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The Holographic Self: Self-Representation and Logics of Digitality in Three Contemporary Narratives of Cosmopolitanism



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Abstract

This dissertation is an examination of the holographic self in three contemporary novels of cosmopolitanism. The holographic self is a concept I present which expands upon the cyborg to suggest foreground a self that operates in relation to a hologram a public-facing digital self-representation or operates in the logic of such. In this project, I deploy two models of the holographic self: one in which the hologram functions as an interface for fantasy to move toward an actualization of an ego-ideal; and another in which the amalgam of holograms or instantiations of self form a rhizomatic or constellational arrangement of subjectivity in which movement itself is prioritized. In each of the focal novels Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani*; Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*; Teju Cole's *Open City* the protagonist functions as a holographic self in a manner that expresses a desire for a post-positionality subjectivity, where traditional notions of bodily or singular identity itself are exceeded. In chapter one I argue that in *Londonstani*, protagonist Jas seeks to produce a culturally hybrid self in which the virtual is used as a tool of self-actualization, as it ultimately prioritizes the bodily self reconfigured by its holographic dimensions. I compare the novel to Wilde's *Portrait of Dorian Gray* to suggest that text has no similarly phenomenal ground for an outsourced self. In chapter two, I assert that in *Transmission*, Arjun also operates in relation to a hologram of self, but the text's desire for Arjun to exceed identity itself expresses a yearning for a non-bodily notion of selfhood that seeks to escape the policing of identity. I compare the novel to Brontë's *Jane Eyre* to argue that Jane's trajectory functions to manifest a set of inescapable material socio-ideological constraints that demand a particular conclusion. In chapter three, I examine William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* and its explosion of taxonomy and signification in relation to digitality, and then argue that *Open City* manifests such ideas through a holographic self that desires escape from not just identity but consequence. I conclude by suggesting a potential harmony between the concept of the holographic self, digitality, and narratives of cosmopolitanism.

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ways in which cosmopolitan self-transformations can be used as an analytical tool to explain a variety of identity outlooks and practices. The manner in which both past and present cosmopolitanisms compete with meta-narratives such as nationalism, multiculturalism and religion is also inv The self-concept is a knowledge representation that contains knowledge about us, including our beliefs about our personality traits, physical characteristics, abilities, values, goals, and roles, as well as the knowledge that we exist as individuals. Throughout childhood and adolescence, the self-concept becomes more abstract and complex and is organized into a variety of different cognitive aspects of the self, known as self-schemas. Children have self-schemas about their progress in school, their appearance, their skills at sports and other activities, and many other aspects. These self-schemas can be studied using the methods that we would use to study any other schema. One approach is to use neuroimaging to directly study the self in the brain.