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THE BATTLE FOR AUTHENTIC SELF-IDENTITY IN THE DIGITAL HYPERCONNECTED WORLD OF GEORGE SAUNDERS'S JON: A LITERARY MEDIA STUDY

Fatima Abid[1st]
Student of BS English, The Institute of Arts and Sciences, Chiniot Campus, GCUF
fatimamaab2516@gmail.com
Corresponding Author: **Saba Rasheed**[2nd]
Lecturer, The Institute of Arts and Sciences, Chiniot Campus, GCUF
sabarasheed@gcuf.edu.pk
Najma Rani[3rd]
Student of BS English, The Institute of Arts and Sciences, Chiniot Campus, GCUF
raninajma996@gmail.com
Sadia Arshad[4th]
Student of BS English, The Institute of Arts and Sciences, Chiniot Campus, GCUF
naveedakhtar3440@gmail.com
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Abstract
This research article highlights the effects of excessive connection with digital technologies on real human identity. It mainly focuses on digital hyperconnectivity and self-identity proposed by Sherry Turkle, where the former implies that digital hyperconnectivity is constant connection of people with information, devices, and communication tools etc. and the latter relates that self-identity becomes artificial with the excessive use of technology. By using the short story Jon written by George Saunders as a case study, this work examines how digital platforms influences behavior, relationships, memories, and decision-making. The paper aims to reveal the fact that digital hyperconnectivity creates a contradiction through screens where the characters are physically present but psychologically regulated by technology, leading to self-identities stung by depression, anxiety, and frustration, obscuring the boundary between real and artificial. Further, it emphasizes the role of digital media in building self-identities, mainly among teenagers. However, even in a technological environment, real human feelings still survive.

Keywords: *Digital hyperconnectivity, self-identity, real human identity, digital media, science fiction.*

Introduction
Science fiction is a genre that creates stories by the fusion of technology and modern science (Roberts, 2002). Starting from the 19th century, science fiction seems not just about future or space stories exploring robots and aliens, but rather it explores human society, technology, and future ideas through the combination of imagination and science. Creating a new world and situations by using scientific ideas, it shows how technology and science can change human life through raising questions like what will happen if this happens? (Luckhurst, 2005) In this way, science fiction also becomes a source to explain social issues as shown through films like *Dune* and *Men in Black.* Digital devices enter human life and damage self-identity badly in stories consisting of science, industry, media, technology, war, capitalism, and urban life. It is recorded that this article also reshapes the idea of how technology changes the human body and how self-identity is imaginatively reshaped.

Born on December 2, 1958, in Amarillo, Texas, George Saunders was raised primarily in Oak Forest, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Being a student of geophysics and feeling a little bit different from others, Saunders turned to creative writing (Saunders & Wylie, 2001). Best known for his short stories and award-winning debut novel *Lincoln in Bardo,* Saunders uses executive speech, clinical euphemism, and stream of consciousness to delineate the themes of capitalism, illusion of free will, grief, death, technology, and morality. Most of his works are embellished with surrealism and science fiction elements. Saunders' fiction deeply analyzes

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modern society, jobs, capitalism, power, poor people, human suffering, kindness, and moral choices (Coleman & Ellerhoff, 2017). He reveals the real problems of the world through fairy tales, fake historical places, tycoons, zombie-like characters, ghosts, and high-tech systems. Saunders shapes modern American stories in a new style. His traditional, realistic stories are not simple, rather, they contain comedy, satire, dystopia, fantasy, professional language, emotional suffering, and moral questions. His writing is a criticism of modern life. Jon is no exception regarding science fiction.

