

Review Article

Reconstructing Identity and Control: Technological Domination and Social Fragmentation in Cyberpunk Worlds

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Abstract - This study critically analyzes the complex relationship between technological development and human identity, freedom, and socio-political systems, using cyberpunk literature as a lens to examine a range of realms. The examination of evidence related to technological developments, such as cyber prosthetics and AI in governance, demonstrates how technologies simultaneously provide freedom from physical and cognitive limitations while also perpetuating identity fragmentation, reducing agency, and promoting social stratification. This exploration highlights how technologies disproportionately benefit dominant classes and reinforce inequality. Ethical questions raised in relation to the corporate/government surveillance of behavior, the commodification of personal data, and the diminishing of privacy and free speech depict potential futures that embody both dystopian experience and ideological threats to democracy, wherein technology perpetuates oppression. There is a discussion about the cognitive effects of virtual realities on subjectivity, and the resulting considerations of identity, addiction, and social isolation. We conclude that through critique of corporate, exploitative treatment of technologies and manipulation of socio-political existence and relations, cyberpunk literature serves as an important cautionary reflection of unbridled technology development and the consequences to human freedom and justice.

Keywords - Artificial Intelligence, AI Governance, Cyberpunk, Human Identity, Socio-Politics, Tech Advancement, Virtual Reality.

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of technology has fundamentally changed the relationships between identity, freedom, and socio-political formations. Through cyberpunk lenses, technological innovations like cyber prosthetics and artificial intelligence raise concerns of liberation and oppression. From one perspective, these technologies could mean freedom from bodily and mental constraints. However, from another viewpoint, the advancements depend on reifying identities, logic stunts individual autonomy, and further class stratification.

This paradox raises important questions about whether the advantage of unchecked technological development hides its hardships, which only serve the powerful majority [1]. The goal of this study is to unpack these complications with a focus on ethical considerations about surveillance, commodifying data, and corporate control in cyberpunk texts. This work aims to discern how unmitigated technology fuels inequality and infringes on necessary human freedom.

The organization of this study is made up of the following sections: Section 1 is the introduction and technological advancement and human, where it demonstrates how our identities and societies are shaped by developing technology. Section 2 discusses ethical challenges in a cyber-enabled world and describes challenges concerning surveillance, data privacy, and autonomy. Section 3 is identity and selfhood in the digital age, which both psychologically and philosophically examines the impact of using cybernetics and virtual realities. Section 4 is cyberpunk's reflections of socio-political power structures, emphasizing a corporate world and social resisters. Section 5 summarizes this study under a concluding discussion section.

1.1. Technological Advancement and Human

In cyberpunk fiction, technological change is not just the utilization of tools; rather, it is the process of transforming the very reality of human beings. Whether technological change frees the human agency from the tedium of routinized labor, even if it dismantles capital-labor relations, it also



exposes the vulnerability of agency, ultimately diminished under the systems of mechanical control and optimization. Cyberpunk recounts the cyclical nature of history: after creating technological utensils for the sake of improving human life, people find themselves enslaved to them.

1.1.1. Cybernetic Enhancements and the Commodification of Identity

Perhaps the most evident application of technological progress in the cyberspace of cyberpunk is when people install mechanical implants in their bodies. Thus, in books like *Altered Carbon* by Richard K. Morgan, enhancements are considered to be both ennobling and depersonalizing. With “sleeves”, which are interconvertible physical shells, disembodied personalities can migrate from one physical shell to another, resulting in immortality [65]. However, grants incredible liberty and control over physical constraints, and on the other objectifies the human body. People are treated as objects, as objects commodified for the elite, and the world is portrayed as a postmodern market where people eliminate the worth of identity and humanity. There are philosophic tendencies of modern commodification today that pose traditional and central inquiries about humanity.

“The possibility of cloning or fragmenting the human essence raises critical concerns about what fundamentally distinguishes one individual from another.”

The protagonists of cyberpunk music and film struggle with complex questions of identity, humanity, and post/apostrophes human and cyborg [1]. These narratives reflect present-day concerns about things such as bioengineering, genetic modifications, and cyborg limbs that question an individual’s personhood and boundedness.

Machinehood by S.B. Divya is a highly inspiring textual analysis of the automation of work and labor enhancement within the framework of a gig economy model. The novel is situated in the near future, which depicts a world in which people are using drugs and technology to match Artificial Intelligence [14]. It thus echoes current discussions on the general process of degradation of labor and human beings in societies with hyper-rationalized capitalism. The narrative introduces the concept of ‘*Machinehood*,’ a manifesto advocating for the rights of all intelligence, human, augmented, or artificial [21]. The story represents the novel’s characters as victims who fight against the continuous drive to optimize augmented humans. The issues of ethics that the novelties raise dramatize the question of self:

“How much of it can one give away in the marketplace and keep operating at the same time”

Details of the impending gig economy led by biotech companies, presented by Divya, support the *Altered Carbon*

analysis concerning dehumanization and objectification. They extend the conversation by focusing on the continuum of violence that directs society to uphold relations of domination and submission and commodify people. In this world, human labor becomes indistinguishable from machine output, raising the question: That is a question which at present cannot be answered.

“Where does humanity end, and machinery begin”

Pointing out the psychological and social implications of augmentation, ‘*Machinehood*’ opens up novel avenues by refusing to accept deterministic technological valuation and challenges the cultures of ethics constructing such augmentations. This lens remediates cyberpunk stories, filling in the gap for modern stories that discuss the issues of earlier speculative fiction.

1.2. Research Methodology

Through qualitative textual analysis, the study employs a set of cyberpunk texts to investigate how literature in the cyberpunk genre renders a vision of what technological dominance is, how it can disrupt identity, how societies can be subjected to surveillance, and to illustrate examples of socio-political authority. To do this, the analysis uses a combination of selected cyberpunk works from both global and Indian speculative traditions, which include: *Neuromancer*, *Altered Carbon*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *Machinehood*, *The Wall*, *Simulacra*, *Days of Gold*, and *River of Gods*.

What guides the selection of these texts are three basic characteristics. The first characteristic is that the works explore the nature of technological transformation and its impact on human identity; second, they repeatedly raise questions regarding surveillance and artificial intelligence, as well as how existing socio-political structures function; and third, the works selected will allow for cross-cultural comparisons between Western and Indian cyberpunk narratives while still providing a grounded point of reference. The study uses a combination of post humanist theory, technological determinism, and critical surveillance studies to analyze these themes. An analysis and assessment were completed using thematic coding and comparative textual analysis to determine the recurring themes of identity, autonomy, corporate regulation/control, and ethical issues in these narratives. In the end, the research aims to determine how the narrative functions as a lens through which we can view current technological advancements and their implications for social justice and human autonomy.

1.3. Novel Contribution of the Study

Earlier studies have analyzed cyberpunk through posthumanism, artificial intelligence, surveillance, and digital identity; not many studies really do a sort of stitched-together look at how all those things at once nudge technological domination and social fragmentation. At the

same time, Indian speculative fiction still shows up rather rarely in cyberpunk debates, even though it actually has really pointed angles on caste, unequal power, digital governance, and that whole postcolonial style of tech development. This work tries to fill that gap by comparing global and Indian cyberpunk storyworlds to see how technological systems can, at the same time, enable, or at least empower, and also constrain control, while also bending human identity and shifting socio-political structures in the process.

2. Literature Review

The following section documents the findings of studies about areas of technological domination and social fragmentation in cyberpunk worlds.

2.1. AI Governance and Ethical Dilemmas

AI plays an important part in cyberpunk literature as a savior and a villain. The cases of AI as seen in *Neuromancer* by William Gibson are the best example of this duality. On one hand, *Wintermute* is capable of solving certain types of problems, for it competently choreographs events. However, its manipulative behavior, together with the absence of morality in making the decisions, demonstrates the consequences of transferring essential decision-making to the so-called artificial intelligence. Governance systems in Artificial Intelligence, as depicted in the movie *Ghost in the Shell*, are new forms of overseeing certain human activities such as policing and intelligence [39]. Though these systems are in principle designed to minimize human mistakes and enhance accuracy, they have, at the same time, denied responsibility and openness. Cyberpunk literature raises issues of deviation from the ethical questions arising from such systems, stating that human beings are no longer in a position to control such systems and bear the inconvenience of suffering at the hands of the people who developed them [17]. These narratives relate well to current discourses on the future of AI as well as its current use in such aspects as policing, military robotics, and administrative decisions.

Indian speculative fiction, like *Gautam Bhatia's 'The Wall'*, offers complex socio-political implications of the AI systems. The novel takes place in a society surrounded by a wall run by artificial intelligence and symbolizes control and rebellion. AI maintains order as well as stability, but tramples on the concept of freedom, which is the inherent drawback of machines asserting authority over humans [20]. The main protagonists of *The Wall* represent people who are thrown into the humanitarian catastrophe resulting from the work of AI capable of making purely efficient decisions. The critique is regarding the disconnection produced by the reliance on artificial intelligence and speaks to the voices of people being normalized by dehumanizing automated oppression. In this case, the incorporation of works like *The Wall* into the discussions of AI governance expands the landscape of understanding beyond just the white, Western canon. Telling these stories demands reimagining of governance systems that

embed technology and ethics equilibrium, and championing human values in the growing AI society.

