions, but I also know I am young and healthy. It is hard to know what to believe. Whom to believe” (24). Finn’s uncertainty about what to believe might be indicating a blurred boundary between reality and the simulated information. He is not sure but still somehow believes whatever is told by online resources. Even, he is thinking of taking the risk of not wearing a mask as he is healthy and young. Here, Finn’s perspective seems to depict the concept of the hyperreal world in which he has no individuality and is dehumanized because his perceptions are controlled by the media. Moreover, “Whom to Believe” emphasizes the challenge of navigating a hyperreal environment where several voices and storylines struggle for the audience's attention. Establishing sincere connections and trust with others in such an environment can be difficult since honesty is difficult to come by. As a result of the continual onslaught of information and contradictory messages, individuals find it difficult to connect on a human level, which can further add to a sense of dehumanization. Besides, it depicts that living in a hyperreal world, characters are not able to see the difference between simulacra and hyperreality.

Diana expects that her boyfriend, Finn, will be angry if she does not call or text him. “Finn will freak out if he doesn’t hear from me. On some rational level he knows that there is limited Wi-Fi in the Galápagos” (35). This suggests that there is an

intensified sense of anxiety regarding communication in their relationship. In the hyperreal world, communication can become a simulation of itself, where the need to stay connected becomes more important than the actual meaning of the communication. In this situation, the expectation of continual contact is reflected in the belief that Finn would "freak out" if there was a lack of instant communication. It exemplifies how in a hyperreal society, the simulated reality (continuous technological contact) might be dominant over the real reality (restricted Wi-Fi availability). People could place more importance on the simulated (being in contact) than the actual (the restrictions of Wi-Fi use). Likewise, staying in touch and hearing from someone via technology turns into a simulacrum, a reflection of their presence and well-being. This emphasizes how these symbols of communication have assumed a substantial and maybe overemphasized relevance in the hyperreal world and how the lack of this link is viewed as a possible disaster. It can also be linked with the concept of dehumanization because it shows how easily people might become dehumanized in today's hyperreal, technologically advanced environment. Finn's emotional reaction to the silence implies a reliance on technology for interpersonal connections. When actual human connections and emotional ties are replaced by technology, it can lead to a feeling of dehumanization. Genuine relationships seem to suffer as characters in the novel care more about the communication's signal than the people sending it. In short, it demonstrates the intersection between hyperreality, the dependence on simulacra or representation, technological dystopian features, and the possibility for dehumanization in a situation where the expectation of continual connectedness interacts with the reality of restricted technology access. It illustrates the complicated relationship between technology and the human condition in a hyperreal way. Characters are more closely linked via technology than by actual connections throughout the novel. The stress on communication via technological devices illustrates the symbol of communication for the hyperreal society.

## **4.2 Between the real and hyperreal**

Diana wonders whether the mail system will work on the island or not which highlights the uncertainty and unreliability of traditional communication methods in a hyperreal world where digital communication dominates. "It feels really old school to be writing a postcard, but even if this island is a technology desert, the mail is supposed to work, right" (41). The concept of hyperreality contains the blurring of boundaries

between the real and the simulated, and in this context, the traditional mail system may seem like a symbolic representation of reality in the simulation universe. It may seem that living in this real world, she will come out of the hyperreal world soon.

I don't know how long I sit on the main street in Puerto Villamil rereading Finn's email, the sun baking the back of my neck and the crown of my head. His description of the city and the hospital feels unreal, dystopian. (50)

Diana rereads Finn's email many times, which contains the description of the city and the hospital. The description evokes a sense of unreality and dystopia. In the hyperreal world, representations and simulations can take superiority over the real experience, which blurs the lines between reality and hyperreality. The description in the email becomes a simulation of the city and hospital, creating a hyperreal version of the experience.

The given statement demonstrates Baudrillard's concept of simulation and hyperreality by depicting how the description in the email shapes Diana's perception of the COVID-19 pandemic which leads to a sense of unreality and dystopia. The representation in the email becomes a simulation that influences the speaker's experience, highlighting the representation of perception and emotions in the hyperreal world.

Moreover, Diana is of the view that her colleague is even faking the death of her husband. "It seems to me that everything was a big show for your husband—even, forgive me, his death" (129). In this hyperreal world, what we see and how things are shown to us may seem more real than the actual reality. For instance, if someone doesn't cry when they're sad, we might think they aren't truly upset, and the other way around. This could mean that the way we're expected to express emotions is already decided for us by the simulation world. It blurs the line between reality and hyperreality. As a result, we might end up losing our individuality by becoming dehumanized. According to Baudrillard, hyperreality is the creation of the real by models without reference to reality or origin (166).

Technology impacts and shapes human experiences and relationships in the hyperreal world. "I pull it out of my pocket and watch a torrent of messages from Finn roll onto my screen. I lost you. Hello? Tried FaceTiming but...? Bad Wi-Fi? Will try you tomorrow" (48). The "torrent of messages" from Finn popping onto Diana's screen

reflects the dependence on technological devices for communication in the digital age. In the hyperreal world, technology plays a vital role in shaping human interactions. The flood of messages and rapid exchange of digital communication can create a sense of hyperreality. The communication becomes detached from the real emotions or intentions. Diana's dependence on digital communication technologies to interact with Finn underlines the hyperreal nature of their relationship.

Diana's high expectations and breath-holding while waiting for an internet connection highlight the dependence on technology in the hyperreal world. The constant reliance on digital devices and the internet for communication and information can lead to a loss of individuality. People become increasingly lost in their devices and the virtual world. "I stare at the screen, holding my breath, until the notification pops up: No internet connection" (51). Communicating through gadgets results in the absence of face-to-face interactions and physical presence. It denotes the lack of real warmth and empathy, resulting in creating a sense of dehumanization in relationships. Baudrillard argues that the hyperreal world blurs the line between reality and simulation, leading to a loss of authenticity or reality. The way Diana is obsessed with the mobile screen and her hope to get an internet connection represents that the simulated world may dominate and distort one's perception of reality by making one lose the sense of authenticity. Moreover, Postman is also of the view that technology is where the culture gets its approval, finds its fulfillment, and accepts its instructions (71-72). It also emphasizes how reliant on technology the protagonist is, with all of her thoughts and feelings centered around the anticipation of an internet connection. People in a technological dystopia frequently rely on technology excessively for communication, knowledge, and even emotional fulfillment, which creates a feeling of vulnerability and worry when that technology fails or is unavailable. The expression "holding my breath" alludes to intense mental stress brought on by the requirement for an internet connection. Since so much of everyday living, communication, and information retrieval depend on digital connectivity, being unable to access the internet or connect to a network can create emotional upheaval. Patterns or repetitions in language and symbols highlight themes or motifs associated with technological dystopia and hyperreality. Furthermore, the contrast between the real and the simulated, natural and artificial, authentic and fabricated can be seen in the text. It may show how the novel's patterns, repetitions, and contrasts contribute to its overall thematic

development and meaning. Such elements contribute significantly to showing a technological dystopian world. It makes hyperreality and the simulated environment evident.

### **4.3 Exploring the Blurred Line between Reality and Hyperreality in Diana's Experience**

As Diana is disappointed after not getting a stable internet connection and losing the virtual interaction with her boyfriend, she tries to come out of the hyperreality temporarily. “I am not sure if that is a blessing, or if I should be cursed” (132). She enjoys going out and staying connected with the real world where she is not worried about the phone or the availability of the internet. She tries to step out of the hyperreal world. In a hyperreal world, as proposed by Jean Baudrillard, simulations and representations control our views. It makes it difficult to distinguish between reality and hyperreality. However, Diana starts to enjoy the real experiences staying away from the suffering of the world. The last part of the statement indicates her uncertainty about whether it is a blessing or a curse to detach herself from the hyperreal world. As we have become so dependent on technological devices, it seems challenging to disconnect from them.

