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Surveillance, Simulation, and the Fragmented Self: A Postmodern Critique of Digital Identity in Dave Eggers' *The Every*

Assistant Professor Dr Raed Nafea Farhan

General Directorate of Education in Al-Anbar, Ministry of Education, Iraq

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Abstract: This paper explores the ways in which the surveillance, simulation, and fragmentation of identity mechanisms in the modern world through digital media are criticized by Dave Eggers in his novel *The Every*. The current paper discusses the increasing necessity to explore psychological and sociopolitical issues related to the existence in an algorithmic governance context. Incorporating both literature and surveillance capitalism, this study aims to explore how fiction can serve as a diagnostic medium for examining the human condition in data-driven environments. The study employs a qualitative analysis of the literature. It applies an integrated theoretical approach, comprising concepts such as panopticism simulation, as explored by Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard, respectively, and the theory of postmodern identity. The analysis exposes three key findings: (1) the normalisation and internalisation of digital surveillance via participatory platforms, (2) the dominance of algorithmic simulation over authentic experience, and (3) the formation of fragmented, performing digital identities. These findings underscore the novel's critical exploration of power, subjectivity, and reality in the post-digital era. The paper comes to the conclusion that *The Every* is a literary review and a hypothetical presentation of surveillance capitalism. It contributes a unique interdisciplinary model for analyzing digital fiction, highlighting the value of literary texts in examining the psychological and political implications of platform life.

Keywords: Digital Surveillance; Simulation Theory; Postmodern Identity; Dave Eggers; Surveillance Capitalism

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INTRODUCTION

The digital age has not established a stable and definite self but rather a changeable one, the one formed by streams of data, algorithmic interfaces, and simulation of hyperreality. Modern theorists still claim that digital space generates performative and disaggregated objects that are constantly watched (Marks, 2024; Rosana and Fauzi, 2024). Literature has not merely been reflexive of digital culture in this topography but also a space to challenge that culture. Dave Eggers, a contemporary American novelist known for his critiques of corporate control and digital absolutism, offers in *The Every* a dystopian extrapolation of the modern surveillance society. The novel is placed in a world where the measurement of morality, digital legitimization, and performance of improving conduct are the elements of life, as the novel unveils the disappearance of interiority and the advent of the algorithmic identity. This narrative is representative of a broader cultural landscape in which technology not only mediates the self but also shapes the self (Rocke, 2024; Nehring & Rocke, 2024).

Though the idea of the digital identity is now researched extensively, there is not much literary criticism on how the disintegration of the selfhood by the logics of simulation and Surveillance is played with in *The Every* by Eggers. Whereas the literature has talked about the social implications of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2020; Landwehr and Wulf, 2023), the

psychological effects of the mediated identity (Tripathi, 2024; Veliev, 2024), few have talked about how these phenomena are fictionalized in literary texts, specifically *The Every*. This disjunction also remains even as the simulation theory gains more interest in exploring the failure between the real world and the digital one (Gunkel, 2021; Gunderson, 2023).

Moreover, the manner the novel integrates Foucault ideas of panoptic self-regulation and Baudrillard ideas of simulation endows this novel with the special privilege to explore the postmodern identity crises. The protagonist, Delaney, tries to rebel against the digital order system, but her rebellion is also filmed and commercialized by the system, which becomes a deviant confirmation of the algorithmic totality. It is so paradoxical that it requires further research in academia.

The gap that can be filled enables one to draw a nearer insight into how contemporary fiction criticizes and recreates the topic of the age of algorithmic governance. Researchers have also pointed out that the development of digital identity is inclined towards the use of classifications, behaviour prediction, and economic use (Rowland and Estevens, 2025; Landwehr and Wulf, 2023). Along with that, data doubling and virtual profiles unattached to reality also increase, which further exacerbates the meaning of selfhood (Gabamet & Montesano, 2023; Tripathi, 2024). In this respect, the literature is both the witness and the critic, which maps

the struggles between autonomy and control in the postmodern digital culture. By engaging with *The Every*, this study contributes to a growing interdisciplinary discourse on algorithmic identity, offering a literary lens through which to explore the deconstruction of the self.