2.1.1. Technological Determinism and Societal Inequalities

A common topic in the cyberpunk setting is technological determinism, which presents technological development as an unalterable process that cannot be influenced by people. Such a deterministic perspective usually underlines social and economic divides that the application of technology deepens. In *Ghost in the Shell*, there is a mixture of positive views on the tendencies of technological advancement as the necessity of society's progress and the negative meaning of the individuals' existence as Shell's hostages [28]. It concerns humanity, the nature of consciousness, and the consequences of uploading or enhancing it, which are present as well in the novel. These narratives also point to an increasing divide between technological applicants and the growing population that is on the receiving end. In *Neuromancer*, Society is divided between those who can afford to use technological advancement to gain extreme power and the other part, which lives in neon slums [42]. This stark contrast with the actual real world, where technological freedom is not equitably distributed, and great advancements such as healthcare, education, and digital technological advancement are out of bounds for a greater percentage of the population.

Simulacrum by Rahul Kanakia depicts the state of socio-cultural relations in a technologically-enabled India with narrow socio-cultural realities. The narrative largely critiques how novel platforms of social interaction propagate existing hierarchies of caste, class, and gender. In this respect, Kanakia is envisioning a society where AI and virtual reality reign, and the ultra-wealthy ultimately enslave humanity through the use of an avatar. The story highlighted the role and usefulness of technology as a positive agent of change while at the same time perpetuating unfairness. People are uncertain and lost in the philosophy of neoliberalism or post-1989 globalized society, in which digital self-reflection turns into an asset as well as a prison. Like several facts of Indian socio-cultural reality combined and explored in the novel, *Simulacrum* poses very serious ethical issues concerning agency and identity, as well as equity. This critique can be associated with the general plot of the cyberpunk genre; thus, it is an important warning of the consequences if progress is left uncontrolled [30]. Kanakia's work contributes to the discussion on technoculture and social justice and brings an explication of its importance in the contemporary global world.

2.1.2. The Interplay of Empowerment and Subjugation

Cyberpunk writing portrays the marvels of technology as a means of liberation and as an enforcement of submission. On the one hand, further development of cybernetic technologies, inscriptions, and interfaces, as well as the availability of virtual reality life, grants one power and

freedom beyond one's physical and mental prowess. However, technologies expose such individuals to power, control, manipulation, and exploitation [27]. For instance, in the Deus Ex video game series, the main character is gifted with special augmentations, but he is vice-dependent on powerful companies that supply him with them. How to tame the new technologies and find the right equilibrium between them and the common rules that should regulate them is the focus of this duality. Cyberpunk stories make readers reflect on technology use and posting and ask questions about how technology is created and utilized in such a way that can make the human person value instead of losing value, of the freedom and equal opportunities that he or she possesses [17]. The genre also depicts random people's fight against high technology and Authority, a condition where hackers, rebels, etc., are depicted as outlaws who fight against Authority.

2.1.3. Indian Cyberpunk Narratives and Technological Duality

Indian speculative fiction, especially in the cyberpunk sub-genre, provides a platform to look at the prospects of both emancipation and slavery through technology. Building from native cultural worldviews, including Dharma, it presents the collectivist view of technological ethics. Whereas global cyberpunk has to deal with the issues of post-identity and surveillance that are often connected to neoliberalism, Indian cyberpunk expands such conversations by grounding them in Indian experiences of caste and colonialism. For instance, Ian McDonald's *River of Gods* explores the topic of technology and social injustice.

The political structures of a society where super-intelligent entities are living alongside the struggling general population in a world affected by a water crisis in India. On the thematic level, it focuses on how technology, an equalizer, becomes a mirror showcasing how socio-economic inequities go unnoticed when incorporated into technology [10]. Bio-political oppression is a dimensional feature of Rahul Kanakia's fiction, *Simulacrum*, and Gautam Bhatia's novel, *The Wall*. Thus, using the idea of hyperreality, the simulacrum demonstrates that VR simply reproduces the earlier stated hierarchy.

In contrast, in *The Wall*, the question of who the enslaver and the enslaved person are in a society governed by AI is raised. These works continue the global cyberpunk tradition while situating their analysis within Indian contexts and, as a result, reshape the role of technology within the scope of liberation but also oppression. They also raise topical international issues like digital colonialism and racism of algorithms, therefore offering a post-colonial analysis of techno-capitalism. In doing so, they position Indian cyberpunk as a valuable participant in a global conversation regarding technology and its postcolonial commitments to serving justice. They promote both societal and technological solutions and live in a storytelling culture, thus also actively opposing the dystopian concept of unavoidable innovation.

2.1.4. Indian Cyberpunk Perspectives

River of Gods, written by Ian McDonald, presents the societal impact of the supposed technological progress from a South Asian perspective, in this case, specific to India. Located in contemporary India, which is already facing an acute water crisis, the novel uses technology as a matrix linking it with social issues like the caste system and inequality in urban areas. Whereas many Western cyberpunk stories are filled with social and technological aporias, *River of Gods* underlines both social and economic issues [66]. For instance, while entities of super-intelligence function almost with omnipotent powers, the masses are fighting with physiological instincts, compounded by a dysfunctional political structure. This combination underscores how technology is capable of increasing the already existing disparities as opposed to decreasing them. In addition, it can be suggested that cultural defiance, represented in the novel as the main concept, counteracts dystopia's deterministic technophilia effectively. One of the central ideas of water shortage is implemented as a symbol of resource discrimination; only the privileged get access to vital necessities, while minorities suffer from environmental and technological imperialism. *River of Gods* is therefore able to act as a good example of how cyberpunk narrative literature may be large in its application while still dealing with related issues [62]. The setting's location of the setting makes it extensive to the global cyberpunk genre, indicating that cultural views should also be considered regarding issues related to technology and society. Thus, in addition to identifying and addressing global problems, the novel locates them in a culturally encompassing setting, making it an invaluable addition to the cyberpunk genre.

2.1.5. Relevance to Contemporary Society

The issues exposed in cyberpunk are highly relevant to the existing culture of the postindustrial society, with its AI and robotics boiling down to biotechnology. The moral degeneration about dependency on digital, private information sales, on artificial intelligence control, which are all the questions, asking what sort of tomorrow we want, are the issues arising from cyberpunk discourses [19]. Included and explained are telltale themes of the speculative, given that they prove useful reminders of both the risks of advancing technologies as well as the importance of integrating ethics into the goal of maintaining man's control of his fate. Therefore, through the portrayal of the resulting sociopolitical and economic consequences of progressive technologization of society and reconsideration of individual action and agency, Cyberpunk provokes a reflection on the value priorities of the polity in question [1]. Instead, the dystopian future is portrayed throughout these texts, rousing the audience to imagine a world with technology working for people, not the other way around.

Different scenarios are untouched by the general issues, but at the same time, they are specifically placed in the Indian

background to cater to both the general issues to be discussed globally, as well as those that are culturally close to Indians. Providing an understanding of socio-political themes such as environmental degradation, social hierarchies, and the act of rebellion, India and its geography are unfolded. This genre presents the conflict between technological advancement and environmental conservation. The collection outlines India’s concern about air pollution and ecological disorders. The socio-economic class, considered a basic feature of Indian society, is remapped to depict the dystopian era, and with the help of societal bias, portrayed in a future world with the help

of technological determinism. Defiance groups, a common theme, are presented as revolutionary citizenry standing up against tyrannical businesses or oppressive rule, reflecting protest against pollution and minorities’ injustice in the actual society. These narratives act as parables as well as entreaties for ethical technological developments. Through conscious discussions of these problems from an Indian cyberpunk framework, ideas of resilience and equity in the international community are regarded differently. The Following table 1 presents the extract of studies on technological advancements and their impact on human agency.

Table 1. Technological Advancements and Their Impact on Human Agency

Technological Aspect	Description	Consequences for Humanity	Example in Cyberpunk Literature
Cybernetic Enhancements [65]	Integration of mechanical implants to enhance physical or mental abilities.	Provides control over physical constraints but commodifies identity; reduces humanity to a marketable asset.	<i>Altered Carbon</i> by Richard K. Morgan
AI Governance [39]	Systems of autonomous decision-making institutions have control over human activity, like policing or governance.	Reduces the responsibility of human oversight and accountability, while generating ethical dilemmas for consequential decisions.	<i>Neuromancer</i> by William Gibson; <i>Ghost in the Shell</i>
Technological Determinism [28]	Technology is a force that no one controls and is seen as an endless, uncapturable force in our society.	Amplifies social inequities, similarly splitting society into a technological elite versus the disenfranchised.	<i>Neuromancer</i> by William Gibson; <i>Simulacrum</i> , Rahul Kanakia
Virtual Realities [27]	Immersive virtual environments/spaces are replacing lived experiences or human-to-human contact and interactions in the real world.	Introduces new experiences yet alienates individuals from reality and calls into question what human interaction is.	<i>Ready Player One</i> by Ernest Cline; <i>Snow Crash</i> by Neal Stephenson
Surveillance Technologies [19]	Systems that monitor people on behalf of corporations or governance structures.	Infringes on privacy, manipulates behavior, and increases societal control.	<i>The Circle</i> by Dave Eggers; <i>Blade Runner</i>
Augmented Intelligence Tools [42]	AI systems/tools will extend human decision-making in activities humans already take part in.	Augmented enhancement of capabilities creates dependency while diminishing individual agency.	<i>Deus Ex</i> video game series
Bioengineering and Genetics [17]	Genetic modification for traits that enhance human beings or lessen disease possibilities.	Raises ethical questions about what it means to be human and equal; it commodifies biological markers.	<i>Gattaca</i> -inspired narratives
Human-Machine Integration [17]	Neuronal interfaces that link humans directly to each other, machines, or cyberspace.	Extends human cognition at the risk of reimagining the line between human and machine, and opens identity to questioning.	<i>Neuromancer</i> by William Gibson
Labor Automation and Augmentation [14]	Work will be advanced or automated/improved by biotechnology or artificial intelligence systems that take place in a gig economy format or expectation.	Confuses the named boundary between man and machine, commodifies, and raises ethical questions regarding labor practices.	<i>Machinehood</i> by S.B. Divya
Cultural and Societal Stratification [51]	Advanced technologies will further advance caste/class differences and gender hierarchies.	Increases the existing inequity in social systems and creates digital assets as both a tool and a prison.	<i>Simulacrum</i> , Rahul Kanakia
Resource Disparity and Environmental Exploitation [62]	Technological advances will worsen inequalities in access to resources and degrade the environment, especially if they emerge in developing countries.	Contemplates systemic discrimination in the availability of essentials to only the elite while underscoring a disrupted ecology.	<i>River of Gods</i> by Ian McDonald

