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**THE APP GENERATION AS A HYPNOTIC VIRUS: A DIGIMODERNIST READING
OF CRYSTAL MALDONADO'S *NO FILTER AND OTHER LIES* AND DAVE
EGGERS'S *THE CIRCLE***

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ABSTRACT :

In the internet age, the contemporary American novel is moving towards the post human direction where human beings have a symbiotic bond with the machines that they make. The human identity therefore is inextricably linked to technology. In Crystal Maldonado's No Filter and Other Lies and Dave Eggers's The Circle, we see that Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and other social media sites represent a vital social context throughout the formative years of the adolescents. Thus, they ascribe their identities along the lines of likes, shares and comments. The more views they have in the social media validates their identities. The hypothesis contends that they can only arrogate themselves an identity with others

opinion of likes, comments, views and shares. The use of the social media induces a hypnotic spell or trance and the App Generation becomes addicted to it. There is a very high possibility that a hypnotic virus creeps into the subconscious of the American app generation. The Digimodern turn works hand in glove with the American contemporary society as represented in the novels under study, which project a very technologically advanced society, and the social media becomes indispensable in the lives of the American youth. The social media has become a new global culture and identities are being formed and reformed because digimodernism tests liberal notions of identity.

KEYWORDS: *social media, app generation, identity and digimodernism.*

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INTRODUCTION

The internet revolution has publicly reconstructed daily lives, identities and the global world in the contemporary American Society. So, it is very common to speak of technologies as changing human nature or at least human thought, identity and action. Kurzweil, R (1999) recently warned, “*the distinction between AI and humanity is already blurring.*” (p.9) More so he notes:1

We’re merging with these non-biological technologies. We’re already on that path. I mean, this little mobile phone I’m carrying on my belt is not yet inside my physical body, but that’s an arbitrary distinction. It is part of who I am—not necessarily the phone itself, but the connection to the cloud and all the resources I can access there. (p.10)

The notion of social networking sites revolves around viewing the internet as a distinct social space. The primary function is to facilitate user interactions, ensuring the continuous generation of content in the form of digital identity.

Technologies affect identity and digital media technologies offer new ways for young people to participate online, that these technologies are the keys that shape today’s generation that Howard G and Davis K, (2013) call the “App Generation.” They define the word “app” as a software program, often made for a mobile device, utilising one or more operations. It can be a shortcut that takes youths straight to where they want to go. They define the App Generation as the cohort of youth who have grown up seamlessly surrounded by software applications (apps) that structure, mediate, and automate their daily lives, thoughts and social interactions. They note that:

It is our argument that young people growing up in our time are not only immersed in apps: they’ve come to think of the world as an ensemble of apps Whatever humans want should be provided by apps and if no app can be imagined or devised, then the desire simply does not matter. (p. 8)

In addition to their unique generational approach to the analysis of digital media proliferation, the authors delve deeply into three areas: identity, intimacy and imagination. The app generation, therefore, is the youth for use digital media and applications not merely tools but a lens through which they perceive the world, navigate their relationships, construct their identities, and exercise their imaginations.

The social media is fast becoming an empire in the contemporary American novel. The works under study represent an intriguing example of youth culture in a digital era. Young people growing up in digimodernist period are not only immersed in apps but their consciousness pushes them to think of the world as an ensemble of apps, to see their lives as a string of ordered apps. The app generation is used in this study as a metaphor to represent the American youth born or and growing up in the era of the social media.

Digimodernism, a term coined by scholar Kirby (2009) defines the cultural paradigm that succeeded postmodernism. It is characterised by computerised textuality, onward flowing engagement, social performativity and the continuous construction of identity through digital technology Digimodernism is built on active user participation, immediate digital presence and the tension between authentic selfhood and algorithmic curation.

A digimodernist reading of Dave Eggers's *The Circle* and Crystal Maldonado's *No Filter and Other Lies* reveals how both texts explore the psychological and socio-cultural consequences of living as a digimodernist subject. Digimodernism asserts that identity is no longer fixed or internally reflective; instead, it is continuously re-authored in real time through posts, metrics, feeds, and comments. In Eggers's text, identity is completely subsumed by platform-driven performativity. Mae Holland's digimodernist existence is defined by total transparency and algorithmic tracking (PartiRank). Her selfhood only exists if it is broadcast and acknowledged by the network. In *No Filter and Other Lies*, Maldonado highlights the digimodernist split between the physical body and the digital avatar. Kat Sanchez fragments her real-life self, a 17-year-old, fat, half-Puerto Rican girl from her online persona, "Max Monroe," a thin, white 21-year-old. The opening line establishes her relationship with digital textuality: "You should know, right now, that I'm a liar. They're usually little lies. Tiny lies. Baby lies. Not so much lies as lie adjacent. But they're still lies" (p.1)

This work is divided in three sections. Part one analyses identity and the social media. Part two analyses the App generation as a hypnotic virus and the last part talks about defragmentation and catharsis.

IDENTITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Based on leading prompts such as "*What are you doing now?*", "*What's on your mind?*", "*What's new?*", and "Express yourself", contemporary social networks sites aim to gather various aspects of users' self-expression in order to feed and expand information flows through features like walls, news feeds, or profiles. This mode of self-expression which individuals interact with adopts the structure of an empty writing frame, promising to present every visual or pictorial interaction and every written statement as an expression declared 'now' through unlimited notifications to other network members (Gomez, 2016, p. 65-66).

Youth identity is shaped and expressed in the age of the app. The youth present a socially desirable, polished self online which greatly differs with the offline self. As seen in *No Filter and Other Lies*. The book opens with Kat introducing her habit of rationalising small, everyday lies, demonstrating how easily online platforms blur the line between performance and reality. Online platforms make lying feel frictionless. Thereby, allowing users to construct curated versions of themselves until they can no longer separate the fake persona from who they actually are. The social media allows the app generation to craft strategic self-presentations by deciding what information to highlight, downplay, exaggerate, or leave out entirely. The online persona therefore builds her identity on the number of click, shares, comments, likes and views.

While Kat's best friend Hari lives authentically, Kat is stuck endlessly calculating how she appears to the outside world, she says, "I admired how he always wore his heart on his sleeve unlike me, who is always calculating who gets to know what about my life, forever afraid of what others will think." (p.18) The spell of social media is driven by fear of judgment. Kat's hyper-awareness forces her to curate and control her image, keeping her trapped in an internal state of performance rather than genuine connection. When Kat posts as herself; a fat, brown teenager in a quiet town, she experiences low engagement and feels invisible. But when she steals the photos of a conventionally attractive, thin, white woman named Max Monroe, the social media response is immediate:

Kat works hard to create the perfect online aesthetic... but engagement is low... That lack of validation and feeling of isolation leads her to create the Max account, and suddenly, now that the person speaking her words has a beautiful, thin, and white face, people care and want to listen. (p.33)

Maldonado uses this dynamic to critique the biases of digital culture. The algorithm and audience hypnotise Kat into believing her real self is inherently unlovable, persuading her that she must wear a socially preferred digital mask to gain empathy and community.

In the novel, social media is not merely a communication platform, it is a central space where identity is performed, distorted and fractured. Through Kat Sanchez, Maldonado explores how digital platforms pressure marginalised individuals to alter their identities to fit idealised, mainstream standards of beauty and acceptance. Kat draws a sharp line between her internal reality and her outward digital projection. Social media enables a culture of constant curation where authenticity feels risky when Kat says, "I'm always calculating who gets to know what about my life, forever afraid of what others will think." (p.12) Kat's identity is defined by hyper-vigilance and calculation. Rather than expressing her true self, social media conditions her to treat her identity as a product to be managed, edited, and guarded against negative judgment. Kat is a fat, brown teenager living with her grandparents in Bakersfield, feeling largely invisible in both her family and her social world. When she creates the fake Instagram account "Max Monroe," using photos of a conventionally attractive, thin, white girl, she experiences immediate online validation:

Kat works hard to create the perfect online aesthetic... but engagement is low... That lack of validation and feeling of isolation leads her to create the Max account, and suddenly, now that the person speaking her words has a beautiful, thin, and white face, people care and want to listen. (p.66)

Maldonado uses the "Max" alter ego to critique how social media algorithms and digital culture enforce systemic biases. Kat discovers that her actual voice and thoughts are only valued when packaged inside a body that aligns with white beauty standards. Her digital identity becomes a protective mask that compensates for real-world marginalization. As the fake profile gains traction, Kat becomes trapped in her own invention. The line between her real self and her digital creation begins to blur, causing profound identity dissociation, "I was so focused on

being Max that I forgot how to just be Kat." (p.45) This quote highlights the psychological cost of living through a digital alter ego. The time and emotional energy Kat spends maintaining her false identity erode her connection to her real self, leaving her feeling detached from her actual body, family, and friendships.

