

**PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA**  
**MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**  
UNIVERSITY OF AMMAR THELEDJI-LAGHOUAT  
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



**The Strain of Identity (Re)shaping in the Digital Age: Debriefing  
the Divide of the Authentic Vs. the Fake in  
Dave Eggers's *The Every* (2021)**

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for Master Degree in Civilization and Literature

Submitted by: Rihab KAIDI

**Board of Examiners:**

Mrs. Sarra Ahlam BEDERINA	University of Laghouat, Chairperson.
Dr. Fattoum MOUISSA	University of Laghouat, Supervisor.
Dr. Djihad Afaf SELT	University of Laghouat, Examiner.

**Academic Year 2024-2025**

## **Dedication**

To my father, the one whose forehead sweated, who gave his all, and from whom I drew my strength and pride in myself.

To my mother, the one for whom Allah placed Paradise beneath her feet, and who stayed up praying to see me climb the ladder of success.

To those who were a support and a pillar along this journey, my friends.

I proudly dedicate my graduation and the happiness I have long sought to those who have always provided support and generosity.

## **Acknowledgements**

All gratitude and appreciation go to my supervisor, Dr. Fattoum MOUISSA, for her unwavering efforts and valuable advice that accompanied me kindly throughout my journey. It is an honour to dedicate to her all respect and appreciation for this success.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the jury members, for taking the time to read and examine my work.

## Abstract

In the age of digital transformation, individual identity has become a subject of debate as it appears to be under Persistent reformation and reproduction, critically within the digital age. This research converses about the impact of modern digital technologies on contemporary identities, focusing on how surveillance algorithms influence the (re)shaping of identity . Dave Eggers's *The Every* (2021) mirrors the characters' distressing journey and quest for authenticating their identities in a world tracked by apps and technological platforms. Through the characters and Denaley in particular , the novel portrays the struggle between preserving an original self without fully submitting to the digital dominance. Hence, Eggers tends to question the prospect of an authentic representation of oneself without being absolutely immersed in the virtual world. To meet the objectives of the study, an interdisciplinary approach, aligned with a textual analysis of Eggers's work, is embraced to probe the different cultural, historical, and social contexts that may shape contemporary identities. Eggers reveals that one can probably understand the issue of identity if he/she understands that people today are the products of this age and their identities are shaped by the platforms they adhere to. This, however, explains Delaney's anxiety and concern whenever her true and fake identities clash. Hence, her resistance to the technological supremacy sprang from her desire to restore her autonomy and sense her identity that is entangled in a Perpetual struggle between what she aspires to and what is imposed on her.

**Keywords:** Identity Shaping, Digital Age, Algorithms, Resistance, Surveillance.

# Table of Contents

<b>Dedication</b> .....	i
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	ii
<b>Abstract</b> .....	iii
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	iv
<b>General Introduction</b> .....	01
<b>Chapter One : Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age</b>	
Introduction .....	08
1. Rethinking Identity in the Digital Turn.....	09
1.1. Virtual spaces as a Secure Sanctuary .....	10
2. The Digital Influence and Rejuvenated Identities.....	11
2.1. Constructed Selves in The Digital Age .....	11
3. Identity Amendment: From Traditional to Digital Underpinnings .....	14
4. Identity in the Context of Modernity.....	14
4.1. Inspecting Identity: Giddens' Perspective .....	15
4.2. Paul Miller's Conception of the 'Digital Self' .....	16
4.3. Baudrillardian Viewing .....	17
5. Richard Sennett's Flexible Identity and the Surveillance Society.....	19
5.1. External Control of Identity.....	19
5.2. The Fragmented Self.....	23
5.3. Distributed Identity.....	24
Conclusion.....	26
<b>Chapter Two: Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's The Every: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake</b>	
Introduction .....	28
1. On Dave Eggers's <i>The Every</i> .....	29
2. Technology and Identity (Re)shaping in Eggers's <i>The Every</i> .....	30
2.1. Tracking Human Behaviours Through Technology in Eggers's <i>The Every</i> .....	31
2.2. Echoes on The True Self Vs. The Digitally Imposed Self .....	34
3. Tracked Identities and Surveillance Platforms in Virtual Spaces.....	36

## Table of Contents

3.1.Identity Crafting Under the Sovereignty of Algorithms and Data.....	36
4. Potential Countermeasures to Digital Hegemony .....	37
5. Voluntary Acceptance of Surveillance and the Normalization of Tracking.....	40
6. The Conundrum of Identity in <i>The Every</i> : Collective Identities Vs. Personal Identities .....	41
7. The Individual's Struggle with the Imposed Collective Identity.....	43
8. Self’s Dissection Between Resistance and Conformity in <i>The Every</i> .....	44
9. Self-Estrangement in a Virtual Setting.....	46
Conclusion.....	47
<b>General Conclusion</b> .....	49
<b>Work Cited</b> .....	51
<b>Appendix A</b> .....	54
<b>Appendix B</b> .....	55
<b>Résumé</b> .....	56
<b>الملخص</b> .....	57

# *General Introduction*

## **General Introduction**

Conventionally, Identity has always been perceived as the way through which individuals define themselves, built through their interactions with their religion, language, and culture. In the past, identity was relatively stable, but with the advancement of the modern age, the concept of identity has changed. It is no longer confined to reality alone; each person now has another presence in the digital world. This has enabled individuals to have more than one identity and program it as they wish, revealing and hidden parts of it depending on the digital platform they use. This has led to the flexibility and complexity of identity, prompting us to reconsider it and its meaning

In an age where technology governs and data administers almost every aspect of people's ordinary lives; human identity has drastically transformed due to the changes brought up by technology. Accordingly, identity has become a quarrelsome topic. Astonishingly, individuals are surrounded by digital standards and surveillance systems that impose particular behaviours, leaving them questioning whether they have control over their identity, or if the latter is a predetermined and designed by those digital systems. As a result, they no longer have enough room or space to shape who they really are or what they want to choose.

*The Every*, a novel written by American writer Dave Eggers in 2021, stands as a contemporary narrative model that reflects the issue of the shifting identity under the pressure of technology and digital surveillance. This leads to the erosion of the individual's original identity and the imposition of digital identity models controlled by such systems. The novel revolves around the dominion of a massive corporation named 'The Every', which takes control of individuals' lives and reshapes their behaviour and performance through algorithms. The novel projects the ongoing conflict between the real identity and the digitally imposed one by the digital system, presented as a substitute for the original self. This conflict

## **General Introduction**

is personified through the central character, Delaney, and some of her friends, like Wes and Mae, who attempt to resist the system from within. Nonetheless, their secret resistance, merged with outward conformity, progressively leads to the destruction of their identities and their integration into the digital order involuntarily. The narrative discourses the loss of privacy and the conversion of the self into an external, computable, and tracked object.

Due to the philosophical perception that related the crisis of identity to the absence of stability and consistency, and adding to the impacts of the cultural and social contexts that shape humans. This research attempts to address identity with the world in which it is formed. Since identity is no longer a fixed essence as it once was but now is a malleable one due to the influence of the technological advancements. This work tends to question whether identity loses its validity in a such changing world.

Recently, the concept of identity has undergone noticeable changes with the rise of the internet and artificial intelligence, which have drawn individuals into their contemporary systems. Originally speaking, identity was based on traditional basis be it social, cultural or religious ones; today it has become more fragile and constantly reshaped due to the interactions with the digital world. Given the previously mentioned changes, it becomes necessary to pose the following research questions:

- How do modern technologies shape the individual's identity in contemporary digital societies?
- How does Dave Eggers project the question of identity when it is based on the original vs. fake self-debate?
- How characters like Delaney would maintain a sense of identity in a digitalized world? And what forms of resistance does the main character, Delaney, practice against the digitally imposed identity?

## **General Introduction**

This study puts forth the following hypotheses to address the previous questions. First of all, technology is no longer a mere means of communication but has become a powerful and influential factor that shapes and reproduces the individual identity through algorithms. The latter have made identity more fragile and led to the individuals' separation from their true selves. It might also be argued, at this level, that the presence of the programmed digital self makes the original identity ineffective, allowing the person to be subject to its mechanisms in the name of comfort and well-being but at the expense of authenticity and privacy. Some characters, most notably Delaney, personified the model of individual resistance that seeks to reclaim personal identity under what is called compliance with the digital system in order to disrupt it. But in the end, this resistance ultimately failed due to the power of digital systems.

Once more, the aim of this research is to examine how the concept of identity has changed as a result of technological dominance and how it led to the fluidity and fragmentation of identity. Digitization has exceeded reasonable limits in shaping the self, directing its behaviour, desires, and choices, and imposing digital patterns on the self to serve its own interests. In this study, the profound impact of digitization, if not to say the internal struggle, on reshaping the self through algorithms, data, and applications that is represented via the character Delaney is highlighted. Additionally, the work is studied in light of certain contemporary philosophical conceptions so as to offer a deeper understanding to the problem of identity.

Though there are many studies that have examined the relationship between technology and identity, the majority have either treated identity from a fixed perspective or concentrated on general transformations, without giving sufficient attention to its flexible and shifting nature as shaped by continuous interaction with digital media. The novel, *The*

## General Introduction

*Every*, provides a suitable setting for identity crisis, as the novelist presents characters, who interact with hidden and surveillance-based systems that continuously strain and modify their identities. Grounded in the theories of Stuart Hall, Paul Miller, Zygmunt Bauman, and Jean Baudrillard, this study seeks to rethink identity in a digitalized environment.