As explained by Jean Baudrillard, simulation refers to the process where the representation of reality seems more real than the reality itself. For instance, images, guidebooks, internet content, or any other form of information that shapes our point of view about a place or experience can be a representation of reality. “Visitors come here saying they want to see Galápagos, but they don’t, not really. They want to see what they can already see in guidebooks or on the internet” (154). The statement indicates that the visitors want to have a real experience but for them, the real experience is the one which is shown in guidebooks or on the internet. The simulated representations are more real to them than the reality. Instead of enjoying the real beauty of the Galapagos, they are more concerned about copying or validating the experiences they have seen on the internet or in the guidebooks. It indicates the concept of hyperreality where the boundary between simulation and reality is blurred. The representation seems more real than the actual place.

The hyperreal love seems to get shattered when Diana is involved in a romantic relationship with Gabriel. “Suddenly I feel like I’m going to be sick. Because as much

as I don't want to face Gabriel to discuss what happened between us, I want even less to confess to Finn" (176). Being in a relationship with him, it appears as she realizes that her love for Fin was influenced and shaped by the idealized images of romance. For her, it looked like it was not more than the love shown in movies. That could be the reason she wanted him to propose to her by going down on his knees on a trip. But once she escapes from the hyperreal world, she seems to understand that she truly loves Gabriel only. Before that, she might have just been trapped in a hyperreal world where she was blindly following the simulation rather than reality.

The novel takes a shocking turn when the readers come to know that everything that happened on her trip was her dream. She was on the ventilator the entire time. "How did I get back from the Galápagos? Finn blinks. Diana, he says, you never went" (189). Everyone around her tries their best to make her believe that she neither left her country nor did she meet Gabriel and his daughter.

It indicates the notion of hyperreality and simulation universe. The concept of hyperreality demonstrates the boundary between reality and simulacra which becomes blurred. The simulated representations seem more real than reality. The protagonist experiences difficulty in understanding the difference between reality and hyperreality. "I have to go back to real life sometime. She pulls away, a wistful expression on her face. For a while, she says, didn't this feel real?" (177). For her, the world that was in her dream appears more real than the actual world she is in. Diana's dream world seems more real and vivid to her. The simulation (her dream) appears more real to the protagonist than the actual reality (her life on the ventilator). When she realizes that whatever she experienced was just a dream, she desires to go back to that "real world" which portrays the shift from the hyperreal world to the real world. It could be interpreted that when she detached herself from the technological devices in the dream, she started to see the real world. Even though it was a dream still it seemed more real because her life was no longer filtered at that time.

The writer taking a twist in the story and shocking readers could be the reason to show that it is not easy to come out of the hyperreality in this modern world. Diana escaped it for a very short time but after experiencing it, that dream becomes more real to her than the actual reality. Diana cannot process her mind when she is told by her loved ones that whatever she experiences is not more than a dream. It seemed as if Diana spent her life there which she always wanted in her dream as in the real world,

she was stuck in the hyperreal world where she just followed the things shown through electronic gadgets. There are a lot of references in the text where she is seen using a mobile phone or worried about the internet connection. Finn being a doctor explains that she is not the one who is having such experiences.

Finn comes across many patients who start having hallucinations when they are taken off the ventilator. “A lot of Covid patients experience delirium when they’re taken off the vent, Finn says gently” (189). Here, “the ventilator” seems to be a very significant symbol because when she was on the vent, she was able to see the world from a different angle. She became very obsessed with that dream world as her life was not dependent on technological devices. She was able to think with her mind. But the same ventilator takes her back to the real world which shows that we cannot escape from the hyperreality in this modern era. The ventilator which helped her in getting her real version in the dream is also an electronic machine (a part of the technology), which takes her back to the hyperreal world. It appears as if the writer is trying to be sarcastic in showing us the brutal reality that no one can escape the hyperreal world in this era because the simulation seems more real than the actual real.

It seems as if she was quite happy when she was on her trip in the dream. She was herself when she was away from her mobile phone. “You don’t understand...I lived there. I met people and made friends and I...I climbed into a volcano...I went swimming—Oh!” (192). People she met over there were genuine. But in real life, every connection she has is obsessed with the digital world. After the realization, she is unable to find peace and comfort with the people who are living in the hyperreal world.

When everyone is trying to make her believe that it was just a hallucination which she felt when she was on the ventilator, Diana is unable to distinguish which world is real and which one is her dream world. “It wasn’t a hallucination, I protest. It felt more real than any of this does” (192). She is astonished at how things can feel more real in the dream world. She craves the love she feels for Gabriel. Simulation as explained by Jean Baudrillard, is a process that creates representations or copies of reality. Here, the dream world is a simulation that blurs the reality and the representation. That is the reason that made her believe the representation is more real than the actual real. “What if I can’t tell the difference anymore between what was a dream and what wasn’t?” (195). This statement explains more deeply the concept of hyperreality because here, the connection between the simulacra (representation) and



the reality has been weakened. For Diana, the hyperreal experience (her dream) overshadows the actual reality (life on a ventilator). It also illustrates the powerful influence of hyperreality in shaping Diana's perception of the world through simulacra.

"I was alone a lot in the Galápagos, but I wasn't lonely, like I am here" (198). Diana says that she was alone in Galapagos as she was away from her family and friends. Even though she was a stranger with no acquaintance over there, still she felt a connection there. She never felt as alone as she felt after coming back to the real world.

"I am alone, trapped in a body that will not do what I need it to do" (192). She is lonely in the real world as she cannot find her purpose in life. Moreover, she says, "It feels like my reality just changed" (193). It may mean that the life she had in her dream looked so real to her that now the actual reality does not look real to her. For a short time, she lived a life when she was away from technology. She escaped from dehumanization but she could not escape from it completely and forever.

Her journey portrays the fragmented narratives that reflect the fragmented nature of hyperreality, in which the past, present, and future blend together. Diana is so perplexed that she is unable to process her thoughts about her present, past, or future. Her experiences become more complex as she transitions from the dream world to the real world, where she suffers hyperreal hallucinations. Such narrative techniques may be used to depict the simulation universe.

#### **4.4 Loss of authenticity in the simulation universe**

Diana feels disconnected from true experiences, which represents a lack of authenticity. The hyperreal world is full of images, representations and simulations which make the real experiences very blurred. "I don't know what's real anymore, and what's not," I confess to Cosima, as she wipes down the faucets and the sink basin (203)". She feels extremely isolated as she is unable to connect genuinely to other people because of the dominant presence of simulations. Diana's loneliness makes her detached from the world where everything seems superficial.

Finn is trying hard to make her believe that her trip never took place and it was not more than a dream but she keeps saying repeatedly that how can something which she experienced feel so real. It was more like a freedom to her. Dr. Sturgis states, "Your brain, in its drugged state, tried to make sense of the insensible, and maybe you hallucinated a scenario in which you were tied down. What I hallucinated wasn't

confinement, but freedom” (208). The world she is in right now is not more than a prison to her. Her dream in which she felt freedom shows that the hyperreal world can create simulated experiences that feel more meaningful than the actual reality. Moreover, it shows how hyperreality and simulation can change a person’s view and perception of the world which blurs the line between reality and simulation.