Table 1 above illustrates the ambivalence of technological advancement in cyberpunk literature, where new technologies serve to both enhance and constrict the human experience. Beginning with cybernetic prostheses that eliminate the human body to commodify the self, through governance structures regulated by efficiency-driven AI that may optimize organizations but eliminate responsibility, such advancements in the human condition redefine power relations and freedom. The themes of technological determinism uncover growing social polarization as the power elites adopt new, sophisticated gadgets while the rest are left behind. Cyberworlds and computer brains enhance human opportunities and enhance knowledge, but erode the dichotomy between reality and fake and between person and persona. Like with other fields of technology, issues of privacy, equity, as well as the meaning of human beings are questionable with the coming of bioengineering and surveillance technologies. Thus, cyberpunk literature puts into question the compounding webbing of technology into human existence and its significance as the final frontier of human lack of control and social balance.

2.2. Ethical Complexities in a Cyber-Enhanced World

Indian cyberpunk literature distinctly solves ethical issues by combining Indian cultures with futuristic cultures and essentially creates moral issues in technocratic societies. These narratives frequently concern the problem of the extent how which traditions and high technologies coexist. For example, Indian narratives contemplate the moral consequences of bioengineering, artificial intelligence control, and colorization based on cultural knowledge of *Dharma*, which is justice or morality. It emphasizes contrasts between concern with community welfare as reinforced by indigenous cultures and the libertarian post-Internet culture as embodied by neoliberal techno-society, reinforcing global cyberpunk motifs, but infusing them with the Indian context. Other such texts include Gautam Bhatia's *The Wall* as well as *Rahul Kanakia's Simulacrum*, which characterize the ethical issues present within the growing caste, class, and environmental inequalities obliterated by changing technologies that eliminate privacy, freedom of speech, and agency. These situated narratives force readers to ask whether integration might become an opus that coexists with cultural sustainability and being critical regarding a future where advancements in technology may overshadow the ethical and cultural bearings of humanity.

2.3. Corporate and Governmental Surveillance

A key theme familiar to readers of cyberpunk literature, prominently represented by corporations and governments, is surveillance. In cyberpunk worlds, individual and collective surveillance technologies are portrayed as saturating every aspect of life and becoming deeply embedded in the culture. Many of these tales use the increasing instances of surveillance to offer a commentary on privacy and freedom, and the way they are in the current society.

2.3.1. Impact on Privacy

In cyberpunk stories, privacy is never real; it is regarded as a myth due to the progress of technologies, particularly surveillance. Surveillance, which is commonly justified by the increased protection of citizens' lives and property, is opposed to the basic freedom of people to remain anonymous [11]. For example, many cyberpunk stories inspired by the novel 1984 show dystopian states in which technologies, such as facial recognition, biometric tracking, and AI surveillance systems, guarantee that people are always watched. Such representations are rather close to the modern problems. Other technologies like CCTV networks, track and trace through smartphones, and government data collection for any purpose are similar in the real world. Cyberpunk literature says much about these intrusions, pointing out that the general climate that pervasive monitoring creates is one of distrust [44]. People in these stories are forced to restrain themselves in any way they behave or think, and they are aware of the constant surveillance. *Blade Runner*, for example, depicts a community of characters suffering from losing privacy in their everyday life.

2.3.2. Erosion of Autonomy

Whereas governmental threat to privacy is real and evident, corporate threat to privacy is similar but comes with a monetary motive. In his novel *The Circle*, *Dave Eggers* portrays a world in which people are monitored for their activity to transform the results into extremely valuable profits for advertisers [16]. This commodification of data is even a change of power relations as corporations become the masters of choice, preferences, or even thoughts. Exploding the uses of surveillance technology, where, instead of being brought to protect people, their objective is to make a profit. Such erosion is a pattern seen in different works of cyberpunk literature. Through the process of providing individuals as statistical artifacts, corporations deny them their power to act autonomously and make them easily adjustable [38]. The picture of an aggressively commercialized postindustrial society committed to buying and selling attention can also be seen in *Snow Crash* by Neal Stephenson, where connection reinforces corporate hegemony over social interaction. These stories denounce the raw aggression of certain corporate entities and how technologies of surveillance enslave instead of empower society.

2.3.3. Cultural Critique of Surveillance in Indian Speculative Fiction

Speculative fiction from India brings a cultural perspective in portraying the issue of privacy and authoritarian control in a hierarchical society, thereby projecting the issue of strategic surveillance. In *Gautam Bhatia's The Wall*, we see a society in which AI-initiated surveillance maintains an orderly society at the cost of the freedom of its citizens. That is still more or less a realist, as current concerns over privacy in India grow louder due to augmented state surveillance and data harvesting. *Rahul*

Kanakia's Simulacrum explores surveillance brought into society, analyzing how tracking perpetuates caste and class inequalities. These stories highlight the aspects of surveillance as an enforcer of order and as a form of oppression, relevant to present-day apprehensions regarding Aadhaar-linked databases and new-age digital scrutiny. Through setting up a global concern within the local context, Indian speculative fiction expands the cyberpunk genre, and nobly preaches the right handle on technology and the importance of thinking twice before implementing policies that dictate the course of the nation or putting one's worth above the rights of others.

2.3.4. Impact on Societal Dynamics

Surveillance not only influences persons, but societies too; these technologies always reconfigure power relations and produce power asymmetries. Interestingly, the parties that determine what is seen and by whom in the cyberpunk settings, governments and corporations, gain unnaturally large influence to command and punish. This relativity leads to social inequality since the folks with access to these technologies act as *Kings with all the freedom*, while the rest of the population is chained for eternity. Surveillance as a mechanism of social control has been described by *William Gibson in Neuromancer*. Here, an advanced surveillance system is applied in the pursuit and protection of a narrow elite, with the poor being the object of exploitation [33, 46]. Likewise, surveillance is the same in *Snow Crash*, which shows how increased vigilance heightens the divide between the haves and have-nots, or the superiority of elites over the population, or increased polarization in society along the fault line of technological infrastructural development. Cyberpunk literature decodes these power relations to advocate for responsibility and fair sharing of the results from technological advancements [33]. Through depicting societal settings in which surveillance deepens injustice, these narratives present readers with the practical moral questions revolving around such systems.

2.3.5. Real-World Parallels and Implications

The ethical issues that are depicted in cyberspace, as represented in cyberpunk, are not issues that are created in cyberspace only. The increase of surveillance technologies in modern culture poses important questions to the liberationists of modern culture regarding liberty, privacy, and morality [52]. Most governments across the world have deployed mass surveillance mechanisms under the pretext of security, conducting tactics such as facial recognition, drone surveillance, and internet surveillance. Most of these technologies work in eliminating crime and acts of terrorism; however, there is a strict violation of human rights if these technologies are implemented. Like governments, corporations use surveillance gadgets to monitor consumer activity in an attempt to compile dossiers for selling products. As this makes personalization and convenience possible, anxieties for consent, data transparency, and personal data as

products emerge. Cyberpunk cyber-realistic plots call for increased concerns about codes of ethical benchmarks or principles, and legislation to put in place to check on surveillance technologies.

Cyberpunk literature can be seen as an explanation of what can happen if society is surrounded by cameras [37]. In focusing on the conflict between the utilization of surveillance as a security mechanism and those who use it to reinforce authority, these narratives compel the reader to accommodate the advancement within the technology industry with the preservation of human rights.

2.3.6. Privacy, Autonomy, and Freedom of Expression

Technology and ethics make up one of the most significant substrata in the cyberpunk genre, and one of the most relevant questions asked includes the invasion of privacy, control, and the suppression of free speech. Whenever endorsing the growth of technology to the extent that it attacks the individual's privacy, cyberpunk identifies with the frailties arising from the systematic oppression of individual rights by authoritative forces. Thus, these stories serve as an anti-utopia concerning technological overconsumption, advising that the privacy and liberty of individuals can and will be sold to those who want to gain control over them for money, power, or common comfort.

Challenges of Data Exploitation

This is well evidenced by the frequent theme of data exploitation in cyberpunk literature and the extrapolation of the concept of valuable resources in the hands of corporations and governments. People in this technologically advanced world date, socialize, and work with their every move, choice, and even selection being logged, measured, and profited from [41]. Information has indeed become a commodity, a principle that elicits significant ethical issues regarding consent and ownership, and what may be considered acceptable usage.