In Dave Eggers's dystopian novel *The Circle*, social media and digital technology do not merely influence identity, they redefine and dismantle it. The tech monopoly ("The Circle") enforces a culture where the individual exists only through their digital metrics, public visibility, and total transparency. Eggers explores the intersection of social media and identity. At the core of The Circle's philosophy is the eradication of online anonymity and multiple personas. The company consolidates every aspect of human life, finances, social media, voting, and communication, into a single digital identity called TruYou:

To use any of the Circle's tools... you had to do so as yourself, as your actual self, as your TruYou. The era of false identities, identity theft, multiple user names, complicated passwords and payment systems, was over. (p.46)

The novel highlights how social media platforms force identity into a rigid, singular profile. By linking a person's real name and digital activity permanently, the platform strips away the ability to compartmentalize, experiment, or maintain private boundaries, turning one's digital profile into an all-encompassing identity.

Inside The Circle, self-worth and identity are reduced to a real-time numerical score called PartiRank, which measures social media participation, comments, likes, and responsiveness as we see in the novel:

She embarked on a flurry of activity, sending four zings and thirty-two comments and eighty-eight smiles. In an hour, her PartiRank rose to ,288...Knowing that her rank was changing every minute, that it was a living measure of her standing among her peers, gave her a feeling of purpose. She was being seen, and counted, and known.(57)

The protagonist, Mae Holland, adopts a quantified identity. Instead of developing self-worth through internal reflection or genuine relationships, her identity becomes tied to algorithmic validation. Her sense of "being known" relies on continuous digital output. As The Circle pushes its agenda, its leaders introduce corporate slogans that frame privacy and an

unmonitored inner life as inherently immoral: "*Secrets Are Lies.*" "*Sharing Is Caring.*" "*Privacy Is Theft.*" These paradoxical mantras redefine what it means to be a moral human being. By equating private thoughts with "secrets" and "theft," the platform convinces users that an unshared life is an unethical one. Identity is stripped of its interiority; a person only "exists" if their actions are broadcast to the world.

When Mae agrees to go completely "transparent", wearing a camera that broadcasts her daily life live to millions 24/7, her identity transforms entirely into a public performance; "to know that millions were watching... gave her a sense of vast responsibility but also an overwhelming calm. She was never alone, and because she was never alone, she was never unheard." (p.75) Mae's sense of relief stems from surrendering her individual agency. Under constant surveillance, she can no longer act authentically; every gesture, phrase, and emotion is curated for her audience. Her identity ceases to be autonomous and becomes a communal product consumed by viewers.

While both Crystal Maldonado's *No Filter and Other Lies* and Dave Eggers's *The Circle* explore how social media reshapes youth identity, they approach the topic from two distinct angles: Maldonado delivers a micro-level, psychological coming-of-age story, while Eggers presents a macro-level, dystopian socio-political satire. Together, both novels portray social media not as a passive tool, but as an active, defining environment that radically alters how young people understand self-worth, community, and personal autonomy. While Maldonado shows youth *escaping* into false identities to feel seen, Eggers demonstrates how platforms *force* youth into rigid, single public identities. *The Circle* strips young people of the ability to experiment, compartmentalize, or make private mistakes during formative years.

Both novels illustrate how social media replaces internal self-reflection with external, gamified metrics. Kat (Maldonado): Tying her worth to Instagram comments, Kat reflects: "I was so focused on being Max that I forgot how to just be Kat." (p.71) Her sense of self dissolves into the metrics of a fictional persona. Mae (Eggers) Obsessed with her company participation rank ("PartiRank"), Mae feels validated only when watched and scored, "Knowing that her rank was changing every minute... gave her a feeling of purpose. She was being seen, and counted, and known." (p.51) For both young protagonists, human value is no longer grounded

in character, ethics, or self-knowledge, but in continuous digital output and audience engagement.

THE APP GENERATION AND THE HYPNOTIC VIRUS

Braid, J (1843) the Scottish surgeon coined the term hypnotism as a state of "neuro-hypnism" or nervous sleep, characterised by fixed attention on a single idea or object, leading to extreme physical relaxation and heightened mental concentration. More so, it is a state of consciousness involving focused attention and reduced peripheral awareness characterized by an enhanced capacity for response to suggestion.