Through a critical reading that reexamines the issue of identity in the light of the digital changes, as represented in the novel, the study provides a multi-dimensional contribution to understand the ever-existing relationship between identity and technology. In addition, it inspects the connection between literature and digital social theory, showing how literary texts can reopen new theoretical conception regarding identity shaping, freedom, truth-finding and progress. Hence, the study is not merely a literary analysis, but a redefining the novel as a tool able of producing knowledge about technology and self-understanding in contemporary times, opening up new theoretical horizons in literary studies, digital theory, and identity studies. The emphasis on the novel, as a work that traces modern changes with regards to identity, is justifiable, adding to fact that it has received a little scholarly attention in field of literary studies that negotiate technology and identity.

Previous studies across various fields such as digital literature and cultural studies have addressed the issue of identity. Zygmunt Bauman's *Liquid Modernity* (2000) explores the uncertainty of identity in the changing world. Equally, the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells, in his work *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), deals with the transformative changes in social and human values caused by the digital systems. Interestingly, Sherry Turkle in *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (2011) relates the identity crisis of the digital age to hyperconnectivity, believing that today's isolation is caused by technology.

## General Introduction

More specifically, Catherine MacMillan, in her work titled “Everyone Watching You: The Future of Society in Dave Eggers’s *The Every*” (2024), discusses the interconnectedness between identity and technology. She argues that technology, namely surveillance in the name of protection, leads to the demolition of human identity. Another researcher, Agata Wroble, in her 2021 work titled “Behave New Humans and Incongruous Bodysuits: On Surveillance and Its Modes in Dave Eggers’s *The Every*,” also debates how individuals adapt to the machines of digitalization, especially under continuous dominance. People, unwillingly, begin to construct an identity to escape from the original self. As for Jana Malusko’s research paper titled “The Elements of Contemporary Technological Dystopia in Dave Eggers’s *The Circle* and TV Series *Black Mirror*,” it uncovers how the digital systems, instead of improving humanity, impose certain standards that, when surmounted, lead to human destruction.

In the light of the contemporary discussions, the importance of this topic is increasing, particularly with regards to the impact of technology on humanity, as it has altered from a tool of communication to one that uses digital data basis to reconstruct and redesign individual identity. As well, it forces humans to adhere to some existential digital norms, which eradicate their autonomy in defining who they are. In this context, the question of identity and how it is influenced by the changing external world has become a subject of endless debate. The objective is to determine what constitutes human identity, as the debate tends to examine whether it is possible to resist its dominance, particularly on human identity in a modern malleable world in which identity has become an intertwined fabric of digital interactions and discourses. Accordingly, Eggers’s *The Every* is chosen to address such contemporary and philosophical issues. The novel presents a world wherein identities are constantly redefined through digital systems. Accordingly, the study’s primary objective is

## **General Introduction**

to understand how identity becomes unstable, as the world around us changes rapidly and technology gets more involved in our lives.

To meet the objective cited, the reliance on the interdisciplinary approach seems reasonable. Consequently, the cultural approach, which involves interpreting literary works as cultural representations, is used. The chosen narrative, which reflects the profound struggle of identity with the system and platforms of the digital age, is perfectly suited to this approach, which permits appraising a work without detaching it from the cultural, historical, and social context that is rife with conflicts between authentic and false perceptions of the self. Also, it looks at the relationship between literature and other artistic mediums. Likewise, a sociological approach is embraced to question the extent to which literature in general and Eggers's work, in particular, reflect the values and struggles of the contemporary society that is under the mercy of technology. Additionally, to look at how identity has changed in light of theorists like Paul Miller, David Lyon, Zygmunt Bauman, and Stuart Hall. Finally, a psychoanalytic approach is used to examine Delaney's personality from a psychological standpoint, with a certain emphasis on the self's duality between rejection and compliance as well as alienation.

With regard to the structure, the dissertation is composed of two chapters. Chapter One covers the theoretical framework of the study, shedding light on the changes that have

affected identity in the digital age. The chapter begins by defining identity and then moves on to analyse how contemporary identity has become flexible, fluid, and fragmented. In order to emphasize the importance of understanding identity as a constantly changing entity, key contemporary thinkers were relied on. All of whom approached the concept of

## **General Introduction**

flexible identity from different angles, such as cultural identity (Stuart Hall), liquid identity (Zygmunt Bauman), and identity under surveillance (David Lyon).

On the other hand, chapter Two puts into practice the theoretical insights covered in the first chapter through an analytical reading that highlights the conflict between individual identity and digitally imposed identity, as represented in Eggers's novel, *The Every*. The struggle between the true and the fake imposed identity is projected through the main character, who joins the company with the intention of dismantling it from within but fails in her resistance. Her identity is torn between rejection and submission to the dominant system. Ultimately, the chapter underscores the powerful impact of digital systems on individuals' lives: the more there is resistance, the more it is absorbed by the system in a way that paradoxically strengthens it. This, however, makes individual identity an open and vulnerable field and a difficult matter to understand.

# *Chapter One*

## *Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age*

# Chapter One      Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age

## Introduction

Identity is considered one of the most prominent topics that have attracted the attention of scholars, especially in light of the developments taking place in contemporary societies, driven by technology. The reshaping of human identities has been a significant focus as digital technologies have had a profound impact on the formation of new identity models, where the technological factor play a crucial role in bringing about changes and transformations in the components of identity.

Identity has long been a foundational aspect of human existence, deeply intertwined with how individuals perceive themselves and relate to society. Historically, identity formation was largely influenced by relatively fixed factors such as culture, religion, and family ( Hall 222-237). However, the modern world, with its rapid technological advancements, globalization, and shifting social dynamics, has altered radically the ways individuals understand and express their identities. Lately, a specific attention has been directed to the complexities of identity formation in today's world, focusing on the factors that shape identity, the challenges people face, and the opportunities for positive identity development in contemporary society. In this regard, it is envisioned that individuals seek to shape multiple versions of themselves depending on the context. (Zygmunt Bauman 12)

By logically framing identity within modern conceptions and theories that perceive identity as a dynamic social contract, this chapter tends to present imperative views to identity. In the context of digital transformations, identity has become more flexible, influenced by technological discourses and the entangled surveillance systems in the digital space. This chapter draws on a range of modern identity theories, most notably the concept

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

of cultural identity as formulated by Stuart Hall and the theory of ‘liquid identity’ by Zygmunt Bauman in order to explore how the self is reconstructed and reshaped in an environment governed by digital data and invisible surveillance.

## **1. Rethinking Identity in the Digital Turn**

Digital identity is an electronic representation of a person’s identity online and includes some information such as usernames, profile picture, age, gender, and even the geographical location. In the digital era, many individuals rely on their digital identity to communicate and express themselves aiming to enhance their digital presence and define and distinguish themselves. This identity, however, plays a vital role in communication and electronic connections, where it is used by individuals and companies to connect easily and effectively in a tech-driven world.

It is noticeable that technology plays a chief role in shaping new identities, as it allows individuals to present different versions of themselves online. This frequently leads to the creation of a ‘hybrid identity’, which is an amalgam between the traditional identity and the digital persona. In the digital environment, people can explore and express different aspects of their identity in ways that may be completely different from their real selves, which adds complexity and deepens the problem of identity.

The deep immersion in the virtual world does not negate the need for belonging, as identity remains in a constant and continuous state of reproduction. It continues to express itself persistently in various and diverse forms, responding to other encounters and interacting with the challenges it faces. In the past, identity was mainly shaped by race, blood, land,

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

history, and language as its key pillars. However, the emergence of artificial intelligence has brought about new features of the digital age that go beyond human understanding and challenge many domains. (Al-Ashour Mostafa, para.1)

## **1.1. Virtual spaces as a Secure Sanctuary**

Numerous studies confirm that digital identity can be a refuge for identities suffering from isolation and persecution. In this sense, a person in the digital space may find a refuge for his fragmented and oppressed identity, especially since the internet allows individuals to conceal their identity freely and express whatever thoughts come to mind, even if they conflict with societal norms. Some individuals express their identity under pseudonyms used as a means to present identity-related issues. In such cases, there may be a discrepancy between an individual's real-world identity and the one in the digital world. (Al-Ashour, Mostafa, para. 10-12)

If we recall adolescence, we will find that this stage is characterized by transitional periods where identity-related struggles intensify. The suffering associated with identity takes distressing forms, ranging from extreme feelings of alienation to identity crises. This distress can create social isolation, making the digital space a haven for escape. In this regard, studies have shown that teenagers spend approximately seven hours connected to the internet. According to the theories of the Canadian philosopher and communication scholar, Marshall McLuhan, the medium is the message in itself, extending human capacities. Each medium reshapes our perceptions of reality and with digital media, it redefines human identity. (McLuhan 7)

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

## **2. The Digital Influence and Rejuvenated Identities**

Researchers argue that the process of identity formation varies from one individual to another, and from one society or culture to another. A cohesive identity can only emerge through an individual's interaction with his past and familial roots, that is form what is known as values, customs, and beliefs acquired from that family. Adding to the personal experiences he/she has undergone through that eventually shape his/her self-understanding and sense of the world around. However, with the development of communication technologies and the emergence of digital communities, the traditional criteria for identity formation have shifted, giving rise to a new type of identity, digital identity. (Fazzaa Fares and Mohammed Siddiqi 648-662). Hence, Identity in old contexts was understood as a fixed essence, but with the emergence of digitization, identity became a process, as digitization allowed individuals to reshape themselves through pseudonyms and diverse profiles.

### **2.1. Constructed Selves in The Digital Age**

With the development of technology and the rise of digital platforms, people can now create new identities online that are often very different from their real selves. This has resulted in a flexible and unstable sense of identity that constantly changes according to the surrounding modern environment. In the digital world, individuals can express themselves freely, break and transcend social boundaries, and show parts of their personality they cannot reveal in real life. Sometimes this digital identity is honest and reflects a real part or a true aspect of the person, and at other times it is idealized or imagined, not fully representing or resembling reality.