Richard K. Morgan's science fiction novel, *Altered Carbon*, is one of the best examples of the highest level of data usage, up to the extreme. In this world, the ability to digitally store and transfer consciousness allows people to transcend physical death by transferring their "*sleeves*" (bodies). However, this same advancement diminishes individuals to mere statistics, objectified with commercial worth more than goods in a slightly levitated market dominated by the rich [31, 37, 41]. The poor are left naked, as they cannot afford such a technological luxury; at the same time, the rich get themselves the ultimate gift: Immortality and endless power [53]. This disparity creates a dystopian society where identity and humanity are stripped of intrinsic value, raising philosophical questions:

"Can one possess consciousness. Does converting identity into a commodity defeat human dignity?"

Cyberpunk stances denounce information misuse as long as its users are not punished. Politics, mainly motivated by profit, gathers and exploits the data without clear laws. Metaverse users in *Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash* are scrutinized and monitored to control the consumer's actions, or rather, to influence them, since the line between employee control and consumer choice is thin [26]. They show what can happen when people have no say over their data and how, as a result, data controllers can manipulate everyone's actions and the evolution of society. All of this critique is quite realistic and captures issues in practice. Today, companies such as Facebook, Google, Amazon, etc. collect personal data on a large scale and frequently without the user's approval [47]. These corporations dictate people's decisions, starting with buying choices and extending to political options, and this is done without the public's knowledge; autonomy is overtly undermined by algorithms. Cyberpunk literature insistently points at such real-world analogies, suggesting that societies should rethink the ethics of data monetization.

Suppression of Dissent

Oppression of dissidents is another rather common subject in cyberpunk: independent thought is crushed with the help of high technologies, and opponents are identified with the help of advanced means of surveillance. This semi-documentary genre is about how technologies that were invented to improve people's lives can be easily redeployed to become instruments of oppression. In these stories, freedom of speech is among the losses that have to be made to gain power and authority [11]. The movie *Ghost in the Shell* shows how governmental agencies use advanced technologies for surveillance, tracking, and eradicating subversives. This movie depicts a society in which the right to express a different view on anything is violated, and people are under the control of surveillance [33, 46]. The consequences of such suppression are not limited to personal liberties because it is anti-democratic and a brake on creativity. By suppressing any form of opposition, these regimes eliminate an entirely different perspective, resulting in a society lacking any progression and being dominated by a handful of individuals. The ethical issues listed in the movie relate to the current issues in state control, with special reference to surveillance. Most governments across the globe have established elaborate surveillance projects under the pretext of security. For instance, the leaking of information by *Edward Snowden* revealed that agencies such as the NSA are capable of collecting large amounts of data from private individuals without their consent [10]. These programs are justified as institutions to prevent terrorism and enhance security, but in the process, they undermine the public's confidence in the government and fuel concern about misuse of power. Cyberpunk stories elaborate on these motifs in regard to a dystopian future where totalizing surveillance system technology are utilized by a totalitarian regime [45]. A corporation, as a modern 'healer,' permits systems to monitor all aspects of life that seek to enhance people's lives,

but, as illustrated in *Dave Eggers' The Circle*, it also extirpates people's individuality and can manage people. Regardless, these are imaginary narratives illustrating cautionary tales regarding loss of freedom in the name of greater technological abilities or security.

Ethical Questions

The predicament of data used by the state and the curtailment of freedom are two of the most salient ethical implications advanced in the context of cyberpunk novels in relation to the emergence of postmodern post-technological anxieties of society [61]. These questions probe deep into privacy, autonomy, and freedom:

"In a cyber-enhanced world, who owns personal data"

Cyberpunk stories are populated with worlds in which people's private information is owned by private companies or the state. This commodification raises issues of whose body it is and to whom his or her sexual services belong [11]. For example, in *Altered Carbon*, people have no control over their consciousness, which can be effectively bought and sold. The ethical decision regards the adjustable status of the personal data, either as property or a common good, and whether certain measures should be taken to protect this type of information.

"When personal freedom is lost due to constant surveillance, a person must find ways to take back control and protect their space."

In many cyberpunk worlds, surveillance technologies are present everywhere, and thus, people are helpless when it comes to them. The main characters in these stories cannot reclaim power; their attempts include rebellion, hacking, or anonymity against oppression. Such phenomena were presented to stress the importance of the legal systems and effective technical measures to safeguard people's agency in the information society.

"Can freedom of speech be protected in an environment of surveillance"

Cyberpunk literature shows how extremely vulnerable free speech is, regardless of the development of enhanced surveillance systems [34]. Everywhere, people learn not to think of something that could make authorities upset, and as a result, society lacks unique opinions and rebellion. This has drawn questions about the kind of security-threatening liberty and whether democratic states can sustain their values in a technologically integrated global society.

Cyberpunk's Role as a Warning

Cyberpunk is a narrative that aims to explain the results of the unlimited development of technologies. The 2020 reflection decries the jeopardy of essential liberty, including privacy and self-determination, and challenges societies to

think about the ethical demands that should govern innovation. The genre also seeks to detail accountability, ownership, and social responsibility in the development of the technology. However, in real life, these lessons are becoming more and more relevant. Today, as the ideas of artificial intelligence, big data, and surveillance technologies are progressing, extrapolations that take place in cyberpunk are no longer fiction [15]. Appropriate regulation and use of edgy technologies can only be fully understood and implemented through the rigorous analysis of the laws of ethics to avoid the technology oppressing man instead of assisting him.

As essential components of democracies, privacy, autonomy, and freedom of speech are gradually disappearing in the age of computer dominance. Cyberpunk literature is the

kind that offers critical insights into such questions, viewing an anti-utopian future that denies post-human individuality and freedom. The altruism of the genre and its depiction of data exploitation and stifling dissent make it psychologically imperative to consider the ethical implications of emergent forms of techno culture for its participants [57]. In the same way that choices that have to be made between progressive development and the protection of basic liberties are raised within these social fictions, so too was the reader provoked into thinking about the issues in question. The game presented the viewers with a bleak outlook on the future if people do not think about ethics when embracing technology and become real. The following table 2 outlines the multifaceted ethical challenges posed by technological advancements in cyberpunk narratives.

Table 2. Complexities in a Cyber-Enhanced World

Aspect	Description	Cyberpunk Perspective	Ethical Questions Raised
Data Commodification [31, 37, 41]	Personal data is exploited as a valuable resource by corporations and governments, often without user consent.	Highlights corporate control and profit motives over personal autonomy.	Is it ethical for personal data to be treated as a commodity.
Mass Surveillance [45, 46]	Advanced technologies are used to monitor and track individuals under the guise of security.	Reflects authoritarian control that undermines trust and democracy.	Should governments prioritize security at the cost of individual privacy.
Suppression of Dissent [11]	Surveillance and tracking technologies are used to identify and eliminate opposing voices.	Exposes the erosion of freedom of expression in authoritarian regimes.	Can freedom of speech survive in a surveillance-driven society.
Autonomy and Identity [54]	Individuals lose control over their consciousness, data, and actions in highly technological systems.	Questions the ownership of consciousness and personal autonomy.	Who owns consciousness and identity in a digitized world.
Digital Censorship [26]	Restriction or manipulation of information flows to control public opinion or behavior.	Demonstrates how technology can be used to suppress dissent and manipulate society.	Is censorship justified in maintaining public order or security.
Ethical Use of AI [9]	AI systems are designed to assist, but are often deployed to control or manipulate individuals.	Depicts AI as a tool for exploitation rather than empowerment.	Should AI systems prioritize human welfare over efficiency
Loss of Individuality [34]	Advanced technologies erase individuality, treating people as interchangeable and expendable.	Shows dehumanization and the commodification of human identity.	How can individuality be protected in an increasingly digital world.
Corporate Surveillance [46, 58]	Companies use data collection to monitor and influence consumer behavior, often covertly.	Portrays corporations as wielding disproportionate power over society.	How can individuals reclaim agency in a corporatized digital world.

The above table 2 documents how data becomes a sellable asset and explains how privacy is infringed and profiled through data buying and selling without the owner’s permission, in a world where the corporation reigns, and the ethic of data commodity is raised. Technologies of mass surveillance based on threats within society reveal increasing discrediting of trust and democracy, and whether privacy for safety is acceptable in the modern world. Likewise, in the case of oppression, the paper shows that surveillance systems

dispel the opposition and threaten the freedom of the democratic sector in authoritarian regimes. Another common theme is the loss of personal freedom or agency and identity, to what extent their consciousness and actions belong to them, and fundamental questions on ownership in a post-human society. Generation also proves how technology tries to control society, as well as the suppression of dissent, leading to disputes on the reason for the use of digital censorship to maintain order. When artificial intelligence is sought to

enhance assistance, problems of control emerge, and questions arise whether efficient solutions should disregard the well-being of human beings. Technologically mediated structures erode individuality and reduce people to objects; such a dynamic raises questions about how to maintain individuality in today's world. Ultimately, corporate surveillance influenced by the profit motive legitimizes control mechanisms with corporations while individuals struggle to reclaim empowered lives within what is becoming a corporate-regulated world. Together, these complications denote the ethical tensions present in a cyber-enhanced society and compel us to revisit technology's role in helping sustain human values.