This paper also analyzes the way in which *The Every* can be interpreted as a form of identity fragmentation by monitoring and simulation, and therefore turns the novel into a postmodern commentary on the perception of the algorithmically generated self. The essay is devoted to how Eggers constructs those digital spaces that recreate agency and reduce individuality, authenticity and privacy. A central research question guides this study: *How does The Every represent the dissolution of identity through systemic Surveillance and simulation in digital society?*

Theoretical Framework.

A practical theoretical framework is essential in directing any academic research since it is the conceptual prism through which the research problem is examined and explored. The theories picked in the present research helped to highlight the aspects of power, identity, and digital control that are introduced through the novel *The Every*. This study incorporates a mixed methodology, utilizing the theory of panopticism as developed by Michel Foucault, the theory of simulacra and simulation as developed by Jean Baudrillard, and the theory of postmodern identity to analyze the phenomenon of self-breakdown and redefinition in *The Every* by Dave Eggers. Theories are selectively employed as they are critical in revealing the epistemological changes that digital Surveillance, algorithmic rule, and the commodification of identity have brought about in the 21st century. Panopticism, the concept initially developed by Foucault to describe the control of disciplinary power within institutional contexts, has since been largely reinterpreted to describe the decentralized yet omnipresent processes of digital Surveillance (Weserlund & Leminen, 2021; Greco, 2025). This theory can be applied in *The Every* to achieve a subtle interpretation of the ways through which people are privatizing the visibility and altering their behavior according to what they believe will be the judgment of algorithms- identifying a parallel in the novel of how rating moral systems, feedback ranking of users, and psychometric scoring are tools of socialization and a means of enforcement.

The theory of simulation, as proposed by Baudrillard, complements this analysis by placing greater emphasis on the substitution of real life with digital facsimiles and symbolic representations. The world in the novel is infiltrated with measured experiences, gamified ethics, and designed cyber-reality that blurs the distinction between the Sainly and synthetic (Gunkel, 2021; Gunderson, 2023). The concept of hyperreality, as employed by Baudrillard, can be instrumental in understanding how truth, as presented in

the novel, is defined by what can be measured and verified by a machine, often at the expense of embodied subjectivity in the form of data-based proxies. The reading enables the researcher to question the presentation of simulation as a cultural logic that transforms human lives, priorities, and the understanding of agency.

Additionally, the postmodern theory of identity provides a philosophical articulation of the episodic, precarious, and performative character of identity in the era of late capitalism and technological mediation. City as reconstructed subjectivity. In this context, it is possible to subscribe to the concept of such theorists as Veliev, Mansfield, and Tripathi, according to which our subjectivity is a persistent patching up conditioned by our consumption patterns, the branding that is provided by the digital rooms and relationships (Veliev, 2024; Tripathi, 2024; Mansfield, 2020). The *Every* refigures individuals no longer possessing a viable interiority, instead crafting individuals sensitive to social infrastructure and surveillance scales. This was important to emphasize the postmodern loss of authenticity and the commodification of subjectivity (Uyurkwak, 2023; Plesa, 2023).

The justification for uniting these models lies in the fact that they can be seen as complementary to one another. Whereas Foucault discusses the disciplinary means of visibility and control, Baudrillard writes about the ontological effects of simulation, and postmodern identity theory questions the subjective disintegration of both.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the ways in which modern fiction and dystopian digital novels in particular such as *The Circle* by Dave Eggers, explore the social, psychological, and philosophical consequences of the digital culture. It is based on three themes, which include digital Surveillance and identity, simulation and hyperreality, and postmodern fragmentation of the self. The review utilizes sources, literary criticism, cultural theory and digital humanities to discuss the narratives of fiction which redefine selfhood in technologically ubiquitous societies by comparing the *Every* to other works, including *The Circle*, *Super Sad True Love Story*, and *Black Mirror*. The review ends with an explanation of the gaps within theoretical and empirical studies that are common in the current studies, and this is what the study will attempt to overcome.

Digital Surveillance and Identity

The digital age has essentially changed the ways of control, bringing forth new forms of Surveillance that are reconfiguring personal identity. Researchers have also addressed the role of platforms in Surveillance when tracing, predicting, and even controlling user behaviors, relying on the theory of panopticism that Foucault (1977) developed (Rana, 2021; Greco, 2025; Farhan, 2025).