As discussed before, simulated experiences seem more real than the actual reality. So, for her, simulated experiences are more fascinating to her than the real ones. “I’m not afraid of revisiting that other world. I’m afraid that if I return there, I won’t want to come back” (209). “The other world” signifies her dream world (hyperreal realm). A few consequences of hyperreality include loss of individuality and dehumanization. In simulated experiences, people appear to detach themselves from their true selves. They are controlled by the hyperreality and simulacra. They act on whatever is shown to them without even realizing it. They start prioritizing simulations and representation more than real connections. If a person finds pleasure and gratification in the hyperreal world, he may find it boring or reluctant to go back to their real life. New signals and symbols have taken the place of reality (Baudrillard 79). This could be the possible reason that Diana desperately wants to go back to the hyperreal world. It explores the themes of loss of individuality and dehumanization which represent the technological world full of simulations. The use of such themes shows the difference between the simulacra and reality. Diana’s dream world is a simulation that seems more real to her. The use of fragmented narratives and repetitions gives stress to the contrast between simulacra and hyperreality.

The love story of Diana and Finn faded because their love was not more than the hyperreal love. As discussed previously, they are seen talking about only hyperreal things throughout the novel.

Finn and I have spent so many lazy Sunday mornings in bed with coffee and bagels and a laptop balanced between us, surfing through the real estate of our dreams. Most homes were out of our price range, but it was fun to fantasize.  
(218)

Whenever they are together, they are just busy surfing the internet. They talked about surfing the internet to buy their dream house but it was out of their range. So,

they decided to just watch to romanticize things. The way they were surfing the internet on their laptop elaborates the role of technology in shaping hyperreal experiences. Technological devices play a significant role in creating hyperreality where people can indulge in fantasies. It can lead to technological dystopia where the line between the real and the simulated becomes blurred. Diana shares her experience of being on the ventilator. She says,

The comments are supportive, effusive, heartfelt. Some are political, claiming that the virus is a hoax and I have the flu. Other friends attack that poster on my behalf. All this while I was unconscious. (244)

The comments on social media represent the four orders of simulacra as explained by Jean Baudrillard. The first order of simulacra is a reflection of the actual reality. It includes the comments on social media which sincerely depict the real events which is Diana's unconscious state. These comments reflect authentic facts about Diana's illness and show genuine care and support. The second order incorporates the comments which move away from the reality. Such comments comprise different interpretations creating a simulation. It further creates various versions of reality which are based on people's perception. The third order of simulacra includes the comments that take the misrepresentation further. It creates exaggerated narratives that are far away from reality. It generates different hyperreal representations. The heated comments intensify the online interactions which makes the online platform more significant than the real event. It blurs the boundary between simulation and reality. Analyzing the text with the four orders of simulacra might give a clear idea about the detailed view of simulacra. Moreover, it seems to represent the process through which simulacra emerges from reality.

#### **4.5 Diana's self-realization**

Diana becomes a very different person after she experiences a life in her dream. In her dream world, she was away from the technology and she started living a life where she was just herself.

I know what Finn was about to do. It is a moment I've dreamed about. So why can't I let it happen? I am sweating and I am cold and shaking. I've known

what I wanted for years. And now that it's here— Now that it's here— I'm not sure I'm ready. (251)

She found a connection with Gabriel which she could not have with Finn. She realized that with Fin, it was not anything more than a hyperreal love where they were just influenced by the hyperreal world. Unfortunately, whatever she experienced was also a part of the hyperreal world which shows that no matter how hard we try, it is almost impossible to get out of the hyperreal world in this technological era. Whatever she dreamed of was also on the ventilator (electronic machine). How ironic it is. After coming back to reality, her beliefs and perceptions are changed. She is not sure what is real and what is not. That is why she rejects Finn's proposal for which she waited a long time.

The character Finn talking about the planned life represents the simulacra because it is the ideal representation of what they want. "You can't plan your life, Finn, I say quietly. Because then you have a plan. Not a life" (305). The planned life is the simulacra which is the representation of their reality whereas Diana, at the end of the novel, has finally understood that sticking too strictly to a plan can make life feel like a simulation more significant than a real experience.

Diana refutes this idea, indicating that she understands life cannot be well planned and that trying to do so leads to a simulated existence. This comparison highlights the differences between the simulated, hyperreal world produced by technology and the unexpected nature of experienced reality. Furthermore, there is a use of vivid imagery when Diana describes herself as sweating, cold and shaking. It stirs up the gut-wrenching feeling of hyperreality. These sensory nuances draw attention to how intense Diana's experience was with the simulacra, where physical sensations may be amplified or warped. Diana's inner monologue mirrors her interactions with the hyperreal world. Her thoughts and reflections highlight how confusing simulation may be and how it can get challenging to tell the difference between genuine emotion and artificial sentiment.

Overall, the narrative approaches applied in the research contribute to a comprehensive examination of hyperreality and simulacra, emphasizing how these notions impact Diana's individuality in an increasingly mediated world.

## 4.6 Conclusion

By carefully examining the language, themes, and characters' interactions in the novel, deeper understandings and insights are gained regarding the notion of simulacra, reality, dehumanization, and loss of individuality.

The novel, *Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult depicts the struggle of Diana to escape the hyperreal world. She spends quality time in the Island Galapagos where there is an unstable internet connection. By staying away from her phone, she discovers the real world free from simulations and representations. By detaching herself from the internet, she becomes successful in finding her true love, Gabriel. It also made her realize that the love for Fin was not more than a hyperreal love. The novel takes a shocking turn when the readers come to know that whatever happened on the trip was her hallucinations as she was on the ventilator the entire time. It shows that no matter how much we try to escape from hyperreality or simulation universe, we will be trapped again in it. It is a satire on the hyperreal world where simulations and representations dominate. Diana's journey from being lost in the hyperreal world to the real world and then, all of a sudden trapped in the simulation universe again shows that no matter how much we try to escape from the hyperreal world, we cannot come out of it. Diana at the end of the novel realizes she become a different person. Diana experiences a life in her dream and changes dramatically as a result. She stopped using technology and began living a life in which she was only herself in her fantasy world. She realizes that her relationship with Fin was nothing more than a hyperreal love in which they were only influenced by the hyperreal environment. Sadly, everything she went through on her trip was also a part of the hyperreal world, demonstrating that in this modern age, it is nearly impossible to escape the hyperreal world. The ventilator, an electrical device, was likewise set to whatever she had been dreaming. What a cruel irony. Her perceptions and ideas have been altered after returning to reality. With the help of themes, symbols and narrative techniques, the difference between the simulacra and reality is examined.

## CHAPTER 5

### CHARACTERS IN *BURNTCOAT* TRAPPED IN THE HYPERREAL WORLD

Sarah Hall is a well-known English novelist who mostly writes works related to fiction. She was born in 1974 in Carlisle, England. Sarah Hall's work has earned her several prizes and awards. *Haweswater* (2002) received the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Novel, *The Electric Michelangelo* (2004) was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, and *The Wolf Border* (2015) was nominated for the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. Sarah Hall is the author of novels, short stories, and poems. *Haweswater* (2002), *The Electric Michelangelo* (2004), *The Carhullan Army* (2007), *How to Paint a Dead Man* (2009), *The Wolf Border* (2015), and *The Burnt-Out Town of Miracles* (2018) are her famous novels. Sarah Hall's work frequently delves into issues of nature, human connections, and the intersections of the uncivilized and the civilized.

Her work has received widespread acclaim for its rich imagery and poetic skills. Hall is renowned for her stunning imagery, detailed vocabulary, and complex sentences. Her work is noted for its lyrical quality and focuses on detail, allowing readers to get immersed in the worlds she conjures. Critics and fellow authors have complimented Hall's work for its depth, intellect, and emotional relevance. Her work has been hailed as strong, thought-provoking, and exquisitely made. Sarah Hall's contributions to modern writing have cemented her status as a notable and acclaimed author. Her ability to tell fascinating stories and explore challenging ideas.