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

Some platforms, like Second Life, allow people to build a completely new identity, giving them the chance to explore themselves more deeply and experience new aspects of their personality. Hence, each person lives in his/her own online world, even if he or she is in the same physical space as others. This has instigated a shattering of the traditional foundations of identity, such as work and emotional relationships. Most importantly, today all of the previously mentioned elements have become unstable. Subsequently, relationships change quickly, and people no longer primarily identify with their jobs. Due to the frequent changes and renewals brought about by technology, it has become hardly possible to maintain stable social connections. Identity today has become fluid and shifting, like the clothes we wear or the way we present ourselves online. Hence, human identity has been considerably influenced by the digital realm, which for some has become a second life or a means of escape from the real world. On account of this, a digital identity is not merely a reflection of a real identity; it has become an independent entity built within the online world and directly touches people's lives. It is necessary to note that regardless of the chances of self-expression offered by digital identity, it carries risks and comes with hazards like privacy violations and abuses, adding to the weak control over personal data.

Deh Dragana and Dancia Glodovic's article, "The Construction of Identity in Digital Space," discusses the various forms of external impositions that affect the formation of identity, including social pressures through which individuals seek to present an ideal image. These pressures compel them to modify their behaviours or their digital image. On top of that, permanent data storage, which saves information published in the digital spaces, may remain preserved for a long period, leading to the imposition of a fixed image of the individual that is difficult to modify later. What is more perilous is the control of identity by

# Chapter One      Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age

others in the sense that digital tools allow the manipulation of another's identity, whether through information or images. (Deh Dragana and Dancia Glodovic 101-103)

In the book entitled *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* by Shoshana Zuboff, she argues that digital identity has become subject to domination and surveillance. This is evident in the way that personal data is shared by individuals on digital platforms, collected, and controlled without their consent. Here, the human identity becomes exposed to continuous fragmentation and reshaping through publicly displayed digital data. In addition, digitization is used as a tool to reshape the self based on digital standards, which leads to the violation of privacy. The self is transformed from an internal experience into an external entity that is reformulated based on digital interests. The self thus shifts from being a lived experience to a product that is produced and controlled through algorithms and data. *In Surveillance Capitalism*, Zuboff explains that digitization has led to self-alienation, as digital technologies control the data, choices, and desires of the individual, causing them to lose their sense of self, as a free being living a human experience. Digitization, therefore, has profoundly contributed to the erosion of individual identity, leading the individual to become separated from his/her own personal self (550-610).

### **3. Identity Amendment: From Traditional to Digital Underpinnings**

Identity has always been based on traditional pillars such as family, religion, and language. However, modern technologies have enabled individuals to reshape their identities through various digital platforms. This has given identity a new sense of flexibility and fluidity, allowing individuals to break free from the constraints of the past. The new digital spaces have enabled users to adopt new roles that allow them to explore hidden or mysterious

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

aspects of themselves, parts they may not be able to express in real life. This reflective process can influence their behaviour and self-perception in the real world.

Over time, this may affect the concept of self, leading to a blending between the virtual and the real, which can result in overlap, or even clash between these identities. People often begin to question whether their online identities truly represent them or are just digital masks. With the advancement of technology, it has become easier to explore different cultures, which has changed certain aspects of personal identity. This change may weaken a person's connection to his original culture and make him feel distant from his community. (Turkle 339-357)

## **4. Identity in the Context of Modernity**

In recent days, many changes have ushered in many fields, and identity is no exception. The latter, however, has delineated from its traditionally-grounded definitions to malleable ones. Accordingly, contentious discussions regarding identity came to the floor on the basis that people started interrogating its nature, wondering whether to consider it a lived experience of a produced entity.

### **4.1. Inspecting Identity: Giddens' Perspective**

Anthony Giddens, the British sociologist, sees identity in the contemporary era as no longer a fixed and continuous entity but rather as a flexible and changing one, a 'self-project' as he calls it. That is to say, individuals today have become responsible for shaping their own identity following their choices. Likewise, Giddens also envisions, in his (1991) book entitled *Modernity and Self-Identity*, that modernity and the subsequent technological and

# **Chapter One      Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

informational transformations have given the individuals greater freedom to shape and form their identity and self-image, accordingly. They have, nonetheless, simultaneously created a troubling and disquieting sense of who they are and the true image that best captures their essence. In today's world, users redefine themselves in multiple digital environments. Consequently, and within the light of this technological advancement, digital platforms have embodied this profound transformation in the understanding of identity as being more multifaceted and changeable rather than a fixed one.

The digital environment does not stop at presenting a fixed image of the self, but permits the individual to continuously reconstruct this image. This is what Giddens sees as a 'self-project' that is defined as: "a series of continuous changes that become more complex day by day in the digital space" (Giddens 4-5). With the increased use of the internet, individuals now have greater freedom to choose and highlight different aspects of their identities in the way they wish. In addition to this, the impact of technology on contemporary identity has led to a level of existential anxiety about "who we are" or what is the original version that truly represents us.

## **4.2. Paul Miller's Conception of the 'Digital Self'**

In the third chapter of his book, Miller discusses the idea of how modern technology has affected individuals and how it has forced them to develop flexible and changing identities that adapt to different digital environments. For example, what a person shares on Facebook differs from what he /she displays on Instagram since each platform enforces a certain form of self-presentation. These adjustments are not a choice but sometimes a

# Chapter One      Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age

necessity to ensure acceptance or success within digital platforms. In this context, Miller points: “The digital self is not a singular, coherent entity. Rather, it is a fluid constellation of identities, tailored to fit shifting social contexts online. Flexibility becomes a key survival trait in digital life.” (Miller67). He also mentioned another important point, namely that the flexibility of identity leads to a kind of internal fragmentation, which sometimes makes the individual feel alienated from their original self. (68)

In the fifth chapter of the book, titled “*Surveillance and the Digital Construction of Identity*,” he discussed how identity has become closely linked to the hidden and scientific surveillance practices carried out by technological platforms. Individuals no longer have full control over shaping and constructing their identities, as these identities are not only formed by what the individual chooses, but also by what is recorded and analysed through surveillance algorithm data. He points, “The digital self is under constant construction, shaped as much by algorithmic observation and prediction as by conscious self-presentation.” (Miller 103)

### 4.3. Baudrillardian Viewing

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard presents a sharp conception in which the boundaries between real reality and the false collapse, reflecting that identity is no longer a fixed essence but rather a series of fabricated representations directed at invisible audiences. In his work, he demonstrates how we have come to lose the boundaries between the real and

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

the fake, reflecting how identity is no longer a fixed essence but has become changeable and constantly reshaped according to what technology imposes.

For Baudrillard, “The self, like the object, is now destined to pure appearance. There is no identity behind the mask, only the mask itself.” (Baudrillard 101). This quote reflects that identity is no longer a true self but instead a mask designed to perform roles across digital spaces. Applied to digital identity, we can say that data does not express the essence of the individual but a simulation constructed according to algorithmically imposed standards. Baudrillard suggests that modern identity is not a fixed self engrained in an authentic origin but has become constantly shifting patterns within a digital space of simulations, where the self is reproduced without an original reference, making identity flexible, transformable, and forced to adapt to ever-changing technological demands. He claims “Technology has produced a universe where the origin is no longer meaningful and where reality itself is endlessly deferred through signs and images.” (Baudrillard 6)

With the increasing flow of technological information and data, and the dismantling of traditional foundations of identity, identity production has become subject to reconstruction and revision. In the context of informational development, identity has become subject to constant transformation. Baudrillard describes this condition as: “The flow increases while meaning diminishes.” (p. 79). Accordingly, he suggests that in a world of increasing digital production, original identity has lost its meaning. He foresees that we now live representations and roles of our identity. In this respect, priority is given to the digital image, which is subject to change and modification, while the human experience becomes marginalized and non-existent.

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

Parallel To Baudrillard, Stuart Hall discusses individual identity in the postmodern era and points out that it is no longer something steady or unchanging but has become a socially and culturally constructed concept that is constantly changing (Hall 1-7). From the beginning, Hall rejects the traditional idea that identity is stable and permanent. Instead, it has become multiple and fragmented. He points:

From this, I came to understand that identity is not a set of fixed attributes, not a thing we have or possess, but something we are constantly producing and reproducing through representation. Identity is not something which is already ‘there’, inside us, but something we must constantly work to construct and reconstruct. Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being. (Stuart Hall 4)

According to Stuart Hall, identity does not exist within us from the beginning; rather, the individual works on building it through interaction with their environment. But now, in a world dominated by technology, it becomes difficult to hold on to a stable identity due to the impact of technology on individual life. The individual begins to change their understanding of themselves and present themselves in different ways.

In a similar vein, David Lyon explains that modern society has come to rely heavily on digital surveillance systems, which constantly collect personal data through various sources such as credit cards, surveillance cameras, smartphones, and corporate databases. While the stated aim is to ensure security, improve administration, and better manage

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

societies, the result is the creation of a fragile and flexible identity, one that can be controlled and shaped through digital data. (Lyon 13-14)

## **5. Richard Sennett's Flexible Identity and the Surveillance Society**

Flexible identity, as discussed by Richard Sennett, refers to an identity that is constantly shifting in response to changing social and economic conditions. David Lyon builds on this idea by connecting it to digital fragmentation. Accordingly, identity is no longer stable or unified but instead appears through a collection of digital profiles, records, social media accounts, databases that are all subject to surveillance and categorization. (13-14)

### **5.1. External Control of Identity**

With technological development, we have entered a new stage of identity flexibility, where individuals are no longer the sole creator of their identity. Instead, identity is increasingly shaped by corporate systems and digital algorithms. As a result, identity becomes something that is continuously reconstructed and redefined by those who monitor and categorize us, namely the governments, technology companies, and data systems. In this context, it is claimed: "Surveillance is the focused, systematic and routine attention to personal details for purposes of influence, management, protection or direction ". (Lyon 13-14)

Deborah Lupton is one of the most prominent researchers in digital sociology, technology, identity, and self-surveillance. One of her key concepts that he introduced is 'self-tracking', which refers to practices such as using applications that track an individual's life in the form of data. This data-filled information creates a type of identity, where the

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

individual is redefined through their numbers and metrics. The person is no longer seen merely as a human being but as a data double. These data are used to manage or monitor the self.