This Surveillance has ceased to be extrinsic but introspective, shaping things through a subtle prodding of the self and an algorithmic prodding. This has been further advanced by Zuboff (2020) in her theory of surveillance capitalism, where the digital companies sell personal information of individuals to forecast and alter behaviours commercially.

Empirical research has found a strong relationship between digital Surveillance, which is always used, and the display of conformist and curated identities (Rana, 2021; Wrobel, 2023). Research into the invocation of this sociotechnical regime in fiction has begun to be examined by literary critics. Khan (2024) and Yangchen & Inbaraj (2024) discuss the examples of modern novels describing a world where making everyone visible is considered a moral virtue. To the extent that the corporation's culture is essentially digital, with moral oversight internalized in the form of reputation ranking and behaviour auditing, *The Every* is a work of corporate fiction. This leads to such systems fostering anxiety-based conformity, which aligns with recent research highlighting the visible consequences of behavioural changes in attitudes (Wang & Zhang, 2025; Asio & Sardina, 2025). Additionally, the novel amplifies the fears of Surveillance and compulsory righteousness by illustrating how the loss of self-will is a gradual process when one is under continual Surveillance.

Simulation and the Hyperreal

Building on Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and simulation (1981), the recent literature was used to analyze how the separation between the real and its simulated equivalents broke down. The hyperreal settings displace referents through signs, making the measures even more real than experience (Gunkel, 2021; Gunderson, 2023). The thoughts of Baudrillard have been applied to digital fiction and social media culture, where the quantified feedback loop exchange system, such as likes, shares, and ratings, forms artificial truths (Pahl & Schroter, 2023; Van & Kline, 2025). These hyperrealities dominate epistemic perception, creating digitally mediated "truths" that alter individuals' sense of meaning.

In *The Every*, Eggers puts into play the rise of metrics and algorithmic ratings as barometers of morality. The reason behind the simulated privatized trust, safety, honesty, and friendship, even in the context of apps that determine the way decisions have to be made. This is in line with the findings of Turner (2022), whereby the narrative form of online fiction is trending towards trying to mimic platform design, thus strengthening epistemologies of data. Also, the novel is reminiscent of *The Candy House* and *Fake Accounts*, where the characters are lost by the failure of the boundary between the real and virtual selves (Gunkel, 2021; Gunderson, 2023). These works decathologize the digital age preference towards pictures and ratings over complexity and authenticity, which is a fact that has been

linked with the annihilation of ambiguity and conflict by simulation.

Postmodern Fragmentation and Identity

Postmodern theories of identity inform about the notions of coherence, stability, and unity of the modern-day self. According to Veliev (2024) and Tripathi (2024), in the late capitalist and digital economy, the subject has become fragmented, performative, and subjected to the logics of consumerism. These hyper-aesthetics are used to build rather than to find identity based on the advertising of aestheticized lifestyles and digital identities. Niceriboim & Nam (2025) theorize that the posthuman subjects are becoming more and more decentered by the impact of the technoculture and their exposure to capital flows. This change is pioneered by the online environment, which produces chopped and cut personas built in packages through programs and measures (Farhan, 2025).

This is justified by literary reviews, which depict that digital fiction touches upon the topic of fractured subjectivities. As Mansfield (2022) shows, in the modern novels, it is very common to see characters who switch between various roles and identities, which are often mediated by digital platforms. Joseph (2025) discovered that these accounts reveal the fluidity of a sense of self in algorithmic cultures. These theoretical assertions can be found in *The Every*, where characters cannot prevent manufactured moral measures and reputational economies that interfere with their real-life selves. As Khan (2024) argues, this performativity is neither liberatory; rather, it is compulsory performativity, the performance under panoptic pressure. In addition, the very structure of the narrative becomes disjointed, corresponding to the disintegration of the main character and aligning with what Joseph (2025) has come to call the platformed psyche, the kind of personality divided by conflicting, algorithmically exacting pressures.

Research Gap and Contribution

While a growing number of studies interrogate digital Surveillance, simulation, and fragmented identity, these strands of scholarship have rarely been brought together in a unified analytical framework. Furthermore, few literary analyses offer deep theoretical readings of *The Every*, despite its rich narrative exploration of these very themes. The majority of the existing works are not deeply theorized, but somewhat thematic and superficial. Indeed, an interdisciplinary reading that combines Foucauldian, Baudrillardian, and postmodern approaches to identity is required to explain the structural, aesthetic, and ideological criticism in the novel.

