CYBERSPACES AND IDENTITY:
A STUDY OF CYBERPSYCHOGEOGRAPHY
IN THE SELECTED EURO-AMERICAN
FICTION

BY

SABA JAVED

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES

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SABA JAVED

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Submitted By: Saba Javed   **Registration #:** 179-MPhil/ELit-F21

Dr. Kalsoom Khan   _____
Name of Supervisor   Signature of Supervisor

Dr. Farheen Ahmed Hashmi   _____
Name of Head (GS)   Signature of Head (GS)

Dr. Arshad Mahmood   _____
Name of Dean (FAH)   Signature of Dean (FAH)

_____
Date

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I Saba Javed

Daughter of Muzafar Javed

Registration # <u>179-MPhil/Elit-F21</u>

Discipline <u>English Literature</u>

Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Cyberspaces and identity: A Study Of Cyberpsychogeography in the Selected Euro-American Fiction** 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.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Cyberspaces and Identity: A Study of Cyberpsychogeography in the Selected Euro- American Fiction

With increasing integration of human experiences into digital environments, contemporary society has entered a state where cyberspaces influence individual identities and interpersonal relationships. This study examines two contemporary Euro-American novels, *Meatsapce* (2014) by Nikesh Shukla and *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) by Gary Shteyngart, through the lens of cyberpsychogeography; a theoretical framework merging psychogeography and cyberspace studies. This study incorporates the key theoretical concept of cyberpsychogeography, a term coined by Mark Amerika, along with related concepts such as cyberflânerie and cyberdérive, drawn from the works of Amy J. Elias and Rosane Ganley. The research explores how the novels depict characters navigating virtual environments shaped by cyberspaces. By tracing characters' digital movements and emotional responses across online terrains, the study demonstrates how cyberspaces disrupt spatial continuity and emotional stability, leading to fractured identities and superficial connections. The analysis also incorporates these theories to understand the emotional and cognitive impacts of navigating within cyberspaces on the characters' identities and interpersonal relationships. The theoretical framework serves to map how digital pathways mimic urban wandering, making visible the often-invisible psychological effects of algorithm-driven interaction on human behavior and social bonds. The study reveals that cyberspaces, acting as extensions of urban psychogeography, create fragmented identities and strained interpersonal connections. Characters exhibit altered temporal experiences and fluid selfhoods, grappling with the pervasive influence of algorithmically mediated interactions. Both novels critique the overreliance on digital environments, exposing their role in distorting human connections and undermining authentic engagements. The research argues that while cyberspaces offer opportunities for self-expression and exploration, they simultaneously highlight the vulnerabilities of identity and relationships within a digitally mediated society. These findings open avenues for further research into the psychological and sociocultural consequences of digital urbanism in literature and real-life contexts.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Shehzadi Anbreen and Muzafar Javed, who never let societal norms cripple my wings and always empowered me to soar as high as I desired, and to my younger brother, Zargham Javed, who was kind, considerate and brave enough to lend me his life when I was struggling to keep mine alive.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Owing to daily advances in technological innovation, the 21st century is seeing a steady transformation in human perception and way of life. Even though humans first created these technologies for practicality and efficiency, with time these technological advancements began to not only occupy human brains but also to govern the modern human mind. The real experience of human life was taken into consideration when these devices and technologies were first developed and designed. Now, these same devices are changing, altering, and modifying people's perceptions of reality, which in turn is causing changes in their identities and relationships. There is no denying that these sophisticated technologies and accompanying experiences have split society apart, forming a new world inside an old one. The ancient world, known as *Meatsapce* (2014), where humans have lived for ages, and the modern, intricate, and advanced realm known as Cyberspace. Before diving into the further discussion, we must pay heed to a primary question i.e how do we define cyberspace?

> The portmanteau term "cyberspace" may be defined as the worldwide network of computers and devices. It functions as an alternate spatiotemporal realm of "being," where we imagine, experience, and negotiate with the world and the people in it – including ourselves – guided by the rules and assumptions which are seemingly distinct from those which govern our existence in the "real time" lived realm. (Mittal 1)

Cyberspace refers to the interconnected environment of digital systems, particularly the virtual space where online communication, interaction, and information exchange occur. Coined by science fiction author William Gibson in his 1984 novel *Neuromancer*, the term has since become widely used to describe the conceptual space where computer systems, networks, and digital communication exist. This study is centralized on impact of cyberspaces on characters' psychosocial aspects i.e. identities and relationships.

Psychogeography, a term popularized by the Situationist International movement in the mid-20th century, represents a dynamic and interdisciplinary approach to understanding the interplay between geography, urban environments, and human psychology. Rooted in the idea that our surroundings significantly shape our emotions, behaviors, and psychosocial aspects, psychogeography explores the subtle influences of space on the psyche of a human being. This concept challenges traditional notions of urban planning and architecture, emphasizing the subjective experience of space over objective design. Psychogeography encourages individuals to engage with their environments in unconventional ways, fostering a deeper connection to the emotional and imaginative dimensions of a place. Through practices such as *"dérive"*, Dérive (drift) is defined as a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. It involves letting oneself be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters found there. It is a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of transient passage through environments. (Debord 50), psychogeography seeks to uncover hidden narratives, cultural nuances, and the psychosocial impact of the built environment.

Cyberpsychogeography, a term coined by theorist Mark Amerika in his essay "Cyberpsychogeography: An Aimless Drifting in Twenty Digressions", an evolution of psychogeography, explores the intricate relationship between individuals and digital landscapes. In the contemporary era dominated by technology, this concept investigates how online environments, social media platforms, and digital interactions shape the human psyche.

The two theoretical concepts that have helped analyze and substantiate this study are *cyberflâneur* and *cyberdérive*. *Cyberflâneur* in the essay "The Cyberflâneur in the Age of Digital Technology" is defined as:

> Rather than just basing the flâneur on a cultural figure that roams the streets, it is also one that fuses itself with the world of the virtual in the mechanical age of reproduction. This suggests that the future of the flâneur will be better accommodated online, in a virtual world rather than existing beyond the screen. (Ganley 5)

Within the digital domain, *cyberflâneur* engages in the activity of purposelessly navigating through online content, characterized by a lack of specific objectives or aims. This practice involves casually exploring diverse websites, social media platforms, discussion forums, or other virtual arenas for the purposes of discovery, entertainment, or relaxation, devoid of predetermined agendas. Whereas *cyberdérive* entails the deliberate and intuitive navigation of online spaces, with an emphasis on uncovering latent or obscured facets of the digital landscape, in the essay "Towards a Digital Age Psychogeography and the hybrid flâneur" (2018) it is defined as:

> The phenomenon of cyber-dérive is so extensive that it would be not exaggerating to talk about a global village, a cyber-community, that not only democratizes knowledge by sharing it, but also shares personal information about its tours with everyone who has access to the Internet. (Sylaiou, Chountasi, and Lagoudi 6)

In this study, analysis of characters in Nikesh Shukla's *Meatsapce* (2014) delves into the psychosocial effects of navigating cyberspace, examining how the design and user experience of digital terrains influence one's psychosocial aspects. Additionally, the study broadens its scope by including Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010), offering an exploration of characters' interactions with virtual landscapes in the context of evolving technologies. By unraveling the multifaceted dimensions of human experience, the research seeks to understand the intertwined influence of digital environments on characters' psyches in these contemporary literary works.

The researcher is interested in the way individuals navigate the virtual space or the cyberspace and the impacts these spaces have on their identities and relationships. This study views the impact of cyberspaces on characters with a lens of *cyberpsychogeography*. A focus is made on how virtual or cyberspace is mapped and represented in selected fiction, and how this influences the characters' perceptions of identity. The ultimate goal of this research is to explore the psychogeography within cyberspaces. Essentially the main objective of this research is to explore the presence of *cyberflâneur* within cyberspaces and to navigate how this *cyberflâneur* experiences *cyberpsychogeography* within the realms of cyberspace and how these experiences alter his identity and relationships.

Based on the argument mentioned above, in the proposed research, the researcher carries out a qualitative analysis of the selected Euro-American contemporary fiction. Precisely, the primary texts selected for this study are; a British contemporary novel titled

Meatsapce (2014) by Indian Brtitish novelist Nikesh Shukla and the American novel *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) by Gary Shteyngart. The current study claims that humans are continuously drifting within virtual realm in these works of fiction, which causes changes in their identities and relationships. The present research contends that characters in the selected fiction experience a nuanced digital psychogeography within virtual world which affects their psychosocial aspects. The frequent drifting within cyberspace causes citizens to perceive reality in a different way, which alters their identities and relationships.

The primary text selected for this study; *Meatsapce* (2014) by Nikesh Shukla follows the story of Kitab Balasubramanyam, a struggling writer, who experiences an unexpected turn in his life when he meets a mysterious stranger, Kit. As Kitab grapples with his online persona and realworld challenges, the novel explores themes of identity, connection, and the blurred lines between the digital and physical realms. The narrative weaves humor and introspection as Kitab navigates the complexities of modern life in both meatsapce and the cyberspace. Whereas *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) by Gary Shteyngart is a satirical dystopian novel set in a nearfuture America dominated by the influence of virtual spaces and technology. The story follows the contrasting perspectives of Lenny Abramov, an aging book enthusiast, and Eunice Park, a young and tech-savvy woman. In this society obsessed with youth and constantly ranked by social media metrics, the characters' identities and relationships are profoundly impacted by the virtual realm. As Lenny and Eunice navigate this digitized landscape, their personal data, appearances, and social standing play a crucial role in shaping their identities. The novel explores the consequences of living in a society where virtual spaces not only dictate personal worth but also influence the dynamics of human connections, emphasizing the transformative impact of technology on the characters' sense of self and the nature of their relationships.

The selected texts were chosen because they present a nuanced and rich depiction of how identities and relationships are reshaped within cyberspaces. They

capture the contemporary reality of cyberpsychogeography, illustrating the psychological and social transformations that occur in virtual environments. These narratives provide fertile ground for examining the evolving interplay between digital spaces and human experience. The rationale behind the selection of these contemporary novels is driven by the overarching question of understanding the impacts of cyberspaces on characters' psychosocial aspects within contemporary fiction. *Meatsapce* (2014) is chosen for its exploration of Kitab Balasubramanyam's struggles with identity and connection in the digital age, as he grapples with the intersection of his online persona and real-world challenges. The novel delves into the blurred lines between meatsapce and cyberspace, offering a nuanced perspective on how virtual realms influence individuals' psychosocial dimensions. Similarly, *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) is selected for its satirical portrayal of a nearfuture America, where characters like Lenny Abramov and Eunice Park navigate a society obsessed with virtual metrics. The juxtaposition of their perspectives provides insights into how virtual spaces impact personal identities and relationships, shedding light on the psychosocial consequences of living in a digitized world. By analyzing these two novels, the research aims to unravel the complexities of characters' experiences in virtual spaces and their subsequent psychological and social transformations.

This research endeavors to address a critical gap in existing literature by focusing on the psychosocial impacts of cyberspaces, a dimension that has been relatively underexplored in previous studies. While prior research has predominantly delved into the surveillance aspect of technology and the influence of social media on our identities, this study recognizes the significance of the impacts of intangible cyberspaces and virtual environments. The implication of this study is that it deepens understanding of how cyberspaces transform human identities and relationships, offering insights relevant to contemporary digital life. In this intricate technological age, it is crucial to comprehend that, akin to urban spaces, cyberspaces exert a profound impact on the human psyche as well. The virtual spaces we navigate daily contribute significantly to shaping our identities and influencing our psychosocial aspects.

1.1 Thesis Statement

Nikesh Shukla and Gary Shteyngart's fiction explores the impact of *cyberdérive* and *cyberflânerie* on characters' identities and relationships as they drift through virtual

realms and experience *cyberpsychogeography*. This study fills a critical void in contemporary literary criticism by examining how digital spatial practices reshape selfhood and human connection. The theoretical concepts of *cyberpsychogeography* by Mark Amerika, *cyberflâneur* and *cyberdérive* by Roessane Ganly and Amy J. Elias can help explore and substantiate the argument.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To investigate the kinds of digital identities and spatial experiences portrayed within cyberspaces in the selected contemporary Euro-American novels.

2. To analyze the representation of *cyberflâneurs* within cyberspaces in the selected EuroAmerican fiction.

3. To explore the impact of *cyberpsychogeography* and *cyberdérive* on characters' identities and interpersonal relationships.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What kinds of digital identities and spatial experiences do the selected contemporary Euro-American novels portray within cyberspaces?

2. In what ways does the selected contemporary Euro-American fiction represent *cyberflâneurs* within cyberspaces?

3. How does *cyberpsychogeography* and *cyberdérive* impact the characters' identities and interpersonal relationships?

1.4 Research Methodology

The design of the research is qualitative in nature. The researcher has done the textual analysis of the selected novels subjectively and descriptively. For this study, the researcher has used Catherine Belsey's method of textual analysis which she explains in her essay, Textual Analysis as a Research Method (2005). The present study has chosen two contemporary novels as data for analysis and after reading the texts twice, the researcher chose the sentences and paragraphs for interpretation using the theoretical lens provided by Mark Amerika in his essay,

"Cyberpsychogeography (An Aimless Drift in Twenty Digressions)" and Amy J Elias and Rosane Ganley's concept of 'cyberdérive'" and 'cyberflâneur'. The researcher has explored the intricate interplay of identity, interpersonal relationships, and the navigation of virtual environments as depicted in the selected texts. The analysis delves into how cyberpsychogeography, functioning as extension of psychogeography, shape and influence the characters' perceptions of self and their connections with others. It examines the pervasive effects of cyberdérive" and cyberflânerie, revealing how these distort identity coherence and strain human relationships. Through this investigation, the study highlights the challenges characters face in maintaining authenticity and meaningful connections in a world which has now entered into cyberspaces.

1.5 Significance and Rationale of the Study

There is a common understanding that physical urban spaces can affect an individual's psyche, and there have been many studies conducted on this topic. However, as technology and virtual spaces become increasingly prevalent in our lives, it is important to also consider the impact of cyberspaces on our psyche. This study explores the concept of cyberflâneur and how individuals navigate virtual spaces, experiencing psychogeography within cyberspaces, which can affect their psychological and social aspects. This study is significant because it sheds light on the evolving nature of human experience in the digital age. As technology continues to shape our lives, it is important to understand how our interactions with virtual spaces affect our psychological and social well-being. By exploring the concept of cyberflâneur and their experiences within cyberspaces, this study provides valuable insights into the impact of virtual realms on the human psyche. Furthermore, the research also extends the study of spaces in relation to cyberspaces, which has previously been limited to the study of urban spaces. In Pakistan, where digital spaces are rapidly reshaping social interactions, this study helps understand how cyberspaces influence emerging identities and relationships. By exploring cyberpsychogeography, the research also offers insights into the psychological and social effects of increasing virtual engagement among Pakistani youth. The selected literary texts have not been previously studied through the perspective of the impact of cyberpsychogeography on human identities and relationships.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

Because of this thesis's scope and time constraints, the study has been limited to the topics addressed in the research questions, and the sample has been drawn exclusively from the chosen readings. The current study has been delimited to the contemporary novels of 21st century, which has helped keep study's scope and aim clear as it has only focused on the impacts of cyberspaces on characters' identities and relationships. Two contemporary novels; *Meatsapce* (2014) by Nikesh Shukla and *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) by Gary Shetengart have been selected for analysis. The research has also been delimited in terms of the theoretical lens. In the research, the concept of experiencing psychogeography within cyberspaces has been the main factor of exploration. For this purpose, the theoretical lens is delimited to the concept of cyberpsychogeography by Mark Amerika, cyberflâneur and cyberdérive by Roessane Ganley and Amy J. Elias.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into six chapters, each serving a distinct function in addressing the research objectives.

Chapter One provides an introduction and contextualizes the study. It outlines the background of the research problem, presents the thesis statement, and defines the research objectives and questions. This chapter also explains the research methodology adopted for the study, and concludes with a discussion on the significance and rationale of the research.

Chapter Two offers a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. It examines scholarly articles, theoretical texts, and critical works pertinent to the topic. This chapter also reviews existing studies on the selected novels to identify gaps in the current body of scholarship that the present study aims to fill.

Chapter Three presents the theoretical framework underpinning the study. It elaborates on the core concepts and theories such as cyberpsychogeography, cyberflânerie, and cyberdérive that inform the analysis of the selected texts.