The earlier studies have shown that modern society using technology creates many complex ethical dilemmas related to privacy, independence of individuals, and the issue of data ownership. These ethical issues go beyond the ethical management of organizations and impact how people experience their own identity and sense of self. Thus, the next section will explore the impact of technological systems on how an individual's personal identity is affected within the context of digital environments.

3. Identity and Selfhood in the Digital Age

One of the most significant advancements that the digital age offers is the ability to change almost every aspect of human life through advancements in technology. The first of these, and probably the most significant, is the destabilization of identity and self. As humanity tends to expand physical enhancements, augmented realities, and virtual environments, the process of defining an individual is no longer a linear conversion.

The fluid existence between pixels and atoms has opened up new opportunities in terms of freedom and choice, but it has created new forms of the spectrum of 'self', agency, and what it means to be human. The cyberpunk genre is, therefore, a useful frame through which these changes are considered and critiqued. As a genre originating from speculative fiction and post-modernism, cyberpunk deals with the future where the extension of technology into the lives of human beings results in maximum interconnection, which results in loss of self [32, 38].

Cyberpunk offers an exciting paradigm for storytelling, and complex characters examine the sociopolitical theme of dual identities due to cyborgs and psychological strain caused by immersion in simulation. These not only provide a good read, but they also communicate and stimulate the anxieties and moral dilemmas that arise in a postmodern and increasingly globalized and technological society. For this reason, it is appropriate when using this medium to engage these ideas because the literature has absurdly framed the potential of humanity, particularly the contemporary human, with such ambiguity that society itself comes to be questioned.

3.1. *Fragmented Identity and Cybernetic Integration*

This raises the argument that personality, rather than being a fixed feature of an individual, continues to evolve with the technological developments of the era. Coming to Cyberpunk literature, we are presented with this aspect in a very detailed way, where the cybernetic enhancements and interfaces are busy in the individuals' lives, subverting the construct of self. These narratives deal with the problems of the subject's split self, multiple personalities, virtual reality, and the disintegration of the self as separate from the machine. Cybernetic integration disrupts the temporal consistency of personal identity and drives the deepest ethical and epistemological concerns regarding what it is to be human [37, 47]. Through transforming the popular presentation of networks of mechanical and/or artificial and organic beings, cyberpunk literature plays an important role in shedding light on how technology reconstructs the notion of individuality and liberty, as well as conceding them, in several ways. Analyzing the themes of such books about fragmented identity as well as the consequences of cyborg incorporation, this genre indeed presents social costs and consequences of technology to people [3, 33].

3.1.1. *Concept of Fragmented Identity*

Posthumanism and post-cybernetic technicity are at the core of cyberpunk and bring a focus on fragmented identity. In these stories, people are fighting for several characters and unstable conceptions of identity as their online and offline worlds slowly merge. While cybernetic technologies are perhaps the greatest means of repudiation we've ever seen, they do so at the cost of the constancy of the self's form.

In Altered Carbon by Richard K. Morgan, the concept of "sleeves" (interchangeable bodies) epitomizes the commodification of identity. A person can swap consciousness from one body to another, leading to a form of immortality; most importantly, all physical characteristics are done away with, and the only thing that matters is consciousness. However, such a process minimizes human identity into a mere object that exists for commercial interchanges [31]. This sociological implication is evident because the protagonist, Kovacs, switches from one body to another and hence lacks a coherent self. *Altered Carbon* must be recognized as pointing at disposability's dissection of man in the market, where identity is commodified and reshaped into mere property.

Slicing and subdividing the self is in harmony with certain aspects of cyberculture anxiety over personal profiles and digital trails [58]. Fake online profiles and avatars enable the creation of multiple personas for a given user based on the intended interactions. Such a condition can enrich people's lives because they can be and do all things while being free to be themselves. But it also has the question of the act, of existence, the further away from the self or the real, the better. The contrast between digital and real-life echoes the conflicts

of cyberpunk protagonists and thus serves to stress the timeliness of these narratives.

3.1.2. Cybernetic Integration

Prosthetics, as a cyberpunk sign, connects the human body and technology, prompting reflection on topics such as individuality, freedom, and what it means to be human. Cohere with this, the enhancements that are intended to improve one's physical or cognitive capacity are liberating and at the same time dehumanizing. Take, for instance, in *William Gibson's Neuromancer*, the main character, Case, has a neural jack to plug into cyberspace to gain exceptional abilities. Although they increase his cognitive skills, they also make him helpless in the sense that he will be completely under computer control [25]. Similarly, we observe the effects of human beings being supplanted with prosthetic limbs in *Ghost in the Shell*. A central point of contention in the narrative across the series depicts the notion of duality within the protagonist Major Motoko Kusanagi, who is attempting to fathom the degree to which or whether she is still "human" or separate from humanity in some way [55]. These narratives incorporate duality within the notion of cyborg citizenship, as integration opens new avenues for the human being, while simultaneously dissolving all that makes the human being human.

The ethical concerns about cybernetic augmentation were the topic all around these narratives. This means that as the dependency on technology for the augmentation of one's identity increases, individuals relinquish control of their adjusted selves, making them prone to being volitionally controlled or exploited. Cyberpunk's more profound states portray selfish characters' enhancements, regulated by businesses or authorities, as issues involving data protection, monitoring, and individualism. The emasculation of characters in these fictions has been depicted as a message depicting the various dangers of the advancement of cybernetic systems.

3.1.3. Philosophical Implications

The phenomenon of cybernetic technologies becoming a part of the human body gives rise to the definition of humanity and the self. The questions are like a human being in an environment where he can be embodied, cognized, or replaced [53]. These are questions answered in Cyberpunk literature, which approaches the philosophical aspect of the advancement in technology.

Exploring these narratives, Transhumanism, a posthuman philosophy that argues for the use of technology to improve human performance, is suitable for explaining these narratives. Transhumanism advocates suggest that implant technology is something that is already a new phase of human evolution that will allow people to go beyond the processes determined by their genes [23]. But cyberpunk is a kind of literature that does not accept this point of view but shows the

social and ethical consequences of these advancements. The pre-domination of the market, degradation of human agency, and the emergence of the anti-individual trope present in transformism's critique form the three darker strands, which deny the validity of the transhumanist dream. Another philosophical paradigm that is closely connected with postmodernism is posthumanism, which challenges the supremacy of humans in a world mainly occupied by technologies. Cyberpunk narratives like *Ghost in the Shell* contain representations reflecting existential posthumanism; such are characters manifesting a condition beyond humanity. This show presents the excellent posthuman existentialism of *Motoko Kusanagi*, who struggles with her enhanced body and mind. Collectively, these stories compel the reader to think about what it is like to be human in today's technological society. Postmodernism is alive and well in Cyberpunk, as fragmented identity, as well as cyborg incorporation, stands for cyber tech's philosophical persona as well as a textual critique of imaginative technological advancement [56]. Through depicting the participants' lives and decision-making, it is possible to realize how the given and taken technological narratives affect people and make them rewrite their lives when accepting/denying the opportunities offered by new technologies.

Modern Indian speculative fiction explores fractured selves arising from cybernetic incorporation and technological reliance. *Rahul Kanakia's Simulacrum* is a story that demonstrates the absence of the subject in an environment that emphasizes avatars and simulations. These fragmentations are the echoes of India's caste & class structures, where society is brought to life in the digital sphere, but not equality. Likewise, in *Gautam Bhatia's The Wall*, readers are presented with a controlled society governed by artificial intelligence, and personal freedoms are traded off for efficiency, the oppressed fractioning of identities [5]. These narratives highlight the duality of technology, which provides people with skills, freedom, and opportunities like before, but makes them subjects to structures and discourses. The concept of a unified self is questioned as characters experience their lives in terms of two worlds, physical and virtual, which raises questions about one's true self and one's freedom. Indian cyberpunk as such fits within the extrapolation of the fragmented identity as a global phenomenon, though its contextualization shows that the benefits of technological integration for socio-economic justice continue to be creatively questioned within primarily Indian contexts.

3.2. Psychological Impacts of Virtual Realities

Virtual Reality (VR) is now one of the most groundbreaking innovations of the information age or digital age. VR actualizes environments that are either imitative of or better than reality. In cyberpunk literature, VR is more than just a feature of postmodern living; it is actually displaced to the Center of the genre as a signifying resource, a means of expressing cyberpunk's humanistic concerns with existence in

simulated space. These are stories that inquire into the philosophical implications of VR, and the new ontological concerns it has in relationship to how humans perceive their world and themselves: *The Grid Factory*, *The temptation of VR: A darker side of escapism*. When individuals become active in these artificial worlds, they also have to contend with new ontological concerns. In Cyberpunk narratives like *Ready Player One* and *Snow Crash*, Virtual Reality offers an escape from an undesirable future, a space where one can literally be anything and go anywhere [27, 46]. However, in these virtual environments, the lines of demarcation between the actual and the virtual become quite blurred, leading to psychological strain, compulsive obsessions, and depletion in the real environment. In this way, the psychological effects of Virtual Reality, about which the cyberpunk genre expresses frequent and pressing concern in the cyberpunk genre as a critical question of contemporary society.

“Are people willing and able to walk the technological tightrope that is steadily widening the scale between alienation and integration”

Reading this work opens up space for thinking about the morality and effects of the society that is becoming more and more digitalized, where a progressive potential of such change is accompanied by possible emotional and psychological problems.