The paper fills this gap and provides a thorough theoretical exploration of *The Every* by situating it within the framework of the contemporary discussion of the algorithmic control, simulated reality and the

postmodern self. This way, it is useful to the literary criticism of the work by Dave Eggers as well as to the discussion of the concept of digital subjectivity in the age of universal Surveillance and imitation. Moreover, the work goes beyond the present level of the comparative literature research; that is, it is a synthesized and theoretically oriented analysis of the narration, characters, and interpretation of the themes.

Synthesis: Toward a Unified Critical Lens

The literature surveyed suggests that the field of research concerning Surveillance, simulation, and postmodern identity is in disarray, yet it shares common ground. Although all these theoretical strands, Foucauldian panopticism, Baudrillardian hyperreality, and postmodern subjectivity have something to say, the interaction among them helps form a more robust critical framework through which *The Every* can be reverse-engineered. This novel resists being confined to a single theme; instead, it explores the intersection of moral Surveillance, data-driven performance, and the disintegration of identity.

With the combination of such frameworks, this study provides an overview of the work as dystopian fiction 'gasping through a straw,' but more importantly, as an ambitious narrative experiment that instead inquires into the 'circumstances of subjectivity in the digital age.' The style of writing in the novel, the development of its characters, and its thematic conflicts resemble the structural logics native to contemporary critical theory. Thus, the novel is an ideal one for examining how literature can reflect and critique the current epistemic regimes of our time. Such a reading positions this novel at the forefront of its literary value and relevance to theory, making it both a product and a critique of the algorithmic condition.

METHODOLOGY

This section provides an outline of the selected methodology to study *The Every*, based on the postmodern literary theory. It gives the research design, theory, and methodology that were used in the research. Given that the novel is replete with the themes of digital Surveillance, simulation, and identity fragmentation, the qualitative analysis of the text, in its turn, becomes necessary to decipher the narrative strategies and ideological frames of the novel. The methodology of the research is informed by the existing criticism of culture and the literary theory; and the thematic interpretation is a dominant focus. The methods and structures have been substantiated to suit each of the sections that follow, according to the objectives of the research.

Research Design

The research methodology is the qualitative textual analysis, thus focusing on the interpretive analysis of *The Every* by Dave Eggers. Among such sociocultural phenomena that cannot be sufficiently discussed in the context of the quantitative research

design are Surveillance, simulated reality, and identity fragmentation (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Since the theme of the novel is personal immersion, especially with the help of algorithmic control by using digital media, the tactic allows for a critical analysis of narrative structures, characterizations, and the ideological framework. White and Cooper (2022) argue that the qualitative approach is essential to the analysis of postmodern literature, in which the meaning of a phenomenon is frequently scattered and in a way that cannot be traced clearly along a linear path.

Data Source

The focal center of the material within the article *The Every* (2021) by Dave Eggers is its first source. The rationale behind this novel is the fact that it is a direct address to the issues of surveillance capitalism, platform hegemony, and algorithmic governance. *The Every* is a cultural art's critique and the embodiment of the digital society of our current days, which is why the play can be regarded as a timely example of theorizing the postmodern condition. In addition, contextual and theoretical claims are demonstrated with the help of current scholarly articles and critical essays, which were published in 2020-2024. The choice of the secondary sources is based on their academic level, peer-reviewed nature, and suitability to the research goals in terms of the subject matter.

Analytical Framework and Data Analysis Procedures

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive framework grounded in literary criticism to conduct a literary analysis of *The Every*, drawing on three theories: Michel Foucault's panopticism, Jean Baudrillard's simulation theories, and postmodern theories of identity. These frames are not just theoretical matches with the novel's key issues, namely, digital Surveillance, data commodification, and self-fragmentation, but are also well-rooted in the study of techno-literature in the contemporary age (Wroble, 2023; Gunderson, 2023).

His theory of panopticism and especially his concept of internalised discipline via Surveillance will be used in following the way *The Every* develops a world where moral auditing and normative behaviour is run on algorithms. The description of the protagonist's experience in the hyper-monitored setting can be linked to the concept of the panoptic gaze, as outlined by Foucault, which is explored through narrative events, dialogue, and themes (Greco, 2025). This has been an efficient way to study Surveillance within the fiction scenario, as observed when applied to post-Snowden fiction (Zuboff, 2020; Macmillan, 2024).