Chapter Four contains a detailed critical analysis of Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010). This chapter engages with the novel's narrative to explore how cyberspace affects the characters' construction of identity and their interpersonal experiences.

Chapter Five offers a parallel critical analysis of Nikesh Shukla's *Meatsapce* (2014). It applies the same theoretical lens to examine how the novel portrays virtual navigation and its implications for subjectivity and human connection.

Chapter Six concludes the study by summarizing the key findings from the analysis. It highlights the contribution of the research to existing scholarship and offers suggestions for future inquiry in related areas.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter delineates the scholarly literature examined by the researcher concerning themes pertinent to the present investigation, with a concentrated emphasis on the depiction of technology within fictional narratives, specifically in relation to the experiences and navigation of cyberspace. This exploration is situated within the emerging theoretical framework of cyberpsychogeography, which offers a nuanced lens to interpret the psychological and spatial dynamics of digitally mediated environments. It encompasses an analysis of cyberpsychogeography, cyberdérive, and the repercussions of virtual environments on human mind, in conjunction with the notion of cyberflânerie as it influences personal identity and social interactions. The chapter further evaluates existing academic discourse surrounding *Meatsapce* (2014) by Nikesh Shukla and *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) by Gary Shteyngart, to elucidate deficiencies within the literature that this research seeks to address. Despite a growing body of scholarship on postmodern digital identity and cyberspace, few studies have critically analyzed these novels through the cyberpsychogeographical framework, thus signaling a vital gap this research intends to fill.

In the following chapter, the investigator will initially elucidate the foundational principles of the discipline known as psychogeography, followed by an examination of its progression into the realm of cyberpsychogeography. Subsequently, the discourse will transition to an analysis of flânerie and dérive, alongside their advancement into the concepts of cyberflânerie and cyberdérive. Thereafter, an exploration of the existing research and literature pertaining to these advanced terminologies will be undertaken. Furthermore, an examination of the literature regarding the implications of these concepts on human identity and interpersonal relationships will be presented. Following this, the previously conducted research on the selected novels; *Meatsapce* (2014) and *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) will be reviewed. In the concluding section of this chapter, the investigator will identify the existing gaps within the literature and articulate how the current research endeavor aims to address these deficiencies. The investigation of spatial experiences and their consequential effects on human psychology has historically captivated researchers

across various academic fields. Psychogeography, which examines the psychological ramifications of spatial and environmental contexts on individuals, serves as a crucial framework for analyzing human engagement with their surroundings. The conceptualization of psychogeography emerged in the 1950s, associated with the French Situationist International (SI) movement, led by theorist Guy Debord. Debord articulated psychogeography as "the examination of the specific impacts of the geographical environment, whether intentionally organized or otherwise, on the emotions and behaviors of individuals."(6) Initially conceived as a counterpoint to the monotonous design of urban environments, it sought to foster innovative modalities of experiencing urban landscapes through spontaneous exploration, termed "dérive" (drifting). This practice encouraged participants to traverse environments devoid of any predetermined objectives, permitting the surroundings to influence their cognitive processes and experiential encounters organically.

During the 1960s and 1970s, psychogeography underwent significant transformation in response to the evolving socio-cultural and technological contexts. In the 1980s, it experienced a resurgence of interest in the United Kingdom, particularly within the oeuvre of writers such as Iain Sinclair, who scrutinized the ways in which urban spaces in London influenced their residents. Sinclair and his contemporaries investigated the "hidden histories" of various locales, perceiving these spaces as imbued with profound symbolic significance and latent psychological effects. Gradually, psychogeography emerged as an essential instrument for probing the socio-political implications of urban environments, unveiling the ways in which cities could both mirror and shape human consciousness. These investigations laid a foundation for extending psychogeographical inquiry into non-physical domains, setting the stage for contemporary engagements with cyberpsychogeography. As digital networks increasingly constitute the spaces we inhabit intellectually and socially, understanding their psychogeographic dimensions becomes crucial in examining how narrative fiction reflects and critiques the mediated realities of 21st-century life.

The dérive (French for "drift") emerged as an essential concept within the Situationist International (SI) movement during the 1950s, under the intellectual leadership of Guy Debord. The dérive" was formulated as a radical reaction to the engagement inherent in contemporary urban existence, which the SI ascribed to the

rationalization and commodification of urban environments by capitalist systems. Drawing inspiration from prior avant-garde movements such as Dadaism and Surrealism, the dérive aimed to disrupt the established routines of daily life and promote spontaneous exploration of the urban milieu. In contrast to the flâneur of 19th-century Paris, who passively observed the city as a spectacle, participants in a dérive actively engaged with the urban landscape, permitting its characteristics to influence their movements and emotional states.

The dérive serves as the practical manifestation of psychogeography, converting its theoretical constructs into tangible exploration. Debord characterized the dérive as "a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances" (Debord 62). The dérive entails a conscious yet spontaneous meandering through urban environments, liberated from preestablished objectives or habits. Through participation in a dérive, individuals assume the role of psychogeographers, engaging in an active exploration of the ways in which the spatial configuration of a city influences their emotional states, perceptions, and social interactions.

While psychogeography furnishes the analytical framework for comprehending the city's impact, the dérive provides a methodology for revealing these effects through lived experience. It enables individuals to engage with the environment on a profound level, discerning emotional reactions to architectural structures, street configurations, and urban rhythms. In this context, the dérive operates as a mechanism for producing psychogeographic knowledge.

The notion of the flâneur an individual who wanders through urban landscapes in solitude while meticulously observing the dynamics of city life originated in the 19th century as a significant cultural and literary archetype. Ingrained in the swift urbanization and modernization of metropolitan areas such as Paris during the Industrial Revolution, the flâneur became emblematic of the evolving interactions between individuals and their urban settings. This character is predominantly linked to the literary works of Charles Baudelaire. Baudelaire in his essay *The Painter of Modern Life* described the flâneur as a "passionate spectator" of urban life (Baudelaire 9). The flâneur's rise coincided with the transformation of Paris, orchestrated by Baron Haussmann, who reconfigured the metropolis through the introduction of expansive boulevards, communal parks, and a revamped infrastructure that facilitated a

contemporary, cosmopolitan existence. These urban modifications engendered novel modalities of social and cultural engagement, fostering a milieu in which individuals could meander and scrutinize the cadence of metropolitan life. The flâneur materialized as an embodiment of this milieu, epitomizing the dichotomy between the newly acquired liberty to wander and the estrangement induced by industrialization and commodification.

After delving into the definitions of both flânerie and dérive", one might ponder what is the difference between these two. Maren Hartmann in his phd thesis; Technologies and Utopias: The Cyberflâneur and the Experience of 'Being Online' (2004) clearly state the distinction between the two; flânerie and dérive share similarities as both involve wandering through urban spaces, focusing on the marginal and ephemeral aspects of the environment, and exploring impressions beneath the surface. However, they differ significantly in purpose, engagement, and philosophy. Flânerie is aesthetic and reflective, characterized by passive observation and a detachment from direct involvement with people or surroundings. In contrast, dérive is political and revolutionary, aiming to critique and transform urban spaces through active engagement and provocation. The flâneur finds intoxication in the crowd and commodities while maintaining distance, whereas the situationists (those who engage in dérive") becomes immersed in the environment, often losing objectivity. Flânerie lacks direct political aims, mourning urban changes, while dérive is inherently political, rebelling against capitalist structures. The flâneur produces creative or intellectual work, whereas the situationist prioritizes the experience itself over tangible outcomes. Moreover, flânerie focuses on external ephemerality, romanticizing fleeting city impressions, while dérive emphasizes internal ephemerality, seeking personal transformation and social change (94-96).

Having explored the foundational principles of psychogeography, the dérive, and the flâneur, each of which is deeply embedded in the physical scrutiny and critique of urban environments, we now proceed to analyze their development within the digital domain. The advent of cyberspace has revolutionized spatial experiences, leading to the formulation of the concepts of cyberpsychogeography, cyberdérive", and the cyberflâneur. These terminologies reinterpret the tenets of their corporeal counterparts within virtual landscapes, illustrating the manner in which the digital sphere affects

emotions, behaviors, and identity formation. Cyberpsychogeography explores the impact of virtual environments, such as websites, social media platforms, and digital cartography, on users' cognitive and emotional engagement. In a similar vein, the cyberdérive" pertains to aimless meandering through the internet, wherein hyperlinks, algorithms, and user interfaces direct exploration in unforeseen manners.

Meanwhile, the cyberflâneur, evoking Baudelaire's depiction of the urban wanderer, traverses digital terrains with a blend of curiosity and detachment, scrutinizing and interpreting the structures and spectacles intrinsic to the online realm. This shift from physical to virtual spaces highlights the enduring relevance of psychogeographic themes, elucidating how digital environments incessantly influence human experience in multifaceted and significant ways.

> The Cyberflâneur "strolls" through information space, taking in the virtual architecture and remaining anonymous. If the Flâneur was a 'decipherer of urban and visual texts'…then the Cyberflâneur is a decipherer of Virtual Reality and Hypertexts. (Goldate 199)

As the physical principles of psychogeography, the dérive, and the flâneur transition into the digital sphere, scholars have examined how these ideas manifest in cyberspace. The essay Cyberspaces of Everyday Life delves into these evolving concepts, exploring how digital environments reshape our experiences of space, identity, and interaction. Cyberspaces of Everyday Life offers a critical analytical framework for comprehending the role of the Internet in the construction of social space. Mark Nunes draws upon the spatial analytical contributions of Henri Lefebvre to elucidate cyberspace as a construct of social reality. By examining online education, he investigates the manner in which the Internet reconfigures the university landscape. Nunes further scrutinizes the societal applications of the World Wide Web and demonstrates how online communication transforms the interplay between the global and the local. Additionally, he employs Deleuzian theory to underscore the performative dimensions of spatial production inherent in computer-mediated communication. By addressing the social and cultural ramifications of spam and anti-spam regulations, alongside the impacts of the defunct Internet stock bubble and the Patriot Act on the nexus between networked environments and daily existence,

Cyberspaces of Everyday Life illuminates the discourse surrounding virtual space and its significance within the offline domain.

The theoretical constructs of dérive and flâneur have experienced substantial metamorphoses as they have acclimatized to the digital epoch, transforming into cyber dérive" and cyber flâneur. Originally, dérive", a term anchored in the Situationist International movement, pertains to the methodology of unplanned navigation through urban settings, advocating for individuals to traverse the city sans a predetermined trajectory. This endeavor encapsulates a variant of psychogeography, wherein the emotional reactions elicited by the environment shape the perception of spatiality. The flâneur, an emblematic figure within 19thcentury Parisian society, epitomizes an observer of the urban milieu, ambling through the city while absorbing its rhythmic nuances. Scholars such as Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin have effectively captured the quintessence of the flâneur, accentuating the significance of the observer in comprehending the intricacies of modernity.

With the emergence of digital technology and the internet, these concepts have been reinterpreted. Cyber dérive" encapsulates a similar ethos of exploration, albeit within the digital domain. It entails engagement with online environments, navigating virtual spaces, and experiencing the vastness of the internet in an unpremeditated fashion. The concept of the cyber flâneur arises as a contemporary analogue to the traditional flâneur, wherein the individual traverses digital landscapes, observing and interacting with the plethora of information and stimuli that populate cyberspace. Prominent texts such as "The Cyber Flâneur: A New Paradigm for Public Space" by Andrew McLuhan and "The City of Bits" by William J. Mitchell furnish critical perspectives on how these figures have adapted within the contemporary context, underscoring the sustained relevance of dérive and flâneur in modern society. The progression into cyber dérive" and cyber flâneur exemplifies the persistent human inclination to explore and comprehend the world, whether in its physical or virtual manifestations. The concepts of cyberdérive" and cyberflâneur represent distinct yet interconnected ways of engaging with cyberspace, particularly in relation to identity, culture, and social interaction. The cyberflâneur, as explored in the context of youth and queerness, emphasizes the interplay of power, pleasure, and consumer politics in digital environments (Rasmussen & Kenway 2004). In contrast, cyberdérive" focuses

on the exploration of urban spaces through digital means, often highlighting the fluidity of identity and experience in cyberspace.

The cyberflâneur embodies a modern wanderer in digital spaces, engaging with the virtual world while navigating consumer culture and identity. "The youthful cyberflâneur is critiqued for its heteronormative biases, prompting a re-examination that incorporates queer identities and experiences" (Rasmussen and Kenway 45). "The traditional flâneur, a detached observer of urban life, evolves into a Cyber Flâneur who actively engages with digital tools to navigate and experience the city" (Barber 2024).

> …the flâneur slips easily into discourses about cyberspace. The same evanescent character who wandered through the Parisian boulevards of the French poet Charles Baudelaire, and from there can be glimpsed sauntering across the pages of many a critical text, now has a new space through which to roam, the virtual chat rooms, meeting places and cafes of the Internet. (Kimbell 1997)

Cyberdérive" refers to the practice of exploring and experiencing urban environments through digital technologies, akin to the dérive in psychogeography. It emphasizes the transient nature of identity in cyberspace, allowing individuals to navigate and redefine their experiences in real-time. "The rise of digital platforms facilitates new forms of social interaction and identity expression, challenging traditional notions of space and community" (Jaishankar 2007).

Amy J. Elias, in her essay "Psychogeography, Detournment, Cyberspace" (2010), explores the interplay between urban psychogeography and digital navigation, framing the dérive as a conceptual bridge between physical and virtual spaces. Debord's concept of the "dérive," or "drifting," refers to a transient and exploratory passage through environments, marked by playful and constructive behavior that sets it apart from conventional journeys or strolls. At its core, the dérive prioritizes the experience of chance encounters and the spontaneous discovery of urban spaces, free from predetermined motives or fixed destinations.

> …within the WWW they frequently define it as a dematerialized, telematic space central to the purest form of algorithmically defined movement, transitivity, and libidinal investment. Scores of web writers seem to have

discovered that Debord's description of dérive—an urban walking journey—sounds a lot like web surfing. (Elias 822).

Elias believes that a defining feature of the dérive is the deliberate abandonment of habitual motives for movement, allowing individuals to be guided by the attractions and dynamics of their surroundings. This exploration is not entirely random; it is shaped by the psychogeographical relief of the city, an intricate landscape of currents, fixed points, and invisible forces that subtly influence how people move through urban spaces. By immersing themselves in this process, participants open themselves to serendipitous moments and fresh perspectives on their environment. Elias is of the view that in the digital age, the act of web surfing can be seen as a contemporary reinterpretation of the dérive. Much like urban exploration, navigating the World Wide Web allows users to experience unplanned encounters and uncover new perspectives within a virtual landscape. Web surfers traverse digital spaces with varying degrees of structure; some journeys are guided by specific search parameters, while others unfold in an open-ended manner, echoing the fluid and unbounded nature of the dérive. This digital drift invites users to experience the web as a space of discovery, mirroring the exploratory ethos of Debord's original concept. Elias suggests that although the dérive celebrates spontaneity, it can also incorporate simple algorithms or rules that introduce a degree of structured randomness. For instance, movements might be dictated by patterns like "Go Left, Go Left, Go Right," creating an intentional yet unpredictable pathway through an environment. This practice parallels the behavior of web surfers who follow hyperlinks, recommendations, or digital pathways, encountering unexpected content along the way. Such algorithms act as tools for discovery, blending deliberate direction with the serendipity that characterizes the dérive. Elias further argues that just as urban environments possess a psychogeographical relief, a network of influences that guide movement, cyberspace has its own set of currents and zones that shape digital exploration. Elements such as trending topics, popular links, and algorithmically recommended content serve as virtual equivalents to the physical contours of a city. These features can either encourage or discourage further exploration, demonstrating the shared dynamics of urban and digital spaces as arenas for chance, pleasure, and discovery. Elias concludes that the parallels between the dérive and web surfing illuminate the potential for both physical and virtual spaces to foster unexpected encounters and novel perspectives. By embracing the unplanned and

allowing the environment whether urban or digital to guide their journey, individuals engage in a mode of exploration that transcends traditional boundaries. This alignment underscores the enduring relevance of the dérive as a framework for understanding how we navigate and experience the worlds around us, both tangible and virtual.