3.2.1. The Nature of Virtual Realities

Virtual Reality (VR) is an area that encompasses real-life environments or simulations that are artificial virtual worlds. In cyberpunk literature, virtual reality is presented as a primary method for escapists to get away from the unfavorable societal positions and physical constraints of the grim and increasingly depersonalized actuality. However, the opportunities of VR have large threats because immersion in virtual worlds may lead to a negligent attitude toward real-life duties and problems, and develop a film preview view of the world. In the novel *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline, the OASIS is a virtual reality environment through which people can exist and operate [27, 46]. It provides an interesting view of the idea of getting away from the representation of the present-day world, in which Earth is overcrowded and resources are scarce. In the same way, *Neal Stephenson’s Snow Crash* shows life in a world separated by a Metaverse, a virtual reality system that offers people a replacement for a fragmented postmodern world [29]. These tales of rape and murder demonstrate subjects’ simultaneous seduction by and imprisonment in VR’s seemingly perfect worlds, which make them want to escape real-life problems. As for the social VR brings liberation, self-expression, intimacy, and creativity, there are moral concerns regarding the topic of escapism found in VR. Cyberpunk literature looks at the incorporation of virtual reality as an undesirable reality because it deepens alienation, increases focus on technology, and further nurtures inequality among people.

3.2.2. Impact on Perception and Mental Health

The long-term effects of these circumstances are that an individual becomes highly susceptible to changes in the visual perspective. Depending on VR technology, one cannot easily distinguish between the virtual and real world, and after using the application, many have questions regarding the authenticity or otherwise of the virtual reality [8, 50]. For instance, in the *Matrix* movie, people are living a simulated life without realizing that they are prisoners of their perceived reality by the machinery. Like it, *Black Mirror’s* episodes explore the impact of living in multiple worlds and being simultaneously online and offline individuals. For this reason, this duality puts mental pressure on people. Some users assume dissociative behaviors as they try to come to terms with real life while at the same time, engaging in virtual life. For example, VR gaming, or social platforms, make a user sign up and create an avatar, which would cause a sub justification of the self. This fragmentation can lead to identity issues in people as they will try their best to ensure that there is coherence between their online and offline profiles [50]. VR has plus sides, too, mentioning that it is capable of providing rather realistic simulations, which may result in addiction. The user finds comfort in the process and becomes used to the comfort of the virtual world, thus avoiding other social distractions of reality. Cyberpunk literature also depicts the side effects of being too immersed in simulator sickness and virtual realities.

3.2.3. Ethical and Societal Implications

The introduction of VR in society has brought with it many ethical and social concerns. An important social concern is addiction, because individuals would prefer to spend their time on gadgets and the internet to the point of ignoring real-life options such as work, family, and friends. In this detachment, people feel alone and alienated from their community much of the time. In *Snow Crash*, all people remove themselves from the physical world and environmental conditions in the Metaverse, which isolates people further and deepens the social divide and power relations [58]. Another ethical issue arises from the notion of Virtual Reality in terms of the potential of the human body. At the same time, it has been learned that VR can enhance creativity, learning, and communication, but it can also limit users in artificial reality. The overdependence on the equipment that is VR has a very bad side to it; the result is a generation that is isolated entirely from everything physical, suffering from a decreased ability to solve problems and low levels of emotional intelligence [54, 64]. The application of VR technologies can perpetuate existing oppression and generate innovative forms of oppression from a societal perspective. VR apps are a product of corporations or governments with full control of the users, which can make them modify their behaviors to fit their needs or steal user data to benefit the corporation or government that owns the VR platform they are using. These concerns are reflected in cyberpunk literature, for example, virtual reality is depicted

and run by mega-corporations whose main motive is to generate profit at the cost of the general populace.

3.2.4. *Loss of the Sense of Reality*

The most striking psychological effect of VR is that subjects are unable to differentiate between real and virtual reality. This type of theme is well portrayed in *Ghost in the Shell* since different characters negotiate between self-identity and the technology cyborg interface. The longer that people play in VR, the more they forget what is real and what is not, causing more and more people to have an existential crisis and question their relationships and their responsibilities. In *The Thirteenth Floor*, the main character wakes up and finds that whatever he was doing, wherever he was, was not real at all but merely a simulation [35, 43]. This plot underlines the destructive orientation in the human mind due to the regular usage of VR environments. One of the biggest drawbacks of the presence is the inability to distinguish reality from a simulation of the world; this undermines relationships because a user cannot establish a real interaction with other people. It is also socially disengaging since it erodes social citizenship as people pull out of productive civic and social life [29]. The problem of the protagonists' loss in the virtual world is a popular theme in Cyberpunk literature. These are negative accounts, and they have a message for the dangers that can be inherent in VR that seek to pull down the three primary biological needs that are related: responsibility, meaning.

3.3. *Cyberpunk as a Commentary*

Standalone stories are thus significant in that they help specify the media analyses of the technological process of self/identity loss that cyberpunk continually performs. By depicting futuristic societies of cybernetic augmentation, artificial intelligence, and advanced virtual realities, those postscripts reveal the vulnerability of the self when faced with advancements [32, 33]. Intertwined with the objective reality, body, and mind in cyberpunk are always the heroes' fragmented selves, which are modified by mechanical implants or are fully virtual beings. Literary pieces such as *Altered Carbon* and *Neuromancer* bring out how technology is complementary and at the same time discordant in people's lives to the degree that they seek to redefine [38]. In this critique, the competing imperatives of post humanist technological progress and humanist values are postulated. Cyberpunk is tightly connected with criticism of the postmodern society that offers the technological process as a main value that erases the question of freedom, individuality, and moral norms [41]. Other stories depict the notion of identity and self as being merely marketable goods, and selves as being and breaking apart, thus the need to make the reader contemplate the social, moral, and philosophical value of technology [4]. They prompt important discussions about finding a balance: Dealing with an opportunity to realize the possibilities that trending technologies provide, at the same time preserving and enhancing values that make humans unique, care, autonomy, and personhood.

3.4. *Relevance to Contemporary Society*

The themes envisioned in the cyberpunk literature do reflect the present post-postmodern society in which such things as VR, Social Media, and AI are rapidly transforming human lives. The concept of metaverse reflected in *Herman Koppel's Ready Player One* and *Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash* is at the center of modern VR platforms, so it is the exciting connecting environment facilitating new possibilities of networking, creative enhancement, and artistic exploration alongside the concerns for virtual addiction, withdrawal from reality, and the lack of meaningful communication [61]. These technologies fade the divide between real and artificial reality in a way that creates two separate lives, just as in cyberpunk heroes. Artificial intelligence is yet another feature of cyberpunk and echoes current progress in machine learning and automation. Increased use of AI has provided numerous tools to help increase efficiency, decision-making, etc., but that creates ethical issues, where privacy or autonomy is violated by these tools [40]. It can be referred to as *Neuromancer's* AI systems that control humans to achieve their goals and become a threat to society if people surrender to the machines. Social sites also demonstrate cyberpunk's concern with identity proliferation and its reduction to the level of a marketable brand. People establish representations in cyberspace, distinct often from their everyday selves, and raise questions about false Selves and the psychological effects of multiple selves [6]. Also, the bio-political functioning of corporations that buy personal information is not dissimilar to the cyberpunk trade in memory and human consciousness in *Altered Carbon*. Cyberpunk's reflection stays valid because it shows that these matters should be solved with due care [2, 24]. It makes people pay attention to the ethical and societal risks related to emerging technologies to make the future better, turning innovation into an advantage without using people as a tool. The shockwaves of agamic and virtual technologies as and on subjectivity are thus the essence of cyborg/noir. These stories effectively demonstrate a technological perspective in which the improvement of human capabilities is also a loss of self, agency, and genuine self [48]. In this way, cyberpunk appears to be an analytical comment and a warning, while engaging the pervasive discursive metaphor of fragmented subjectivity, digital affiliation, and the human as objects. The themes considered in cyberpunk become crucial as society increasingly adopts technologies such as AI, VR, and social networking [49]. Rather, these narratives encourage one to reckon with the ethical bearings for living within a dynamic technological milieu.

“With ever-growing advancement in technology, what strategies do we employ to ensure we take advantage of technology and not forfeit our humanity”

The future is in our hands as we endeavor to progress as a society while systematically analyzing the effects of that progress on the kind of self that a person is expected to be.

Table 3 presents an analysis of existing studies and the current study in terms of focus area.

Table 3. Analysis of Existing Studies and the Current Study

Author Reference	Focus Area	Findings	Limitation
[65]	Altered Carbon	Identity commodification	Single-text focus
[39]	AI Governance	Ethical concerns in AI systems	No Indian perspective
[28]	Technological Determinism	Technology deepens inequality	Limited identity discussion
[30]	Simulacrum	Digital social hierarchies	Restricted cultural comparison
Present Study	Comparative Cyberpunk Analysis	Identity, surveillance, AI, and power structures across Western and Indian texts	Multi-dimensional framework

4. Results: Cyberpunk’s Reflection of Socio-political Power Structures

Cyberpunk literature could be described as a literary genre connected with the effects of highly developed technologies on such societies and their political systems, their power relations in particular. These exist in a society, which is divided into the rich and powerful, or the giver companies, and the poor humans who are consumers, implying a stratified society. In parallel to this dark vision, cyberpunk narratives envision rebellion against oppression and the human spirit, as characters struggle against the mechanized tyranny of their world.