Lupton envisions that individuals are compelled to constantly follow and adapt to the form of their new identity, which is being monitored and controlled. She emphasizes that identity is not something fixed, but is continuously reshaped since modern technologies make us constantly reconfigure ourselves. She claims, “Am I doing well on this app? Is my life perfect on social media?” (Lupton 4)”. This, however, shows that digital data alone have made the individual more obsessed with the self, and even directly controlled by it. Our identity today is an unfinished project, continuously reshaped through the platforms and applications we use. She adds, “In self-tracking cultures, identity is increasingly understood as something to be improved, monitored, and constantly modified [...] Identity becomes an ongoing project, directly linked to digital technologies and the data they generate” (41). Furthermore, she contemplates “Digital technologies do not just reflect the self — they are actively involved in producing the self.” (Lupton10). Lupton also believes that applications and smart devices not only reflect who we are, but also participate in the construction of identity, making it a continuous project of modification directly linked to digital technologies.

Giorgio Fontana draws inspiration from Zygmunt Bauman’s concept of liquid modernity, where identity is no longer fixed but rapidly changing due to digital and social pressures. He argues that in the age of modernity, identity has lost its traditional foundations, such as nationality, religion, and class. It has become constantly changeable and subject to reconstruction. Flexible, constructed identity is not merely a choice, but a necessity in the digital crisis of stability. However, this leads to a loss of control over one’s digital self that is

## **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

contrasted to the real self, prompting the individual to ask: Who am I? And what form should I take (Bauman p 8,23). In other words, which version of myself should I present, as the individual feels that they are living in contradiction between their digital and real self

In the context of rapid development in contemporary societies, as discussed by Zygmunt Bauman, there are no longer fixed and stable identities or roles. Due to globalization and modern technology, identities have become changeable and reshaped to keep up with the characteristics of the era and the demands of the market, work, and relationships. Bauman sees that one of the features of modernity is the breakdown of traditional models that used to govern people's lives in the past, such as identity. Identity used to be built once. However, in the current epoch, the stability of identity is viewed as a burden rather than a source of security on the basis that the individual is afraid of being restricted in world filled with fast-moving technologies. (Bauman 34)

In addition to this, social media imposes ideal standards on the individual and constantly rewards people for appearing in a new form. This feeds the idea of self-reinvention and weakens the structure of traditional stable identity. Here comes the point of existential anxiety. Stability used to be a source of reassurance, and escaping from it leads to a constant feeling of uncertainty and anxiety about the authenticity of identity. Instead of identity being an inner essence, it has become an external performance presented to others and controlled according to the platform and the situation. Zygmunt remarks "In liquid modernity, to be tied down is to be deprived of freedom; to stay in place is to miss opportunities, to hold a fixed identity is to risk being left behind." (17) Hence, in the age of modernity, commitment to something is seen as an obstacle to personal freedom. Stability and fixed identity are no

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

longer desirable; instead, they are seen as barriers for individuals who seek liberation and the ability to keep up with the changes of the era. Identity has become something we create and constantly recreate in a modern and ever-changing world.

The scholar Luciano Floridi rethinks concepts such as identity, privacy, and the reality we live in. The latter has become a hybrid between the real and the virtual, making it impossible to distinguish between the two, as there are no longer boundaries separating both worlds. In his work, he addressed the topic of identity as a continuous and ever-changing process, influenced by digital interactions as well as the data and algorithms presented by this technology. He suggests “Identity in the infosphere is not fixed, but an ongoing process shaped by one’s informational interactions” (Floridi 13)

Furthermore, the philosopher Floridi acclaims the term ‘Infosphere’ to describe the digital environment we live in, which includes the internet, digital data, and identity. Here, it does not refer to the name or data, but even to the way the individual is perceived digitally through their presence and interaction. In addition to this, Floridi discards the traditional notions that see identity as fixed and acquired at a certain stage of life. Rather, identity has become multiple and changing, built continuously through what we say, do, and share. Therefore, we constantly produce different and multiple identities through interaction with digital systems, as claimed “in a hyperconnected world, identity becomes a performance, continuously shaped and reshaped through digital interactions.” (Floridi 13)

Henceforth, Floridi sees that our selves have become part of this digital space; they are not fixed but flexible, updated and modified through continuous interaction ‘on life’ with technology. He also said that we no longer live online or offline, but in a mixture of both.

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

This makes the digital identity intertwined with personal reality. The individual no longer forms his identity alone; algorithms and digital data participate, control, and infiltrate to violate his privacy. In the past, the individual had a kind of control over his/her identity. However, a lot of identity-related factors are now dictated by external digital systems. Due to technology and media saturations, new contradictory personas are produced, and tactlessly people lost authentic selves. Therefore, people can show different sides of themselves on digital platforms. This helps them learn about new cultures and experiences, but it also makes them worry about how real, consistent, or true their identity really is.

In the article “Self in Crisis: Identity and the Postmodern Condition” by Dmitri Shalin, the author explores how postmodernism challenges the idea of a unified self. He supports the views of Jean Baudrillard and Jacques Lacan, who both reject the notion of a fixed inner essence or a stable, unified identity. Instead, it is seen as a series of representations and desires that are continuously reshaped by technology. He also describes identity as performance, seeing the individual as not possessing a single self but rather performing different roles depending on the context, making identity an unstable process.

## **5.2. The Fragmented Self**

Identity is fragmented due to the inflation of cultural and technological discourse, making it difficult to maintain a unified narrative of the self. In addition to this critique, the concept of original identity is criticized as a tool of social classification imposed by institutions such as the school and the family. In this regard, Mark Poster, in his work *The Second Media*, offers an in-depth analysis of how technology and digital media affect the formation of individual identity, as identity has become distributed across different digital

# Chapter One      Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age

platforms. This has led to the fragmentation of traditional identity, allowing individuals to adopt multiple and diverse identities depending on the digital platforms and context, enabling them to present themselves in different and varied ways.

## 5.3. Distributed Identity

This means that identity is no longer confined to a single biological entity but is distributed across digital profiles, data, and digital footprints, through which the individual constructs the self. In addition, one of the main concepts in the poster is that identity is no longer fixed in one entity but is changeable and renewable, distributed across digital platforms according to the individual's needs and desires. These digital media are considered a new tool of the modern age through which we construct and express our identities. In the past, identity was formed through tangible experiences and direct social relationships, but today it is shaped through continuous interaction with information technologies. Poster also tends to emphasize that contemporary digital media have brought new challenges regarding privacy. Although we believe we have the freedom to choose and express ourselves, our presence on the internet is monitored and known through our personal data. From this, we derive an important point, which is 'digital power'<sup>1</sup>. Poster points out that digital platforms are not just a means of communication but are data-driven systems that control how our identities are shaped and how we represent ourselves to the outside world through algorithms and data. This leads to a decline in the sense of an independent self, and identity becomes

---

<sup>1</sup>Digital Power is a concept introduced by Mark Poster in his work "*Information Please: Culture and Politics in the Age of Digital Machine*". He defines it the capacity of the digital technologies to transform and refigure human subjects, identities and social structure.

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

part of the image promoted by digital platforms (Poster 16). He suggests “Technological platforms do not merely reflect identity; they actively construct and reshape it, making self-presentation a continuous negotiation”. ( 6-10)

In this context, identity is exposed to unprecedented challenges between dissolving into the digital world and preserving privacy and cultural distinctiveness. This drives the individual to re-examine their perceptions and what they know about themselves. Therefore, understanding identity in the digital age requires not only philosophical reflection but also awareness of the contemporary changes that have occurred in individual life, in a time when the boundaries between reality and virtuality, between the real and the artificial, have become more blurred than ever before.

The individual no longer knows or defines himself through his nationality, religion, or language, but rather through digital platforms and personal profiles, which have become an inseparable part of the structure of contemporary identity. With the increasing complexity of the digital structure of the world, identity has become confined to algorithms and data that monitor and analyse individuals’ behaviours. While these technologies allow for freedom of self-expression, they also, in a subtle way, control and observe, turning identity into a product generated by these digital technologies in a way that serves their interests. This digital key is not without its own problems, as the separation between real and virtual identity has created existential and psychological tensions.

## **Conclusion**

It becomes evident through this chapter that the concept of identity is no longer fixed or based on an essential core as in traditional conceptions, but has become a flexible and

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

shifting notion, closely tied to contemporary technological transformations. With the widespread proliferation of modern technologies, it has become necessary to reconsider identity from a new perspective, one that moves beyond fixity to what is mutable and changing. This chapter shows that identity today is used as a way for people to escape or express themselves, but at the same time, it's also a tool of soft control that shapes who they are in hidden and indirect ways. As David Lyon explains, control doesn't happen in obvious or physical ways anymore, but through digital data and algorithms. Using ideas from Stuart Hall and Zygmunt Bauman, the chapter explains how people now have flexible identities that move between online spaces. Identity is no longer something continuous, but something changeable and shaped by temporary appearances, constantly shifting based on the digital environment.

On the other hand, the use of Giddens' work helped to understand how the self is reconstructed under modernity, as he describes identity as a project that is continuously rebuilt. As for Baudrillard, identity becomes a simulation, a representation of what is desirable or programmed. Floridi, Fontana, and Lupton, on the other hand, focus on how the self is reshaped through interfaces, algorithms, and data.

In the midst of rapid development, identity is no longer fixed or confined within traditional standards, but has become flexible, shaped and transformed under the influence of digital media. Technology has produced new forms of self-expression and created new spaces in which the self is reshaped, such that the individual is no longer bound by a specific geographical or cultural framework, but has become part of a global fabric where identities intersect and overlap.