The concept of the cyberflâneur has become increasingly relevant in discussions of digital spaces, particularly when considering how individuals navigate and interpret virtual environments. Drawing parallels to the Situationist International's (SI) reimagining of urban space, the cyberflâneur is positioned as a digital wanderer who engages with the World Wide Web (WWW) in a manner akin to the flâneur's leisurely exploration of the city.

As Elias suggests, the redefinition of cosmopolitan space in virtual realities underscores a dematerialized and telematic form of movement, where the individual's navigation is shaped by algorithmically influenced pathways rather than physical landmarks. This analogy highlights the transition from physical psychogeography to its digital counterpart, where the exploration of websites, hyperlinks, and online communities mirrors the dérive's emphasis on chance encounters and non-linear trajectories.

Web surfing, as many scholars argue, embodies the spirit of the dérive in digital form. It enables users to explore cyberspace in a way that is playful yet structured by the psychogeographical relief of the internet, zones of attraction and repulsion defined by user interfaces, algorithms, and digital currents. This notion resonates with the broader implications of cyber psychogeography, particularly its influence on identity formation and interpersonal relationships. The act of moving through digital environments is not merely a functional or utilitarian exercise but a deeply affective and experiential one.

The cyberflâneur, much like their urban counterpart, engages in a dialogue with the environment, shaping and reshaping their sense of self through their encounters with digital spaces. Elias's observation that web surfing aligns with Debord's concept of the dérive further emphasizes the fluidity of boundaries between urban and digital psychogeographies. This fluidity is crucial to understanding how digital navigation influences identity and relationships among people. The algorithmically defined movements of cyber dérive not only mediate individual experiences of the virtual but

also redefine how connections are formed, maintained, or disrupted in a networked world. These themes invite a critical analysis of how digital platforms as psychogeographical spaces contribute to the construction of contemporary identities and reshape the nature of interpersonal relationships, a central focus of this research.

Similarly, another essay "Towarsds a digital age Psychogeography and the hybrid flâneur" (2018) analyzes how Situationism principles are integrated into digital media art. It explores how new technologies enable expression and engagement with space. The study argues that the contemporary flâneur uses mobile technologies to enhance exploration.Cyberspace, as defined by Gibson, is a vast network for exploration.Cyber-flâneurs gather data and experience emotions while navigating online.

Further the study says, Cyber-dérive creates a global village, sharing knowledge and personal experiences. Debord's concept of psychogeographic dérive involves spontaneous exploration of urban spaces, where individuals allow their surroundings to influence their experiences. This idea parallels modern Internet use, where users navigate through various online environments, often in a non-linear fashion. Just as flâneurs wander through city streets, cyber-flâneurs traverse the vast landscape of the Internet, discovering new information and experiences along the way. The study draws comparison between flâneurs and Cyber-flâneurs discussing how Cyber-flâneurs actively gather data while browsing the Internet, similar to how flâneurs collect sensory experiences in the physical world. They stop at points of interest, engage with content, and utilize hyperlinks to move between different areas of the web. This process allows them to accumulate knowledge and insights, creating a rich tapestry of information that reflects their unique journeys through cyberspace. The act of navigating online can evoke a range of emotions, much like wandering through a city can lead to unexpected feelings and reflections. Cyber-flâneurs experience disorientation, curiosity, and even nostalgia as they explore digital landscapes. The Internet, with its vast array of content and connections, provides opportunities for users to encounter new ideas and perspectives, fostering emotional engagement with the material they encounter.

The Internet's structure, characterized by hypertext and semantic interoperability, allows for a non-linear exploration of information. This mirrors the unpredictable nature of a dérive, where the journey is not predetermined, and the path

taken can lead to unexpected discoveries. Cyberflâneurs embrace this randomness, letting their interests guide them through the digital labyrinth. Just as psychogeography encourages individuals to reappropriate their urban environments, digital psychogeography enables users to reinterpret their online experiences. By engaging with various digital spaces, cyber-flâneurs can challenge conventional narratives and create new meanings, reshaping their understanding of both the physical and virtual worlds.

2.1 Critical Studies on *Meatsapce* (2014) and *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010)

2.1.1 Nikesh Shukla's *Meatsapce* (2014)

After reviewing the existing literature on the theoretical frameworks underpinning my research, I now turn to the exploration of previous studies conducted on my selected texts, tracing how they contribute to the broader discourse on cyberpsychogeography. The first such study I will engage with is the essay *The Mind is the Effect, not the Cause* by Piotr Czerwinski, which offers a compelling analysis of Nikesh Shukla's *Meatsapce* (2014). This essay delves into the intersections of technology, identity, and human consciousness, providing valuable insights that resonate with the themes central to my research. The scholarly work "The Mind is the Effect, not the Cause" authored by Piotr Czerwinski critically explores the significant influence of cyberspace on human cognition and identity, as articulated in Nikesh Shukla's novel *Meatsapce* (2014). Czerwinski accentuates the character Kit as a representation of the escalating immersion in digital environments, which subsequently leads to the reduced importance of the physical realm, referred to as meatsapce. The essay deliberates on how Kit's experiences serve as a reflection of wider societal patterns, presenting a critique of the all-encompassing impact of technology on human existence.

The analysis posits that cyberspace functions as Kit's predominant milieu, eclipsing his interactions with the tangible world. Through an examination of Kit's mounting dependence on social media and virtual reality, Czerwinski contends that the novel illustrates a reconfiguration of priorities wherein virtual engagements supersede physical relationships. This transition, as the essay posits, transcends mere

convenience, indicating a more profound metamorphosis in the manner in which individuals navigate their identities and interpersonal affiliations. This shift aligns with the theoretical framework of cyberpsychogeography, where the spatial experience of the digital displaces the affective relevance of material environments. Kit's behavior can thus be interpreted as a form of cyberdérive, wherein his spontaneous and habitual drifting through online platforms subtly restructures his emotional and psychological landscape. Czerwinski further elaborates on Kit's reliance on technology, emphasizing the pivotal role of devices in contemporary existence. The essay references Kit's observation, "Without battery, you can't tell anyone where you are or what you're eating," to exemplify the extent to which human experience has become inextricably linked with digital connectivity. This reliance, as the author elucidates, transforms smartphones and other technological innovations into indispensable instruments for sustaining both personal and social functionality. The essay critiques this dependence, positing that it epitomizes a cultural transition towards prioritizing virtual presence over concrete experiences. From a theoretical standpoint, this exemplifies Mark Amerika's concept of the digitally augmented subject, where the individual's perception and expression are modulated through interfaces and algorithms. Kit, in this light, is not merely a victim of digital addiction but a prototype of the posthuman subject navigating mediated psychogeographies

In addition, Czerwinski engages with the theoretical paradigm of the extended mind, accentuating how technology in *Meatsapce* (2014) operates as more than a mere tool, it evolves into an essential component of cognitive processes. The essay examines Kit's attachment to social media and wearable technology, observing how these facets obscure the distinctions between physical and virtual identities. By emphasizing this amalgamation, Czerwinski argues that Kit's consciousness is informed by both domains, presenting a nuanced interpretation of how human thought adapts to digital enhancement. The discourse also investigates the ramifications of cyberspace on Kit's emotional landscape, asserting that his deep engagement in digital connectivity results in the neglect of significant relationships in the material world. Czerwinski critiques this dynamic, suggesting that Kit's proclivity for social media diminishes his ability to forge authentic emotional connections. This observation, as noted in the essay, resonates with broader apprehensions regarding how technology can overshadow genuine human interactions, engendering isolation rather than connection. Ultimately,

the essay delves into Kit's cyborg-like identity, wherein his sense of self becomes profoundly mediated by technology. Czerwinski posits that this amalgamation of human and machine elucidates the diminishing boundaries between the physical and virtual, mirroring a transformation of selfhood in the digital epoch. The author suggests that Kit's experiences in *Meatsapce* (2014) symbolize a more extensive societal transition, in which technology reconfigures not only individual identity but also collective interpretations of humanity.

In summation, Czerwinski's essay presents a critical examination of *Meatsapce* (2014), imparting significant insights into the interplay between cyberspace and human consciousness. By scrutinizing Kit's technological reliance, his evolving priorities, and his developing identity, the essay underscores the novel's pertinence as a commentary on contemporary digital culture. However, while Czerwinski adeptly highlights the psychological and cognitive implications of digital immersion, his analysis does not directly engage with the psychogeographical dimensions of Kit's navigation through virtual space. My research seeks to bridge this gap by foregrounding the spatial and affective displacements enacted in cyberspace and analyzing how they structure not only Kit's identity but also the broader sociocultural critique embedded in the novel.

Another pertinent study, *Hyperreality and Cultural Crisis in Nikesh Shukla's Meatsapce* (2014)*: A Post-Cyberpunk Study* by Hira Khalid and Dr. Qasim Shafiq, explores the moral and ethical dimensions of post-cyberpunk society in the context of globalization and technological advancement. This research underscores how these developments have fundamentally reshaped the concept of being human, particularly through the pervasive influence of cyber technologies. The authors argue that these technologies have created a hyperreal media culture where sounds and images dominate, shaping political beliefs, social behaviors, and the construction of individual identities. The study situates Shukla's *Meatsapce* (2014) within the framework of post-cyberpunk literature, focusing on the cultural crises that emerge in a world increasingly mediated by technology. Drawing on Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality and Neil Postman's critique of technopoly, the paper examines how *Meatsapce* (2014) engages with these themes to critique the romanticization of techno-culture. It contends that the novel resists the techno-utopianism often associated with cyberpunk by instead portraying a more nuanced and often dystopian vision of network communication and

its impact on human culture and identity. Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality is particularly significant to the study, as it illuminates how mediated representations in a digital world often replace reality with simulations. This notion of simulated realities resonates with the central narrative of *Meatsapce* (2014), where online identities and their disconnection from tangible reality create existential tensions for the characters. Similarly, Postman's technopoly, the idea that societies increasingly prioritize technology over cultural and moral values, is used to critique how technological dominance erodes traditional frameworks of identity and meaning.

The study further highlights the role of discursive strategies in Shukla's *Meatsapce* (2014), such as satire, allegory, and dystopian realism. These literary techniques enable the narrative to interrogate the contradictions inherent in techno-culture. For instance, through satire, Shukla critiques the obsession with digital selves and online validation, while allegory and dystopian elements deepen the exploration of the fragmented identities and cultural crises triggered by excessive reliance on digital technologies. These strategies serve as a means to challenge the dominant narratives of technoutopianism and present an alternative, more critical vision of the future. These narrative strategies complement the notion of cyberflânerie, where characters like Kit perform a digital wandering not marked by detachment but by anxious self-surveillance and performative identity construction. This flânerie, unlike the leisurely urban stroll of Baudelaire's archetype, is constrained by the invisible architectures of digital platforms. The findings of Khalid and Shafiq's study underscore the profound cultural and societal impact of network communication, particularly in shaping values and identities. The study reveals how post-cyberpunk narratives like *Meatsapce* (2014) critically engage with the promises and pitfalls of techno-culture, offering a counter-narrative to the idealized visions of progress and connectivity often associated with technological advancement. Instead of celebrating the seamless integration of technology into daily life, *Meatsapce* (2014) confronts its readers with the moral and existential dilemmas posed by such integration, especially the erosion of authentic human experiences and relationships. This erosion reflects a core concern within cyberpsychogeography, where the virtual reterritorialization of social space alters not only how people interact but also how they internalize notions of presence, proximity, and intimacy.

Ultimately, the study positions *Meatsapce* (2014) as a pivotal work that not only critiques the dominant ethos of techno-utopianism but also provokes readers to reflect on the cultural values at stake in an increasingly digitized world. By unpacking the complex interplay between network communication, identity, and cultural values, Khalid and Shafiq's analysis illuminates the ways in which post-cyberpunk literature challenges and redefines our understanding of the human condition in the digital age. While the study effectively addresses the cultural and ethical ramifications of techno-culture through post-cyberpunk and media theory, it does not explicitly interrogate the spatial and affective dimensions of digital navigation. My research addresses this oversight by incorporating the theoretical lens of cyberpsychogeography, thereby foregrounding the significance of spatial affect, emotional dislocation, and identity fluidity in digitally mediated environments.

A notable study relevant to the thematic concerns of *Meatsapce* (2014) is Shugufta Iqbal's thesis titled *The Loss of the 'Real' in Nikesh Shukla's Meatsapce* (2014)*: A Study of Constructed Hallucinations* (2019). This research examines how evolving digital technologies have complicated the concept of reality in postmodern literature and culture. It contends that technological mediation has rendered 'reality' increasingly unstable, fragmented, and shaped by simulation rather than direct experience. According to Iqbal, the postmodern literary landscape, influenced by cybernetic environments, no longer mirrors life as a fixed truth but instead reflects a multiplicity of constructed, fluid experiences rooted in digital space.

The thesis draws extensively on Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality and William Gibson's conception of cyberspace, suggesting that contemporary societies engage with simulated versions of reality rather than with reality itself. Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality where simulations replace the real becomes particularly relevant in the context of *Meatsapce* (2014), where characters engage with digitally constructed environments that distort their sense of authenticity and physical presence. Similarly, Gibson's formulation of cyberspace as a "consensual hallucination" frames the digital domain as one in which users navigate and experience a pseudo-world, often with more emotional investment than they exhibit toward the tangible world. These conceptual tools offer important inroads for interpreting the cyberpsychogeographic dislocation present in Shukla's narrative. Characters traverse digital platforms in much the same

way urban psychogeographers once wandered city streets motivated not by rational objectives but by affective impulses shaped by the architecture of cyberspace.

Iqbal's analysis further emphasizes the breakdown of traditional binaries such as real/virtual, human/machine, and natural/artificial. In the context of *Meatsapce* (2014), these blurred boundaries reflect the lived condition of postmodern individuals whose identities are constructed across overlapping digital and physical interfaces. The thesis underscores how social media, online communication, and digital technologies act not merely as tools but as environments in which reality is simulated and reshaped. This virtual navigation resonates with the notion of cyberflânerie, as characters like Kit drift through digital interfaces, consuming and curating fragmented experiences that influence their psychological orientation and self-perception.

The research also critiques the collapse of metanarratives in postmodernism, suggesting that literature like *Meatsapce* (2014) engages with localized, personal narratives, often contradictory and unstable, that reflect the fragmented nature of postmodern subjectivity. As these micro-narratives unfold within digitally saturated environments, they become interwoven with hallucinated or simulated realities, making it increasingly difficult for characters to distinguish between authentic experience and its virtual imitation. Such movement across online platforms, unanchored and emotionally charged, reflects the process of cyberdérive. Kit and others do not navigate with purpose but drift through algorithmically structured environments, driven by affect, distraction, and desire rather than logic**.**

Ultimately, Iqbal's thesis concludes that *Meatsapce* (2014) captures the collapse of certainty and the erosion of fixed identity in the hypermediated present. In a world where reality is filtered through digital screens, the characters grapple with hallucinated lives that obscure their grounding in the physical world**.** While Iqbal insightfully applies postmodern theory to the dissolution of 'the real,' the spatial and navigational dynamics of cyberspace remain underexplored. This thesis expands upon her findings by incorporating the theoretical lens of cyberpsychogeography, allowing for an analysis of how characters experience digital space not just as representational but as psychically inhabited terrain, shaped by affect, rhythm, and techno-social structure.

2.1.2 Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010)

Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) has garnered significant scholarly attention as a poignant reflection of contemporary societal issues. Among these, Simon Willmetts' essay, "Digital Dystopia: Surveillance, Autonomy, and Social Justice", offers a compelling argument that Shteyngart's dystopian satire serves as an insightful heuristic model for understanding the complexities of surveillance in the twenty-first century. While George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* remains an iconic text for exploring state surveillance and authoritarian control, Willmetts suggests that many of Orwell's predictions now seem outdated in the context of our decentralized, digitally mediated world. Shteyngart's narrative, as Willmetts asserts, provides a more relevant framework for analyzing contemporary "surveillant assemblages." Unlike Orwell's centralized vision of a Big Brother-controlled society, the world depicted in *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) reveals a more diffuse, networked form of surveillance where control is exerted through data, technology, and consumer culture. This decentralized form of surveillance, maintained through digital systems, algorithms, and social media, reflects a shift toward what Gilles Deleuze has termed a "control society." In this context, individuals are constantly monitored, not by a singular authoritarian entity, but through interconnected networks that blur the lines between state, corporate, and personal spheres. This diffusion of surveillance across multiple digital platforms results in a transformation of urban and virtual environments into cyberpsychogeographic terrains, where individuals experience not only spatial disorientation but also psychological vulnerability. The characters' movement within these environments both physical and digital can be interpreted as involuntary instances of cyberdérive, in which their paths and choices are shaped not by spontaneous will but by algorithms and societal expectations.