Hypnosis is a positive therapy that is used for healing processes of addiction, trauma and many other conditions. The social media paradoxically transforms the process of hypnotism to a negative concept. It is likened to a virus that slowly but surely consumes the minds of the youth. In this paper hypnosis produces a trance or altered state of consciousness. I decide to use it as a virus, with deep seated manipulative hypnotic program(s) installed in the subconscious during adolescent earlier years...without their knowledge or permission. These viruses can come from deep concentration on the social media and the youth are *never* aware of these insidious virus creeping in because they are in state of trance and hypnotism. Hypnosis is very captivating and erases all other images from the mind of the individual except that which the social media infuses. The social media comes in the form of a trojan horse. This metaphor from Homer's *Odyssey* presents an enticing and captivating social media that comes as a horse with soldiers inside to kill the very essence of juvenile identity. Metaphorically, the soldiers kill every structure in the postmodern contemporary American society. All that is left of the youth identity are broken chains of structures and laws. Youth transcend all boundaries and take any form that they want.

James C, (2014) portrays how youth can experience connectivity over the Internet. Through connectivity and qualitative research with youth, James analyses how the various aspects of digital life affect the way youth see themselves in today's digital society: "The picture is incomplete if we don't also understand how the negative potentials and realities are experienced, are made sense of and influence the moral and ethical dispositions of young people" (p. 3). James' stance on ethical issues of youth participation stages to create the terms

“disconnects” and “blind spots” in order to examine the issues in how youth directly connect with the digital world. uses the idea of “disconnects,” relying on a sense that youth display an absence of ethics in their participation online. The use of ethical “blind spots” is demonstrated in the growing preoccupation with self that contributes to the pervasive individuality of youth in today’s Internet age. James connects with these young individuals who describe their digital experiences, showing there is a lack of morality and ethics in their digital world. This book implores us to focus on this greater issue in connection to privacy, property, and participation. The reader explores the deeper disconnection of youth during the digital age.

In *No filter and Other Lies*, the hypnotic pull of social media is illustrated through Kat. The novel captures how online platforms act like a trance—offering an escape from real-world invisibility, but ultimately luring users into a compulsive loop of fabrication, validation, and self-alienation. Kat wants to be liked for her real self but what is her real self when she has a desirable alter ego as a Facebook personality? She transforms herself on Facebook as a 21 year old glamorous Max Monroe, bearing the picture of a beautiful experienced lady and sharing out advise as opposed to her plain unintelligent real self. She thrives and influences a lot of people as Max Monroe and even makes good friends with sophisticated ladies like Elena. The more she has likes, views and comments on her Facebook page as Max Monroe, the more she wants to keep the façade as Max. From this point of view, we realise that social media can facilitate superficial ties, discourage face-to-face confrontations and interactions, suggest that all human relations can be classified if not predetermined in advance.

The influence of the social media on the app generation will likely stay with the youth for the rest of their lives, affecting important decisions they make as adults. The hypnotic virus state confuses the app generation who believes that everything must operate only on a digital scale. Hypnosis instead of becoming a therapy is reduced to the notion of an amoebic virus that mutates at every social setting as seen in the life of Kat Sanchez and her Facebook identity of Max Monroe. Like an amoeba, she mutates to take any identity she wants. Her life is reduced to mimicry and forging new identities.

In Dave Eggers’s dystopian novel *The Circle*, social media hypnotism is portrayed as an insidious form of corporate-driven, voluntary compliance. Rather than using violent force

or overt brainwashing, the tech monopoly, *The Circle*, captivates its users and employees through psychological feedback loops, social validation, and moralized corporate slogans. The protagonist, Mae Holland, is gradually inducted into the company's hypnotic ecosystem through constant digital interaction. Employees are expected to send "Zingers" (tweets), respond to messages instantly, and maintain high social-participation scores. Mae experiences a psychological trance driven by real-time validation—watching her rank rise, receiving thousands of "smiles," and fearing "frowns" or lower participation metrics. This continuous stream of micro-rewards keeps her attention completely absorbed inside the screen. Leadership at *The Circle* uses repetitive, chant-like slogans that function like hypnotic suggestions, conditioning characters to internalize company ideology without critical thought: "Secrets Are Lies," "Sharing Is Caring," "Privacy Is Theft." Through constant repetition in presentations, corporate retreats, and digital interfaces, these paradoxical ideas become unquestioned truths for Mae and the general public.