Literature Review

Earlier, the online system was a free space for people to explore their abilities where one could create one's identity on a social media platform, such as a social portfolio. However, it is measured by values like followers and likes as the system shapes one's identity now through apps and algorithms affecting oneself. People are now becoming a data identity in the online system (Brubaker, 2020). Social media and online platforms shape adolescents' and young adults' identities. Their social media identities and real-life identities are parallel. The problem is that there is a difficulty in balancing and differentiating between both identities (González-Larrea & Hernández-Serrano, 2020). The digital technology is neither completely beneficial, nor completely harmful, rather, it depends on how people use it since its usage constructs one's digital identity. It mainly affects young people because they are under the age of identity development (Muñoz Rodríguez et al., 2020). It influences youthful identity construction under the age of 12-18 regarding freedom, responsibility, self-determination, and critical thinking (Pérez et al., 2020). Digitization and automatic decision-making affect decisions in real life and personal freedom (Englezos, 2022). Decreasing their real experiences, the simultaneity and hyperreal images of digital technology lead humans away from the real world to the virtual world, which is temporary. In this way, technology confiscates human knowledge (Thwaites, 2021). Further, the digital world gives new ideas to express and understand queer identities. The queer self is not just a sexual identity but an identity that changes through social interaction, online platforms, and becomes more accessible, visible, selective, and abundant. It might result in discrimination, stigma, surveillance, and excessive use of the online system (Weinger, 2025). Hence, digital hyperconnectivity affects oneself in different ways.

In the short story Jon, the exploration of real self-identity in the digital world is the topic of this paper, which has not been discovered before. Though Jon as a dystopian fiction where human freedom is nearly gone, has been found out. In this dystopia, devices are placed in humans' bodies, location indicators control their thinking, and emotions are managed through drugs like Aurobon. The humans are considered as product testers and part of the market, such as trendsetters and tastemakers (Holdefer, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

Marshall McLuhan is one of the founders of media theory which introduces the idea of how digital media and tools of communication shape human awareness, society, and culture (McLuhan, 2017). The media itself has a great impact on people and society. Technology transforms the way humans think, act, and live. People usually focus on what the media shows in the form of content and ignore how the media changes society and human behavior. Media shapes interaction, such as digital media itself. For a network is not only about the content but it also affects human communication, perceives information, and forms social bonds. According to Mark B.N. Hanse, the media lies between Empirical [1] and Transcendent [2] (Hansen, 2006). Media is real and shapes people's thinking. It is not only an object or a machine but also the part of human evolution. Humans and technology evolve simultaneously. Digital

[1] It comes from real-world experiences
[2] It is the basic condition of thinking and understanding

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hyperconnectivity and self-identity relate to media theory, as digital hyperconnectivity is the network shaped by digital media

In media theory, digital hyperconnectivity is a situation of potentially limitless connectivity, in which any individual can be connected to any other individual or group (Brubaker, 2020). Digital hyperconnectivity contains two fundamental pillars – ubiquitous connectivity and real-time information, where the former means always being online everywhere and anytime without any restrictions, and the latter means to have instant access to a vast form of data at just a click away. This digital networking not only has transformed society in many positive ways but also has affected the human self. An MIT professor and psychologist, Sherry Turkle, defines digital hyperconnectivity and self-identity in her book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* as there is a constant *tethered* connection of technology and self that creates a paradox *Alone Together* that means humans are physically present but mentally and psychologically absent (Arnd-Caddigan, 2015). The self is seen as something created through social interactions and actions, which leads to stress, anxiety, and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). People are unintentionally involved in constantly shaping and reshaping their self-image online. Real identities are totally different from the online world. People try their best to show their appearance well-mannered and beautiful on the internet, just for the sake of validation, so that they can receive a better response from others.

Textual Analysis

Jon is a science fiction story in which the protagonist, Jon, narrates the story. The story is about Jon's hyperconnected life experience, which transforms him completely. According to Sherry Turkle, digital hyperconnectivity is potentially limitless connectivity with digital systems, and self-identity is something created through social, digital, and system interactions. The whole story portrays how human real identity is affected both physically and psychologically by the hyped-connected system, which is explained in detail below.