One of the essay's most critical contributions is its emphasis on the disproportionate impact of surveillance on different segments of society. Whereas Orwell envisioned a society in which the "proles" were largely ignored by surveillance systems, Willmetts highlights that in Shteyngart's dystopia, surveillance reaches everyone but disproportionately targets the vulnerable, such as marginalized communities and those without economic or political power. This unequal burden reflects real-world concerns about the ways in which surveillance exacerbates existing

inequalities, disproportionately policing and controlling certain groups while granting others relative freedom. The spatial aspect of this digital inequality may be examined through a cyberpsychogeographic lens, revealing how certain individuals navigate cyberspace freely as cyberflâneurs while others are trapped in digitally imposed behavioral patterns, lacking the agency to drift or resist. The novel thus maps a deeply stratified digital topography, where movement, access, and visibility are privileges unevenly distributed.

Willmetts also addresses a central theme of dystopian literature: the tension between personal liberty and the right to privacy. While some critics argue that dystopian narratives often adopt a reactionary stance, opposing technological and social progress, this essay challenges that notion. Instead, it suggests that the autonomy championed by privacy activists and dystopian authors is not rooted in isolationist individualism but rather in a concept of personhood that is socially and politically engaged. Autonomy, in this sense, is framed as a precondition for meaningful resistance against the dehumanizing effects of digital mass surveillance. This nuanced understanding of autonomy shifts the discussion beyond simplistic critiques of surveillance to explore the deeper implications for personhood, identity, and societal values. Willmetts argues that the kind of autonomy envisioned in *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) is neither selfish nor detached but embedded within a collective consciousness that values personal freedom as integral to social justice. The novel's digital environment, filled with constant streams of data, credit rankings, and relationship ratings, becomes a psychogeographic space saturated with affective stimuli, shaping the characters' identities and emotional responses. In this space, the cyberflâneur figure is both compelled to drift and simultaneously surveilled, highlighting the contradictions of navigating hyperconnected spaces.

This reimagining of autonomy is crucial for fostering resistance and creating spaces for refusal within systems of surveillance. Ultimately, Willmetts positions Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) as a vital and timely contribution to the dystopian genre. By capturing the complexities of our digitally interconnected world, the novel transcends the limitations of earlier dystopian texts, offering readers a sobering yet critical lens through which to examine the challenges of surveillance, autonomy, and justice in the twenty-first century. Through the integration of

cyberpsychogeographic theory, the novel may further be understood as not only a dystopian critique of surveillance but also as an exploration of how virtual spaces psychologically and spatially condition subjectivity. The characters' affective and cognitive trajectories are charted through digital landscapes that simulate choice while enforcing conformity, revealing the layered dynamics of surveillance and spatial experience in the postmodern digital world.

In another study *Cyberculture and Ethics in Generation A and Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) by Reinhold Kramer, the examination of cyberculture and ethics within Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) and Douglas Coupland's Generation A unveils a significant critique regarding the ramifications of technology on interpersonal relationships, moral frameworks, and societal constructs. Both literary works function as satirical representations of modern trepidations linked to technological advancements, social media platforms, and the gradual degradation of conventional values, particularly within the realms of empathy and community.

In *Super Sad True Love Story*, Shteyngart articulates a dystopian future wherein technology pervades every facet of existence, resulting in a marked reduction in empathy amongst individuals. The characters are frequently portrayed as being more attuned to their technological devices than to one another, thereby eliciting ethical inquiries concerning the essence of human relationships in an excessively interconnected environment. The narrative critiques the superficial nature of online interactions, positing that the incessant influx of information and the precedence of digital communication over in-person engagements contribute to a diminishment of authentic emotional bonds. This motif is reiterated in the examination of how cyberculture influences the self, community, and collective action, illuminating the adverse consequences of technology on our aptitude for empathy and moral involvement.

In a similar vein, Generation A investigates the repercussions of a society increasingly dependent on technology. The characters traverse a reality where traditional methods of communication and community have been supplanted by digital exchanges, culminating in a profound sense of isolation and disconnection. Coupland's narrative provokes ethical inquiries regarding the ramifications of this transformation, particularly in relation to the characters' capacity to cultivate meaningful relationships

and participate in collective endeavors. The deterioration of reading habits and the ability to maintain attention, as indicated in the analysis, further intensify the obstacles to empathy within a cyberculture that favors immediate gratification and superficial connections.

Both novels also confront the ethical quandaries that emerge within individualistic societies shaped by cyberculture. In Super Sad True Love Story, the characters encounter moral dilemmas concerning their obligations to one another and to society as a whole. The protagonist, Lenny, finds himself in a state of conflict between his affections for Eunice and the societal pressures that exalt power and status over authentic human connections. This struggle provokes inquiries into the essence of loyalty and the ethical ramifications of personal decisions in an environment where individualism predominates. The narrative invites readers to contemplate the moral ties that bind individuals and the significance of literature in reinforcing shared ethical principles.

In Generation A, Coupland similarly scrutinizes the ethical landscape of a society propelled by self-interest and technological progress. The characters wrestle with their identities and the moral implications of their actions in a world that frequently prioritizes personal advantage over communal welfare. The novel's investigation of ethical dilemmas pertaining to environmental degradation and the obligations of individuals towards their communities reflects a broader apprehension regarding the influence of cyberculture on moral decisionmaking. While Kramer's comparative study provides valuable ethical and cultural insights into how cyberculture transforms social and moral dynamics, it stops short of examining the psychogeographic and spatial dimensions of digitally mediated environments. Concepts such as cyberpsychogeography, cyberflânerie, and cyberdérive remain unexplored in this context. The current research addresses this gap by focusing on how digitally constructed environments not only affect moral decision-making but also alter the spatial and psychological navigation of characters. By integrating spatial theory into the discourse, this study expands the scope of literary inquiry to include how digital terrains shape emotional landscapes, identity formation, and interpersonal relationships in both *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) and *Meatsapce* (2014).

Similarly, in other essays like, "Surveillance Capitalism and the Critique of Social Media in Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010)", "Surveillance in PostPostmodern American Fiction: Dave Eggers's The Circle, Jonathan Franzen's Purity and Gary Shteyngart's Super Sad True Love Story", and "Some new dimension devoid of hip and bone": Remediated Bodies and Digital Posthumanism in Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story*, the aspect of surveillance is explored. In many other essays the exploration of both the novels is limited to surveillance, ethical issues or post humanism. Both of these novels have not been explored through the lense of cyberpsychogeography. This study hence fills this gap.

In another essay "Digital Diaspora: The Race for Cyberspace," Anna Everett challenges prevailing narratives of African people's absence from digital spaces by highlighting their significant contributions and early adoption of technology. She introduces two powerful metaphors: the Afrogeek and the black cyberflâneur. The Afrogeek represents those in the African diaspora who actively bridge the technology gap in black communities, while the black cyberflâneur embodies individuals who navigate digital spaces seeking community and activism, despite facing exclusion and racial bias. Everett's narrative confronts the whitewashing of digital spaces, emphasizing the overlooked history of black technological innovation and activism. By drawing inspiration from Afrofuturist texts, she underscores the deep connection between black culture, science, and technology, challenging stereotypes and reclaiming narratives of technological mastery within Africana communities.

Anna Everett's "Digital Diaspora: The Race for Cyberspace" provides a critical intervention in digital cultural studies by foregrounding the racialized dimensions of cyberspace and introducing figures such as the Afrogeek and the black cyberflâneur. This notion of the cyberflâneur aligns with the current research's theoretical engagement with cyberpsychogeography and digital dérive, particularly in its emphasis on navigating cyberspaces as affective and politicized terrains. Like the cyberflâneurs in *Meatsapce* (2014) and *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010), Everett's black cyberflâneur engages with digital environments as sites of both alienation and resistance. Both frameworks explore how identity is shaped and contested within virtual geographies. However, Everett's work is distinct in its Afrofuturist orientation and its

direct engagement with race, diaspora, and the historical erasure of Black technological contributions; elements that are not the primary focus of the current study.

While Everett powerfully addresses the racial politics of digital presence and visibility, the current research identifies a different critical gap: the lack of sustained literary analysis exploring how concepts like cyberpsychogeography, cyberflânerie, and cyberdérive operate across Euro-American fiction to influence character identity, emotional dislocation, and digital drift. This thesis fills that gap by analyzing how cyberspaces in *Meatsapce* (2014) and *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) function as psychologically charged environments that alter characters' perceptions of self and their relationships with others, often through subtle, experiential navigations rather than overt political resistance. Thus, although Everett's contribution enriches the theoretical landscape, this study offers an original intervention by applying theories related to spatial experiences within cyberspace to the literary analysis of contemporary Euro-American narratives that have yet to be extensively examined through this lens.

In conclusion, the existing body of literature on *Meatsapce* (2014) and *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) demonstrates a sustained critical engagement with the socio-cultural and ethical ramifications of digital technology. Scholars have explored a range of themes including the erosion of empathy, the fragmentation of human relationships, the rise of hyperindividualism, and the ethical crises engendered by pervasive technological mediation. These studies have laid essential groundwork in understanding the dystopian dimensions of cyberculture, surveillance, and the commodification of identity. However, much of the existing scholarship remains largely situated within macro-level critiques of technology, often neglecting the spatial and experiential dimensions of how digital environments reshape subjectivity and interpersonal dynamics.

This research intervenes by addressing that gap, applying the conceptual frameworks of cyberpsychogeography, cyberflânerie, and cyberdérive to foreground how characters' movements through and interactions within cyberspaces actively shape their psychological states, emotional attachments, and evolving senses of self. By focusing on the spatial and affective dynamics of digital environments in these texts, this study reveals how the virtual navigation of characters reflects deeper crises of meaning, dislocation, and identity formation in the postmodern digital condition.

Moreover, the research contributes a new interpretive lens to literary studies by synthesizing theoretical insights from psychogeography, digital subjectivity, and post-cyberpunk fiction.

Through this nuanced analysis, the study positions *Meatsapce* (2014) and *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) as critical sites for examining the affective geographies of cyberspace and their influence on human consciousness. In doing so, it expands the discourse on contemporary fiction's ability to interrogate the psychological and ethical complexities of life in the digital age, while also offering a meaningful contribution to the evolving field of cyberliterary studies.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methodology

The focus of this qualitative study is on analyses rather than preconceived conclusions because it uses an exploratory and interpretative research approach. Given that qualitative research results cannot be broadly applied, the investigator has examined the chosen texts using the discursive potentials that were derived from them. The method employed by the researcher is textual analysis, as introduced by Catherine Belsey in Gabriel Griffin's book *Research Method in English Studies* (2005). In contrast to cultural criticism, which encompasses English, cultural history, and cultural studies as well as any other field that focuses on texts or aims to comprehend how culture is reflected in its artifacts, Belsey outlines that textual analysis is essential to cultural criticism research.

Belsey's theory that research adds to knowledge by revealing something new gives the researcher room to add to the body of knowledge already available about cyberpsychogeography by revealing all those characteristics that change and use the palimpsest metaphor to rewrite digital identity. To understand the text, textual analysis is used. For this study, the researcher breaks down the textual analysis into three stages. In order to gather information and make sense of the text in order to uncover something new, the researcher will first closely examine the text. Since Belsey believes that there is no such thing as pure reading, the information will be interpreted in order to derive a concrete meaning, which is understood to be the relationship between the reader and the text.

Catherine Belsey's methodology is appropriate for my research because her textual analysis emphasizes close reading and interpretation, which allows me to critically explore how cyberpsychogeography, the cyberflâneur, and cyberdérive are represented in the selected novels. The goal of this research is to analyze the

representation of cyberflaneur and impacts of cyberpsychogeography on characters' identities and interpersonal relationships. By analyzing the selected texts, *Meatsapce* (2014) by Nikesh Shukla and *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) by Gary Shteyngart, the study highlights the impact of cyberflânerie and cyberpsychogeography on identity formation and interpersonal relationships exposing how they result in a multi-layered digital identity and strained relationships. The analysis of the selected texts is within the theoretical framework of the cyberpsychogeography propounded by Mark Amerika.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical underpinnings for the present study are derived from Mark Amerika's concept of cyberpsychogeography taken from his essay, "Cyberpsychogeography :An Aimless Drift in Twenty Digressions" and concept of 'cyberdérive"' and 'cyberflâneur' are taken from Amy J Elias' essay "Psychogeography, Détournement, Cyberspace" and Rosane Ganley's essay "The Cyberflâneur in the Age of Digital Technology".

3.2.1 Cyberpsychogeography: An Aimless Drift in Twenty Digressions

Psychogeography, as defined by Guy Debord and the Situationists, studies "the precise effects of geographical setting, consciously managed or not, acting directly on the mood and behavior of the individual." This concept forms the foundation of cyberpsychogeography, which examines the emotional and psychological responses to virtual environments. Mark Amerika extends this idea to cyberspaces, introducing the term cyberpsychogeography. He describes these zones as digital spaces where psychological and geographical experiences intersect, reshaping individuals' sense of self, space, and time.

The Situationist practice of the dérive" (drifting) is also recontextualized in digital terms. Amerika's phrase " cyberpsychogeographical drifting" (20) refers to aimless wandering through digital networks. This aligns with the thesis's exploration of how characters in the novels navigate cyberspaces, engaging in cyberdérive"s that influence their identities and relationships.

Mark Amerika's designation of the "cyberpsychogeographical jockey" refers to an individual who navigates digital arenas with a remarkable fluidity, frequently

characterized by a fluctuating and dynamic sense of direction or control; "a cyberpsychogeographical jockey teleporting his unconscious maneuverings throughout the wide open spaces of the wild wild west (WWW) forever in search of clicking connectivity" (Amerika 3). This concept positions the cyberflâneur as both an explorer and an active participant within the digital milieu. The cyberpsychogeographical jockey encapsulates the instability and unpredictability inherent in cyberspaces, wherein the demarcations between self, spatiality, and narrative are perpetually obscured. This theoretical framework is indispensable for scrutinizing how movement through digital environments subverts conventional understandings of identity and agency.

"Technomadic wandering", as described by Amerika, echoes the cyberpsychogeographical tradition of the *dérive"*: "Timeless tripping or technomadic wandering." (Amerika 6). This concept underscores the exploratory nature of digital engagement, where individuals navigate virtual realms without fixed objectives, discovering new facets of identity and relationships.

Algorithms also shape the flow of movement within cyberspace, dictating how individuals interact with and perceive digital environments. This dynamic creates opportunities for both connection and constraint, as users engage with the constructed currents and fixed points of virtual spaces. This resonates with the *dérive"* as individuals drift aimlessly, dictated by technological frameworks. It reflects the thesis's focus on *cyberdérive"*, emphasizing how digital spaces enable unique forms of exploration and interaction.

While technomadic wandering is practiced individually, "intersubjectivity" (Amerika 26) emphasizes shared or collective experiences and perceptions, particularly as they unfold within digital contexts. Cyberpsychogeography underscores how interactions within virtual spaces engender novel modes of connection and disconnection. This concept facilitates an exploration of how individuals relate to one another within cyberspaces, forging relationships that are simultaneously mediated and immediate. Intersubjectivity is paramount for comprehending how digital environments cultivate new forms of communal engagement while concurrently presenting challenges to genuine connection.