# **Chapter One            Theoretical Views on Identity Moulding in the Digital Age**

After that, identity appears as a mirror reflecting the modern human's struggle between what was and what has become. Technology did not merely change the tools of expression, but reshaped the questions surrounding the self and belonging. It is true that it has given us the opportunity to form our identities freely, but on the other hand, it has swept us toward repetitive and pre-packaged models. We may find ourselves living identities that are not our own, but rather imposed upon us. Despite all these transformations, identity remains an open space for experimentation and creativity. As much as technology complicates our relationship with the self, it also provides renewed ways to reshape and rediscover it. The challenge today is not to resist technology, but to harness it in order to build flexible and renewed human identities.

## *Chapter Two*

*Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's The  
Every: The Impasse of the Real VS. the  
Fake*

## Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake

### Introduction

In the previous chapter of this study, where the theoretical framework with regard to identity construction in the digital context was examined, we decipher that identity has changed in the age of technology, becoming more connected to the digital world and less stable than it was in the past due to the excessive engagement with modern technological media. We also discussed the theories that address the relationship between the individual and technology, such as Stuart Hall's cultural, adding to the works of Paul Miller, David Lyon, and Zygmunt Bauman, among others. This was done to analyse the impact of digital globalization on managing the boundaries between reality and virtuality and dismantling traditional frameworks of identity-related belonging. This theoretical foundation has served as a base for a deeper understanding of what this study will address through an analysis to Dave Eggers's *The Every*, which is one of the contemporary literary texts that reflect the transformations that identity undergoes within the technological dominance, as it addresses the influence of algorithms and data on daily life. Identity thus becomes easily shaped, altered, and controlled, leading the individual to lose balance between digital and real self, as these modern technologies impose an ideal model of identity that may not correspond nor resemble the original one.

In addition to the tensions individuals face as they become increasingly embedded in these digital systems, such as exposure and loss of privacy, this chapter aims at examining these identity transformations in the novel, *The Every*. The novel stands as a prominent

## Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake

literary example that embodies contemporary anxieties about the dominance of algorithms and data in shaping a person's self-conception in an era where the self is produced according to standards that serve controlling digital systems and suppress personal autonomy. Therefore, the analysis of the novel tends to explore how identity is formed in a world transformed by modern technology within a narrative context.

### 1. On Dave Eggers's *The Every*

Dave Eggers, born in 1970, is an American writer, editor, and publisher who graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. Among his fictional creation is *The Every*, which serves as a sequel to the novel *The Circle*. *The Every* is a 2021 dystopian novel that tells the story of a woman named Delaney Wells, who joins The Every, a company formed by a merger between *The Circle* and an e-commerce giant known as 'the jungle' (a lightly disguised version of Amazon). Wells believes that the company is too powerful and authoritative, so she joins with the intention of ruining the corporation from the inside out.

The events of this novel revolve around Delaney, who is forced to work at The Every, the largest e-commerce platform. Delaney plans to bring down the company from within. This company controls and monitors people's lives under the guise of providing comfort and security, but in reality, it controls them involuntarily through their exposed data. Delaney tries to propose inhumane applications in the hope that people will reject them, but what she does not expect happens: people welcome the idea and even demand more intervention and surveillance, shedding light on the erosion and fragility of individual identity under digital

## **Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake**

hegemony. In the novel *The Every*, Delaney Wells embarks on a journey that begins with the intention of resisting a dominant technology company from within, but she gradually finds herself trapped in a system that reshapes individual identity through digital tools that do not allow a person to remain mysterious or free in his or her own essence. Delaney starts off as an independent person who rejects technological dominance, but she is forced to adapt to an environment that determines a person's value through algorithms and applications like the lie detector to assess an individual's self-worth, imposing a new form of self-surveillance.

It is interesting to note that Eggers's work represents and reveals how technology not only controls and monitors people's lives, but also changes how they see and perceive themselves, pushing them to either comply or dissolve into a system that defines the human being not by what and who they are, but by what can be measure. In this context, even her alleged allies, Wes and Gabriel, undergo a radical transformation and give up on their true selves and their original identities. As for Delaney, her fate becomes a tragic warning and a distressing reminder that in a technologically driven realm, it might be impossible to defy the system without risking one's identity and being eventually.

### **2. Technology and Identity (Re)shaping in Eggers's *The Every***

*The Every* shows how technology plays an important role in shaping individual identity, revealing the extent to which digital technologies penetrate people's lives, control their behaviour, and guide them through the surveillance of their personal data. This leads to the erosion of privacy and the transformation of identity into an external, measurable entity.

## **Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake**

### **2.1. Tracking Human Behaviours Through Technology in Eggers's *The Every***

One of the central themes in Dave Eggers's, *The Every*, is the use of technology as a tool for reshaping identity. The author criticizes the modern world, showing that technology is not only used for surveillance and control over individuals but also as a dominant force that redefines and reshapes human identity. This is done through systems, applications, metrics, and data that obscure the individual and take control over their life, choices, behaviour, taste, and culture. Identity, instead of being the result of unique and diverse experiences, appears as a unified digital model imposed on each person. Henceforth, identity turned into a set of data points that are reshaped and redefined. Accordingly, the individual becomes nothing more than data in a digital arena. Additionally, Eggers reveals how the boundaries between the real and the digital selves have progressively become hazy and blurred

In this setting and given that individuals are trapped between being a natural human in reality and technology systems, it is important to note that privacy is endangered and subsequently people are losing their sense of independence. This aligns with the idea of the former U.S National Security Contractor, Edward Snowden, in which he predicts "A child born today will grow up with no conception of privacy at all [...] They will never know what it means to have a private moment unrecorded, unanalysed thought" (*The Guardian*, 2013). This, however, leads to the creation of a new digital identity, controlled through tools of

## Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake

surveillance and measurement. Moreover, the narrative highlights that the loss of privacy leads to an existential crisis, reflected in questioning. In this claim it is envisioned:

What did it mean to be private anymore? What did it mean to be oneself? When privacy disappears, the possibility of building an independent identity is lost as well, and the character feels suffocated—how can one be independent in their identity while being constantly monitored? (*The Every* 203)

Technology here does not merely observe but actively shapes identity; it does not just record data but uses that recorded data to influence the individual and construct a digital image of their true self. In this claim, it is pointed out “Surveillance is not only about watching, but about shaping behaviour, structuring expectations, and constructing identities” (Lyon 8). It analyses the data, gradually reshapes the identity, and then guides the individual according to that data, leading them to behave as the technology expects, not as they truly wish. In the novel, technology does not reveal your identity; instead, it leads you to believe that you are the person that the data describes, depriving the individual of their autonomy to define who they are. Eggers’s description to Mae’s illustrates the point “She found, true to Mae’s insistence, the camera on her chest forced her to behave better [...] She was less interesting, surely, and less funny... but she was also kinder, more positive, more generous and civil” (p 51)

Taking the character of Delaney as an illustration, her initial role in the company is that of an impartial observer and system critic. But as time goes on, the technological environment surrounding her begins to erode her identity. The business keeps tabs on her

## Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake

every action and choice, including her voice and facial expressions, and then makes recommendations for how to enhance her friendships and her life style. The successive passage illustrates Delaney's critique to how the absence of valid reference, namely faith, and the dominance of technological platforms normalise human behaviour and relationships:

The collapse of so many faiths seems tied directly to the rise of surveillance, and the collective enforcement of social norms through instant global shaming [...] Prayers to God were rarely answered, while shouts into cyberspace always receive a response, even if misspelled and hateful. Everything God offered, answers, clarity, miracles baby names, internet does better. Do you know how many times what is the meaning of life? Was searched on your platforms last year? Twenty-billions times... The question that could not be answered until now, is Am I good? ( 226)

Gradually, Delaney starts adopting the company's values and begins to doubt her previous sense of freedom. At this point, she no longer makes decisions based on what she wants, but rather on what is expected according to the company's algorithms. Her identity shifts from being free to being subject to the system of surveillance. Here, surveillance presents itself as a smart assistant, a friend, and a tool for self-improvement. This idea makes people embrace change without resistance, and over time, a new identity is formed, not from within but designed from the outside. This idea is epitomized as "the unmeasured life is not worth living." (147). Besides, Eggers envisions this inactivity due to technology dominance in this way, "How do I live? The data will tell you. 'What should I do?' The numbers will know

## Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake

[...] We end uncertainty. We kill the subjective.” (268-269). This indicates that the human self is reprogrammed to defer to system's decisions, and accordingly, identity is no longer built on experience and choice but is instead replaced by an imposed digital identity.

It is necessary to remark that the digital age did not transform human identity solely; it imposed external standards that outline human behaviours. This dominance is alluded to in Delaney's words as such:

Above all things they want order. And now we have the means to provide it. With a number, you always know where you stand. If you take unnecessary trip to the Seychelles, you drop twenty points. Excessive meat-eating? Again, points are lost. Same with smoking, jaywalking, terseness of tone, looking somewhere you should not, it all figures in. (267)

What can be predicted is that individuals become more watchful of their behaviours to comply with the digital standards to fit into the digital environment. The above passage shows the number of points an employee amasses based on his/her behaviour. Most prominently, one of the agents named Wes forms counterfeit emotions to please the system as revealed “As we talk, our AI is analysing Wes' facial expression, eye contact, and vocal intonations ... Looks like Wes is being truthful, as you can see here. His facial sensor is red, indicating that he is tense” (32). Hence, the subject's conduct becomes unnatural and monitored to meet the system.