The narrator, Jon, is a young boy who lives in a controlled future society where some people called coordinators make rules for people who live in the system and force everyone to follow these rules. The first rule described in the story is an educational video titled, “It’s Yours to Do with What You Like!” (Saunders, 2003, p. 1). It is about self-touching basically, this video is shown to teenagers so that they can handle their sexual requirements on their own, privately. By saying there is nothing wrong with self-touching, the system is normalizing sexual behavior. Through this video, the real human emotions and ideas are being suppressed. This reflects modern platforms such as social media, TikTok, and YouTube, which shape identities and desires today.

Here, we see the story starts with the digital hyperconnectivity of digital media, which binds human self-identity. Jon says that love seems to be a mysterious valley but it is not the case with its mechanics. Love is a natural emotion that cannot be measured through apps, algorithms, or pleasure, but hyperconnected people focus on personal choice and quick satisfaction, which is limited. Society is isolating people and promoting individualism in the digital age. This resembles modern digital culture. In the system, boys and girls leave separately in their privacy traps, and people are technically private. There are two foil characters to the aforementioned majority, Josh and Ruthie. Both of them are young and have affection with each other instead of privacy. They love each other and have a physical relationship that breaks the rules of the system. Ruthie becomes pregnant. But the facility does not punish them for this act. Then this act becomes an example of real human interaction for Jon, who questions himself why he is still trapped in such a system, because human intimacy is rare for him, i. e., the system has suppressed his natural relationships.

Facility makes humans emotionally empty in the name of technology, which Jon thinks about before making a love relationship with someone. Jon indirectly confesses that a real human

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connection feels better than an artificial relationship. Rebelliousness is shown here: "final straw that broke the back." (Saunders, 2003, p. 2)This phrase is an idiom that shows Jon can no longer tolerate the control of the system.

Later, Jon performs a TV show named *Final Straw that Broke the Back* with a girl named Carolyn. Jon has an affection with her. He likes her beauty, but secretly due to system restrictions. Carolyn also loves Jon. When they perform a TV show, Carolyn says she wants to feel real sexual emotions instead of just performing for hundreds of people. And suddenly Carolyn kisses Jon. At that moment, Jon feels softness and emotional warmth. He realizes that human desires are only being shaped by entertainment and sexuality, and that reality performance has become blurred. This fact clearly describes the suppressed self-identity by the digital system. Jon compares artificial pleasure with real intimacy and concludes that it is much stronger.

A few days later, Ruthie gave birth to a baby girl named Baby Amber. Jon again notices that nothing wrong happens with them in the system. They are happy. He wishes to feel this pleasure with Carolyn. They made physical relations and a few months later Carolyn is impregnated. Jon feels over the moon after listening to such an exciting news. He goes to coordinator Slippen, a coordinator who rules over facility people like Jon and Josh, etc. Jon informs him about the expected arrival of his baby and asks for permission from Slippen. He declares that "Baby Amber will be having a little playmate…" (Saunders, 2003, p. 3). After hearing this news, Slippen was shocked and angry because he considers babies a burden. He responds to this information by throwing a proclamation about the elimination of two members from the system, referring to Jon and Carolyn, in such matter. It shows how digital systems rules over human real happiness. However, Slippen eventually permits them because he also has kids.

Baby Amber is a symbol of love, natural life, family, death, systemic cruelty, and human emotions. Jon says real intimacy does not destroy individual identity; instead, it creates a strong bond between two people. But everyone is stuck in it, even against their will. Basically, the facility is a digital media-based place where kids are treated with ads, products, and other digital apps, but baby Amber is born by natural human intimacy, which is very special for all facility members, especially for Jon and Carolyn. Baby Amber is very weak because the system does not fulfill the natural requirements of the baby and is busy with marketing tests, media campaigns, and product reviews. As Jon relates: "We have a lot of Assessments…, ...my Assessments became very nuanced."(Saunders, 2003, p. 4) It highlights the constant connection with the digital system, by which the real human relationship, even mother baby relation is being affected. Branding and content are considered more important than real life. Suddenly one day, Jon says that she was unable to wake up, which means baby Amber died due to meningitis, i. e., weakness. Everyone feels regret and sadness because they love her very much, but they lose her due to their busy activities. It shows how much the hyperconnected world affects human real identity. People lose their near and dear relations permanently.