The idea of simulacra created by Baudrillard is used to analyze the role of representations like metrics, ratings, and gamified interfaces in the novel as replacements and obscurations of lived reality. Analytical focus will be put on the situations when the real has become subordinate to algorithmic

approximations, and the analogies will be drawn with the notion of hyperreality (Gunkel, 2021; Ekler, 2023). This is an important theoretical construct to interpret how *The Every* parodies a culture that has placed more value on data as opposed to personal truth.

The third layer of analysis is based on the postmodern identity theory, that is, the self is perceived as fragmented, performative, and influenced by late capitalism and saturation in consumerist technologies (Jameson, 2022; Marks, 2020). This frame would allow studying the role of characters in *The Every* in self-alienation, the acquisition of performative digital selves, and the investigation of the loss of interiority and authenticity. As the determinants of defining commodification of identity in the digital age, social metrics, audience rankings, and the culture of transparency will be described.

The thematic coding of the novel's main textual attributes (motifs, character actions, and narrative plot) was employed, and the results were combined with the selected theories. Interpretive close reading emphasize the ways literary techniques, including irony, satire, and repetition, contribute to the critique of digital modernity in the novel. Data was organized into themes such as "*the quantified self*," "*algorithmic morality*," and "*hyperreal environments*," based on how these concepts surface within the text and interact with theoretical constructs.

By means of this tripartite theoretical framework, not only is it possible to analyze the interaction of the narrative with the modern digital phenomena, but also contribute to the existing scholarly discussion of the issue of techno-surveillance literature. Such a form provides the opportunity to redefine the overall meaning of the work by Eggers as an identity dissolution of the algorithmic cultures (Rosana and Fauzi, 2024; Joseph, 2025).

ANALYSIS

This section involves the thematic interpretation of the novel *The Every* by Dave Eggers, utilizing Foucault's concept of panopticism, Baudrillard's theory of simulation, and the theory of postmodern identity. It examines the novel's critique of digital Surveillance, the erosion of reality in favour of data-based simulation, and the displacement of the person in the algorithmic world. Discussing relevant scenes, personalities, and lines in connection to the theories mentioned above helps the section pinpoint how the literary methods used by Eggers relate to modern arguments about the surveillance economy and the marketization of the human body. In this examination, both the satirical elements and the literary critique of the psychological and political ramifications of digital domination, as presented in *The Every*, are identified.

Surveillance and Internalized Power

In *The Every*, Surveillance is not solely a top-down imposition; instead, it is internalised, embraced, and performed through quotidian technologies and social practices. One illustrative moment occurs when Delaney, the protagonist, reflects: "*If everything was measured, then everything could be improved. And if not improved, at least accounted for*" (Eggers, 2021, p. 74). This passage encapsulates the novel's central idea: datafication becomes a moral duty. In this case, the concept of panopticism, as introduced by Michel Foucault, comes into play, where individuals perceive themselves as subjects of regulation due to the constant threat of being observed by others (Foucault, 1977). In Eggers's world, the panopticon is not a jail building; it is an app, a device, or a social metric that continually forces people to improve their behaviour.

A second powerful passage supports this reasoning: "*She didn't know who was watching, or if anyone was at all. But that wasn't the point. The point was that she behaved as if they were*" (p. 132). This illustrates Foucault's idea that the most effective Surveillance is not when it is evident in areas like jails, but when such observation becomes internalized. The individual polices themselves to be in line with the norms created by the digital process. Scholars like Westerlund & Leminen (2021) argue that this type of Surveillance, already ingrained in platform capitalism, does not necessitate state involvement but rather attracts users to participate in it. Wroble (2023) extends this by showing how apps create moral regimes, where self-surveillance is equated with ethical citizenship.

A third example comes from a social-scoring app in the novel: "*The app was voluntary, of course. But only fools opted out, and fools didn't last long at The Every*" (p. 201). The coercive effect of voluntarism, what some scholars refer to as "soft panopticism," makes monitoring systems practically unavoidable. Gunderson (2023) connects this to digital labor, where compliance and conformity are built into the design of user interfaces, gamification structures, and performance metrics.