Hyperimprovisational lifestyle practice delineates a profoundly intuitive and adaptive approach to engaging with creativity and identity amidst the fluidity of cyberspaces, as defined in the essay:

> the term hyperimprovisational (which I borrow from the sound artist and theorist Roger Dean and then manipulate for my own uses) refers to an intuitive, ongoing jam session between nomadic Net artists and the new media technologies they are forever connected to as part of their collaborative prosthetic aesthetic. (Amerika 12)

The term "hyperimprovisational," as adapted from sound artist and theorist Roger Dean, describes a dynamic and intuitive process akin to a continuous jam session. It captures the interaction between nomadic characters and the new media technologies they are perpetually engaged with, forming a collaborative "prosthetic aesthetic" that blurs the boundaries between individual and medium. "Prosthetic aesthetic" refers to an approach or style of engagement where external tools, technologies, or extensions referred to as "prosthetics" become integral to the characters' experiences and identities. These "prosthetics" are not just functional additions but become intrinsic to their expressions and actions, influencing how they navigate, interact with, and perceive the world. In the context of digital and new media settings, this term often signifies the blending of human agency with technological enhancements, forming a collaborative synergy between the individuals and the tools they use.

a. Unrealtime and Temporal Dislocation

The notion of unrealtime pertains to a modified or non-conventional perception of time, wherein digital realms disrupt established temporal understandings. Cyberpsychogeography engages with this phenomenon, elucidating how individuals immersed in digital environments experience time as fragmented, hyper-accelerated, or perpetually present. This altered sense of temporality significantly influences the manner in which individuals engage with their environments and contributes to the formation of their self-identity. By contextualizing "unrealtime" (Amerika 5) within this inquiry, we are afforded the opportunity to investigate how digital technologies reshape human experiences of time, thereby challenging traditional narratives of continuity and linear progression.

Mark Amerika's *jet-lag consciousness* captures the disoriented temporality induced by digital immersion: "Jet-lag consciousness expands the playing field for my imagination to fictionalize its avantgarde presence in." (Amerika 6). This concept connects to post human temporality, where technological environments distort traditional experiences of time and space. In digitally immersive contexts, individuals lose markers of real-world chronology, resulting in a fragmented sense of reality and self. Such altered temporalities contribute to the thesis's investigation of how *cyberpsychogeography* impacts identities and relationships.

b. Alternative Spaces

Mark Amerika's discourse on operating within bureaucratic frameworks while conceptualizing "future-tense practice that resists" (Amerika 5) resonates profoundly with Foucault's notion of biopolitics, wherein bureaucracies regulate and oversee human existence. This theoretical perspective critiques the omnipresent influence of bureaucratic systems that govern bodies, identities, and relationships within both digital and physical realms. Weber's conception of bureaucracy accentuates its rigid, hierarchical framework, which frequently suppresses individuality. Resistance within these frameworks can be examined through Deleuze and Guattari's notion of deterritorialization, wherein individuals liberate themselves from societal conventions and reimagine their roles within these structures. Characters situated in digitally mediated contexts often resist by devising subversive spaces or embracing nonconventional practices that contest the prevailing order, embodying Amerika's vision of "future-tense practice." This resistance serves as a broader commentary on the potential for individual agency within oppressive systems, which aligns with the study's emphasis on identity and interpersonal dynamics.

The formulation and exploration of alternative spaces are pivotal to the concept of cyberpsychogeography, as articulated by Mark Amerika. These spaces manifest as liminal zones where conventional boundaries of space and identity become indistinct. Drawing upon Debord's theory of psychogeography, digital spaces particularly metamorphose urban and cultural landscapes, presenting novel modes of perception and engagement. These spaces function as a form of resistance against bureaucratic control, enabling characters to navigate and redefine their environments. Lefebvre's theory of the production of space further enriches this discourse, underscoring how

individuals imbue spaces with significance through their interactions. Digital spaces, as alternative domains, serve as platforms for characters to tailor their identities and subvert societal norms. These spaces are not merely retreats but venues of active engagement where the dichotomy between freedom and control is negotiated.

Liminality, or the condition of existing in a state of transition, "transitional figure" (Ganley 5) constitutes another vital aspect of alternative spaces. It encapsulates the transient and transformative essence of digital and psychogeographical environments. This concept is intimately connected to Amerika's examination of digital spaces as fluid, dynamic, and inherently resistant to fixed interpretations.

c. Customization of Identity and Digital Flux Personas

The concept of identity customization in digital spaces reflects the post humanist discourse, which emphasizes the integration of technology into the human condition, reshaping selfhood and personal expression. In Mark Amerika's cyberpsychogeography, the idea of a personalized "avant presence" (Amerika 5) illustrates how individuals navigate and redefine their identities within technologically mediated contexts. This notion aligns with theories of post humanism that challenge traditional notions of an autonomous, stable self, suggesting instead a fluid and dynamic interplay between humans and technology.

Technological mediation serves as the primary force influencing this reconfiguration of selfhood. In digital environments, individuals construct identities that conform to the demands of technological frameworks, which act as both enablers and constraints. The digitally mediated self emerges as a construct that adapts to the pressures of virtual interactions, surveillance, and cultural expectations. This phenomenon underscores the duality of empowerment and control inherent in technological engagement. Mark Amerika's description of digital flux personas captures the mutable and fragmented nature of identity in cyberspace: "These digital flux personas are a multiverse of possibility and are experienced as something else entirely different from what I thought I was when I started the day" (Amerika 6).

One thing I am sure of as I continue this ongoing process of experimental identity construction is that there is an all-too-human tendency to lose sight of

who it is I am while teleporting my writerly texts through this networked space of flows. (Amerika 7).

This statement reflects the challenge of maintaining a stable sense of self amidst the constant flux of identity in digital spaces. The author acknowledges that the process of crafting and sharing texts within the "networked space of flows" often leads to a disconnection or blurring of their personal identity, highlighting the tension between creative expression and the depersonalizing effects of digital networks.

Mark Amerika introduces the concept of *thoughtography*, which refers to capturing and manipulating digital images and memories through a thought-based apparatus. As he explains:

"The Digital Thoughtographer… is a kind of alien creature/visitor from another realm who is now 'capturing' digital images through his 'thoughtographical apparatus.'" (Amerika 16). Individuals transcend traditional identity constructs by engaging with such innovative digital narratives. Thoughtography represents how digital interactions foster new forms of communal storytelling and memory preservation.

This fluidity also reflects Sherry Turkle's exploration of cyberspace, where individuals construct overlapping, multifaceted identities that respond to the dynamic nature of online environments. Turkle's work Cyberspace and Identity emphasizes the internet as a space for experimentation, where individuals simultaneously inhabit multiple selves, embracing the contradictions and possibilities inherent in digital life. This aligns with the concept of fragmented identity, where traditional boundaries of selfhood are dissolved, replaced by fluid personas that adapt to shifting contexts and interactions.

d. Space of Flows and Non-Places

Manuel Castells' concept of the space of flows redefines how individuals experience space in the digital era. Traditional notions of location and place give way to dynamic networks where information and individuals move fluidly, transcending physical constraints. In cyberpsychogeography, this perspective is central to understanding how digital networks reshape spatial experiences, as reflected in Mark Amerika's observation: "There is only a networked SPACE of flows for my creative

self to wander nomadically through." (Amerika 9). This notion challenges fixed spatial identities, suggesting that the "home" of a digital flâneur is no longer a physical site but a shifting, interconnected web of digital interactions. Characters' engagement with such spaces fosters a reimagining of selfhood and relationships. Similar to the concept of the space of flows, Marc Augé introduces the idea of non-places, which refers to locations devoid of traditional relational or historical meaning, which is particularly relevant in digital environments. In these *nonplaces*, identity becomes transient and dislocated. Amerika articulates this transformation: "This process of metamediumistic self-invention taking place in an always emergent, interconnected space of flows…" (Amerika 6). Here, selfhood emerges as a product of ongoing interactions within the digital network, rather than being rooted in a specific place or time. This aligns with the study of *cyberdérive"*, where characters navigate these digital *non-places*, their identities shaped by continuous flux and negotiation.

3.2.2 Psychogeography, Détournement, Cyberspace

Psychogeography, as articulated by Guy Debord and the Situationists, examines "the precise effects of geographical setting, consciously managed or not, acting directly on the mood and behavior of the individual." In her essay "Psychogeography, Detournment, Cyberspace" (2010) Amy J. Elias expands upon this notion within the realm of cyberspace, positing that the Internet and Web 2.0 are reconfiguring cosmopolitan spaces in manners reminiscent of the Situationist International's (SI) methodology concerning urban environments. Proponents of the web frequently draw parallels between the SI's psychogeographical investigations of urban landscapes and the navigation through the World Wide Web (WWW). "Scores of web writers seem to have discovered that Debord's description of dérive—an urban walking journey—sounds a lot like web surfing" (Elias 822).

Dérive, a concept from the Situationist Internationale, refers to a form of urban wandering that encourages spontaneous and playful exploration of one's environment. For Elias this idea parallels web surfing, where users navigate the internet in a seemingly random fashion, encountering various sites and content. Both practices emphasize chance encounters and the discovery of unexpected experiences. However, she says, while dérive promotes authentic engagement with the environment, web surfing often feels superficial, as users are guided more by algorithms than genuine

curiosity. The web is often described as a dematerialized space, composed of data and digital interactions rather than physical form. This allows for algorithmic movement, where users explore ideas and concepts without physical constraints. While this fosters creativity, it is frequently limited by the algorithms governing online interactions, which can homogenize experiences and restrict genuine exploration. Just as urban environments can be designed to limit movement and access, the web features "neighbourhoods" (Elias 822) and gated communities and algorithmically curated content that confine users to specific pathways.

Elias argues this structured digital navigation mirrors the spectacle critiqued by the Situationists, where the commodification of experiences reduces the potential for authentic engagement and discovery. In cyberspace, this spectacle manifests through a focus on consumption and superficial interactions, creating alienation. Users engage with a curated version of reality that prioritizes commercial interests over meaningful interactions, reflecting the digital realm's resemblance to a controlled and commodified spectacle.

a. The Cyber-Palimpsest: Memory and Storytelling in Cyberspaces

Elias introduces the notion of a "cyber-palimpsest," wherein specific websites employ "fuzzy logic" (Elias 829) to algorithmically generate a stratified space of interconnected memories; "algorithmically create a cyber-palimpsest of related memories" (Elias 829). This phenomenon exists at the intersection of identity both national and personal and its dispersion throughout the web. The cyber-palimpsest cultivates a communal storytelling environment, linking the diasporic nature of online existence with real-world, "a cross linked, communal story telling space" (Elias 829). Consequently, virtual spaces reconfigure material realms into storied, human centric spaces, operating as a form of online dérive" where identity and memory converge.

Elias's discourse positions cyberspace as a lived and storied environment, where the digital dérive" metamorphoses material space into significant, human-centered narratives. This reconceptualization of space corresponds with Lefebvre's theory regarding the production of space, which underscores how spaces accrue meaning through human interaction and narrative. The WWW, as an extension of urban psychogeography, empowers users to navigate virtual realms that are concurrently

personal and collective, immediate and historical. While cyberspace presents avenues for exploration and connectivity, Elias draws attention to its dehumanizing characteristics, as it becomes a domain increasingly dominated by commerce, labor, and entertainment. Similar to Debord's critique of urban spaces, the WWW mirrors broader societal stratifications, engendering gated digital communities that curtail access.

3.2.3 The Cyberflâneur in the Age of Digital Technology

"Our zombie-like presence in the realm of the digital era has, however, affected our ability to engage with the natural world, the city streets and other passers-by" (Ganley 1). Ganley's idea of a "zombie-like presence" in the digital era connects to the concept of cyberflânerie, where people, instead of wandering through physical spaces like traditional flâneurs, now roam the digital world. This shift has made us "cyberflâneurs," passively observing and navigating online spaces rather than engaging actively with the real world. While a traditional flâneur explores cities and interacts with their environment, a cyberflâneur engages with digital content, often without true awareness or connection to the physical world, further distancing us from direct interactions with nature, urban life, and other people. This reflects how digital spaces alter the experiences of cyberflâneurs, as their focus shifts from the sensory, embodied exploration of physical cities to fragmented, mediated interactions within cyberspaces.

"Digital technology has influenced the emergence of the cyberflâneur, which is the flâneur in cyberspace, a fast-forward flâneur, a net flâneur or a virtual flâneur" (Ganley 1). This statement highlights how digital technology has redefined the traditional concept of the flâneur, a leisurely urban wanderer observing and interpreting the city, into the cyberflâneur. The cyberflâneur navigates cyberspace, exploring virtual environments with speed and fluidity, embodying the characteristics of a "fast-forward" or "net" flâneur. This shift underscores how digital landscapes have reshaped modes of exploration, identity, and engagement.

Ganley argues that the concept of the cyberflâneu**r** emerges as a reimagining of the traditional flâneur, a figure historically associated with leisurely wandering and observing urban spaces to engage with cultural and sociological contexts. Introduced

by Charles Baudelaire, the flâneur epitomized modernity, navigating the city as both participant and detached observer. In the digital age, this figure transitions to cyberspace, transforming into what Hartmann (2004) describes as "a transitional figure" (Ganley 5) revealing shifts in technology's integration into everyday life.

While she talks about this new embodiment of a traditional flâneur i.e cyberflâneur , she also stresses on the point that frictionless sharing on platforms like Facebook undermines the exploratory essence of the flâneur, replacing curiosity and individuality with algorithmically curated experiences. Lastly she also talks about how the flâneur's evolution into the cyberflâneur also challenges traditional gender norms. This aligns with the potential for digital environments to redefine the cyberflâneur as a hybrid entity that transgresses gender and societal boundaries, fostering new forms of self-expression and interaction. This framework situates the cyberflâneur within a digital context, engaging with cyberpsychogeography to analyze identity and relationships in cyberspaces. By addressing these dynamics, this thesis will contribute to the understanding of how the characters in Euro-American fiction navigate the experiences within cyberspaces, offering insights into the human perceptions in the age of technology. Ganley describes **a** new urban type as a paradoxical figure who is both immersed in the crowd and detached from it, embodying the alienation of modern city life. Ganley depicts this as a "new urban type, an isolated and estranged figure who is both a man of the crowd and a detached observer of it and, as such, the avatar of the modern city." (2).

He also gives the idea of hyper-surveillance, which holds similarity to the Amerika's idea of "thoughtography" and Elias' idea of "cyber palimpsest", it refers to the digital permanence of past actions and memories, where everything is recorded and always accessible. "hyper surveillance, in which the past, digitised and stored, is available all of the time" (Ganley 2). He claims that digital technology has invaded and personal boundaries have been eroded, altering traditional notions of identity and selfhood. "Digital technology has invaded our privacy and deferred the meaning of being and the self" (Ganley 2). He also talks about identity of a virtual flâneur he describes him as a multi-layered complex figure, an individual whose identity is fluid, adaptable, and shaped by the evolving digital landscape "a multilayered complex figure, that is not easily labelled and can adapt with the times" (Ganley 3).

CHAPTER 4

NAVIGATING IDENTITIES AND INTERPERSONAL

RELATIONSHIPS IN

SUPER SAD TRUE LOVE STORY (2010)

In *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) by Gary Shteyngart, the concept of the cyberflâneur who is an individual who navigates and explores cyberspaces much like the traditional flâneur roams urban landscapes is epitomized through the characters' interactions with their äppäräts. This wearable device serves as a constant portal to cyberspace, anchoring individuals in a digital dimension where their identities, relationships, and daily interactions are mediated by technology. Through their äppäräts, characters are immersed in a virtual environment that often eclipses their physical realities, embodying the essence of the cyberflâneur as a digital wanderer.

The äppärät functions as an interface that enables characters to navigate the interconnected realms of data, social rankings, and communication. This dynamic mirrors the flâneur's exploration of the cityscape, except here, the "streets" are cyberspaces, and the "crowds" are digital networks. Characters like Lenny Abramov, whose life is deeply entwined with his äppärät, reflect this cyberflânerie. His äppärät buzzes constantly with notifications, projections, and demands, illustrating his continuous traversal of digital spaces where social and professional obligations collide. These devices allow characters to remain perpetually connected, turning their exploration of cyberspace into an extension of their identity and social engagement.

Lenny's relationship with his äppärät also reveals the psychological dimensions of the cyberflâneur. His feelings of guilt and anxiety, described as a "warm cotton towel of guilt" (Shteyngart 7) around his neck, underscore the tension between digital obligations and personal reflection. While the flâneur of the 19th century observed the city with detachment and curiosity, the cyberflâneur is weighed down by the demands of constant connectivity, revealing the isolating effects of a life mediated by technology. Despite these pressures, moments of introspection, such as Lenny's diary

entries, highlight the duality of the cyberflâneur experience: the äppärät both enables connection and creates alienation, providing a platform for self-reflection even as it bombards its users with distractions. The äppärät's role as a medium for identity construction and interaction further cements its connection to cyberflânerie. Social validation, digital metrics, and real-time feedback dictate how characters perceive themselves and others, effectively reshaping their identities within the cyber realm. Lenny's reliance on the äppärät to manage his life and relationships underscores a broader societal trend where human connections are mediated by technology, transforming individuals into digital wanderers who traverse the vast terrains of cyberspace.