## **Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake**

### **2.2. Echoes on The True Self Vs. The Digitally Imposed Self**

In the novel, Eggers highlights the stark contrast between the true self that is shaped by experience, and the digital self that is constructed by data and algorithms. Without spontaneity, this digital self is designed to be trackable, quantifiable, and evaluable. The author forewarns of a day when our perception of who we are would only be a reflection. It is solely an algorithmic creation proposed and projected to mould us into what we should be. This leads to meaning implosion as suggested by Baudrillard, who anticipates, “we live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning” (79). So, living in a society that is governed by technology makes the search for identity a fundamental task, as suggested by Manuel Castells in his work, *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), who emphasizes “In a world of global flows of wealth, power, and images, the search for identity becomes the fundamental source of social meaning” (Castells 3). Based on Baudrillard and Castells’ view, the quest for identity today has become the primary source of social meaning.

Moreover, the novel poses serious questions about who we truly are when our behaviours, actions, emotions, and preferences are dictated by algorithms that claim to know us better than we know ourselves. In one passage, Eggers expresses the fading autonomy of the self, which increasingly depends on digital guidance rather than its own instincts. This idea is clearly elucidated as follows

Subject 277 was found today at the bottom of the stairwell, unable to discern how to get to the second floor. Her own self had not been updated. Subject was

## **Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake**

conscious of the humour in the situation, but was still unable to conjure a way to get to the second floor without QwnSelf guidance. She lighted about the failure, and was quite apologetic...She could not make that decision, either. (252)

Thus, the true self, in this context, becomes ineffective in the absence of its digital counterpart, and the notion of the self as an independent, living being loses its meaning. It gives way to a virtual identity that is externally created, continuously monitored, designed created, and altered. The author also forewarns of a future in which identity is diminished to a collection of quantifiable measures rather than sentient, independent persons, and hence the digital picture transcends reality.

### **3. Tracked Identities and Surveillance Platforms in Virtual Spaces**

As projected in Dave Eggers's novel, surveillance devices have become an essential part of individual life, leading to the erosion of privacy and highlighting concerns about the limits of privacy in the digital age. Thereby, the individual self has become data that is tracked and shaped to serve the digital system.

#### **3.1. Identity Crafting Under the Sovereignty of Algorithms and Data**

In the novel, the author shows us the extent of the dominance and control of surveillance systems through data and algorithms, which transform into an active force in shaping and directing individuals' selves. We see this in the example of Participant 277, who becomes lost without digital guidance. Here, we see the deep penetration of the digital system into individuals' lives, which eliminates the essence of the true self. These algorithms acquire

## **Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake**

the authority to define what is right and wrong, transforming human identity into a set of measurable standards. What is even more alarming is that this control is not enforced through coercion, but rather embraced willingly by the people, as exemplified by the following quote: “More than being shy about being on camera in their homes, the vast majority of people welcomed it [...] broadcast automatically, it was so convenient, without their knowledge or permission” (211). Thus, we observe how the self gradually loses its privacy and its ability to control its personal boundaries under digital surveillance. In the age of informational advancement, the self is not anymore an inner essence measured by experience but has become an external entity that is measured and classified.

The sense of independence and individuality dissolves under the illusion of digital perfection. “Never before has humankind evolved so quickly and so uniformly... We’ve never been a more pliable species. The ready adoption of virtually any new application has almost no historical precedent” (253). In this sense, Eggers is critiquing people’s eagerness and agency to digital apps and platforms, which is something unusual and unprecedented in human history. This aligns with Shoshana Zuboff’s claim that “We thought that we search Google, but Google searched us. We assumed that we use social media to connect, but social media uses us to produce behavioural data” (Zuboff 504-5). In *The Every*, the concept of identity is redefined from being an independent self to a digital self, represented as a bundle of data. People come to know themselves through algorithms and the data revealed by applications. In this context, surveillance does not merely observe the self, but actually produces it, convincing individuals that this digitally constructed identity is ideal and makes

## Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake

their lives easier. As a result, people become more immersed in and dependent on the virtual world.

### 4. Potential Countermeasures to Digital Hegemony

The author of the novel under discussion emphasizes how digital hegemony shapes people's identities and goes beyond simply regulating and monitoring conduct to influence people's identities on a deeper level. This contemporary novel thus becomes a critical space that exposes the forms of digital control over people's lives and reveals the strategies of resisting it. In this context, Delaney embodies the fragmentation and internal conflict between her conviction to dismantle 'The Every' and her assimilation into the very system she seeks to resist, as she enters its structure to destroy it from within, and her plan will indeed destroy the company if it crosses the bounds of reason.

Delaney practices a form of passive resistance through the magic of the tech zone, but as people increasingly embrace absurd ideas, she begins to realize the futility of her plan. Every attempt at sabotaging is repackaged and marketed as a new service. Throughout the narrative, we come to the realization that the individuals no longer know themselves freely; instead, apps and algorithms tell them who they are in the sense that everything is measured and monitored. In this context, Marshal McLuhan, in his work *Understanding Media* (1964), said, "We shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us" (McLuhan 7). Accordingly, one can say that resistance in Eggers's work is not seen as a rejection of technology but instead as a struggle to defend the self and identity.

## Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake

As the narrative progresses, readers may easily notice the characters' attempts to remain free and show that true identity cannot be defined through numbers or classifications, but through experience and free thought. In addition, Dave Eggers shows how digital technology threatens the essence of human identity, as individuals' lives become reduced to data, with algorithms determining their nature, turning the human being into nothing more than a number in a network of data. In sense, maintaining a human identity that is founded on mystery and experience requires resistance. Delaney, the main character, personifies this resistance to bring down the system from within, but she realizes the difficulty of this, as she reflects the internal skirmish between the true self and the digital identity imposed by the digital system.

Another explanatory passage that represents and highlights the essence of 'The Every's digital hegemony as an entity that retains and records information is mentioned beneath. The passage also demonstrates how the system simplifies reality into digital data that can be classified and controlled; hence, reducing or transforming the human being into something measurable, and therefore posing a serious threat to human subjectivity and essence afterwards. Eggers describes:

The Every continues to control the flow of information for most people. Most people live most of their online lives through the Every; the average user doesn't ever need to leave the platform [...] This aligns perfectly with what the Every is doing: feeding the urge to control, to reduce nuance, to categorize, and to assign

## **Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake**

numbers to anything inherently complex. To simplify. To tell us how it will be.

*(The Every 146)*

Based on what has been said so far, the individual becomes drawn to the fabricated comfort provided by these digital systems; they forget that their choices and behaviours are subject to control and surveillance, which means a violation of their privacy. Thus, the modern human becomes broken in the face of this digital transformation that offers convenience in exchange for sacrificing privacy. Nonetheless, Delaney tries to resist and oppose this digital hegemony, as shown in the following quote: “After three months, she retook her spot on the bridge over the river and reclaimed her mind.” (38). Accordingly, individuals, under this imposed digital environment projected in the novel, are deprived of the ability to think about the future due to constant surveillance. These modern technologies ultimately deny the presence of the true self, rendering it meaningless.

### **5. Voluntary Acceptance of Surveillance and the Normalization of Tracking**

Here we discover how submission to surveillance turns into a habitual or even a desirable behaviour, under the guise of comfort and choice. This quote illustrates this. “But for it to be most effective, we need to have access. [...] We need data, as much of it as we can get. [...] we absolutely must keep them on their phones as much as humanly possible” (85). The main analogy that the novel is founded on is summed up in this quotation. People now actively seek out monitoring, as a source of comfort and security rather than resisting it; it is

## **Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake**

no longer something that is imposed on them. As explained in "I am watched, therefore I am here," it emphasizes how pervasive digital surveillance has become in day-to-day life to the point where it is voluntarily accepted as evidence of one's existence.

The link between security and freedom is broken down by Eggers, who shows that freedom dwindles under the appearance of protection while security today entails being watched and exposed all the time. This form of conditioning, which the novel portrays, renders the individual incapable of imagining a life beyond surveillance. The voluntary nature of these modern technologies does not come from a conscious decision but from dependency and immersion until these technologies make individuals feel they exist and provide them with a sense of safety, even while, in essence, they are eroding their freedom.

Therefore, surveillance is framed in terms of progress and advancement. It is not imposed but rather marketed as a necessary condition for self-betterment. This aligns perfectly with Bauman's conception of soft control in contemporary society. In reality, however, it restricts freedom and exposes privacy. This reflects the deep infiltration of surveillance into individuals' daily lives without their recognition or awareness. This type of surveillance contributes to reinforcing our voluntary acceptance of it and diminishes our sense of privacy.

## **Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake**

### **6. The Conundrum of Identity in *The Every*: Collective Identities Vs. Personal Identities**

It is worth pointing out that individual identity is viewed as a way in which a person defines himself or herself as an independent being with his or her own thoughts, inclinations, choices, desires, and personal experience (Anthony Giddens 75). An example of this is the character Delaney, who tries to reclaim her mind. i.e., her intellectual independence in the face of an institution that seeks to erase her individual identity in favour of a programmed collective digital one. By contrast, collective identity is alleged to be the individual's perception of themselves as part of one group, based on religious, national, or class filiations (Emile Durkheim, Benedict Anderson, and Erik Erikson). Whereby these identities are formed through a shared collective discourse and imposed uniform behaviours, this type of discourse, however, reflects a tension between individuals' desire for independence and the social and systemic pressures to integrate them into a unified and programmed identity that is easy to control. In the context of *The Every*, the company works to eradicate an individual's identity in favour of a collective discourse in the sense that users are subjected to the same algorithms and surveillance, transforming them into identical copies that must adhere to the standards set by digital systems. As for the surveillance that Delaney portrays, it stands for the desire to reaffirm individual identity and reject submission to digital system.