This thematic portrayal is consistent with recent literary critiques of digital Surveillance. For example, Westerlund & Leminen (2021) discuss how novels like *The Circle* and *The Every* depict a moral shift in which transparency becomes a virtue and privacy a vice. Similarly, Khan (2022) examines how fictional texts reflect a changing public sentiment that accepts Surveillance as a means of ensuring safety and enhancing personalization.

Taken together, all these illustrations and theoretical reflections make it apparent that Eggers has created a world in which the ubiquity of Surveillance is by no means repressive, but rather seductively bound to everyday activity. The novel does not merely theatrically

reenact Foucault's panoptic architecture, but modernizes it in an era of participatory media, socially and technologically enforced social penalties, and self-metrics. The concept of virtualization of visibility is indeed the most critical point of the novel, which explores the topics of autonomy, power, and identity within a data-driven society.

Simulation and the Collapse of the Real

In *The Every*, the distinction between reality and simulation blurs as digital representations increasingly determine human experience. A pivotal passage occurs when a character remarks: "*No one wanted to waste time on experiences that weren't rated, reviewed, and optimized. Life unmeasured was life unseen*" (Eggers, 2021, p. 88). This echoes Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation, in which the signifier no longer refers to an objective referent, but instead creates its hyperreality. The world of *Every* is governed by simulation metrics, scores, and gamified interactions that displace authentic human engagement.

A subsequent illuminating moment transpires when a cohort of users ardently adopts an application that forecasts and evaluates emotional reactions: "*The app told you how you should feel about each piece, and eventually, you did*" (p. 167). Here, Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum is fully realised: the representation not only replaces reality but also determines affect. As Gunkel (2021) argues, digital systems increasingly dictate emotional responses, making subjective experience a derivative of algorithmic cues. This is particularly visible in Eggers's depiction of users deferring their inner reactions to system-generated scores, a world where the simulated self becomes more real than the embodied one.

A third illustrative quote comes from a passage where Delaney contemplates the unreliability of memory: "*Why trust your mind when you had verified footage, archived chats, biometric affirmations?*" (p. 192). This expresses Baudrillard's claim that the hyperreal replaces memory, history, and personal identity with externally verifiable digital traces. As Gunderson (2023) notes, platforms construct memory not as lived experience but as a retrievable database, reducing identity to searchable fragments.

This simulated environment extends the critique found in recent literary works. Pahl and Schröter (2023). Examines how digital fiction dismantles the "aura" of experience by prioritizing quantification over depth. Meanwhile, Landwehr & Wulf (2023) claim that works of fiction, such as *Super Sad True Love Story* and *The Every*, depict a future in which algorithms guarantee knowledge at the expense of human judgment, and metrics supersede human judgment.

By applying Baudrillard's theory to Eggers's text, it becomes evident that *The Every* is not merely

warning against digital excess; it portrays a complete ontological shift. The characters do not draw the line between what people live and what is written, what is experienced, and what is prescribed. The novel is therefore a critique of the epistemic control of platforms, whose reality is based on simulation and leads to the obsolescence of the real under the pressure of algorithmic reality.

Fragmented Identity and the Postmodern Self

In *The Every*, the self is not a coherent, autonomous actor, but a fragmented, performing creature formed by algorithmic visibility and consumerist affirmation. The protagonist Delaney offers a poignant reflection: "*I'm not sure who I am when I'm not being measured, watched, reviewed. I don't know if I exist without the lens*" (Eggers, 2021, p. 211). This passage illustrates the postmodern understanding of identity as decentered and externally constructed, what Fredric Jameson (2022) terms the "waning of affect" and the collapse of stable subjectivities under late capitalism.

The novel continually highlights how digital culture dismantles personal depth. One character remarks: "*Authenticity is exhausting. It's easier to be the version of yourself with the highest ratings*" (p. 156). This mirrors Tripathi's (2024) theory of hypermodernity, where identity is no longer anchored in inner consistency but in market-driven performance. Individuals construct their identities to align with data-driven expectations, participating in what Marks (2024) refers to as "reflexive self-monitoring," an ongoing process of adjusting one's identity in response to feedback mechanisms.