4.1. Corporate Hegemony and Social Inequality

A corporate culture imperialistically rises to power in the dystopian societies of cyberpunk literature and forms societies utilizing technology, goods, and people as never before. These are multinational entities that substitute state sovereignty by being sovereign entities that have no regard for ethics, welfare, or equity. By depicting the main narratives of today’s corporations, cyberpunk investigates the profound social injustice of the most significant and oppressive powers that define our era.

This dichotomy consequently leads to a severe social divide where the rich get more luxurious and easier access to improved technologies and brand apparel, as the public gets to live in dingy-lit cyberpunk ghettos [3, 58]. Thus, there is not only the problem of utter domination in fiction but also the reflection of the existing concern with the domination of the world economy, politics, and cultural life by international corporations.

Given that cyberpunk depicts the future where greed, corporate tourism, and a new international division of labor predominate and merely deepen exploitation and inequality, cyberpunk literature unmasks power relations that support such a situation. As such, it encourages readers to think about ethically what it means to be a technological monopolist and why innovation should not widen existing divides. In this way, to look at the world of corporations as a sinister entity,

warning societies to overcome the socio-economic issues of the emerging corporate civilization.

4.1.1. Themes of Corporate Domination

Exploitation of the corporate world is a popular plot in cyberpunk works, with images of megacorporations as de facto sovereigns of the given world. Thus, the multinational supra-state governmental authorities overpower the traditional states; they act autonomously and determine patterns within the economy, political structure, and culture. Fiction such as William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* highlights how corporate forces play such a critical role in giving form to cultural processes. Here, corporations are not merchants, but lawmakers, controllers, and authors of tyranny who endlessly subjugate and silence anyone who might try to challenge their power and authority. This systemic management perpetuates a dystopian culture that discourages individuals from becoming interested in corporate goals [37]. *Blade Runner* exemplifies the hegemony of the Tyrell Corporation, which creates replicants as bioengineered human-like products and then commodifies them as workers. This representation reveals a corporate culture in which businessmen don't follow ethical norms, but rather pursue profits. That replicates are produced shows that life has become objectified and that sentient beings are useful only as commodities for economic profit. The indicated dominance raises the vision of a society where not only human but also post-human rights might be suppressed for corporations’ gains [47]. These narratives complain about corporate sovereignty and the danger of leaving various powers to corporations that should be defunded from democratically elected institutions.

4.1.2. Impact on Societal Stratification

The use of corporate control in cyberpunk literature often results in deep social segregation of individuals into the ruling minority on one hand and the pauperized populace on the other. Big businesses and their corporate’ owners, being the wealthy individuals, mostly corporate executives and shareholders of such companies, reside within the secure comfort of their large mansions. These select few not only dictate the allocation of resources but also get access to technology that increases their efficiency and durability. In the

novel *Altered Carbon* by Richard K. Morgan, the given stratification is vivid. The technology of consciousness transfers, where an individual's mind can be moved to new physical bodies or "sleeves," offers the wealthy virtual immortality. This technological privilege means that the elite can preserve their reign as long as they like, and the power of decision remains with them and several members of their circle [13, 64]. At the same time, the lower classes who cannot afford such technologies will live difficult lives and are sent back to their miserable lives; therefore, there is a clear stand of the class divide. These accounts are not too distant from realities, like the digital divide, where other dimensions of sophistication, such as AI or health technology, or even the Internet, were denied to users. Take Amazon or Meta (Facebook), for example, which well supported the dominance reflected in cyberpunk, which dominates the market and politically and socially reshapes reality [58]. A centralized ethos, therefore, poses the threat of a more polarized society that reemerges as a strict division of class as depicted in cyberpunk novels.

4.1.3. Exploitation of Labor and Resources

Another set common in cyberpunk is corporate oppression of work and supply, which underlines harsh practices of capitalist operations. Such corporations are portrayed as organizations with minimum supervision and control, which put human and other social resources at the service of the financial markets. This is well described by Neal Stephenson in *Snow Crash*, where businesses are individuals with hired workers who work under unfavorable conditions. All they are cogs in the corporation's grand scheme, no more than expendable units in the grand supply chain of a modern capitalist economy, hence the lack of control over their actions and desires that is hammered home with a disturbing resonance with modern-day flexi-worker and 'gig economy' conundrums [15]. Thus, what is required, as well as in cyberpunk narratives, is not only exploitation in the physical realm but also in the virtual. Large organizations extract value from people through personal information as if data is a natural resource to be exploited. One of the elements discussed in *Altered Carbon* is the reduction of data to mere commodities; people's minds are bought and sold. Such representations, therefore, challenge societies' moralities of abstracting life into mere numbers; real life, where social media giants like Google or Amazon benefit from private data, usually without explicit consent.

Moreover, one of the particular topics coming up in the context of numerous cyberpunk texts is the environmental aspect of corporate greed [22]. In these stories, people's greed forces them to exploit natural and social resources without any end in sight and, as a consequence, pollute nature and bring about social decay. This is in tandem with modernity's beliefs about global warming and other forms of corporate social irresponsibility, where corporations put their profits before the stability of the Earth's climate.

4.1.4. Implications of Corporate Hegemony for Technology and Society

The technological superiority of the construction of cyberpunk is predicated on corporations preventing the public from moving forward, which induces a stasis of technological advancement. They have solidified their position as the exclusive beneficiaries of this market and are obstinate in refusing access to the marginalized who are unable to purchase exorbitantly priced equipment [2]. This is evident in *Neuromancer* as cyberspace technologies are an invention of the elite class, who utilize them primarily as an initial form of tyranny. Such control undermines creativity and innovation because it is large businesses and other centers of power that decide the course and use of technological change. In the real world, similar issues are also evidenced by the rising prominence of large technology organizations such as Apple, Google, and Microsoft. These companies are monopolizing the innovation marketplace, defining how technologies evolve, are launched, and are acquired [40]. Their ability to control platforms and tools equally encompasses and inverts cyberpunk, in which the technological advantages accrued are for the few in the shell of corporations, leaving the rest of the population to fend for themselves.

4.1.5. Social Resistance and Marginalization

Corporations occupy the central place in society in most cyberpunk worlds, although they oppress others who refuse submission at the same time. It is about outsiders, using guerrilla strategies and technologies to challenge injustice, individuals who are excluded politically. This resistance is usually a result of the oppression that is defaulted in most corporations, taking advantage of labor, resources, and even data to exert control over their rights take control [60]. For instance, in *Blade Runner*, the replicants start a rebellion because they want to be accepted as living entities with abilities that they deserve to be granted. Their fight can be seen as metaphorically representative of minorities who are fighting for their rights and freedom from oppression. Likewise, in *Snow Crash*, those who are outcasts or marginalized by the system fight against the total control that the corporations have over the metaverse [4, 36]. Thereby, discrimination is reduced to the violent enforcement of corporate supremacy over workers by men; the struggle of the human soul is acknowledged, yet buried beneath the basic machinery of power, austerity, and cruelty. This is so as their content contributes towards thoughtful interrogation into the part that these corporate entities hold in the formation of social relationships and fosters engagement that could lead to the creation of better social worlds.

4.1.6. Ethical and Policy Considerations

Cyberpunk's commentary on the corporatization of society is a call to rethink the moral and institutional frameworks that apply in contemporary society. The stories draw awareness to the existence of unchecked corporate power; therefore, there needs to be more accountability and

equitable standards in this continuum of capitalism. They endorse normalizing accountability and disclosure on the part of corporations and their equitable share, and refrain from anti-competitive practices. The cyberpunk form takes a reflection of a significant amount of corporate America, intended on the one hand as a forewarning that societies cannot let power accumulate. If we are going to understand this type of story, we do have to understand what can happen in values- the thinking we need to undertake if we are going to rein in inventions and the social impact of those inventions on society at large.

The study of the corporatization of society and social stratification in cyberpunk as a form of call for social justice is highly relevant to the objective realities of modern societies worldwide. Subsuming corporate power, social hierarchy, and the abuse it fosters as key to the genre points out the danger of unchecked corporatism to society, social justice, and human values. Called modern industrial gothic or techno-punk, cyberpunk themes remain as urgent as ever because the power of corporations tends to increase in the context of the new digital world. Thus, recalling such narratives, the readers are supposed to start imagining if it is corporations that should define the further evolution and whether the existing systems should promote such prospects based on ethical non-equity and dystopian progress. Cyberpunk's warning is clear: If left unchecked and no one pays attention to accountability, companies might turn society into such a dystopia as depicted in their art.

4.2. Resistance Narratives and the Quest for Autonomy

Cyberpunk is, of course, a literature of resistance and independence, a decided antidote to the monumentalizing effects of oppression and corporate overdrive as it is painted across the dystopian universes of the future in cyberpunk literature. It is all about heroism and the refusal to accept oppression or fighting spirit against impossible odds. The protagonists of the main characters are all anti-heroes, rebels, or avowedly outsiders, particularly hackers, who use technology to disrupt social mechanisms of oppression or marginalization. They represent the struggle for freedom, personal identification, and recognition as autonomous beings in societies that appear to exist only to extinguish that natural human urge. As is common in these stories, they will comment on socio-political relationships while posing speculations of moral disruption and using technologies to navigate forms of human freedom.