Through the lens of the äppärät, *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) critiques the nature of human connections in the digital age. Characters, as cyberflâneurs, navigate a world where cyberspaces overshadow physical realities, their interactions governed by the rhythms of virtual validation. The novel underscores the paradoxical nature of this existence: the äppärät connects them to an infinite digital landscape, yet it isolates them from authentic, unmediated human experiences. In doing so, Shteyngart provides a compelling commentary on the complexities of identity, relationships, and reality in the era of pervasive technology.

> I noticed that some of the first-class people were staring me down for having an open book. "Duder, that thing smells like wet socks," said the young jock next to me, a senior Credit ape at LandO'LakesGMFord. I quickly sealed the Chekhov in my carry-on, stowing it far in the overhead bin. As the passengers returned to their flickering displays, I took out my äppärät and began to thump it loudly with my finger to show how much I loved all things digital, while sneaking nervous glances at the throbbing cavern around me, the wine dulled business travelers lost to their own electronic lives. (Shteyngart 34)

This moment reveals a fragmented digital identity, where the protagonist suppresses authentic self-expression in favor of performative digital engagement. The act of mimicking enthusiasm for technology illustrates a "multi-layered complex figure" adapting with time. (Ganley 3). The scene reflects a spatial experience defined by detachment and conformity, characteristic of non-places in cyberspace (Amerika 6). The "wine-dulled business travelers" embody Ganley's depiction of the "zombie-like

presence in the realm of digital era" (Ganley 1), illustrating how digital technology has diminished individuals' ability to engage with the natural world, physical spaces, and those around them. The description of these travelers, disconnected from their immediate environment and engrossed in their flickering displays, reflects the broader societal condition where digital immersion creates a detachment from the physical realm. This behavior resonates with the concept of the cyberflâneur, who navigates cyberspace in a manner detached from their physical surroundings. Moreover, the protagonist's action of "thumping" his äppärät to demonstrate digital enthusiasm can be seen as an attempt at "hyperimprovisational" self-presentation, as described by Amerika. (Amerika 12) This action is not just a gesture but a performative response to the collective digital culture surrounding him, where identity construction becomes a collaborative process influenced by technological mediation.

Ultimately, the passage reflects the protagonist's internal struggle between his analog self and the digital persona he is compelled to adopt, aligning with Amerika's notion of an "avant presence" (Amerika 5) a personalized yet fragmented identity within a technologically mediated world. The tension between the analog and digital worlds, symbolized by the book and the äppärät, underscores the broader theme of identity negotiation in cyberspace.

> …but there was this one guy who registered nothing. I mean he wasn't there. He didn't have an äppärät, or it wasn't set on "social" mode, or maybe he had paid some young Russian kid to have the outbound transmission blocked. And he looked like a nothing. The way people don't really look anymore. (Shteyngart 32)

The man's absence from the digital network and his lack of an äppärät configured for "social" mode illustrates a stark deviation from Amerika's notion of an "avant presence" (5) which emphasizes how individuals navigate and redefine their identities within digitally mediated contexts. Without an äppärät, he fails to cultivate or project a curated digital persona, rendering him invisible in a society where identity is increasingly tied to one's online presence. This invisibility contrasts sharply with the hyperimprovisational identities described by Amerika, where individuals continuously adapt and perform within interconnected digital spaces.

Moreover, his detachment from the collective network disrupts the concept of intersubjectivity (26), which emphasizes shared experiences and mutual perceptions, especially in digital environments. The man's refusal or inability to participate in the communal digital flow creates a disconnect, making him appear as a "nothing" in the eyes of the protagonist and others. His lack of intersubjective engagement further underscores how digital immersion has become central to forming connections and mutual recognition in contemporary society. In this context, the man's absence from the digital sphere challenges the norms of modern existence, where intersubjective validation through digital interaction is a critical aspect of social belonging.

> Working my lusty, overheated äppärät, I pointed an Indian satellite at southern California, her original home. I zoomed in on a series of crimson-tiled haciendas to the south of Los Angeles, rows and rows of threethousand-square-foot rectangles, their only aerial features the tiny silver squiggles that denoted rooftop central air conditioning. These units all bowed to the semicircle of a turquoise pool guarded by the gray halos of two down-ontheir-luck palm trees, the development's only flora. Inside one of these homes Eunice Park learned to walk and talk… (Shteyngart 34)

The protagonist's use of the äppärät to remotely observe a location in Southern California exemplifies Amerika's concept of "cyberpsychogeographical drifting" (20), where the user navigates and explores digital spaces without physical movement. By directing an Indian satellite to zoom in on a specific location, the protagonist engages in a form of "technomadic wandering" (6). Furthermore, the protagonist's act of virtually tracing Eunice Park's origins through a detached, technological lens demonstrates Amerika's concept of "unrealtime" (5), where memory and history are accessed through digital means, disrupting traditional temporal and spatial understandings. By relying on the äppärät to visualize Eunice's past, the protagonist transforms an intimate act of remembering into a mediated, distant experience, underscoring the disconnection inherent in digitally mediated relationships and interactions. This scene reflects how digital tools not only alter perceptions of space and time but also reshape how individuals engage with personal histories and identities, a cyberdérive that replaces physical exploration with digital drift. This illustrates how

digital technologies create a new mode of interaction with space, where geographic boundaries dissolve, and individuals can traverse distances instantaneously.

> I closed my eyes and let the image slide into my mind's burgeoning Eunice archive. But then I looked again. It wasn't Eunice's brilliantly fake smile that had struck me. There was something else. She had turned away from the äppärät lens, while one hand was forever stuck in midair trying to quickly apply a pair of sunglasses. I magnified the image by 800 percent and focused on the eye farthest from the camera. Beneath it and to one side, I saw what looked like the leathery black trace of burst capillaries. I zoomed in and out, trying to decipher the blemish on a face that would tolerate no blemishes, and eventually distinguished the imprint of two fingers, no, three fingers index, middle, thumb striking her across the face. (Shteyngart 36)

This passage encapsulates the protagonist's cyberpsychogeographical tendencies, as defined by Amerika's concept of "cyberpsychogeographical jockey" (3), where the individual navigates digital spaces with an obsessive, almost unconscious precision. The protagonist's act of zooming in on Eunice's image, magnifying it by 800%, and scrutinizing her facial details demonstrates an intense, almost invasive engagement with digital mediation. The äppärät, acting as an extension of the protagonist's body and mind, becomes a prosthetic tool for hyperimprovisational observation and investigation, a form of thoughtography (16), where the digital apparatus captures and preserves memories in the form of images to construct meaning this also resonates with Elias idea of cyber-palimpsest (829) how past and memories of people are being layered and preserved now in cyberspace which can also be manipulated.

Moreover, this scene underscores the pervasive culture of surveillance embedded in digital technologies, highlighting how individuals' lives and appearances are continuously dissected and analyzed. The protagonist's ability to magnify and inspect a private moment of Eunice's life emphasizes the unsettling power dynamics inherent in the digital gaze, where nothing remains truly hidden or personal. Eunice's attempt to shield herself from the äppärät lens quickly raising sunglasses is symbolic of the futility of resisting such omnipresent surveillance. Her gesture reflects a subversive yet ultimately futile resistance to digital visibility, aligning with Amerika's

notion of future-tense practice (5)**,** where individuals create subversive spaces or gestures to reclaim autonomy in digitally mediated contexts.

The detection of the bruises on Eunice's face introduces a disturbing layer of intersubjective engagement, resonating with intersubjectivity in digital spaces (26), where perceptions and connections are mediated through digital interactions. Instead of directly confronting Eunice or engaging emotionally, the protagonist uses digital tools to decode her physical and emotional state. This reliance on technology to uncover intimate details signifies how digital mediation disrupts traditional, human-to-human relational dynamics, reducing the personal to algorithmically accessible data. The act of piecing together Eunice's hidden trauma via digital manipulation underscores the paradox of hyperconnectivity: while offering deeper access to others, it simultaneously dehumanizes and fragments relationships into a purely voyeuristic interaction.

> I felt the perfunctory liberal chill at seeing entire races of human beings so summarily reduced and stereotyped, but was also voyeuristically interested in seeing people's Credit rankings. The old Chinese woman had a decent 1400, but others, the young Latina mothers, even a profligate teenaged Hasid puffing down the street, were showing blinking red scores below 900, and I worried for them. I walked past one of the Poles, letting it zap the data off my äppärät, and saw my own score, an impressive 1520. But there was a blinking red asterisk next to the score. (Shteyngart 51)

This scene portrays a quantified digital identity, where the protagonist and others are reduced to numerical scores visible in public cyberspace. The spatial experience becomes one of algorithmically constructed social navigation, where emotional responses are shaped by drifting through a network of visible digital reputations; an example of cyberdérive. The protagonist experiences a "perfunctory liberal chill" at witnessing racial stereotyping, yet simultaneously engages in voyeurism by observing people's Credit rankings. This reflects Ganley's assertion that digital technology has "invaded our privacy and deferred the meaning of being and the self." The ranking system transforms human worth into numerical values, stripping individuals of complexity and reducing them to data-driven categorizations. Moreover, this passage aligns with Amerika's notion of "avant presence," where digital identity is constantly reshaped by external forces. The protagonist's self-perception becomes contingent on

the numerical score assigned to them, illustrating how the "networked space of flows" dictates self-worth. This intersubjective experience, where individuals collectively participate in and internalize these rankings, demonstrates how technologically mediated environments redefine identity, subjecting it to continuous scrutiny and modulation. On another occasion we see the protagonist stating, "He tried to comfort me, told me I looked slutty and that my Fuckability was 800+." (Shteyngart 41). The term "Fuckability" quantified with a numerical value has reduced an individual's complex being to a data point, her desirability algorithmically rated. The character's perception of herself is not autonomous but rather filtered through external, digitalized validation, demonstrating the "experimental identity construction" that leads individuals to lose sight of who they are within the "networked space of flows." This intersubjective experience underscores how digital interactivity creates a collective yet fragmented understanding of self, where validation and objectification blur the boundaries between personal agency and technological influence.

> Before I left the 740 square feet of my apartment, I put the name of my oldest Media pal, Noah Weinberg, into my äppärät and learned that he would be airing our reunion live on his GlobalTeens stream, "The Noah Weinberg Show!," which made me nervous at first, but, then, this is exactly the kind of thing I have to get used to if I'm going to make it in this world. So I put on a pair of painful jeans and a flaming-red shirt with a bouquet of white roses embroidered along my chest. (Shteyngart 73)

This passage exemplifies the protagonist's negotiation of identity within the digital sphere, aligning with Amerika's concept of digital flux personas and the space of flows. The act of checking Noah Weinberg's GlobalTeens stream before stepping out highlights how digital surveillance and performativity shape personal interactions. The protagonist in this passage can be seen as what Hartmann (2004) describes as "a transitional figure" (Ganley 5), embodying the evolving integration of technology into everyday life. Their awareness of being livestreamed on GlobalTeens reflects a shift where digital presence and social interactions are seamlessly intertwined, making privacy a secondary concern to digital visibility. The protagonist's awareness that their reunion will be aired live reinforces Ganley's assertion that digital technology has "invaded our privacy and deferred the meaning of being and the self." (2) Their

nervousness suggests an internal conflict, while they recognize the exposure as a necessity for social survival, it also underscores the loss of control over personal moments, which are now subjected to public consumption.

The choice of clothing further illustrates the protagonist's engagement in a metamediumistic self-invention, where identity is not fixed but performed and reconfigured for the digital gaze. By selecting "painful jeans" and a "flaming-red shirt with embroidered white roses," they consciously curate an aesthetic designed to fit within the algorithmically mediated spectacle of cyberspace. This performance reflects Amerika's idea of *avant presence*, where individuals craft their digital personas in response to ever-evolving technological landscapes.

The protagonist's adaptation to this environment, despite discomfort, reveals how individuals are compelled to reshape themselves to remain visible and relevant in the hyperconnected space of flows. This moment encapsulates the intersection of intersubjectivity and self-reinvention, where identity is continuously negotiated within the gaze of the digital audience.

> I looked at the pretty brunette… A bunch of figures appeared on my screen: "FUCKABILITY 780/800, PERSONALITY 800/800,ANAL/ ORAL/ VAGINAL PREFERENCE 1/3/2." "Fuckability 780!" Noah said. "Personality 800! Leeeetl Lenny Abramov's got himself a beeeeeg crush." "But I don't even know her personality,"… "The personality score depends on how 'extro' she is," Vishnu explained. "Check it out. This girl done got three thousand–plus Images, eight hundred streams, and a long multimedia thing on how her father abused her. (Shteyngart 81)

The paragraph delineates the hyper-surveillance paradigm prevalent in cyberspace, wherein digital technologies systematically classify individuals predicated upon algorithmic evaluations of personal information. The protagonist's äppärät (a futuristic smartphone like device) provides instantaneous and quantifiable ratings of the woman's sexual desirability, personality, and sexual inclinations, thereby reducing her identity to a mere collection of numerical values. This phenomenon epitomizes what Ganley describes as "hyper surveillance, in which the past, digitized and stored, is available all of the time." (2) The woman's lived experiences, traumas, and digital imprints are

intricately woven into a cybernetic memory framework that assigns her a numerical score, exemplifying Elias's notion of a "cyberpalimpsest of related memories" a multifaceted system of interlinked digital traces that delineates identity within the realm of cyberspace.(829). The characters here indulged in creating their own digital memories with digital images and data by using äppärät, (in Amerika's words thought based apparatus), reflects the idea of "thoughtography" and "digital thoughtographer" (Amerika 16). All of these experiences mentioned above are forms of spatial experiences within cyberspace.

The allusion to prior encounters with abused individuals insinuates an intrusive datamining operation that correlates historical behavior with prospective attraction, thus illustrating the "fuzzy logic" (Elias) employed in the formulation of profiles dérive"d from fragmented digital traces. Furthermore, the protagonist and his peers engage in cyberflânerie, a digitized iteration of the flâneur's wandering through the urban environment, now transpiring within an interconnected, algorithmically driven landscape. The protagonist is depicted as "a cyberpsychogeographical jockey teleporting his unconscious maneuverings" (Amerika), moving through cyberspace in search of digital connections. His dependence on the äppärät as a navigational instrument within this domain reflects Mark Amerika's concept of thoughtography, wherein digital memories, preferences, and identities are captured and manipulated within a networked, algorithmic structure.

This also aligns with Elias's idea of "a cross-linked, communal storytelling space" (829) as Vishnu explains the scoring system, drawing on interconnected cyber-histories to interpret a stranger's persona. The process of identity formation is no longer personal but communal, shaped by the interactions between users, digital memories, and algorithmic interpretations.

Abramov, born Moscow, HolyPetroRussia; Mother: Galya Abramov, born Minsk, VassalState Belarus. Parental ailments: high cholesterol, depression. Aggregate wealth: $9,353,000 non-yuan-pegged, real estate, 575 Grand Street, Unit E-607, $1,150,000 yuan-pegged. Liabilities: mortgage, $560,330. Spending power: $1,200,000 per year, non-yuan-pegged. Consumer profile: heterosexual, nonathletic, nonautomotive, nonreligious, non-Bipartisan. Sexual preferences: low-functioning Asian/Korean and White/Irish American with

Low Net Worth family background; child-abuse indicator: on; low-self-esteem indicator: on. Last purchases: bound, printed, nonstreaming Media artifact, 35 northern euros; bound, printed, nonstreaming Media artifact, $126 yuanpegged; bound, printed, nonstreaming Media artifact, 37 northern euros. (Shteyngart 81, 82)

The paragraph solely focuses on the protagonist, Lenny Abramov, whose personal and financial information exist as a permanently accessible, digitized record. Every aspect of his identity; income, spending habits, sexual preferences, familial health history, and even estimated lifespan is cataloged, demonstrating Ganley's concept of hyper surveillance. Lenny is no longer merely an individual; he is an accumulation of stored data, available for immediate access and analysis.