When Mr. Slippen sees that it is causing a loss of his marketing and production, he starts giving them Aurabon. Aurabon is an artificial mood control system which relaxes human mind for a little while, just for the sake of its marketing system, because people had not been paying attention to its productive system. Here, Aurabon is a symbol of a hyperconnected system that controls human self-identity artificially. The system controls human emotions through devices. Jon and other facility members become better in his assessment work after taking Aurabon. Only Carolyn does not take Aurabon due to her pregnancy. She realizes that the death of baby Amber is not such a big loss for these people, especially the coordinators. Here, the selfishness of the system is eyed. The system just takes benefit through them, It has no concern about their real identity and their emotions.

Carolyn feels her baby's kick in her belly. She assures her abdomen not to be worried since the Mommy is going to get the angel out of these entanglements after her baby's birth. When Jon

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listens to Carolyn's conversation with her abdomen, he is shocked and says that without the system, the baby will not have a chance to meet celebrities and he does not like life of the outside world which, as he states, "upon seeing me, saw just some mere guy stacking lumber..." (Saunders, 2003, p. 4). Jon's remarks state his mental colonialism by the system and colonized self.

Carolyn's decision to be free of the system makes Jon afraid. He explains to Carolyn if she takes out her baby, they lose those ads, images, slogans, references through which they show their feelings and emotions. This is the true nature of technologically bound self that Jon describes. Basically, Jon has been completely raised in a digital system since childhood. The system controlled his emotions and decided even the smallest aspects of his life. It truly represents a hyperconnected person whose real self-identity has been wholly changed. He even explains his emotions through different examples of ads and slogans to Carolyn. He thinks that without images, ads, he cannot explain his emotions. It is not possible for him. For example, Jon explains his love for Carolyn through the RE/MAX ad, "that is how I feel about you" (Saunders, 2003, p. 5). This thing makes Carolyn angry and asks if he is either with her or against her. Jon answers her question with Lysol ad. Carolyn gets hurt due to the digital form of his response. Finally, Jon says her that he loves her. Carolyn demands to prove this statement in a real life way.

The next day, both Jon and Carolyn go to Mr. Slippen and ask for exit paper works. It means Carolyn wants to leave the system, and Jon does this only for her. When Slippen listens to this, he is shocked and tries to persuade them not to leave, telling them about the stem's facilities, which are not available outside. Carolyn says to Slippen that he also did not raise his children in this type of digital system and asks him why he holds them back. Slippen answers her that his kids have never been on TrenSetters and TasteMakers gum cards. Her gum card is the symbol of public image to relate that Jon and Carolyn are just showpieces for the world. People see them and follow them. So they must do the activities for people instead of their own personal happiness. Here again, digital hyperconnectivity shows how it has deeply changed or transformed human real self-identity. People measure their identity through images / fame / status, / public review. Their real self-identity is being hidden. In the story, Carolyn criticizes the digital system, and now Jon compares this with a prudential ad "Prudential Life," (Saunders, 2003, p. 6) which again describes Jon's hyperconnected personality.

When Carolyn challenges Slippen, he becomes angry and remembers a time when he invested money in them and says they were lucky to be chosen. But in the end, Slippen allows them to go through the proper channel to leave the system and check the pre-visit requirements as he offers: "Necessary Exit Paperwork… when would you like that visit? "(Saunders, 2003, p. 7) It shows if people want to leave digital control, it is decided by the system whether they can leave or not, they are completely immersed in a hyperconnected system. Slippen asks them before leaving, they need to visit the Lerner Center. Basically the Lerner center is symbolizes both freedom and fear. It is a center between the inside and outside world, and it is also artificial and controlled.