COVID-19 plays an essential role in increasing technological dystopia. People used to spend more time on screens as they were not allowed to leave their houses. They became so dependent on technological devices that it might lead them toward hyperreality and a simulation universe. Hyperreality creates a blurred boundary between reality and simulation. In the novel *Burntcoat*, characters seem to consider constructed representation (simulation) more real than actual reality. Hyperreality and simulation can lead to dehumanization and loss of individuality.

The study has investigated how the themes of hyperreality, simulacra, and the blending of representation and reality are utilized via the employment of narrative techniques by Catherine Belsey's textual analysis method to assess the text. Belsey's approach includes closely examining the text's language, structure, and narrative devices to uncover deeper meanings and interpretations.

Correspondingly, we can witness many incidents in the novel where the protagonist, Edith, is trapped in the simulation universe. The novel begins with the textual line, "Those who tell stories survive" (7).

The protagonist's mother, Nomi advises Edith to believe and tell stories if she wants to survive. Stories seem to produce hyperreal experiences. Storytelling can construct hyperreal experiences. They appear to turn into representations as they show an idealized form of reality. Hyperreality blurs the line between reality and representation. Stories detach the real-life complications. Storytelling influences people in observing the world. Moreover, it seems to overshadow real experiences. It depicts that the hyperreal world shapes our perceptions by blurring the boundary between representation and reality. Nomi seems to shed light on the hyperreal world that to survive, it is important to live in the artificial world.

The understanding of Nomi regarding stories seems to create a hyperreal world in her mind by blurring the line between reality and representation. Her understanding appears to be disconnected from the real context. "Naomi had a habit of mixing up words and ideas, and I thought she was confused or meant the reverse – survivors tell stories. I tried to correct her but she insisted" (7). It shows that the simulated or represented experiences become more significant than the real experiences. Nomi's way of saying this phrase is a version of it as it might not be accurate. She seems to interpret it according to her own experiences which shows a simulacra different from what is originally meant. The blurring of lines between simulation and reality in a hyperreal environment may be symbolized by Naomi's tendency to mix up words and ideas. It captures the confusion and uncertainty people have when navigating the boundary between the hyperreal and the real world. The narrator (Edith) assumes that Naomi has to be corrected for her mistake, which is where the irony resides. It may be ineffective or foolish to try to enforce one's idea of what is "correct" in a hyperreal setting when simulation and reality blend together. Narrated from the viewpoint of an observer of Naomi's actions, the excerpt illustrates the difficulty of navigating the

complexities of hyperreality. Naomi's attempts to jumble up words and concepts are corrected by the narrator in a way that reflects society's attempts to make sense of and impose order on the hyperreal world. With the help of textual analysis, multiple interpretations can be observed. For instance, Nomi's portrayal as someone who relies on stories to guide her through the hyperreal world helps to make the concept of simulacra clear. Nomi's emphasis on the importance of stories, despite her daughter's doubts, presents the risk of a detachment from reality and a preference for the constructive narratives of the hyperreal world.

Furthermore, Nomi explains how the brave lady Scheherazade made the king fall in love with her through stories who wanted to kill her before.

Is it possible to be saved, like Scheherazade seducing the enemy with tales?  
Do stories make sense of a disordered world? ....Perhaps Naomi was saying  
that life is only an invention, a version necessary for us to accept living. (7)

It shows the significance of storytelling which seems to be a simulacra more important than reality. Nomi's concept of life as an invention to accept living might be linked with the concept of hyperreality. Stories play a crucial role in interpreting and shaping life which is often a version of reality but not the entire reality. Sometimes, our perceptions become more important than the actual reality which creates a hyperreal form of life. Belsey suggests reading the text in the larger context to fully understand its significance. Nomi's simulation world has influenced her perspective and personal experiences, which inform her concept of storytelling as a survival strategy. We can gain insight into how simulation shapes perceptions and influences behavior by examining Nomi's point of view inside the story.

The virus has shed its older names. They were frightening, incorrect,  
discriminatory. Hanta. Nova. Now it is simply AG3. It is contained, an event  
in a previous era from which we continue to learn. Contingency planning.  
Social tracking. Herd control. (24)

Changing the names of the virus appears to depict the hyperreal world in which people recognize and respond to the virus by the representations of the virus. In a hyperreal world, simulacra or representations are more significant than the actual reality. For instance, renaming the virus from Hanta and Nova to AG3 shows a simulacra or representation that may not reflect its real nature. AG3 seems to turn into



a part of hyperreality in which the simulacra (AG3) gets more worth or importance than the virus itself. Furthermore, contingency planning, social tracking or herd control are also the hyperreal reactions that are formed on the fabricated form of the situation. People may develop plans built on their viewpoints even if they are not entirely associated with the actual reality of the virus. In the simulated universe, social tracking and herd control seem to depict ways in which our perceptions or actions are molded and influenced by the representation of the virus. The virus's renaming to "AG3" is an example of how it reflects the hyperreal inclination to place more importance on simulation than on actual reality. In a dystopian society, the renaming of the virus represents the ubiquitous impact of technology and surveillance. Through the application of Belsey's textual analysis approach, the research has gained a deeper understanding of how language, symbolism, themes and interpretation in the context of a contemporary society marked by simulated realities and technological control by analyzing it through the lens of hyperreality and technological dystopia.

As it is the pandemic novel, there are several instances in the novel where the everyday lives of characters are affected by the virus. For instance, fights at food banks, burgled shops etc. reflect the hyperreal world which is full of representations or simulations. "There were the first desperate acts and breakages – fights at food banks, burgled shops, town halls vandalized" (31). There is desperation in people to get all the essentials at once as if they will not have a chance to buy them again. It represents the role of media in shaping the perceptions of people. It has created such hype and fear in people's minds as if it is the last day to buy things and there will be no tomorrow. Ultimately, hyperreality occurs when the representation seems more real than the actual real. The fear of the virus is created in the minds of people through technological devices that make them experience it. Media or other such platforms make sensational headlines about the virus to which people react emotionally and end up rushing to the stores or food banks to stock things. It makes the virus, a hyperreal version. In the technopoly (a state that is dominated by technology), technology influences our thinking, communication and even, perceptions.

In a simulation universe, people are influenced by the simulacra more than the actual reality. The recorded message seems to act as a representation of information about the virus.

“There was a substantial wait, almost an hour, during which you listened to a recorded message with information about the virus, and Sibelius repeating” (38). The representation which is the recorded message becomes more important for Edith’s lover than the actual virus. In a hyperreal world, the boundary between the real and its representation becomes blurred. The repetition of the music appears to intensify the situation as it makes it more intense or terrifying. Moreover, Sibelius’s repeating can also play a crucial role in detaching from the passage of time. Time becomes distorted for the person as it becomes difficult for him to distinguish between the actual time and the time he experienced while he waited on the call. Furthermore, such distortion blurs the line between the real experience and the simulated one. The repetition of the music can influence a person’s perception regarding the information related to the virus. Apart from that, technopoly (technological dominated state) plays a very vital role in dehumanizing people as they communicate with each other virtually which can result in the loss of genuine interaction.

By closely examining the language, structure, and narrative devices that are utilized in the text, deeper interpretations and meanings are unveiled of how characters are affected by simulation.

### **5.1 Nomi’s Quest: escaping the Hyperreal Enigma**

The protagonist’s mother Nomi tries to escape from the hyperreal world by creating a natural environment that is free from any form of simulation, images or representation. “She didn’t have to see people much, dress conventionally or struggle to behave. She planted vegetables and kept quail in a hutch, their tiny eggs like an ink-stained sky” (13). She opts for a simple lifestyle. She rejects the simulated world which is bombarded with simulated images. Ironically, society considers her a weird person as she does not follow societal norms. People expect each other to indulge in technology if they want to survive in this simulated world otherwise, they are labeled as mad people. This could be the reason that people prefer to live in a hyperreal world by following representations or images. Besides, in technopoly, technology dominates the state in a way that molds people’s perceptions as well. Nomi’s idea of not seeing many people, dressing conventionally or behaving according to social norms can be a reaction to the technopoly as it plays a significant role in shaping culture as well. It

seems to demonstrate Nomi's struggle in distancing herself from consumer culture which is the characteristic of technopoly.