A third textual instance appears in Delaney's anxiety over her job score: "*Her worth, her very being, fluctuated daily with her performance metrics*" (p. 237). This demonstrates the commodification of identity, as criticised in Bauman's (2021) work on liquidity and modernity. The self is transformed into a portfolio of statistics, influenced by algorithms and surveillant structures. Postmodern identity theory elucidates the collapse of conventional notions of selfhood into a state of hyper-fragmentation and conditional worth.

Recent scholarship supports such an interpretation. Rosana and Fauzi (2024) claim that works of digital fiction, such as *The Every*, can be read as reflecting the loss of interiority and a depopulated interior, where the characters' identities are managed algorithmically and structurally unstable. Equally, Rowland and Estevens (2025) note the thematic similarity between the novel and other digital dystopias, in which the subject can be reduced to only the normalized data and continuous calibration. These thinkers confirm that *The Every* is concerned less with the fight against the loss of identity and more with its exposure to the irreducibility of the same in the platform societies.

Introducing the postmodern identity theory to this interpretation of *The Every*, it is clear that Eggers is dismantling not only the technological device but also the existential cost. The novel depicts a society in which visibility measures are a product of self-worth at the expense of autonomy, agency, and self-coalitions. This is no longer social criticism; it is a postmodern diagnosis of the self in the age of complete Surveillance.

Synthesis and Contribution to Knowledge

This section combines the concept of panopticism by Foucault with the theory of simulation by Baudrillard and postmodern theories of identity to show how they dramatize the loss of agency, hyperreal dictation of data systems, and the fragmentation of self in the contemporary digital culture. Through a discussion of the characters, dialogue, and setting used by Eggers in the chapter, the chapter reveals the logic of invisibility inherent in algorithmic systems and the illusion of choice in the surveillant architectures.

This paper fulfils a significant gap in the literature. Surveillance in particular has been studied (Zuboff, 2022; Wrobel, 2023; Westerland and Leminen, 2021) along with postmodern identity in general (Rosana and Fauzi, 2024; Rowland and Esterens, 2025), but not many have applied this triadic design to *The Every*, specifically. Moreover, the recent critical literature on digital dystopias tends to concentrate on earlier novels, including *The Circle*, or the works of other writers of the Black Mirror period, to the exclusion of the specific competence with which *The Every* negotiates the cultures of post-truth and the algorithms (Joseph, 2025).

This part serves as a certain supplement to the process of reading contemporary surveillance fiction, as it offers a multi-theoretical approach that is text-driven. It does not just situate *The Every* in a larger socio-digital context of anxiety, but it is also an analysis paradigm that can be applied to a similar story in the digital space. The combination of the theories and the direct analysis of the literature points to the fact that the novel by Eggers is not only a dystopian extrapolation, but also a philosophical grasp of the identity conditions in the era of surveillance capitalism.

Discussion: Evaluating Contribution and Theoretical Advancement

This paper aligns with recent research in the field, providing a comprehensive literature review and theoretical understanding of digital Surveillance, simulation, and identity. Indicatively, Surveillance and its contribution to digital capitalism, Landwehr and Wulf (2023) and Wrobel (2023) have pointed out how Surveillance has contributed to the shift in the approach of externally imposed compulsion to rules of behavior that people have internalized in their minds.

This shift has been confirmed in our analysis of *The Every*; however, we have provided more literary

specificity in the study, demonstrating how Eggers presents this transition dramaturgically through immersion tactics in the narrative style and irony, as well as the effective use of gamified language. While many sociological studies adopt a more general approach to positioning the reader regarding the sociological consequences of an issue, this study situates the reader clearly within the affective and psychological contexts of digital self-policing. Therefore, it qualifies Foucault's concept of panopticism in the era of so-called voluntary Surveillance.

Furthermore, scholars such as Gunkel (2021) and Pahl and Schroter (2023) have explored how contemporary fiction engages with Baudrillard's concept of simulation, particularly the loss of "authentic" experience. The most significant portion of their labour is dedicated to *Super Sad True Love Story* and *The Circle*. Nevertheless, this work proves that *The Every* is even more overt in its presentation as it illustrates simulation as not just a state of existence but a system of existence. The sense of veracity, recollection, and feeling of the characters is being rewritten algorithmically. This offers a more literary expansion on the concept of hyperreal as developed by Baudrillard as the commercialization of memory and emotion is further compromised more than in other previous dystopian dystopias of today based on digital technology.