They visit the center where, they are introduced to the outside world through a superficial overview. Where a woman, Doreen, who is mentally disturbed and talks strangely, as "a brain is more than a barn*"* (Saunders, 2003, p. 7). A woman's mind is completely filtered by media slogans, which shows that media affects people psychologically and makes them mentally ill and disturbed. Later, Jon and Carolyn are individually consulted by a man who is there to tell them about the real world since he has exited the system and is no more its part now. He tells them about the hole after exit. Jon sees a body hole near his head and gets disturbed. The hole near the head suggests that the mind / brain / body connects with the system, which is a physical sign of digital hyperconnectivity.

Carolyn asks that man about the process after leaving the facility system. The man tells her

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there are some gaps in his mind, like there are some words related to adds that would exist in it which hinder his original thought in the real world because he has left the system just recently. For example, when a man wants to say something pretty to a woman in a normal way but he only ends up with saying advertisement slogans randomly like ancient forest, coffee growers, golf, World Book, phone card, close the gap, etc., Still confused, the man runs from the room. It shows digital hyperconnectivity has influenced human identity so deeply that people have lost control over many aspects of their lives. They often think one thing but behave in a completely different way. It shows frustration. After seeing this, Jon feels afraid of leaving the facility. But Carolyn is still standing by her words.

After sometime an old lady enters the learner Centre. She has been out of the system for two years and suggests "You must wait until Year Two to truly know" (Saunders, 2003, p. 8). She advises them not to judge immediately. Basically she encourages them that after leaving the system, everything becomes normal after some time. It convinces Carolyn to leave the facility, but not Jon. Now both have decided their direction, but in opposite ways. Carolyn declares that Jon breaks her heart. Then Jon goes to the boy's area and calls up his mother's memory loop. In the story, Memory loop is the symbol of mental control, consumer culture, digital hyperconnectivity, and loss of authentic human experience. Means system programs Jon's mind. This is a perfect example that shows the effect of digital hyperconnectivity on the self. Memory loop creates a conflict between real and artificial emotion.

The next day, Jon awakens to an electric / light shock, and Slippen takes them to conference room 6, where Mr. Dove, Mr. Delacourt (two other coordinators) are present, and at the end of the table, Carolyn sits, looking small and weak. She sits by putting both her hands on the exit paper seriously. When Jon sees her, the ad appears in his mind about the chocolate milkmaid advertisement, which represents that hyperconnected people are unable to control their thoughts, even in a serious condition. Dove asks Jon about the exit paper, if he leaves the facility with Carolyn. Jon replies that he will stay. Carolyn leave system just because of their last night fight, assumes Jon. Carolyn answers that it is not because of the fight. Dove feels some doubt, and Jon admits his doubt. Slippen says that Jon and Carolyn can't be happy at any term. But Mr. Andrews gives some more time to them to think. Carolyn directly says that she need not any additional time. This means she is clear about her decision. Then Mr. Slippen advises to stay together because Slippen has been married for thirty years and the couple is together yet. Carolyn does not pay any heed to such advice and asks for or an exit paper.

When Dove again asks Jon if he is prepared? Jon compares Carolyn's anxiety with the Claymation Chicken ad. It means that Jon's mind did not feel fear directly, but through ad-images, showing the effect of digital hyperconnectivity on self-identity. Slippen expresses regret about Jon and Carolyn being a good couple. After listening to him, Carolyn starts crying. She thinks if she stays in the team, she can't change her mind, which means she leaves the system. Then she throws the exit paper to Slippen. The facility asks Carolyn if she wants to meet someone during her last time. She replies that she would like to meet Jon. They leave them alone for a private conversation. Both of them cry. Carolyn requests Jon to come with her, but he refuses. It shows hyperconnected people are unable to leave the system, even at the cost of precious relations. Jon compares their grief with the KFC ad, "KFC Haitian Minibreak, sets," (Saunders, 2003, p. 11), It again shows the effect of digital hyperconnectivity on his mind, i. e., he does not feel grief manually. Carolyn pleads Jon to search for them in the future after getting free. Their goodbye, memories, and jokes are all polluted by the digital system.