Nomi rejects the traditional technology as it is challenging for her to operate the Olivetti typewriter. Such typewriters show the bygone era when manual typewriters were commonly practiced by writers. However, in the modern world, technology has advanced drastically and modern tools dominate the world.

It was written on brown baking paper, typed up by a local woman because Naomi could not operate the Olivettishe'd previously used – the positions of the letters confused her, and the sound of the keys was aggressive. (13)

The shift from traditional technology to modern technology has transformed the way we accept and experience reality which is known as hyperreality. It is defined as simulations or representations that become more real than the actual real. The Modern keyboard is a representation of the traditional typewriter which has become more significant for writers. Nomi rejecting the traditional typewriters and their simulated forms shows that she wants to escape the hyperreal world. She decides to opt for her authentic way of writing. It might be a form of resistance against the hyperreal world full of images and representations. Moreover, it is likely to illustrate the dominance of technology which can shape our behavior as well. Technopoly may interrupt traditional skills. The way Nomi struggles to use a typewriter may reinforce the idea of the superiority of technology in dictating people's behaviors and capabilities. It highlights the theme of the supremacy of technology.

People living in this modern age are so obsessed with their phones that they cannot even imagine surviving without them. It is quite evident from the protagonist's action when she is scrolling through the numbers and staring at the phone for a long time. Moreover, it shows the hyperreality of digital communication.

"This morning I sat looking at my phone, scrolling the numbers. Some I haven't been able to delete. There are friends I should probably inform" (13). In the hyperreal world, people seem to keep in touch with each other through virtual platforms which makes them detached from the physical interaction with friends. The technological era creates the simulacrum of conversation which might not completely show the real essence of relationships. The language conveys Edith's difficulty in deleting the numbers shows that shows how digital representation becomes more significant than the real

presence of the friends. She cannot meet her friends immediately physically but virtually they exist on her phone. It shows the hyperreal nature of modern relations. The phone is a symbol of contemporary technology and how it permeates every aspect of daily life. In addition to signifying connection, connectivity, and information availability, it also evokes thoughts of distraction, loneliness, and monitoring. The narrative's structure is fragmented, offering a collection of disconnected thoughts and observations without any clear chronological or logical order. This fragmented approach reflects how fragmented modern life is, with people navigating a torrent of information and stimuli from multiple sources. Overall, the text's use of symbols, fragmented narrative elements, and language helps to explore themes related to technology, communication, and social connection in modern society.

“I’m acting like a cat, slinking away to the roots of a quiet tree, squeezing into a hiding hole” (13). The protagonist comparing herself with a cat who is squeezing into a hiding hole seems to represent a form of escapism. “A hiding hole” appears to be a metaphor for a hyperreal world on the phone and the virtual interactions it has. The dependence on the mobile phone serves as a kind of escapism or detachment from the challenges of life. In addition, people can rely on technological devices in a technopoly. The difficulty in deleting numbers appears to depict the dependency of technology which makes it challenging for the protagonist to detach herself from it even when it seems not to be useful or meaningful. Besides, technopoly can create shallow and superficial relationships. Edith has a great quantity of friends but in quality, she has very few ones.

There are others in this situation; I could read the message boards and visit support groups. There are registered services, doulas to help relapsers through it – they do everything, from existentialism to excrement. (13)

The protagonist seems to depend on the support systems in which she highlights message boards, support groups, and registered services that offer help. They also have doulas who are available 24/7 to assist people in coping with the challenges. The symbols "message boards," "support groups," and "doulas" reflect the reliance on technology-mediated contacts for emotional and practical support, which blurs the distinction between the physical and digital worlds. Message boards and online support groups are likely to form a simulated space for people to connect, share experiences,

and get help. Virtual connections on such platforms lack the depth of physical interactions which may lead to hyperreality by blurring the boundary between the representation (virtual interaction) and the reality (face-to-face interaction). In addition, the experience that people can gain by meeting physically can be different from the virtual one. The registered services claiming to assist people in facing challenges seem to be exaggerated which leads to the high expectations of meeting all the needs of people. The availability of 24/7 service might be a simulation that is far away from the actual reality of people's difficulties. Moreover, it is also likely to emphasize that technology influences Edith in seeking assistance and connecting with people on online platforms. The use of digital platforms may stress the dominance of technology aligning with the concept of technopoly. Through symbolism and language, the text emphasizes the complexities of human experiences in a hyperreal world dominated by technology.

## **5.2 Blurring the line between real and simulated world**

The frequent calling of Edith to Sean asking about the iron pad's safety can illustrate the virtual communication in the hyperreal world. The constant calling and questioning detach her from the physical reality of the situation. Furthermore, it creates hyperreal interactions by blurring the line between real and simulated experiences. "I keep calling Sean, asking stupid questions about the iron pad, the bolting as if the thing might topple onto whichever royal is doing the unveiling" (13).

People in the digital era are so indulged in the hyperreal world that their perceptions are merely based on representations or simulations. Furthermore, the protagonist seems to be highly dependent on various tasks such as communication and solving problems. It is also likely to underscore the dictating nature of technology which makes people lose their individuality as they act according to the instructions of it. The dependence on the calls and updates shows the simulation universe because the physical reality of the site is experienced through virtual communication. The discussion about the growth of the project appears to be a simulation of reality.

"Do you want to come to the site? I can't. The steps are almost in. OK. Good. So, it's a green light, then? Green light" (14). The steps taken in and a green light being given can be a virtual simulation of the real progress. As Edith is not able to take steps, she cannot visit the site. Because of that, she is detached from the physical location of the project. The experience of the project is conveyed virtually more than the physical

experience which creates a hyperreal situation. In technopoly, people are most likely to be influenced by digital connections and experiences over face-to-face interactions. The use of a green light symbolizes a functional aspect rather than an emotional one. This connects with the inclination of technopoly to give more importance to digital media than physical interactions.

Sean's memorials or commemorating the dead create the representation of reality.

Sean was a monumental mason before he went to Art College. There's not much he doesn't understand about memorials, commemorating the dead, and there are almost no technical hurdles he can't overcome. (14)

It seems to represent hyperreality as the physical appearance of a dead person is replaced by the representation of their memory. Moreover, it blurs the line between the real and the memory because the memorial becomes the representation of the memory. Besides this, Edith's friend memorials include memories and emotions which might be the substitute for real emotional connections. This characterization appears to create a hyperreal experience. Whatever people watch on screens, they try to follow it. It has become a trend for them. Media is likely to influence the perceptions of people in such a way that if they do not follow such trends, they feel left out. Sean's decision to attend Art College symbolizes creativity and the merging of traditional knowledge with modern artistic expression. It signifies a change toward digitalization and modernization in the field of memorialization. Sean's capacity to overcome technological obstacles is mentioned, and this represents flexibility, competence, and technology integration. The text demonstrates a pattern of integration wherein modern activities (admission to Art College) and traditional skills and techniques (monumental masonry) intersect. In a hyperreal world where aspects of the physical and digital realms coexist and affect one another, this design represents the hybrid nature of experiences. The digitalization of memorialization processes and the physicality of monumental masonry are in opposition to one another. This difference highlights how difficult it is to navigate hyperreality, the place where traditional forms of memorialization collide with digital technologies and virtual spaces.