This all-encompassing digital profile is in alignment with Elias's "fuzzy logic" and "algorithmically generated cyber-palimpsest," wherein antecedent behaviors, preferences, and personal characteristics are layered within an interactive memory framework. The surveillance extends beyond financial metrics to psychological markers, his "low-self-esteem indicator" and "child-abuse indicator" of the woman reveal the extent of cybernetic categorization, where even intangible personality traits are quantified.

From a cyberpsychogeographical perspective, Lenny navigates digital space as both a consumer and a subject of surveillance. His financial and personal metrics are not just a record of his past but an active determinant of his digital identity, shaping how he is perceived and categorized within cyberspace. This reflects Amerika's *cyberpsychogeographical jockey*, as Lenny is unconsciously maneuvered through algorithmic spaces that define him through digital markers rather than human experiences.

Both these above paragraphs highlight the shift from organic identity formation to algorithmic selfhood. The first paragraph focuses on how others are perceived within cyberspace i.e. reduced to scores, digital footprints, and stored histories, while the second illustrates how the protagonist himself is similarly fragmented into a digital archive. This aligns with the overarching theme of *cyberpsychogeography*, where identity, relationships, and selfperception are shaped not by direct human interaction

but by the algorithmic structuring of cyberspace. Lenny's unease at how algorithms determine personality and preferences underscores a resistance to this new cyberpsychogeographical reality. In contrast, his peers, like Vishnu, seem more comfortable navigating this digital landscape, reinforcing the generational divide between digital natives and those still adjusting to an interconnected, always-watching cyberspace. Through the lens of hyper surveillance, *cyberflânerie,* and *cyberpsychogeography*, these passages demonstrate how the human experience is increasingly mediated by algorithmic interpretation, redefining identity as a stratified, data-driven construct within the ever-expanding *space of flows*.

> My äppärät isn't connecting. I can't connect. It's been almost a month since my last diary entry. I am so sorry. But I can't connect in any meaningful way to anyone, even to you, diary. Four young people committed suicide in our building complexes, and two of them wrote suicide notes about how they couldn't see a future without their äppäräti. One wrote, quite eloquently, about how he "reached out to life," but found there only "walls and thoughts and faces," which weren't enough. He needed to be ranked, to know his place in this world. And that may sound ridiculous, but I can understand him. We are all bored out of our fucking minds. My hands are itching for connection, (Shteyngart 244)

The apparati function as conduits between these realms, furnishing users with instantaneous information regarding their environment and facilitating continuous connectivity. Nevertheless, the government-imposed prohibition on technology unveils the precariousness of this hybrid existence, as individuals find themselves incapable of navigating the material world absent digital mediation. Lenny's journal entry encapsulates the disconnection and disorientation that ensue when the digital perspective is absent: "My apparat isn't connecting. . . . I can't connect in any meaningful way to anyone, even to you, diary." This underscores the reliance on digital technologies to mediate interpersonal relationships and experiences.

The dependence on apparati engenders distinctive "cyberpsychogeographical zones" (Amerika 7), wherein individuals' interactions and psychological responses are influenced by digital contexts. The inability to access these zones during the prohibition disrupts their social and emotional balance, as Lenny observes four young people

committ suicide and two of them write suicide notes about how they couldn't see a future without their apparati. The tragic suicides underscore that these zones are not merely extensions of physical spaces but rather essential psychological environments. "He needed to be ranked, to know his place in the world" (Shteyngart 244). This reflects the concept of identity customization in cyberspaces, where self-worth is tied to external metrics. The absence of these metrics creates a crisis of identity, as characters struggle to situate themselves in a reality devoid of digital markers. "My hands are itching for connection…" The apparati promote aimless exploration through digital landscapes, permitting characters to drift through streams of information, rankings, and social connections. The prohibition compels them to confront the void left by this drifting. At another occasion we witness Lenny feeling helpless when he states, "Because we can't connect to our äppäräti, we're learning to turn to each other" (Shteyngart 247). Here Lenny's statement reveals a moment of forced human connection in a world dominated by digital mediation. Without access to their äppäräti, individuals must engage in direct, unfiltered interaction, highlighting how technology often acts as a barrier rather than a bridge in interpersonal relationships. The reliance on cyberspace reduces human connections to data points, making organic relationships rare and difficult. This is the paradox of connectivity while technology enables continuous virtual presence, it tends to isolate humans from actual human contact and genuine human interaction. The text portrays digital identities as emotionally dependent on ranking systems and connectivity, where self-worth is shaped by algorithmic validation. Spatial experiences in cyberspace function as psychological zones, and their absence leads to disorientation, emotional instability, and social disconnect (Shteyngart 247; Amerika 7).

In *Super Sad True Love Story*, Shteyngart presents a dystopian landscape where characters function as *cyberflâneurs*, drifting through algorithm-driven cyberspaces rather than engaging with physical realities. The novel portrays *cyberpsychogeography* as a condition in which digital environments shape emotional and spatial experiences, creating psychological zones crucial to identity and belonging (Amerika 7). Through constant interaction with their äppäräts, characters like Lenny experience a *cyberdérive*, navigating digital flows that redefine their sense of self and relationships. These dérives are marked not by freedom but by algorithmic control, exposing how digital metrics mediate intersubjective connections (Ganley 2; Elias 829). Shteyngart

critiques this hyper-connected world by showing that in the absence of these technologies, characters face emotional collapse, revealing their deep dependency on digital identity systems. The novel ultimately reflects how digitally constructed spaces displace authentic human contact, replacing it with curated personas and data-driven selfhood.

CHAPTER 5

TRACING CYBER SELVES AND HUMAN BONDS IN

MEATSAPCE (2014)

In his work, Shukla immediately situates the protagonist within a digitally saturated routine: "As soon as I wake up, I check my phone" (Shukla 79). This ordinary yet telling action encapsulates the essence of the *cyberflâneur*, a figure who navigates the digital city much like the traditional flâneur wandered urban streets. The act of checking the phone immediately upon waking suggests a compulsive connection to cyberspace, reinforcing the idea of the individual as a detached yet participatory observer in the digital crowd (Ganley 2). Similarly in the lines "I click send and wait for the ether to respond. I refresh. I refresh. No responses. No interactions" (Shukla 100) The repetitive refreshing of messages parallels Debord's dérive, where movement through digital space mimics wandering through a city, aimlessly seeking engagement but ultimately feeling unfulfilled, "web surfing" (Elias 822).

In *Meatspace* (2014), Kitab's disengagement is revealed when, "He pauses and looks at me, waiting for me to look up from my phone." (Shukla 101). The fixation on the phone while someone waits for acknowledgment highlights the isolation of the modern urban type, emphasizing how digital immersion alienates individuals from immediate social reality. "I click onto my news feed. There's nothing else to do. I click on the private messages and decide to plough through them as a distraction" (Shukla 111). Clicking through messages and news feeds serves as cyberpsychogeographical drifting, where digital technology fuels an endless loop of passive consumption rather than meaningful interaction. The protagonist aimlessly ploughing through private messages and news feeds embodies Elias's concept of "web surfing", drifting through digital space without a clear destination. This mirrors Ganley's "virtual flâneur", a modern figure who, like the traditional city wanderer, observes and interacts with cyberspace while remaining emotionally detached. His repetitive refreshing and passive consumption align with Amerika's "cyberflâneur", engaging in "cyberpsychogeographical drifting" or "cyberflânerie", where digital navigation

replaces physical exploration. Rather than forming meaningful connections, he becomes lost in an algorithmically curated, fragmented reality, embodying the alienation of the digital age.

The protagonist's complete reliance on his device can be seen from the following lines, "I run down the street, worrying about being late. I live by my Google calendar. I'm dumb without my phone." (Shukla 216) The protagonist's dependence on their phone and Google Calendar reflects Ganley's notion of how zombie-like presence in the digital era affects our ability to engage with the natural world, constant connectivity diminishes awareness of the physical world. Running through the streets while preoccupied with time and technology suggests a detachment from their surroundings, reducing the city to mere background noise rather than an interactive space. Their admission of feeling "dumb without my phone" highlights how digital reliance erodes independent thought and spontaneity, reinforcing a state of passive navigation through both cyberspace and the real world. In *Meatspace* (2014), Kitab's brother confronts him with the words "You don't go out. You don't do anything. And yet you are living this life that's not real. It's not real. None of it is real." (Shukla 236)

The protagonist only resides in cyber terrains what Mark Amerika terms as cyberpsychogeographical zones. Digital spaces hold more significance for him than physical ones. By prioritizing live-tweeting and digital documentation, the protagonist constructs a fragmented sense of existence and he believes his existence is validated only through its presence in cyberspace rather than in meatsapce (the physical world). His declaration, "If I didn't live-tweet it, it didn't happen, I don't have a timeline of events" (Shukla 241) underscores the idea that events only gain meaning when recorded within the digital sphere, reinforcing the dominance of cyberspace as the primary site of experience. This detachment from the physical realm suggests a preference for cyberflânerie over real-world engagement.

In the following text, we can see the protagonist experiencing "unrealtime"**,** "But, there, second to top, is a message from Kitab 2. I look at the time it's been sent. It was sent 2 hours ago. 2 hours ago when I was staring blankly at a Word document, at where I left off some work a few days ago" (Shukla 112). As Amerika describes; a disjointed, non-linear perception of time induced by digital immersion. The message from Kitab exists in a strange temporal limbo, sent two hours ago yet only now entering

the protagonist's awareness, highlighting a "jet-lag consciousness" where real world time feels disconnected from cyberspace.

Similarly, we see protagonist uttering this line while remembering he had received texts, "It was 20 minutes and 40 @ relies ago" (Shukla 114). The protagonist measures time not in minutes or hours but in "20 minutes and 40 @-replies ago", demonstrating a non-traditional temporality shaped by cyberspace. This metric replaces conventional timekeeping with a digital rhythm, where interactions and notifications become the primary markers of passing time, reinforcing the protagonist's immersion in the fragmented temporality of online existence.

> While Hayley sleeps off a hangover, I change my online passwords. My Twitter, my Tumblr, my Instagram, my Pinterest, my Reddit, my YouTube, even my Myspace. I stare at Tom, my first friend on Myspace, and wonder who he really is, that goofy avatar so ingrained in his user's spaces. Then I change the passwords for my current email address, my defunct email address, my online banking, my spur-of-the-moment Blendr account, my Amazon login, my iTunes, Guardian Soulmates, OkCupid, Guardian Jobs, my council tax, my gas and electricity – anything I can think of, anything that I do online. Which is everything. (Shukla 163)

In Nikesh Shukla's *Meatsapce* (2014), the protagonist's act of systematically changing passwords across an overwhelming array of digital platforms reflects the extent to which his identity is dispersed and lived through cyberspace. This digital ritual reveals how contemporary individuals are no longer grounded in a single, unified self but inhabit multiple online selves, each tied to a different app, service, or platform. This multiplicity aligns with Mark Amerika's concept of the "digital flux persona", where individuals constantly navigate between fragmented digital identities, shaped by their interactions across networked environments (Amerika 6).

The protagonist's moment of staring at the familiar yet now "goofy" avatar of Tom on Myspace becomes symbolically important. This image, once a representation of early digital connection and community, now feels outdated and alien to him. This disconnect points to "experimental identity construction" (Amerika 7), as it captures the process through which individuals continuously reshape and renegotiate their sense of self within the ever-evolving digital terrain. The avatar, possibly chosen years ago,

no longer aligns with his current identity, showing how digital personas are historically layered yet fluid. The protagonist's shifting gaze, both nostalgic and critical, suggests an awareness of how identity is archived, performed, and obsoleted in cyberspace.

Moreover, the spatial experience in this moment is distinctly cyberpsychogeographical: cyberspace is not just a setting but a psychological and emotional landscape that envelops the protagonist's daily existence. He is not merely visiting websites; he is traversing spaces of memory, emotion, and anxiety. Each login and password evokes a different slice of his life, suggesting a *cyberdérive*, (a drifting through platforms, profiles, and past selves). The sheer number of sites he feels compelled to secure indicates how cyberspace has become totalizing, consuming every aspect of his social, financial, romantic, and emotional life.

The frantic password changes of the protagonist illustrate what Amerika refers to as "technomadic wandering", a process in which individuals perpetually traverse the vast digital landscape, untethered yet deeply embedded in cyberspace. Like a "cyberpsychogeographical jockey", he moves from one platform to another, Twitter, Tumblr, Myspace, OkCupid, and even his council tax login, teleporting through the "wild wild west of the web (WWW)" in an attempt to regain control over his fragmented digital self. This process is a reflection of the *dérive*, a psychogeographical drift, but in cyberspace: rather than wandering aimlessly through physical city streets, the protagonist drifts through his virtual avatars, seeking a sense of security and wholeness in a world where his very existence is entirely controlled by digital spaces. His fixation on passwords reflects an awareness that everything he does, and is, exists online, reinforcing the idea that his sense of self is deeply entangled with the very platforms he tries to control.

> I'd added him on Facebook and when he accepted me, I went through all his friends and family. He had his whole family listed there. His sisters Rita and Anita, and his mum wrote 'lol x' on every status he made and his dad worked for a hospital. The things you can find out online, eh? His mum's name was Rupa and his dad's name was Tim. I think I get it. (Shukla 127)

The digital identity here is not intentionally performative like the earlier passage, but rather passively constructed and involuntarily revealed, offering insight into how

even mundane social media participation contributes to a person's digital persona. The act of navigating through another person's Facebook profile, browsing connections, reading posts, and uncovering personal history, illustrates a form of cyberspatial exploration where digital space
substitutes for physical proximity.

The protagonist's deep dive into a Facebook profile embodies Amerika's concept of digital "thoughtography", where cyberspace becomes a tool for capturing and manipulating fragmented digital memories. By sifting through an individual's online presence; his family members, their interactions, and even his father's workplace. The protagonist constructs a mental collage of the person's life, much like a thoughtographer piecing together digital fragments. This act also reflects Elias's notion of fuzzy logic, where an algorithmically interconnected web of memories emerges: every click leads to another layer of personal history, forming a "cyber-palimpsest" of interwoven digital traces. Social media thus becomes a "crosslinked, communal storytelling space" (829), where identities are algorithmically shaped, remembered, and rewritten through online interactions. The protagonist's realization, "I think I get it", suggests an illusion of intimacy, where digital traces create a perceived rather than authentic understanding of another's life. This example also demonstrates the idea of surveillance given by Ganley, "hyper surveillance, in which the past, digitized and stored, is available all of the time" (2).

Reflecting on the desire for permanence in the digital age, Shukla portrays the protagonist's yearning for recognition when he declares, "He should be able to exist electronically. He predates social media, he never lived to make his mark and fuck it, he deserved it, he deserved to make his mark. He deserved his presence" (Shukla 240). To "exist electronically" reveals how digital identity can serve as a substitute for physical legacy, emphasizing experimental identity construction (Amerika 7), where selfhood is imagined and extended beyond life via technology. This constructs a "cyberpsychogeographical zone" (Amerika 7) where absence in physical reality is compensated through imagined digital presence, turning cyberspace into a platform of both mourning and imagined self-expression.

Kitab's attempt to preserve the memory of his late brother in the form of a blog is a demonstration of Amerika's theory of digital thoughtography, whereby memories

are deposited, reconstituted, and granted a new life in cyberspace. The words "he should be able to exist electronically" are a demonstration of the feeling that digital immortality can replace corporeal presence. As a digital thoughtographer, Kitab builds a persona for his brother by ascribing imaginary experiences to an imaginary character, thus rewriting history in terms of cyberspace. This vision is a demonstration of Elias's theory of a "cyberpalimpsest", whereby fragmentary memories are reassembled algorithmically into a digital entity. The internet is an interwoven, collective narrative space, whereby Kitab is able to make his brother leave his trace, even if one that is technologically produced. His pronouncement, "he deserved his presence" is a demonstration of the feeling that cyberspace offers a different kind of being, whereby identity is decoupled from lived experience and instead becomes dependent upon technologically mediated presence. Another example of same notion of cyber palimpsest is, "You can construct entire people out of everything they've ever done digitally" (Shukla 240). This argument that you can build whole people out of everything that they've ever done online is a description of the way fuzzy logic and networked digitality condition identity, as described by Elias. By collecting and curating the digital traces of an individual, one can construct a version of their identity separate from who they are in their physical lives.