Eggers uses the hypnotic nature of social media in *The Circle* to illustrate soft totalitarianism. Unlike classic dystopias where control is imposed through fear or pain (e.g., George Orwell's *1984*), control in *The Circle* is maintained through pleasure, convenience, and the desire to be constantly seen and validated.

While both Maldonado and Eggers's *The Circle* explore how digital platforms exert a hypnotic pull over individuals, they examine this spellbinding effect at vastly different scales. Maldonado approaches the phenomenon through a micro, personal lens, investigating how social media hypnotises individuals seeking emotional escape and self-worth. Eggers approaches it through a macro, socio-political lens demonstrating how a tech monopoly uses gamification and moral mantras to induce a state of voluntary compliance. In *No Filter and Other Lies*: Kat Sanchez lives by her Instagram numbers. Her obsession stems from feeling invisible in her family (having been left by her parents to live with her grandparents). When her fake account Max Monroe receives viral engagement, the intoxicating feedback loop convinces her that she matters—making it nearly impossible to unplug even as her lies spiral out of control. In *The Circle*: Mae Holland is mesmerised by the "PartiRank" system and real-time "smiles" or "Zings." The platform treats human social interaction as a video game, making constant participation an addictive necessity rather than a choice.

DEFRAGGING AND CATHARSIS

The term catharsis from the Ancient Greek *katharsis*, meaning purgation or cleansing is one of the most debated concepts in literary theory, philosophy, and psychology. While everyday usage defines catharsis broadly as a release of pent-up emotion, scholars across different fields interpret its meaning through distinct theoretical lenses. While we think of the social media as a mere tool, it has great transforming effects of the minds and identity of the App Generation. Most of the youth therefore become app dependent and it mars their creative and imaginative capabilities. This part is designed to clear the adolescent thinking processes by defragging all the deep-seated hypnotic viral implants. Defragging is used as a metaphor for reclaiming cognitive focus, integrating fractured social identities, or repairing systemic disorganisation. Scholars studying digital culture use defragging to describe the deliberate, structural attempt to counter digital cognitive fragmentation. Defragging social media identity in this paper is also the process of dismantling a fragmented, hyper-curated online persona and reassembling a unified, authentic self. It is a virus cleaning process. An antidote, an anti virus technique, a catharsis that purges that heals and that cleans the psyche of the App Generation. Catharsis in this paper slightly deviates from the emotions of pity and fear as implied in Aristotelian tragic notions. Catharsis is deconstructed to fit into notions of healing and defragmentation of deep viral implants infused by the social media.

In both Dave Eggers's *The Circle* and Crystal Maldonado's *No Filter and Other Lies*, characters fragment their identities across feeds, algorithms, and performative posts. Defragmentation occurs when the illusion collapses, forcing them to integrate their fractured digital selves back into their real, off-screen lives. In *The Circle*, social media identity is fragmented by corporate mandate and hyper-surveillance. "Defragging" (reclaiming a private, whole identity) is treated as treason. The novel shows what happens when a character fails to defrag, allowing their real self to be completely consumed by their public profile.

In *The Circle*, the concept of catharsis through social media is portrayed as a dangerous illusion. While characters often turn to public sharing, constant connection, and complete transparency seeking emotional relief, validation, or release, the novel reveals that digital catharsis is superficial and ultimately depleting. The text examines the tension between perceived emotional release and actual psychological depletion: Characters often use constant

engagement as a coping mechanism, but the resulting "catharsis" leaves them feeling empty rather than relieved. Mercer highlights how digital expression functions like junk food rather than true emotional processing: "You know how you finish a bag of chips and you hate yourself? You know you've done nothing good for yourself. That's the same feeling, and you know it is, after some digital binge. You feel wasted and hollow and diminished." (p.22)

Egger invites the readers, to celebrate a digimodern American identity that may be flawed and conflicted with many personality differences, but who will succeed in bettering the lives of the youth who live in this increasingly diverse and complicated nation. In the novel, catharsis comes when Mae the main character of the novel after changing different facets of her identity realises the dystopia that comes with it. In her youth, Mae does not possess the conscious maturity and clarity of thinking to be able to safely handle the vast technological improvements but she projects to work in The Circle which is a technological firm that controls the social media. She wants to project social media to go into the thought process of every youth so that they will be able to cleanse themselves from viral implants.