Moreover, Edith shares her experience of living in the modern and technological world where the architecture has changed drastically and modern buildings are built next to paper houses.

At weekends I sometimes travelled to the cities, where architecture changed almost overnight, modernist buildings regenerating beside paper houses and narrow alleys, and I made trips out to the islands, to the galleries and museum.  
(15)

The vivid imagery is created by the depiction of modernist structures regenerating next to paper dwellings which makes it difficult to distinguish between simulated and actual urban settings. It appears to represent a hyperreal urban landscape. The juxtaposition of the modern and paper houses blurs the boundary between real and simulated urban landscapes. Moreover, trips to galleries and museums can also symbolize the simulation of history and culture. Such places preserve art and historical narratives which can act as a representation of history and art. It may create hyperreality as the representation gives curated and limited experiences to the visitors. Technological advancements can make a rapid transformation in a technopoly. So, technology seems to be a dominant force in shaping architecture as well. If we compare the modern world with even a few decades back, we can say a drastic change in the change of architecture. People posting pictures on social media plays a vital role in creating a surreal environment.

Overall, the characters are impacted by simulation as it detaches them from the actual world, strengthens their dependence on representations, and shapes their attitudes and actions through media and technology

### **5.3 Role of Media in creating a hyperreal world**

In the novel, the news about the pandemic is only the headline for virtual platforms like media. Edith's boyfriend's dependence on the news to get updates regarding figures about the pandemic shows the hyperreal world. The discussions related to the pandemic dominate people's minds in a way that their perception of reality is altered. Government statements, media reports and online updates can create a simulation version of the pandemic. The news bombarded with information or statistics regarding the pandemic might be causing the simulated experiences of the pandemic as the info becomes the reality itself rather than just a representation of the reality. As we live in the hyperreal world, technology plays a very crucial role in creating simulation and representation. The repeated reporting or saturation of the news can influence people's perceptions. It can create a hyperreal pandemic where the media

representation becomes the ultimate reality. Government denials can also create a sense of hyperreality as the boundary between the real and the representation becomes blurred. Due to that, it becomes difficult for people to differentiate between the actual reality and constructive narrative. Correspondingly, in a technologically dominant state, technology becomes a chief concern of a culture. In a technopoly, technology not only molds our thinking and perception but also becomes the central focus of interacting with people. Technology is likely to influence us to follow the concerns represented by the media and they tend to perceive those issues as well. In a technological world, simulacra and hyperreality dominate.

Edith continues to demonstrate the horrors of the pandemic. She describes the terrors of the pandemic shown on the screen and media.

It did not seem possible joy would be disrupted, or that our bodies could break. The eye can see disaster on a screen, human silt and effluent, makeshift triages, pits, and the brain cleanly dissociates. We live temporally, deluded.

(20)

The disassociation of the brain from the heart-wrenching images continues the discussion regarding hyperreality. The representation of the pandemic and human sufferings on the screen becomes a hyperreal experience for the people. Media plays a significant role in broadcasting the news by bombarding it with numerous distressing images. It may influence people's perspectives and they start thinking the way they want them to think. The media representations seem to influence people's views regarding the pandemic which further plays its role in creating hyperreality. People watching disturbing images on the screen appears to be a simulated experience for them as it is the representation of the real pandemic. It is not the actual physical livid experience of the people surviving the pandemic. It is portrayed by news reporters or social media writers in their own way. Apart from that, a culture that is saturated by technology appears to represent that the constant stream of disturbing news may numb our emotional reactions or change our connection to reality. The disconnection between actual experiences and mediated representations of reality is highlighted by the disruption of joy and the detachment of the brain. This theme highlights the tendency in hyperreality for people to become desensitized to real-life events when they are absorbed through digital screens. A calamity portrayed on film represents the way that



digital technology mediates reality. This imagery highlights the shocking disturbing nature of mediated portrayals of calamity, symbolizing the dehumanization and degradation of human existence. The disordered reality of actual experiences differs from the brain's neat dissociation of catastrophe on a screen. This comparison highlights how the tangled complexity of real human existence differs from mediated representations of reality. It examines the gap between mediated representations of reality and people's lived experiences through symbols, patterns, and contrasts, throwing light on the challenges of navigating hyperreality in the contemporary world.

The intense portrayal of the view seems to enhance its beauty more than it would physically. The light over the sea was radiant: great vaults of shale and a bright patina to the sky. The marram grass reached over the dunes, stroked light and dark as the wind coursed through. (20)

The exaggerated and heightened representation of the scenery might be the illustration of hyperreality because the coastal landscape discussed in the text appears to be the idealized version that goes beyond reality and shows the form of intensified perception.

As the condition in the country was getting worse, the prime minister became active on the screen. For the very first time, she is shown thinner and greyer on TV and other social media platforms.

This was the most dangerous phase, we were told by the prime minister. On the screen, she looked gaunter, greyer; within weeks some private cosmetic clinic had whitened her hair. It was getting into us, infiltrating the mind as well as infecting the body. (31)

It may point out a shift from an idealized image which is mentioned earlier, to a gaunter and greyer look. It seems to create hyperreality as the constructed representation of her clashes with the reality of her deteriorating health. The difference between the constructed image and the actual appearance results in the hyperreal nature of mass media and politics. In a technopoly, technology and media are likely to influence not only people's physical appearances but also their emotional reactions. Its exposure seems to influence their perceptions and beliefs. Because of that, it can infiltrate their minds with simulated information.

The mention of closed wards and videos circulating on social media and other platforms depict a simulated experience of the pandemic.

“Wards were closed off behind disinfectant bays, but videos kept being posted, of delirious, liquefying patients, last words, hands held through plastic sheets” (31). These heart-wrenching and distressing videos are the kind of simulations. It seems to create a representation of the pandemic that is heightened and intensified which contributes to hyperreality. The media representations appear to be more real than the actual reality. The sensationalized aspect of the pandemic can distort the perception of reality and it may cause a hyperreal understanding of the crisis. It can be observed that the focus is entirely on the intense moments that may lead us to a simulation world. Moreover, these intense moments only become the part of pandemic by overshadowing other aspects. The images and hands of the patients who are held through plastic sheets may symbolize the representation of human struggle. The simulation of human suffering via videos can mold public perception. In addition, it appears to shape people’s reactions to the crisis as well. Such representations can create an exaggerated fear or emotional reaction. Whatever is shown on the screen regarding the pandemic can become more real than the actual reality. Moreover, digital media plays a vital role in molding characters’ thinking and way of reacting to the crisis.

The protagonist’s discussion with her friend, Jonah about not being with him physically and talking to him virtually demonstrates the harsh reality of the technological era. “I went to Jonah’s wedding fifteen years ago and, though we speak on video calls, I’ve not seen him since” (23). In a state dominated by technology, the use of technology such as video calls can blur the line between physical presence and virtual interactions. The relationship with Jonah is a simulated one as she has not him for fifteen years. Virtual meetings can allow people to talk to each other through screens but lack the face to face interactions. So, it is a representation of the real presence. It can be a kind of filtered reality where people can only display what they want to show on the screen. They can adjust the lighting or background. Moreover, they might add filters as well. It can lead to a hyperreal state where people represent the idealized versions of themselves. They can hide their unfiltered selves. However, people may depend on virtual interactions which lead them toward the hyperreal social world as the people communicate through each other emojis or virtual emotions.