The characters Wes and Francis are tangible examples of an individual's agency to an imposed collective identity, leading to loss of individuality. For instance, Wes Makanzian, Delaney's friend, becomes immersed in the company's digital discourse and identifies

## **Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake**

himself as a member of the company and never fails to admit his submissiveness and obedience to the system. Another example of collective identification is evident in the message Delany received from Francis. She read, “*Greetings,*” the message read. It was from Francis. “*In order to improve my interactions with Everyones, he wrote, I’m asking new acquaintances to answer a few questions to rate my interpersonal skills*” (93). The passages represent Francis’ and Wes’, if not to say Delany’s, complete integration into the system, as she is willing to subject herself to evaluation to align with the company’s standards, seeing it as a way to develop her personality. From this, we conclude the extent of the dominance and infiltration of the digital system, to the point that it imposes a collective identity unified by the same standards.

### **7. The Individual's Struggle with the Imposed Collective Identity**

Dave Eggers’ *The Every* presents a profound depiction of the conflict between the individual and digital systems that is projected through the character of Delaney, who is torn between outward conformity and a hidden resistance to reclaim her individual identity. However, this resistance abruptly turns into disappointment due to the collapse of the individual before the digital system. People had become accustomed to surveillance and more reserved and cautious; this, however, is reflected in the following quote: “She expected a hundred million people a day to do what she’d done... a mass tossing-out of the HereMes ... But this did not happen... People grew quieter at home... Sex became quieter, laughter more cautious.” (210). Hence, digital systems have reached their peak in monitoring and controlling individuals’ daily lives. This indicates the fading boundaries between the public

## **Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake**

and the private in the digital age, as surveillance is no longer limited to digital space but extends to the details of individuals' daily lives in the name of protection and security, as he says: "People assume they're being watched in public, so they behave better. Now we take it into the home... surveillance that saves lives is inevitable" (202)

Accordingly, Individuals begin to act unnaturally to comply with digital norms, losing their autonomy and their being is indirectly reshaped to serve these digital standards. This is also evident in Delaney's stance, "The camera on her chest forced her to behave better... she was also kinder, more positive, more generous and civil" (51). This idea is adequately consistent with Baudrillard's perspective, in which he claims "In the digital world, individuals often conform to socially acceptable behaviour not because of authenticity, but because they are performing within a simulated system of signs, always under the watchful eye of the networked gaze" (Baudrillard 6). Thus, people's adherence to digitally imposed standards not because of their genuineness or validity, but rather these norms are socially acceptable in the digital sphere.

### **8. Self's Dissection Between Resistance and Conformity in *The Every***

In Eggers' s novel, *The Every*, conformity refers to individuals' submission to the digital authority's implemented ideas, behaviours, and standards. This is evident in the novel when people accept surveillance technologies without objection. Astonishingly, whilst these technologies strip them of their freedom, they still embrace them. Resistance, on the other hand, is the refusal to submit to digital systems or the dominant collective discourse, and the attempt to assert individual identity, something embodied via the character Delaney.

## Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake

In the novel, compliance becomes a tool for erasing individual identity since many characters in the company comply and adjust to the communal discourse instead of asking questions. Compliance, however, has become a technique of eliminating the subjects' sense of individuality. One can assert with confidence that conformity is not just a behaviour but becomes a new identity imposed on individuals, as claimed “ We were moving from an idiosyncratic species that coveted our independence to one that wanted, more than anything, to shrink and to obey in exchange for free stuff” (*The Every*, 76-77). Thus, compliance becomes a voluntary choice, but in reality, it gradually decomposes the individual self of the characters.

Regarding the character Delaney, she endured a painful contrast between external compliance and internal rejection, but this resulted in the loss of identity due to an overabundance and accumulation of conformity pretence. The latter, explains Delaney's constant fear and terror of blurring the lines between what she represents and who she truly is.

Due to the powerful influence of digital systems, Delaney's character wavers her balance and becomes increasingly afraid of losing herself and her identity in the course of resistance, which splits her into two parts: one that accepts the system and one that rejects it. However, she gradually loses herself between what she represents and who she truly is. Even though her objective is noble, she fears losing her real self because she is always hiding

## Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake

behind a false mask. According to the novel, if the self is not stable, even resistance under this prevailing digital system can have negative consequences.

Although Delaney's character lived in a condition of duality, everything was initially under control since she was able to carry out the dual role with awareness and preparation. However, the terrifying thing is the merging of the two states in a way that made her lose equilibrium between her identity and her representation. This fusion does not happen by her willpower but as a reaction to the continuous performance, which gradually begins to reshape her consciousness and identity. The character becomes trapped in collective representations that do not express her personally. This meets the view of the American Sociologist, Sherry Turkle, who wonders, "Are people content to become machines?" (Turkle 2)

Being torn between a past that defies submission and a present that is enmeshed in the organization, Delaney's personality was impacted by the corporate collective conformity. This leads to the erosion of her individual identity, as illustrated by this quote, which was a message from her professor, as it represents her inner voice instantaneously: "You might have been the most techno-sceptical student I've ever taught... Now you work there—at the factory that manufactures conformity. My heart hurts to picture you there, to think they've swallowed another rebel soul." (*The Every* 77)

## Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake

### 9. Self-Estrangement in a Virtual Setting

In the novel's technological setting, people have lost their capacity for reasoning and decision-making as a result of ongoing behaviour monitoring and directives. This has caused them to become submissive to these technologies, marginalized subjects, and individuals with fragmented identities that set them apart from other people. The following description illustrates the aforesaid idea: "Subject 277 was found today at the bottom of the stairwell, unable to discern how to get to the second floor. Her own self had not been updated... When offered the chance to cease the own self experiment, she could not make that decision, either" (252). Here, we witness an entire detachment from the self on the basis that the letter has become incapable of thinking without the digital guidance. Furthermore, the monitored technological self substitutes the human being's feeling of freedom and privacy in life as a result of surveillance. This, however, is effortlessly describes as follows: "If you are being surveilled... Agarwal was roaring through her megaphone, "you are not free! A human being watched cannot be free" (77)

At one point, Delaney lost her balance between truth and deception, sinking into doubts about herself that is split into two parts. What is more, she progressively lost her ability for emotional stability, as shown "What was happening? She loathed herself... Just cry," Mae said, and Delaney found herself in a chair... Her breathing slowed... Mae was real" (245). Although Delaney enters the company with the intention of destroying it, her attempt ultimately ends in failure. All her ideas and plans are considered by the company's

## **Chapter Two Interwoven Identities in Dave Eggers's *The Every*: The Impasse of the Real Vs. the Fake**

technological system as a means of further developing herself. Here, it becomes clear that even resistance was of no use and actually produced the opposite results, ultimately reflecting the overwhelming dominance of digital technology over the individual's life and even identity. Eggers describes her as follows: "She did not want ten million dollars from the Every. She wanted them to cease to exist" (244).

### **Conclusion**

Eggers's *The Every* reveals the portrayal of individual identity under the influence of modern technology. It further reveals that humans are no longer free entities but subject to authorities that exercise control over them. It reduces humans to a simple entity that is continuously monitored and controlled by technology that, while appearing to offer protection, actually works to change a person's identity. In spite of what has been said so far, the novel unveils the issue of latent resistance through several characters, most notably Delaney and her quest to overcome technical limitations that makes the problem much more significant and connected to human life in general. In a realm wherein technology has become a threat to human existence, the novel counsels the need for individual consciousness to maintain the essence of personal identity by demonstrating how modern technologies penetrate the self, making it frail and susceptible to measurement and guidance.

## *General Conclusion*

## General Conclusion

Through this research, it has become evident that identity is not a fixed entity or an inherent essence, as claimed in the traditional perspectives. But rather it is a dynamic endeavor that is continuously reshaped and transformed. Accordingly, identity is no longer based on traditional foundations as it was in the past but has become a response to the developments and technologies of the modern era. This is what some contemporary thinkers, namely Stuart Hall, Zygmunt Bauman, and Jean Baudrillard, validated, as discussed in the theoretical chapter. By challenging the conventional views on identity, these theorists established the concept of 'liquid identity' or 'flexible identity'. According to this assertion, identity is seen as the product of constant interactions and ongoing encounters with digital platforms and algorithms, which lead to the fragmentation and alienation of the individual's self. What is more, such digital platforms contribute to the reproduction of similar versions of identity that are grounded in pre-programmed digital standards and norms that do not resemble the individual's original identity.

Hence, the self has become dislocated and alienated due to its entrapment in an unbalanced world. In modern contexts, identity is no longer a fixed entity that is grounded on foundations like religion, language, and culture but has become a changing project performed by individuals. It is notable that the era of modernity has failed to provide a genuine stability for the self, which has, normally, led to existential crises for humans about who they are and whether they are real or fake.

The literary work, *The Every*, embodies the tension between the individual's identity and the contemporary modern technology. It initially focuses and pays critical attention to

## General Conclusion

the protagonist, Delaney, who stands in for the struggle and defiance against digital dominance in contemplation of reclaiming herself and regaining her autonomy. The novel showcases that the digital systems have a strong impact on the characters' personalities in general and Delaney's personality in particular. The narrative further demonstrates that resisting the system is a battle to assert human existence and defend one's essence of self. The transformations that take place under the digital domination, where these systems exercise power either directly or through intellectual camouflage, are clearly illustrated by the central character of the story. The individuals find themselves involuntarily immersed in the system, to the extent of sacrificing privacy and fully submitting to it.

Hence, this research does not merely shed light on the problem of the flexible and changing identity in light of technological developments, but also urges and calls for a rethinking and reconsidering of how to resist and counteract the fragmentations brought up by technological sabotage. It is worth noting that such necessary reconsideration is detrimental to restoring the autonomy of the self to ensure that individual identity remains a profound issue that is open to inquiry, reconstruction, and reshaping. Differently put, identity is enmeshed in a never-ending conflict between what the self aspires to and what is imposed upon it.

## *Work Cited*

## Work Cited

### Primary Source

Eggers, Dave. *The Every*. McSweeney's, 2021.