After Carolyn's departure, Jon lives in his private trap alone. Memories of Carolyn like her nail clippers and stuffed dog disturb him. In the daytime, Jon spends most of his time sitting on a window seat and scanning outside images just to keep him busy. Jon imagines Carolyn alone

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in blue scrubs [3] in the Lerner Center. In search of peace, Jon desires Aurabon as he says: "I would apply for some additional Aurabon…" (Saunders, 2003, p. 12). This time, Jon demands Aurabon in an extra amount because he could not forget Carolyn due to his hyperconnection. There is a digital solution to emotion problems. Initially Jon feels better due to Aurabon but later he starts hooking in eight to nine times a day. Then Jon realizes this type of happiness is just like chewing a tinfoil. He is happy but wants more. The level of Aurabon goes much higher and Jon feels emptiness inside him.

Now, the emotions of Jon are connected with LI 89736 indexed media clips. Jon creates an artificial beauty through various ads, Dole fruits, toothpaste ads, artificial smell system, LI 89736, LI 22314, LI 76765, LI 74,638, yet he is not satisfied. Then Mr. Dove reduces the dose of Aurabon and changes his privacy trap as he sends him to the boys' area, where Josh shares photos of Carolyn with Jon, it makes Jon sadder. All members are separated from each other. They say goodnight to each other, but Jon misses Carolyn. It becomes his life's "saddest time" (Saunders, 2003, p. 13).

One day, Jon plays Hungarian Headchopper, which is a game in which heads grow. Slippen comes and gives him Carolyn's letter. The letter is written in broken handwriting, *Abbot, Cove, Glen*. It shows that after leaving the system, her handwriting is not stable because, before, her thinking was supported by the media / system. She uses some digital words, "product" (Saunders, 2003, p. 13), "stand behind" (Saunders, 2003, p. 13), "run behind" (Saunders, 2003, p. 13). It shows the effects of digital hyperconnectivity even though she has left the system. After reading the letter, Jon misses Carolyn through memory combined with branded appearance. It again shows the effect of the digital system on the self. Jon feels regret for his stupid decision to stay in the system alone without Carolyn. Jon feels real emotions. He realizes that their relationship was real. And when Brad calls for Aurabon as usual, Jon rejects for the first time to hook in and wants to take immediate official action, and finally decides to leave the system.

Mr. Dove convinces him that his decision is risky. He tells Jon about miserable conditions of people outside the world of the system. When Jon sees outsiders and thinks their clothes are not branded, his mind is completely within system boundaries, as he thinks ordinary clothes are the sign of failure. And imagines an outsider as unhappy, stressful and unhealthy. It also shows the effect of digital hyperconnectivity as Dove says: "Just another lowing cattle in the crowd." (Saunders, 2003, p. 14). Dove pressurizes Jon by telling him that he is a celebrity. He can't survive that kind of world. But Jon is still stuck in Carolyn's letter and finally insist for exit paper. Dove informs Slippen about Jon's decision. When Delacourt listens to all this, he says this is a stupid act. Andrews says Jon is one of our best assessors and reminds him about his Denny O'Malley award. Then Slippen encourages Jon about his decision. Other coordinators challenge Slippen because he is a little bit hopeful for Jon that he will survive in outer world with Carolyn and his baby.

Dove uses Jon's mother references to emotionally blackmail him. It reveals that the facility gave him a memory loop of his mother, who insists on his staying in the facility and living a productive life. It means the system controls the softest part of his heart, love and memory of his mother. It reveals that the effect of digital hyperconnectivity is not limited to just ads or screen use but also enters into memory, family, grief, identity, love, and decision-making. After hearing Dove's talk about mother loop, Slippen gets irritated and says, "Which mother did he get?" (Saunders, 2003, p. 15) He is fed up and leaves the room. Jon realizes that the system is monitoring his private memories and personal emotions through memory loop. It looks like a complete modern digital world in which memories of humans, even not private, are accessed through technology as an algorithm monitoring. Delacourt and Slippen try to

[3] Blue scrubs are a medical dress that is worn during labor

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understand that Jon's emotional thinking is childish and immature.