The pandemic gets worse with time so the prime minister comes on the screen to instruct people to stay at home. A prime minister's speech may not be the direct reality but a representation of reality via television, the internet and other platforms. "The prime minister, live, apologetic, firm as a disappointed parent, told the nation to go home, and stay home: everything would close" (24). As a result, people try to find escape in the digital world and they sometimes end up trapped in artificial images, representations and images. Prime minister's speech seems to be filtered through various forms of representation. His tone which is "firm as a disappointed parent and apologetic" can be depicted as a staged performance rather than a real emotional response. This element can lead to hyperreality as the response of the prime minister appears to be an exaggerated representation rather than a natural emotion. The closure of everything can also be a hyperreality itself as it shows the detachment from the real world. As a result, people try to find escape in the digital world and they sometimes end up trapped in artificial images, representations and images. Moreover, media and social platforms also play a vital role in creating hyperreality. It can be noticed from the way people respond to the prime minister's speech. Such platforms might reshape the message by altering its meaning. People can share the information with their interpretations which creates numerous layers of representations that may cause a distorted reality of the actual event. In a technopoly, authorities address to nation to shape their perceptions and reactions.

All the strange, secret behaviour that was now allowed, could flourish behind the barricades. Creative, restive acts, pastimes run amok, violence. There'd been a rush on pet buying, and already animals were being dumped as the reality and expense of care became too much. (26)

The mention of barricades in the text symbolizes the boundary between the external world and enclosed space. Behind the barricades, hyperreal versions of people can be created as they are detached from the outside world. While staying at home, people can extremely rely on the technological devices that influence and shape their perspectives. The rush on pet buying can symbolize hyperreality because people follow social media trends blindly. Pet buying appears to be influenced by social media platforms. But when they are hit with reality, they find it challenging to take care of pets and start dumping them. Social media, movies, TV shows or advertisements present a very hyperreal image of the pet as a source of happiness or peace. It can create

a representation of reality as they do not see the other responsibilities related to them. The representation shown on the screen sometimes does not align with the experience that pet owners have in reality. When the hyperreal expectations clash with the challenging pet care, it becomes difficult for people to distinguish between the expected experience and the real experience. However, the dominant role of technology can be observed in shaping culture, interactions and even, society. It can further shape our behaviors and social values. “Strange, secret behaviour that was now allowed” illustrates how advancements in technology and culture can change the situation instantly. In a technopoly, cultural or behavioral shifts might be influenced by the adoption of technology.

When Edith came to know about her stepbrother, she started emailing him. In response, he emailed her too. So, communicating with each other via email is a virtual interaction. “We began emailing each other. He knew very little about his father’s first marriage and I did not go into detail. The stories he told did not correspond with the man I remembered” (46). It can lead to hyperreality because emails (written texts) are the representation of thoughts. The partial knowledge of his father’s marriage creates a fragmented narrative. Such fragmented narratives may lead to a simulation of reality. The stories that he shared do not align with memories that Edith has of her father. It may illustrate the line between what is the representation and what is the actual reality. Edith’s unfamiliarity with the information her stepbrother emailed her could be the lack of non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and body language which can lead to multiple interpretations. Recipients may add their own emotions and perceptions in the words which lead to the simulated emotional state that appears to not exactly depict the sender’s purpose. Besides, technology does not only influence communication and memory but also the construct of personal narratives. Virtual interactions are likely to become the most dominant way of communicating in a technopoly which may affect the nature of the conversation.

Edith, throughout the novel, shares the love stories of her boyfriends. As the novel revolves around pandemics and people’s dependence on technology, it creates a form of hyperreal love for her. At the beginning of the text, she glorifies the love. She shares her feelings about how love for her is perfect. There are many statements in which love is exaggerated and heightened by her. For instance,

Love is never the oldest story. It grows in the rich darkness. There was no exact event. Everything bleeds together, can't be separated. I remember breathlessness, elation climbing through my body, charging all the nerves, unbearable restraint. (16)

The technological era has played a very important role in creating hyperreal love. The love described at the beginning of the novel is exaggerated in a way that differs from the love experienced in real life. It appears to create hyperreality as it shows the unrealistic perception of love. It is a representation of romance which is different from the reality of romanticism. But unfortunately, her hyperreal love is shattered after a few years.

The pregnancy was ectopic and rupturing. When I woke, I'd been catheterized and was wearing a morphine belt. The incision was weeping into its bandage, had been hastily closed. The fallopian tube was irreparable and had been removed. (30)

Hyperreal love appears to exist in the text as an idealized perception of Edith does not align with reality. In the start, she starts developing the glorified and fantasized emotions and love for her partner which seems more perfect than the actual reality. But when she encounters with problems and violence in a relationship, her hyperreal version of love is shattered.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The novel, *Burntcoat* by Sarah Hall indicates the characters trapped in the hyperreal world which is full of images and representations. The focus is on the main characters which are Edith and Edith's mother Nomi who are lost in the simulation universe. Edith becomes so dependent on technological devices which makes her dehumanized resulting in the loss of her individuality. Whereas, Nomi tries to escape the hyperreal world by rejecting the technology. Unfortunately, the modern world declares her as a mad person. The novel also portrays the role of media in creating hyperreal and simulation universes. Both novels stress the notion that technological dystopia seems to be increasing in the COVID-19 era. To recapitulate, the COVID-19 era has played a very significant role in creating a technological dystopia which made the character rely on technological devices. Furthermore, they spend so much time on their screens that they cannot distinguish between reality and representations. Edith is

lost in the hyperreal world whereas her Nomi rejects it. Ironically, both do not have happy endings. Edith has happily become a part of the hyperreal world while Nomi is forced to accept the simulated world.

Overall, the textual analysis of the novel involves a thorough examination of language, structure, characterization, symbols, and themes to uncover deeper meanings and interpretations about technological dystopia, simulacra and hyperreality. Moreover, it explores the ways through which simulation affects the characters.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Findings of the research

This chapter deals with answering all the questions raised by the researcher. The first question was, in what ways does simulation affect the characters in the novel, *Burntcoat* by Sarah Hall? The novel, *Burntcoat* indicates the characters trapped in the hyperreal world which is full of images and representations. The focus is on the main characters, Edith and Edith's mother Nomi who are lost in the simulation universe. Edith becomes so dependent on technological devices which makes her dehumanized resulting in the loss of her individuality. Whereas, Nomi tries to escape the hyperreal world by rejecting the technology. Unfortunately, the modern world declares her as a mad person. She chooses to live simply. She opposes the virtual environment filled with virtual sights. Ironically, because she deviates from social conventions, society views her as odd. To exist in this virtual environment, people expect one another to be technologically savvy; otherwise, they risk being labeled as insane. This may be the cause of why individuals choose to live by representation or visuals and experience a hyperreal world. Additionally, under a technopoly, technology rules the state in such a way that it also shapes people's perspectives. Nomi's notion of avoiding social interaction, dressing traditionally, and acting according to societal norms may be a response to the technopoly, which has a considerable impact on determining social norms. The novel also portrays the role of media in creating hyperreal and simulation universes. Both novels stress the notion that technological dystopia seems to be increasing in the COVID-19 era. Whereas Edith happily chooses the hyperreal world for herself. She appears to rely heavily on others for several duties, including communicating and troubleshooting. It is also likely to highlight how domineering technology is, causing individuals to lose their uniqueness as they follow its rules. Because the physical reality of the site is perceived through virtual communication, the reliance on calls and updates reveals the simulation universe. It seems as though the debate about the project's expansion is a simulation of reality.

The second research question raised by the researcher was, how is simulacra different from reality in *Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult? The novel, *Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult depicts the struggle of Diana in escaping the hyperreal world. She spends quality time in the Island Galapagos where there is an unstable internet connection. By staying away from her phone, she discovers the real world free from simulations and representations. By detaching herself from the internet, she becomes successful in finding her true love, Gabriel. It also made her realize that the love for Fin was not more than a hyperreal love. The novel takes a shocking turn when the readers come to know that whatever happened on the trip was her hallucinations as she was on the ventilator the entire time. It shows that no matter how much we try to escape from hyperreality or simulation universe, we will be trapped again in it. Technology has become a necessary tool for individuals to keep in touch with their loved ones during the COVID-19 epidemic. Nevertheless, there are certain negative aspects to increasing reliance on technology. For instance, Diana's obsession with clicking photos and finding reliable internet access seems to interfere with her ability to completely experience and appreciate the vacation.