### Secondary Sources

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983. Print.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulation and Simulacra*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994. Print.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000. Print.

Belalia, Zahra. "Digital Technology and Cultural Identity." *Revue Algérienne des Sciences Philosophiques*, no. 17, 2022.

Castells, Manuel. *The Power of Identify*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. (The information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Volume 2). Oxford: Backwell, 2010.

"Dave Eggers Biography." *Biography.com*, A&E Television Networks, [www.biography.com/writer/dave-eggers](http://www.biography.com/writer/dave-eggers)

Deh, Dragana and Danica Glodovic. "The Construction of Identity in Digital Space." *AM Journal of Art and Media Studies*, 2018.

Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press. 1965.

El Achour, Mustapha. "Identity in the Digital Age." *Mugtama Magazine*, Society of Kuwait.

Erikson, Erik. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1968. Print.

## Work Cited

- Fantana, Giorgio. "The Liquid Identity: Adoptability and Seld Transformation in the Digital Age" 2022.
- Floridi, Luciano. *The Onlife Manifesto: Being Human in a Hyperconnected Era*. Berlin: Springer, 2015. Print.
- Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-identity: Seld and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- Lupton, Deborah. "Self-tracking Cultures: Towards a Sociology of Personal Informatics". Proceedings of the 26<sup>th</sup> Australian Computer-Human Interaction Conference, edited by Toni Roberston et al., New York: Association for Computing Machinery, 2014.
- Lyon, David. *Surveillance Society: Monitoring Everyday Life*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001.
- MacMillan, Catherine.** "Everyone's Watching You: The Future of Society in Dave Eggers's *The Every*." *World Literature Studies*, vol. 16, no. 4, 16 Dec 2024.
- Malusko, Jana.** *The Elements of Contemporary Technological Dystopia in Dave Eggers' The Circle and TV Series Black Mirror*. Masaryk University, 2022. Master's thesis. Print.
- McLuhan, Marshal. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1994.
- Miller, Paul. *The Digital Self: How Technologies Are Changing Who We Are*. London: DLT Books, 2020.
- Poster, Mark. *The Second Media Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.
- Sennet, Richard. *The Corrosion of Character: The Persona Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998.

## Work Cited

Shalin, Dmitri. "Self in Crisis: Identity and the Postmodern Condition." *Symbolic Interaction*, vol.16, no.4, 1993.

Snowden, Edward. "Edward Snowden's Alternative Christmas Message." *The Guardian*. 25 Dec. 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2013/dec/25/edward-snowden-christmas-message-video>

Stuart, Hall. "Who Needs Identity?." *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay. SAGE Publications, 1996.

**"The Decline of Indigenous Cultural Identity in Favor of Digital Identity." *Algerian Scientific Journal Platform*, CERIST, n.d.**

**Turkle, Sherry.** *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997. Print.

**Wrobel, Claire.** "Brave New Humans and Incongruous Bodysuits: On Surveillance and Its Modes in Dave Eggers' *The Every*." *L'Atelier*, vol. 14, no. 2, 4 Oct. 2023, Université Paris Nanterre's *L'Atelier*.

**Zuboff, Shoshana.** *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: Public Affairs, 2019. Print.

# *Appendices*

## Appendix A

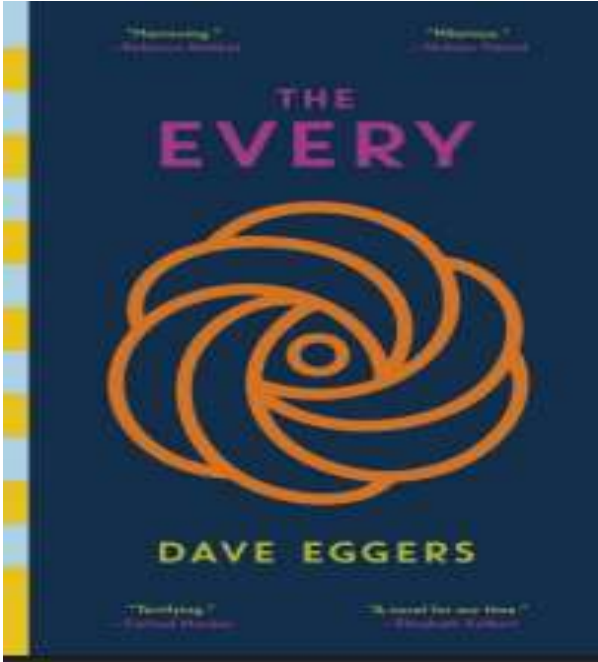
### Dave Eggers's Biography



Dave Eggers is an American writer, editor, publisher, and philanthropist. His accredited fame can be traced to his memoir entitled *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and is praised for its unique narrative style and wit. Eggers was born in 1970 in Boston, Massachusetts, and raised in Chicago. He attended Illinois University but was obliged to abandon it before graduating to take care of his younger brother after their parents' death. Egger started his literary career with his debut memoir that archives his experience of raising his brother after the death of his parents. This book, which was well-reviewed by critics, is thought to have been the catalyst for his career. After that, he wrote his first fictitious novel entitled *You Shall Know Our Velocity* (2002), a blend between humour and melancholy. *The Circle* (2013) marked his start with dystopian literature; the narrative is about a powerful technological company and was adapted into a film. *The Every* (2021), Eggers's follow-up to *The Circle*, explores the issue of surveillance and technology.

## Appendix B

### Synopsis of *The Every*



The novel, *The Every* (2021), tells the story of the protagonist, Delaney Wells, who joins a massive technology company formed by the merger of *The Circle*, a surveillance company, and *The Jungle*. Because she thinks it imposes digital instruments that interfere with human existence through surveillance algorithms, she joins with the purpose of destroying it from within. Unexpectedly, though, many embraced the concept in the name of security and comfort. After being convinced of its advantages, surveillance was no longer enforced but rather accepted. This leads to the erosion of human identity. The novel presents a picture of modern identity, which has been reduced to digital information that governs and guides personal conduct. In the end, the novel shows that resistance failed, which proves the dominance of digital power, as even attempts at resistance are absorbed within the system that strengthens its own mechanisms.

## Résumé

À l'ère de la transformation numérique, l'identité individuelle est devenue un sujet de débat, car elle semble soumise à une reformulation et une reproduction incessante, en particulier dans le contexte digital. Cette recherche examine l'impact des technologies numériques modernes sur les identités contemporaines, en se concentrant sur la manière dont les algorithmes de surveillance influencent la (re)construction du soi. Le roman 'The Every' (2021) de Dave Eggers illustre la lutte difficile des personnages pour affirmer leur identité dans un univers surveillé par des applications et des plateformes. À travers les personnages, et Delaney en particulier, le roman illustre la lutte pour préserver un soi authentique sans se soumettre totalement à la domination numérique. Ainsi, Eggers remet en question la possibilité d'une représentation authentique de soi sans immersion totale dans le monde virtuel. Pour atteindre les objectifs de cette étude, une approche interdisciplinaire, combinée à une analyse textuelle de l'œuvre d'Eggers, est adoptée afin d'examiner les différents contextes culturels, historiques et sociaux susceptibles de façonner les identités contemporaines. Eggers relève qu'on ne peut véritablement saisir la problématique de l'identité qu'en reconnaissant que les personnes actuelles sont le résultat de leur époque, et que leurs identités sont modelées par les plateformes auxquelles ils adhèrent. Cela explique l'anxiété et les préoccupations de Delaney chaque fois que ses identités réelle et fictive entrent en conflit. Par conséquent, sa résistance à la domination technologique découle de son souhait de recouvrer son indépendance et de ressentir son identité, prise dans une bataille incessante entre ses aspirations individuelles et les standards imposés.

**Mots-clés** : Formation de l'identité, ère numérique, algorithmes, résistance, surveillance.

في عصر التحول الرقمي، أصبحت الهوية موضع جدل، إذ أنها تخضع لإعادة تشكيل مستمرة وإعادة إنتاج متواصلة لا سيما في العصر الرقمي. يناقش هذا البحث تأثير التقنيات الرقمية الحديثة على الهويات المعاصرة، مع التركيز على كيفية تأثير خوارزميات المراقبة في (إعادة) تشكيل الذات. تعكس رواية (2021) *The Every* للكاتب ديف إيغرز رحلة الشخصيات وسعيها لإثبات هوياتها في عالم تُراقب فيه الحياة عبر التطبيقات والمنصات التكنولوجية. ومن خلال الشخصيات، وخاصة ديلاني، تُصور الرواية الصراع بين الحفاظ على الذات الأصلية دون الخضوع الكامل لهيمنة الرقمية. وبالتالي، يميل إيغرز إلى التساؤل حول إمكانية تقديم تمثيل أصيل للذات دون الانغماس الكامل في العالم الافتراضي. ومن أجل تحقيق أهداف الدراسة، يتم تبني نهج التعددي التخصصات، مقرونة بالتحليل النصي لعمل إيغرز، لاستكشاف السياقات الثقافية والتاريخية والاجتماعية المختلفة التي قد تشكل الهويات المعاصرة. يكشف إيغرز أن فهم مسألة الهوية يمكن أن يتحقق إذا أدرك الإنسان أن الأفراد اليوم هم نتاج هذا العصر، وأن هوياتهم تتشكل من خلال المنصات التي ينخرطون فيها. وهذا ما يفسر قلق ديلاني وتوترها كلما تصادمت هويتها الحقيقية والمزيفة. ومن هنا، فإن مقاومتها للهيمنة التكنولوجية انبثقت من رغبتها في استعادة استقلالها والشعور بهويتها، تلك الهوية التي تتشابك في صراع لا ينتهي بين ما تطمح إليه وما يُفرض عليها.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تشكيل الهوية، العصر الرقمي، الخوارزميات، المقاومة، المراقبة.