Among the discoveries associated with the postmodern identity theory, our results align with Tripathi (2024) and Rosana and Fauzi (2024) regarding the expectations of modern fiction that presents a more volatile and fragile version of the self and a dependent relationship with the information. But whereas previous research concentrated on the loss of interiority, this work predicts the proactive self-performance work. *The Every* perfectly underlines how the self becomes a project to be optimized, constantly being remodeled through feedback loops, social ratings, and metrics of visibility. This contributes to the growing literature on platform subjectivity by illustrating the narrative grammar of fragmented identity in digital fiction.

Critically, our study fulfils the goal stated in the introduction: to analyze *The Every* using a tri-theoretical framework and to critique how Eggers delivers his critique of Surveillance and simulation as aspects of not only entanglement but also identity. The analytical framework was successful in revealing how each strand of the theme is broken down and how some strands are dependent on others. While earlier studies addressed one or two of these themes in isolation, this study presents a synthesized literary model for how contemporary novels convey digital anxieties across multiple ontological layers, including political, emotional, and existential.

To address the research gap, this study presents a holistic methodological framework for literary criticism that integrates the concept of literary narrative

with theoretical sociology and philosophy. It also draws attention to *The Every* as a landmark text of twenty-first-century digital fiction, the successor not just to *The Circle*, but a text that builds on and (as much as anything) critiques the ideological aesthetics of platform culture. These close readings in the section, coupled with theory and grounded in appropriate scholarship, provide a fine-grained and replicable model for analyzing other digital dystopias.

In short, the existence of an additional layer of theory and textual grounding enriches the study, as well as how literature manages, resists, and expresses the life performed by algorithmic governance. It pushes the discussion about literary adaptations to digitality and verifies *The Every* into a critique of its times, as well as a creation of the same.

FINDINGS, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As this study demonstrates, *The Every* by Dave Eggers is a multifaceted literary investigation of modern digital regimes, in which Surveillance, simulation, and Identity fragmentation have become the threads that are interwoven into everyday life. The novel explores how modern objects are constructed, not in the meaning of them being viewed, but of being trained to internalize visibility as a virtue, manifest identity as an algorithmic approval, and existing within a simulation that interferes with defining reality. The application of the three-pronged theoretical approach that integrates Foucault (panopticism), Baudrillard (simulation theory), and the postmodern theory of identity has enabled the study to capture reflection and criticism of greater epistemic, psychological, and political changes in the digital era in terms of the narrative style, which Eggers develops.

Among the most remarkable discoveries is the movement toward participatory Surveillance, where a platform is not supported by force, but rather by the mechanism of voluntary compliance and gamification, as well as social rewards. Further, an alternative literary mode of simulation has been identified in the study, where characters presented to the readers provide emotional and cognitive agency to support the instructions given by the algorithm. Lastly, the subject of fragmented identity described in the novel fits the postmodern subjectivity theories, depicting people as market-driven performances, calculated by metrics and ratings, but not coherent and stable identities.

There are three contributions in this study. First, it provides a new integrative approach to the study of digital-era literature, which synthesizes the surveillance studies, theory of simulation, and discourse of identity. Second, it makes *The Every* more than just a follow-up to *The Circle*, a literary landmark, an exemplification of aesthetic/ethical paradoxes of platform society. Third, the work contributes to the theory of literature by

demonstrating how contemporary fiction can serve as a diagnostic tool, mirroring sociotechnical conditions and creating epistemic criticism through narrative structure, irony, and speculative imagination.

Based on these insights, it is possible to draw some recommendations. Further studies can utilize this three-pole scheme to analyze other contemporary novels that discuss digital capitalism, such as *Super Sad True Love Story* by Gary Shteyngart or *Fake Accounts* by Lauren Oyler, to determine whether this type of device is already established within the genre of digital dystopia. Besides, the discursive evolution that runs transversally across literature, media studies, and algorithmic governance is likely to introduce more informative records on how a fiction can bring out the human price of data-driven existence. Pedagogically, instructing *the Every* in the digital culture courses at the university has the potential to foster critical literacy regarding the essence of the power of algorithms and identity building.

Conclusively, this paper ascertains that *The Every* is not just a satire, but also a deep theoretical piece. It is a reflection of and a question of our anxieties today when reality is made, the self is lived on, and power is unseen but everywhere. The multiple critiques found in the novel, as unravelled by

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