However, the main intent of this program is to raise individual's conscious clarity levels. The very first step is to determine the degree of personal hypnotic fragmentation and possible mental virus level. That is by transferring the knowledge from the subconscious to the conscious mind and accept that it needs cleansing.

The App Generation mind is likened to that of computer. Their subconscious mind is likely to be in a comparable condition to the computer drive that needs defragging and virus cleaning. Defragmentation in the case will consist on self-healing which goes right back to the notion of hypnotism. Defragging removes all the viral implants through self-hypnotism. The App generation must first of all be aware of the dangerous viral implants of the social media and therefore make up their minds to individually defrag their systems.

In *The Circle*, Mercer, Mae's ex-boyfriend, serves as the novel's voice of resistance, explicitly diagnosing how social media engagement erodes true human identity and social capability:

Here, though, there are no oppressors. No one's forcing you to do this. You willingly tie yourself to these leashes. And you willingly become utterly socially autistic. You no longer pick up on basic human communication cues ..., Your tools

have elevated gossip, hearsay and conjecture to the level of valid, mainstream communication... You think it makes you more human... But it doesn't. It makes you less human.(p71)

Mercer identifies the ultimate irony of the digital identity: while social media promises hyper-connection and global unity, it flattens complex human behaviour, replacing genuine presence with screen-mediated performance.

Unlike Mae in *The Circle*, Kat undergoes actual defragmentation and catharsis. She stops hiding behind filters, comes clean to the people she hurt, accepts her non-traditional family structure, and owns her identity as a bisexual, Latinx artist: The story emphasises "coping with family trauma, accepting yourself as you are, and learning to share your true self with the ones you love." (p.64)

When Kat changes her social media identity to become the glamorous Max Monroe, the end result is that she suffers from one set-back after another and ends up leading a miserable existence. Her awareness comes with healing and cleansing and refers to the resolution of the plot of a tragedy, in which final revelations lead to blinding insights for the protagonist and the audience in such a way that they experience catharsis or a purification resulting in the self, reborn with new knowledge. The narrative climax occurs when Kat's lie goes viral and crashes down around her. Her journey requires unlearning the idea that her humanity can be quantified by engagement:

Kat forgets that there is more to life than just social media, that her worth is not dependent on it... It is about loving oneself, finding worth in oneself outside of social media, and finding hope even when everything seems to fall apart. (p.123)

The resolution counters the hypnotic illusion of Instagram. True validation cannot be found in digital metrics, follower counts, or external praise; it requires grounding oneself in real-life relationships, self-acceptance, and vulnerability. True identity formation requires stepping away from the curated performativity of social media. Kat's arc demonstrates that self-worth cannot be crowd sourced online; it must be built through self-acceptance, real-world accountability, and vulnerability. Maldonado depicts social media as a digital illusion that distracts youth from addressing real-life trauma—such as Kat's feelings of abandonment by

her parents. When her catfishing lie inevitably collapses, Kat is forced to realize that online validation cannot fix offline pain: "It is about loving oneself, finding worth in oneself outside of social media, and finding hope even when everything seems to fall apart." (p.66)

CONCLUSION

In *The Circle*: Mae fully capitulates to the digimodernist imperative. She erases her private boundary, allowing the individual self to be completely swallowed by the digital collective. In *No Filter and Other Lies*: Kat experiences the collapse of her fake digital persona when her lie goes ultra-viral. However, her arc ends with active defragmentation. She deletes the fake account, takes accountability for the real-world harm she caused, and reclaims her artistic voice without the filter of an idealized digital mask. From a digimodernist lens, both novels demonstrate that the digital space is an active co-author of human identity. While *The Circle* illustrates the dystopian extreme—where the digital platform completely overwrites human agency—*No Filter and Other Lies* offers a corrective, showing that individuals can overcome algorithmic alienation by reclaiming authentic, unfiltered human connection.

The social media revolution in contemporary American fiction has provoked – texting, blogging, twittering, snapchatting, whatzapping, Facebooking as massively multiplayer online identity determinants in the App generation and is rapidly leading to the development of new fictional identities. Comparing Crystal Maldonado's *No Filter and Other Lies* with Dave Eggers's *The Circle* offers a fascinating look at how social media shapes human identity. While one approaches the topic through an intimate, personal coming-of-age lens and the other through dystopian techno-satire, both novels arrive at a strikingly similar conclusion: when identity is tied to digital performance, the authentic self is compromised.

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