Then he is taken to the facility cinema. It is a special type of luxury and media environmental room which consists of a big-screen plasma TV, a leather couch, and a deluxe popcorn machine. Here, the effect of digital hyperconnectivity shows how the media manipulates human emotions. In this room, Jon is shown a video of a poor young girl who accepts some terms and conditions. Here, George Saundar basically criticizes modern digital surveillance, media manipulation, and consumer culture. Then Jon comes to know that this poor girl is his real mother, and the system inserted fake beautiful memories in his mother loop so that he can stay emotionally stable and must not feel ashamed because of it. It represents the modern digital world such as filtered realities, AI-generated identities, social media self-image, and algorithmic emotional shaping. It means human or self-identity is not real rather system generated. Delacourt and Dove explain to Jon that system improved his life and treated him like a prince. But this revelation destroys Jon emotionally when he realizes his identity and memories are fake.

Then Dove shows Jon his childhood memory, which was recorded and preserved. On which Jon feels broken after realizing that his memory was fake and the system created it. It describes how digital hyperconnectivity creates an artificial world inside the human mind, and when reality becomes clear, it destroys the human mental state. That's why digital hyperconnectivity with digital system affects human. Basically, by showing all this, Dove manipulates Jon to take back his request for the exit paper. When Dove says, "while I watched 'Sunset Terror Home' on the big-screen…" (Saunders, 2003, p. 18), media is used to emotionally control and is a tool of distraction, which disconnects people from reality. Slippen goes to Jon's privacy and tries to convince Jon by showing him Carolyn's belongings to persuade him to leave the system.

Then Slippen takes Jon near the restricted door of the facility. There is a warning on the door that it is not open without the facility staff's permission. This shows how the facility completely keeps them in captivity in the digital system. Slippen opens the door, and Jon observes the real outside yard: no walls, no ceiling, lawn, flowers, stars. Jon feels dizzy because it is the first time when there is no glass between the real world and him. It is an anti-hyperconnected moment.

Firstly, Jon feels nature through advertisement references, which shows media digital hyperconnectivity, but later Jon lies down on the floor and feels the flowers and nature in his close-up and realizes that real flowers and grass are more beautiful than ads or images. Slippen says to Jon that this yard is amazing but there is another better thing for him. There is a washed-out / bland woman in blue scrub near Jon. Jon judges her and thinks product-based comments on her makeup / hair. It shows that after seeing real people, ads come into the hyperconnected people's minds. And when the girl asks the real name of narrator Jon, instead of his system name, he replies that it is Randy. It shows system defines people with wrong names, which is not their real identity. Jon realizes she is his Carolyn. She looks more pregnant, weak/worn, and her speech is broken, in an advertisement language. Her language is broken, which shows there are effects of old media slogans on her language. She hugs Jon. Jon sees her neck whole, in which there was a system device. Means technology is not only inserted in the mind but also in the body.

When Jon is in the outside yard, there is no LI/ad code that comes to his mind. It is also an anti-hyperconnected moment. But when Jon sees real flowers, there are flowers and grass-related ads flood in his mind, such as sentimental ad memory, ad of Pfizer, Wildflowers, Acura Legend, cliff, LI 76567 Grey Poupon, Toro. Jon says: "Blinked on End, but it did not End" (Saunders, 2003, p. 20). Jon tries to blink, pauses, and ends, but the mental ad stream does not stop. Slippen calls Jon and asks if he can see Carolyn, who is waiting for Jon outside for an hour. Carolyn has freedom and goes where she wants. It is shown that in the system, her movement, vision, and mood are controlled through an algorithm / module, but outside, she

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controls her body and attention by herself. Jon tries to flinch and blink again and again. It shows how Jon's body is digitally interfaced: blink = command. But Carolyn is not panicked and seems beautiful in the moonlight. She has genuinely been worried about Jon. Slippen encourages Jon that this world and Carolyn can be him.