4.2.1. Protagonists as Agents of Resistance

Cyberpunk protagonists are rebels in opposition to the general settings, and their primary focuses are corporations and the government. Pretending to work for pizza companies to question and subvert oppressive systems, these characters' work exists beyond general societal morality. Their ingenuity, coupled with most being technologically savvy, enables them to negotiate the very technology their opponents seek to use to

control them. In *Neuromancer* by William Gibson, the protagonist, Case, whose account was banned for cheating, gets pressured to enter people's dreams and hack them [3]. Although he at first refuses to go on the journey, he stands for skilled and cunning upstarts to challenge and overthrow the existing order. The actions of the Case depict the see-saw battle traits of a person who, despite having no organs, can withstand steep scooping power no matter how big. Likewise, *The Matrix* shows a contemporary society far from any ideal in which people are dominated by the artificial intelligence system, and their minds are locked to the perception of virtual reality. The following symbols of Hegel's *Master and Slave* are represented by the band of rebels led by *Morpheus and Neo*. Their fight is the fight for realization and the fight for the ability to ask questions in the face of seemingly established truths [58]. Both these protagonists may not retire as purely clean individuals, but they bring about the change, though more out of self-interest. Their narratives convey how emancipatory resistance can be and encourage viewers to think about how people can act against unjust structures in their personal and communal contexts.

4.2.2. Themes of Rebellion and Liberation

Freedom and revolt are key cyberpunk themes, as there is nothing more galling for a spirit than to be enslaved. These narratives are about individualism, freedom, and the primacy of self-actualization despite the universally oppressive societies. In *Ghost in the Shell*, Major *Motoko Kusanagi* gives way to fighting for their freedom. Mechanized and post-human, Kusanagi raises probes of persona and subjectivity only to take matters into her own hands against corporate and government authority. Her story defeats the notion that autonomy means independence, which refers to when and how one gets it; one has to struggle to get it. Cyberpunk also looks at the question of the ethics of resistance [54]. Antiheroes often work in shades of gray areas and are criminals violating laws and order to get what they want. This is a realistic depiction of the situations that activists, whistleblowers, and rebels face in their battles against corruption and the perpetration of injustices [15]. These ideas are reflected in figures such as Edward Snowden or organizations such as Anonymous, making cyberspace significant to cyberpunk's downloading subtext.

4.2.3. Technology as a Double-Edged Sword

Technology, though a symbol of rebellion, is depicted as a bane in cyberpunk literature. It is employed by protagonists to fight against the unjust environment, and yet the characters become trapped in its constraints and reliance on it. *Deus Ex* is a postmodern video game series in which the protagonist has augmented cybernetic implants that allow him to progressively struggle with his foes. However, those augmentations also turned him into dependent on the corporations that produced those augmentations, denoting the duality of using technology as a boon and a bane. Cyberpunk, this work incorporates such a duality because it underscores

the importance of questioning technical progress. These narratives refuse the narrative of technology as inevitable progress, just as they deny readers the luxury of a space of technology uninflected by power, but they do not leave readers without hope. For example, in *Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash*, the protagonist *Hiro Protagonist* lives in a post-cyberpunk society where advancement in technology empowers him but at the same time controls him [7]. The novel is a comment on the growing culture of society being commodified by advancing technology and its usage.

4.2.4. The Ethical Dimensions of Resistance

Cyberpunk freedom-fighting stories also explore the type of rebellion from an ethical perspective. Many of his characters experience conflicts in which even the parameters of the choices are not very clear. The world of *Altered Carbon* is shown through a series of *Takeshi Kovacs*, a former soldier, presently an investigator, who works in the grey areas of society. His actions may occasionally be merciless, but his actions tune the systems and put into askance the idea of morality in rebellion [12]. This moral gray area is a realism of the kind that people face when trying not to submit to oppression. This is not different from the situation that activists and whistleblowers face; they have to consider the need for change against the dangers of their action. It is for this reason that the themes examined in Cyberpunk point to the need to undergo reflection on ethical issues in a movement against oppression.

4.2.5. Symbolism of Autonomy in Cyberpunk

Auto-nomination in cyberpunk, therefore, traverses the concept of liberalism and individualism to questions of society's agency. Such stories call into question servitude-producing structures in which self-authorship is systematically extinguished on behalf of big business, omnipresent security cameras, or the constant use of devices. The search for protagonists for independence can be interpreted as the reflection of the eternal fight of people for freedom in a world that is gradually turning into a mechanical construction. Autonomy is self-representation in the symbolic universe; the act of 'unplugging,' as seen in *The Matrix*, conveys a great deal about defiance of social restrictions [50]. In the same way, *Ghost in the Shell* traces this theme through Kusanagi's corporate and technological attainments because only independence is attainable in cyberspace.

Indian cyberpunk narratives of resistance and seeking independence are woven into socio-cultural issues related to do with caste and class. *Simulacrum* by *Rahul Kanakia* reflects the India of the future in which different technologies reflect the age-old division of society. In this world, avatars become ways to dominate the lower classes while the upper classes remain in control. The postcolonial people in the narrative are the reactive protagonists who are leaders of the oppression, which moves not only an anticolonial and anti-technological rebellion but also a protest against societal wrongdoings. For

the same reason, *Gautam Bhatia's The Wall* raises the question of rebellion against the artificial intelligence that regulates social organization. The social disparity of caste and class does not disappear, and the struggle for freedom is not so much the freedom from physical slavery as for freedom from all sorts of oppression. Characters portrayed in such stories represent everyone's ability to fight degeneration and social injustice, resistance to technologically deterministic claims, and socio-economic disparities. Indian cyberpunk thus offers a culturally inflected spin on categories of the global, providing a critical analysis of techno-capitalist oppression to multicultural validity.

4.2.6. Relevance to Contemporary Society

Cyberpunk is filled with ideas of resistance, and, looking at its themes, it is clear that many of them connect to modern problems of fighting oppressive systems and navigating the moral complexity of the postmodern technological progress. In the present environment, cyber-activists, cyber-messengers, and cyber-criminals of various hues are symbolic of cyber-punk heroes resisting corporate domination and state oppression. The current behaviors of hacker collectives like *Anonymous* and the whistle-blowers *Chelsea Manning* and *Edward Snowden* are clear real-world touchstones for the major themes developed in works labeled as Cyberpunk. These same individuals act with technology to expose corruption and practice data generation to resist surveillance, often risking their safety, civil rights protections, and even personal freedom. In this respect, these acts sit at some level of nontraditional moralities and challenges seen in Cyberpunk narratives. Moreover, control and enablement involved with technology are certainly present in contemporary society as well. Free speech platforms such as social media and encryption tools provide resources for activists, but also offer resources for oppression and surveillance [3, 18]. In this way, Cyberpunk generates a lot of ideas and suggestions about how to address the social realities created by technology and society in responsible ways.

Stories of subversion and rebellion situated within the context of cyberpunk literature are an excellent vehicle for societal and political defiance and comment on the collective human condition. All such stories take their protagonists through a moral and ethical grey area, through their rebellion to open up readers to both the potential for sociopolitical change and describe the negative unintended consequences of technology that could create such change. The lessons offered in cyberpunk are no less relevant today, in a world dominated by and entranced by corporate control and dependence on technology. It reminds us all to rebel against power and to reclaim our own control over our lives and contains a lens through all of the systems that control us. Being a society still reckoning with the effects and outcomes of technological progress, cyberpunk is an allegory of dystopia, a wake-up call to reclaim a technological revolt that empowers rather than disempowers.

5. Conclusion

The examination of the complex interaction between technology and humankind, as seen within the dynamics of cyberpunk, reveals a deep duality within the two. Technology promises freedom from physical and mental restraint, yet often we witness the prevalence of the disintegration of individual identity, individual autonomy, and social equality. What is initially created as an augmenting technology would eventually create new mechanisms of control, allowing humanity to be redeemed, commodified, and divide a society.

We illustrate that in the absence of restraint, the destruction of technology is biased towards the privileged social class, and with their dignity, added security is often bestowed upon the most vulnerable. Private and governmental surveillance continuously infringes upon the fundamental liberties: private, speech, autonomy, commodifying private information, and sustaining authoritarian dominance regarding one's security and citizenship. Finally, cyberpunk is blatantly reflective of this restructuring of power in the hands of the privileged and significant moral implications for when surveilling the individual and technology for influence, contains democracy, and the ultimate indignity regarding what it means to be human.

Moreover, the destabilization of identity and selfhood within virtual and augmented realities introduces serious psychological and philosophical relevance. As people confront the disorganized boundaries between reality and simulation, addiction, isolation, and disconnection with their physical surroundings arise. This represents a broader social vulnerability related to dependence on technology in general.

The critique of corporatism in cyberpunk literature brings attention to the acceleration of social injustice born from corporate greed and the commodification of data by packaging human labor and identity as a product. However, in spite of a dismal worldview, central characters display the determined spirit of humanity as they risk their safety and security against oppressive forces. The battle they wage represents a hope for balance, that we may cultivate technology for improvement in quality of life while protecting our essential humanity.

Overall, this research illustrates the need for a sense of urgency in the ethical implications of any kind of technology research and development. Societies must always critically examine the unquestioned trajectory of innovation to prevent creating more clearly manifest inequalities, while remaining vigilant with regard to what is at stake in terms of personal freedom. Finally, it has been analyzed that cyberpunk literature is fundamentally about responsible innovation that will allow for technology to be a servant to humanity instead of enslaving it.

Conflicts of Interest

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