This is an expression of Amerika's cyberpsychogeographical jockey vision, wherein one floats through the boundless digital realm, searching for meanin g and connection in splintered traces of other people's lives. This idea of constructing a version of one's identity separate from who that person is, can also be seen in the following text,

> I 'like' more Facebook things – pictures of people's children, sarcastic political opinions and motivational quotes. I'm engaging in my friends' lives. I link my Twitter and Facebook to some YouTube music videos I like. Just so I can feel like I've engaged in the world. I've said more about my state of mind with the videos I choose than just saying, on Twitter:…Somewhere in this vanity is a genuine desire to communicate with the people who follow me. But on my terms. Where the things I rate create a demonstrative illusion of what I'm like as a person. In my head, this is exactly the message I wish to send out about social media me. (Shukla 164)

Shukla captures the protagonist's growing anxiety after his digital identity is stolen, writing, "I pace the flat weighing up the facts. I play Flappy Bird violently. Is identity theft worse than abandonment? … I click onto my news feed. There's nothing else to do" (Shukla 110).When Kitab 2, the doppelganger of the protagonist, steals his phone and intrudes into his twitter and emails. The protagonist feels restless and engages compulsively with digital distractions e.g., playing Flappy Bird violently, mindlessly scrolling through the news feed, illustrate the psychological impact of digital invasion and identity uncertainty, which is aligned with Ganley's notion that digital technology defers the meaning of being and the self. Kitab 2 has stolen his digital presence, leaving him floating in cyberspace, not to face his reality but rather to drift around the digital spaces. The following lines from Amerika's essay resonate with our examples:

> I have referred to this strange, cyberpsychogeographical space that my digital flux persona drifts through as being fueled by an artificial intelligentsia—by an Internetworked intelligence that consists of all of the linked data being distributed in cyberspace at any given time. (Amerika 15)

This disintegrated sense of self echoes Amerika's digital flux personas: instead of a character taking charge of his identity, he loses himself in the "networked space of flows" (Amerika 7). This violence in the act of playing flappy bird instead of resolving the crisis further signifies his displacement in digital liminality. He further goes on and states his agitation in the following word:

> But this, this isn't right. I'm an individual. I'm myself. I'm the only me. So for him to do this, it counts as identity theft. People could be searching for me and finding him. He could be putting up all kinds of rubbish on his timeline, in my name. I'm the only me there is. (Shukla 111)

The protagonist's panic, "I'm the only me" reveals an existential crisis caused by the interruption of digital "intersubjectivity" (Amerika 26). Kitab 2's intrusion into his online identity disrupts the protagonist's sense of uniqueness, reinforcing Amerika's theory that digital personas are multi-layered, constantly shifting, and open to manipulation. The idea that someone else can control his online presence and redefine him in the eyes of others echoes Ganley's argument that digital technology has eroded privacy and problematized selfhood. The protagonist's struggle to reclaim his identity

emphasizes the fluid, unstable nature of digital existence, where individuality is no longer inherent but subject to the actions of others in cyberspace. This further aligns with the intersubjective nature of digital identity, where one's selfhood is not an independent construct but a shared, collective perception formed within the digital realm. We can see this Ganley's idea of "a multi-layered complex figure" in these lines uttered by the protagonist, "I stare at Tom, my first friend on Myspace, and wonder who he really is, that goofy avatar so ingrained in his user's spaces." (Shukla 163)

Shukla portrays the protagonist's growing dependence on digital spaces for connection when he admits, "By the time the evening comes, I realise I haven't spoken to anyone since leaving Kitab 2 at the university. I have forgotten how to communicate. I log into Facebook and look up my name" (Shukla 110). This moment demonstrates how entirely reliant on the internet he is for social interaction. Amerika's idea of the cyberpsychogeographical jockey, someone who wanders around digital environments in quest of significance and validation, is reinforced when he uses Facebook to look for his own name rather than pursuing human connection in the actual world. His disengagement from Meatsapce (2014), or physical reality, is captured in this moment as his life becomes more and more intertwined with his digital identity. It appears that he does not feel real unless he can locate himself in the networked landscape of social media, as seen by his dependence on cyberspace as his main means of self-affirmation (searching for his name). This is an example of his unconscious maneuvering across the "wild wild west" (WWW), where digital traces, rather than face-to-face exchanges, are used to establish identity, communication, and presence. Similarly this quest for forging relationships in cyberspace can be witnessed in these lines, "How did you see it? Are you on Twitter?' 'I have a look now and again to see what my son does. He never calls me" (Shukla 117). The protagonist's father's statement, "He never calls me" reveals a generational shift where interpersonal relationships, once rooted in real-world interactions, must now migrate into cyberspace. To maintain a connection with his son, the father becomes a passive observer in the online world, abandons traditional modes of communication (calls, face-to-face interaction) and enters the digital realm. His occasional monitoring of his son's Twitter reflects the need to reside in cyberspace to stay connected. This aligns with Amerika's theory of cyberpsychogeographical drifting, where individuals, regardless of age or background, must navigate the digital

landscape. The father's experience underscores how cyberspace has replaced physical reality as the primary site of interpersonal relationships.

To explore the impact of cyberpsychogeography on interpersonal relationships, let us examine and analyze the following example from *Meatsapce* (2014). This instance sheds light on how immersion in digital environments reshapes emotional presence and disrupts real-life connections.

"One of our main arguments was her 'Black Ops' aversion to technology…you had to be present with her. And bloody hell, that was hard" (13). This example illustrates how cyberpsychogeography profoundly disrupts interpersonal relationships by dislocating emotional and cognitive presence from the physical world to cyberspace. Kitab's inability to be "present" with Rach, despite their physical proximity, reflects the disorientation and emotional drift caused by prolonged immersion in digital environments. His prioritization of the abstract, immersive space of cyberspace over real-world intimacy reveals how digital landscapes reshape emotional priorities, leading to detachment, alienation, and relationship breakdown.

According to Mark Amerika's theory of cyberpsychogeography, the digital realm constructs new "zones of experience" that override traditional spatial and emotional bonds (Amerika 7). Kitab's relationship deteriorates because his psychological investment is no longer tied to his immediate physical environment, but rather to the psychogeographical flow of digital stimuli. His partner's demand for presence becomes a burden because cyberspace constantly pulls him away, leading to emotional absenteeism. Thus, the cyberpsychogeographical pull of virtual life fragments interpersonal bonds, replacing emotional intimacy with algorithmic engagement.

Kitab1's compulsive return to cyberspace, even during an intimate moment with his father, demonstrates how digital environments exert a psychological pull that overrides the significance of physical connection. When he interrupts his father's anecdote to check a Facebook message, stating it's "just messages from the world, telling me they love me" (Shukla 27), it reflects a deep emotional dependency on online affirmation. His perception of digital interactions as more loving than those in his immediate surroundings reveals how the immersive affective landscapes of cyberspace

reshape personal priorities. The father's ignored presence and frustrated response, "What is on that phone all the time?" further emphasize the emotional distance created by the protagonist's psychological anchoring in virtual space. Through this, the novel portrays how cyberpsychogeographical zones not only influence spatial navigation but also reconfigure emotional attentiveness, leading to neglect and fragmentation in close relationships.

In *Meatsapce* (2014), Nikesh Shukla illustrates how cyberspace profoundly transforms digital identity, spatial experience, and interpersonal relationships. Through the protagonist's obsessive online behaviors and emotional dislocation, the novel captures the fragmented self-navigating across multiple platforms what Mark Amerika calls the "digital flux persona." The cyberspace depicted is not merely a background but a dominant psychogeographical zone, where identity is formed, remembered, and constantly rewritten. This drifting through digital terrain akin to a cyberdérive replaces genuine intimacy with algorithmic engagement, reinforcing alienation and emotional absenteeism. Ultimately, *Meatsapce* (2014) reveals how digital immersion reshapes personal meaning, disrupts real-world connection, and reframes existence as a performative act of online presence.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Findings

This research set out to explore how selected contemporary Euro-American novels represent cyberspaces and digital and personal identity through the frameworks of cyberflânerie, cyberpsychogeography, and cyberdérive. Using *Meatsapce* (2014) by Nikesh Shukla and *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) by Gary Shteyngart as primary texts, the study examined how these narratives depict digitally mediated lives, explore individual and collective navigation of cyberspaces, and interrogate the psychosocial consequences of life in algorithmically curated digital realms.

In both novels, digital identity is constructed, fragmented, and deeply intertwined with spatial experiences within cyberspace. In *Meatsapce* (2014), Kitab Balasubramanyam represents the postmodern subject caught in a space of flows, constantly shifting between his analog world and an unstable online self. Through Mark Amerika's concept of *digital flux personas* and *experimental identity construction*, Kitab's identity is not fixed but constantly reconstituted through Facebook posts, blog entries, and digital interactions. The character's sense of self drifts through layers of online data, echoing Elias's *cyber-palimpsest* (829), where identity becomes a palimpsestic layering of digital memories and fragmented narratives.

Kitab's brother Aziz, who disappears into the digital realm and reemerges as a fake version of Kitab, embodies the dangers of over-identification with a digital self. The *unrealtime* that Amerika outlines, the collapse of linear temporality manifests in Aziz's obsessive, simulated existence online. His psychogeographical experience of digital space aligns with Amerika's notion of the *cyberpsychogeographical jockey*, one who navigates cyberspace not with purpose but through unconscious, compulsive drifts. These characters are entangled in what Ganley describes as *hyper surveillance*, where the self is always exposed, archived, and judged.

In *Super Sad True Love Story*, Lenny Abramov's digital identity is quantified through his äppärät. This device renders every aspect of his existence into data, his

social status, desirability, and even his thoughts. His life is navigated through what Elias terms as *fuzzy logic* algorithmically generated systems that stratify identity and relational dynamics. Lenny's experience encapsulates Amerika's *avant presence*, a fragmented, ever-adapting digital self within a *networked space of flows* (7). The äppärät becomes a prosthetic extension of the self, echoing Amerika's notion of *thoughtography*, where memory, identity, and desire are digitized and constantly performed.

Both novels portray spatial experiences that transcend the physical. Kitab's and Lenny's interactions with digital space are forms of *cyberspatial drifting* (Amerika 3), aimless, affect-laden navigations that often exacerbate alienation. In *Super Sad*, this is seen in the collapse of physical space under digital surveillance, where even a subway ride becomes a ranking competition. In *Meatsapce* (2014), it manifests in Kitab's psychological disorientation, where even the most mundane city walk is haunted by digital echoes.

The concept of the *cyberflâneur*; a digital wanderer navigating cyberspace much like the 19th-century flâneur wandered the arcades is central to both novels. Drawing on Ganley's definition of the *cyberflâneur* as a "fast-forward flâneur" (1), these texts reimagine flânerie in terms of aimless surfing, scrolling, and lurking.

In *Meatsapce* (2014), Kitab reflects the alienated flâneur of the digital age. He strolls through Facebook and Twitter with the same passivity and irony that Baudelaire's flâneur brought to the Parisian arcades. His behavior reflects what Ganley calls a *multi-layered complex figure* unable to anchor himself in a single mode of being, caught between digital detachment and analog yearning. His ironic online presence, shaped by hashtags and memes, masks deeper insecurities. Through Hartmann's idea of a transitional figure, Kitab reflects how digital technologies have redefined flânerie not as observational detachment, but performative engagement.

Shteyngart's *Super Sad* gives us an intensified version of the cyberflâneur. Characters drift through social spaces governed entirely by digital metrics. Lenny is a reluctant cyberflâneur whose äppärät constantly floods him with data. He does not control the gaze; he is subjected to it. This inversion of the flâneur's power being observed rather than observing illustrates Ganley's argument that digital life has

deferred the meaning of being and the self (2). Lenny's passivity while navigating dating profiles, credit scores, and sexual preference algorithms reveals a cyberdérive stripped of agency. His flânerie becomes involuntary, orchestrated by apps and social networks, not curiosity.

Aziz, (being dead in real life and only existing in cyberspace) on the other hand, fully embraces this cyberflânerie, embodying the *technomadic wandering* described by Amerika (6). He performs multiple versions of himself online, abandoning his physical reality for total digital immersion. Unlike Kitab and Lenny, Aziz is not just navigating cyberspace he is living in it, exemplifying Amerika's notion of *future-tense practice*, where subversive identities emerge in reaction to algorithmic hegemony.

Both novels illustrate how digital environments profoundly affect emotional and social dynamics. *Cyberpsychogeography* the study of how digital space affects psychological and spatial perception and *cyberdérive* the aimless, affect-driven drift through digital realms are manifested through fragmented relationships, disorientation, and performative intimacy.

In *Meatsapce* (2014), Kitab's failed relationships mirror his fractured sense of self, shaped by online dating, performative posts, and constant comparison. His cyberdérives are not liberating; they trap him in cycles of scrolling and nostalgia. Amerika's concept of *jet-lag consciousness* applies here: Kitab is psychologically fatigued, drifting through time zones, social media feeds, and self-doubt. Elias's idea of "gated communities" in cyberspace (822) is embodied in the echo chambers the protagonist falls into, limiting his ability to engage with alternative perspectives or re-establish real-world intimacy.

In *Super Sad True Love Story*, Lenny and Eunice's relationship is filtered entirely through their äppäräts. Intersubjectivity defined here as shared experiences and mutual recognition is distorted, even disabled, by algorithmic mediation. Lenny zooms into images of Eunice to detect signs of abuse, engaging in a hyper-surveillant form of intimacy. This moment reflects Amerika's *thoughtography*, where technology captures and manipulates memory and meaning, often replacing genuine empathy.

Eunice's own identity is algorithmically constructed: her *fuckability* and *personality scores* replace selfhood with data. Her trauma becomes a metric in the

äppärät's ranking system. Ganley's concept of *hyper surveillance*, where past experiences are digitized and always available, reveals how such systems commodify emotional pain and affects one's identity. When äppäräts are banned, Lenny writes: "My hands are itching for connection." This line captures the emotional dislocation caused by the loss of digital psychogeographic zones. Without the device, the characters must confront the emptiness beneath their curated identities. Their loneliness, once masked by notifications, returns with visceral urgency.

Kitab's obsessive need for Aziz to reappear in his life through a forged digital identity is a distorted form of intersubjectivity. He replaces human connection with performative digital mimicry, representing a cyberpsychogeographical collapse an inability to distinguish between connection and illusion.

Through the concepts of cyberpsychogeography, cyberdérive, and cyberflânerie, this study has demonstrated how cyberspace reshapes human identity and relationality in complex, often troubling ways. Kitab and Lenny, along with those around them, navigate an increasingly digitized world where personal worth is quantified, and intimacy is mediated through interfaces. The novels depict contemporary existence as suspended between performance and surveillance, drifting and data, longing and isolation.

By engaging with the theoretical frameworks of Mark Amerika, Amy Elias, and Rosane Ganley, it becomes evident that digital environments have not only redefined how space is experienced but have also altered the very grammar of identity and connection. These characters, as transitional figures, reflect a collective struggle to remain human in a world where the boundaries between the virtual and the real grow ever thinner. Ultimately, the conclusion is not a resolution but an invitation to continue reflecting on how technology rewrites not just our stories, but the storytellers themselves.

In response to the first research question, the analysis reveals that the selected novels depict fluid, quantified identities shaped by digital flux and experimental self-construction within algorithmically structured cyberspaces. With reference to the second research question, the protagonists function as cyberflâneurs, drifting through virtual terrains as complex, data-driven figures. As for the third research question, the

study uncovers that these cyberspatial experiences reshape their psychological understanding of self and interpersonal relationships, resulting in fragmented, multi-layered complex identities, disrupted real-life connections, strained and digitally mediated relationships revealing the deep impacts of cyberpsychogeography on selfhood and human bonds.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Studies

The present study has examined cyberpsychogeography and its influence on identity and interpersonal relationships in contemporary Euro-American fiction. However, further research could conduct a comparative study of psychogeography in the real world and cyberpsychogeography in cyberspace, analyzing how spatial navigation and affective experiences differ in both realms. Additionally, future studies could focus exclusively on the concept of the cyberflâneuse, exploring how gender performativities are no longer confined to traditional societal expectations in cyberspace and how women are represented as cyberflâneuses. Another promising avenue for research is the notion of the cyber-palimpsest, which this study has only briefly addressed. Examining digital spaces as layered, ever-evolving archives of memory and identity on a larger scale could offer deeper insights into the complexities of virtual existence.

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