Jon's faintness also shows the effect of digital hyperconnectivity, as Jon's mind is not able to handle reality directly. Jon now comes to his senses and sits in the restricted room again. There is an exit paper in his lap, and the authorities of the facility stand around him. Dove is angry at his decision. Then Jon is taken to the removal department, which shows a digital connection is physically embedded in his body. The nurse asks Jon to take off his clothes and wear a scrub. It also shows that Jon's identity is described through branded clothes.

"Best of luck, Randy. You'll be fine" (Saunders, 2003, p. 21), Slippen reassures Jon. Nurse asks Jon to go out. Jon receives a medical consent form. Then, before surgery, a question arises "Is the patient aware of the risk of significantly reduced postoperative brain function?" (Saunders, 2003, p. 21). It implies that after surgery, brain function can be reduced. It shows digital hyperconnectivity that how Jon's mind connects with devices. Jon accepts the risk and permits Dr. Edward Kenton. There is a device, a Gargadisk [4]. The process of disconnection has started. After surgery, the cleaning device is used to clean Jon's body. At the end of the story, Jon and Carolyn want to live a normal life without digital boundaries, such as a house, a porch, a family, stars, the moon, and love, etc. After the leaving process, Jon thanks Vivian, Mr. Slippen, and Dr. Kenton. It seems like a farewell note.

Carolyn sends a fax to Jon, showing love and emotion. "LI 87326, LI 44387, LI 09383, LI 33081" (Saunders, 2003, p. 22), are the codes which comes in Jon's mind during text conversation, which show experiences are not like natural memory in Jon's mind but like digital files. Then Jon and Carolyn use some brand references in their conversation, such as Mountain Dew, Cinnabon, Speak & Spell, etc. It shows that at the time of farewell, they also express their feelings through ads. It is the biggest effect of digital digital hyperconnectivity. We can say this story completely describes how digital / commercial digital hyperconnectivity snatches human real emotions, natural memory, and normal language and real self-identity. But after facing all these hardships, love and hope can survive.

Conclusion

George Saunders presents digital hyperconnectivity as a powerful force that highly affects real self-identity. Through the character Jon, this science fiction reveals that the constant connection of humans with digital system does not only affect communication but also dominates emotions, real human feelings, memories, language, relations, attitude, and decision-making ability. Jon lives in a highly controlled digital environment where he is completely influenced by technologies, brands, products, images, slogans, and ads. As a result, his real feeling and self-identity transforms into a system-generated artificial identity. The textual analysis reveals that the self is affected in different ways. Firstly, it weakens Jon's natural emotions, such as he is trained to understand love, grief, pain, suffering, happiness, and seriousness through advertisements and media ads instead of real feelings. Secondly, it damages human language, as Jon expresses most of his feelings through brand names, slogans, and LI codes. Thirdly, it controls his memory and personal childhood history, such as his mother's memory loop, which proves that Jon's memory about his mother is not real, rather, it is just system-generated. This makes self-identity fake and unstable. This story also expresses the effects of digital hyperconnectivity's entrance in the human mind as well as the body. The physical devices, such as a hole near the head, Aurabon, and the removal surgery, describe that the system controls both mental and bodily identity. Moreover, Jon's fear of the outside world suggests that his mental condition is not like that of a normal person. The system destroys his real

[4] A device with which the facility system is connected with the body / brain.

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emotions and feelings like love, regret, and hope. When he goes into the outside world, he encounters his real nature by touching flowers, lying down on grass, looking at the sky, and Carolyn. Carolyn is the person who becomes a source for Jon to identify his real self and take a step to leave the facility system. Jon's story demonstrates that digital hyperconnectivity creates a serious crisis of self-identity. It turns humans into products and controls them psychologically. Saunders also suggests that human identity can be recovered through love, real memory, emotional truth, and freedom.

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