The researcher's third question was, how does simulation lead to dehumanization and loss of individuality? Hyperreality and simulation play a vital role in making the characters dehumanized by making them lose their individuality. Media and the internet also play a significant role in dominating the characters which makes them dehumanized. Moreover, their perspectives are influenced by the technology as well. During the COVID-19 outbreak, people needed to use technology to stay in touch with their loved ones. However, there are also drawbacks to our growing reliance on technology. For instance, Diana seems to struggle to fully experience and appreciate the holiday because she is concerned with taking photographs and locating dependable internet connectivity. Diana feels cut off from real-life events, and this represents the loss of authenticity. The genuine experiences become quite blurred in the hyperreal environment because of all the pictures, simulations, and representations that are there. She experiences severe social isolation as a result of her inability to establish true connections with others due to the predominance of simulations. Diana feels cut off from the world because of her loneliness, which makes everything look superficial. In the novel *Burntcoat*, Fights at food banks, store burglaries, etc. are reflections of the hyperreal world, which is replete with simulations or representations. People are in a



desperate rush to acquire all of their necessities at once, believing that they won't have another opportunity to do so. It stands for the influence of the media on public perception. People now feel as though today is their final chance to buy stuff and that there will be no more days like this. It has made them dehumanized as they are influenced by images, the internet and media.

The study sheds light on the technological dystopia which surrounds characters' lives by making them dehumanized resulting in the loss of their individuality. Moreover, it disregards their real vision of the world and the authenticity of the characters. It makes individuals lonely in technological developments and society moves away from reality in a critical way. In these dystopian novels, characters are controlled by technology. They act whatever they watch on media which results in losing their individuality. This sense of being watched controls human actions and expressions. It dehumanizes an individual by depriving his freedom of behavior. The COVID-19 era is dominated by technology in which social and cultural values are shaped and changed with signs and symbols. The research analyzed how technological dystopia shifts the behaviors, values and needs of characters. The new technologies change characters' behavior, as well as their attitude, and their ways of seeing, thinking, feeling, acting, and meaning/interpreting themselves and the reality around them.

## **6.2 Social Implications**

The selected research is on American and British novels but the situation is universal. The goal of the current study is to investigate how technology surrounds characters, ultimately leading to their dehumanization through the loss of individuality, disregard for their true worldview, and the creation of hyperreality within the simulated environment. Characters in the novel feel more alone as technology advances and society increasingly distances itself from reality. The characters in these dystopian novels are manipulated by technology. In essence, technological dystopia produces simulacra and hyperreality. It includes more serious problems including dehumanization, the loss of uniqueness, and changes in human attitude and conduct. They act on what they see in the media, which causes them to lose their uniqueness. The human behaviors and expressions are controlled by this feeling of being seen. People living in Pakistan can also relate to the situation shown in the American and British novels.

### **6.3 Recommendations for Future Researchers**

The current research has brought up several questions that require more investigation to fully comprehend the phenomena of technological dystopia and its impact on the modern world. One of them is to examine the features of the simulation and hyperreality in Pakistani fiction. Another consideration for future researchers could be the conduction of research on myths, religious, gothic or child fiction as the current study is only on dystopian novels. The research carried out in other genres can help future researchers to come up with interesting findings.

## Works Cited

- Akram, Ayesha, and Muhammad Ayub Jajja. "The maternal dilemma and nuptial ordeals in Jodi Picoult's fiction: The lens of maternal feminism." *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 8 Sept. 2018, pp. 19–38, doi.org/10.46568/pjgs.v17i1.8.
- Baurdillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. The University of Michigan Press, 1994.
- Briggs, Daniel, et al. "Lockdown: Social Harm in the Covid-19 ERA." *Teesside University's Research Portal*, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 11 Dec. 2021.
- Cummins, Anthony. "Burntcoat by Sarah Hall Review – Sex on the Eve of Destruction." *The Guardian, Guardian News and Media*, 4 Oct. 2022.
- Dhannoon, Iman Saud. "Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the COVID-19 Pandemic in Sarah Hall's *Burntcoat* and Sarah Moss's *The Fell*." *Journal of Language Studies* vol. 7, no. 3, 30 Nov. 2023, pp. 340–359. doi: [org/10.25130/lang.7.3.19](https://doi.org/10.25130/lang.7.3.19).
- Fernandes, Ana Raquel. "Transgression and Empowerment in Sarah Hall's Short Fiction." *American, British and Canadian Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1 Dec. 2020, pp. 152–172. doi:10.2478/abcsj-2020-0021.
- Feigel, Lara. "Burntcoat by Sarah Hall Review – Love Under Lockdown." *The Guardian News and Media*, 8 Oct. 2023,
- Gordin, Michael D., et al. "Introduction. Utopia and Dystopia beyond Space and Time." *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility*, 31 Dec. 2010, pp. 1–18. doi:10.1515/9781400834952.1.
- GÖKŞEN, Erol. "Uzay Çiftçileri ve Şebek Romanında Ütopya ve Distopyanın Tezahürü, Edebiyatın İzinde Fantastik ve Bilim Kurgu", 2015.
- Hadiya, Attar. *Art and Surviving Trauma in Times of Crisis*, 06/ N°: 02 (2022), June 2022, pp. 115–122.
- Hall, Sarah. *Burntcoat*. Faber & Faber, 2022.

- Haupt, Angela. "Jodi Picoult's *'Wish You Were Here'* Has Quite the Pandemic Twist." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 10 Feb. 2022.
- Head, Dominic. "The Farming Community Revisited: Complex Nostalgia in Sarah Hall and Melissa Harrison." *Taylor & Francis*, 2020, [www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14688417.2020.1842788](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14688417.2020.1842788).
- Jacqui. "Burncoat by Sarah Hall." JacquiWine's Journal, 13 Dec. 2022.
- Kelly, Staurt. "Book Review: *Burntcoat*, by Sarah Hall." *The Scotsman*, 1 Oct. 2021.
- Kjantzen. "Neil Postman's *Technopoly* ... Twenty Years Later." *Kyle Jantzen*, 18 Feb. 2015.
- Kartal, Ahmet Gurhan. "World on Standstill: Covid-19 Deals Major Blow to Life as We Know It." *Anadolu Ajansı*, 2021.
- Muhammad, Nihal. "The Darwinian world of the COVID-19 pandemic in Jodi Picoult's *Wish You Were Here*: An evolutionary perspective." *Journal of Languages and Translation*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1 Jan. 2023, pp. 20–39.
- Manton, Elia Conesa. "Is the Current State of Our Societies an Inspiration for Future Dystopian Novels? : Utopia and Dystopia in Sarah Hall's *The Carhullan Army* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*." *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*, June 2015.
- Picoult, Jodi. *Wish You Were Here: A Novel*. Ballantine Books, 2022.
- Postman, Neil. *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. Vintage Books, 1993.
- Runtukahu, Pingkan Windy, et al. "Self-Control in Jodi Picoult's Small Great Things." *Journal of Teaching English Linguistics, and literature*, vol. 1, no. 10, 30 Aug. 2022, pp. 1180–1195.
- Ünalán, Duygu. *A Reading From Technological Dystopia to Today's Simulation Universe*, Aug. 2021.
- Vieira, Fátima. "The Concept of Utopia (Chapter 1)." *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, edited by Gregory Claeys, Cambridge Core, Cambridge University Press, 28 Sept. 2010.

