



دراسة ما بعد الرقمية للوحدة الممتدة والألفة المتوسطة وتلعيب العاطفة في  
رواية ديف ايغرز "الدائرة"

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"الدائرة"

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## A Post-Digital Study of Extended Loneliness, Mediated Intimacy, and Emotional Gamification in Dave Eggers' *The Circle*

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### Abstract

The paper explores Dave Eggers' *The Circle* as a post-digital work to explore how hyperconnectivity and surveillance infrastructures are redefining emotional life in the current digital culture. Combining the post-digital theory, the cultural politics of emotion, and the economic reasoning of surveillance capitalism, the paper will assert that the novel narrates that affect is not a marginal effect of technological spread, though a central point of control. In a close analysis of the experiences that Mae Holland undergoes, the analysis determines that there are three interconnected phenomena, including extended loneliness, mediated intimacy, and emotional gamification, as structural conditions that the ecosystem of surveillance in the novel brings about. The results indicate that the long-term visibility destroys interiority that creates a sense of emptiness despite all the interaction; mediation by technology substitutes





embodied connection with that of a performance more in line with the corporate ideology; and gamified emotional labour. The culture novel ends up being a caution concerning a culture, and it shows the emotional aftermath of a world in which connectivity is mandated and in which the self is streamlined to reflect surveillance economies.

### المستخلص

تتناول هذه الورقة رواية "الدائرة" *The Circle* لديف إيغرز بوصفها عملاً ما بعد-الرقمي، بهدف استكشاف الكيفية التي تعيد بها فرط الترابط وبُنى المراقبة تشكيل الحياة العاطفية في الثقافة الرقمية الراهنة. ومن خلال الجمع بين نظرية ما بعد-الرقمي، وسياسات العاطفة الثقافية، والمنطق الاقتصادي لرأسمالية المراقبة، تجادل الورقة بأن الرواية تُقدّم العاطفة لا بوصفها أثراً هامشياً لانتشار التكنولوجيا، بل باعتبارها نقطة مركزية للضبط والسيطرة. وعبر تحليل دقيق لتجارب ماي هولاند، يخلص البحث إلى وجود ثلاث ظواهر مترابطة هي: الوحدة الممتدة، والألفة المتوسطة تقنياً، وتلعيب العاطفة، بوصفها شروطاً بنيوية يُنتجها نظام المراقبة في الرواية. وتشير النتائج إلى أن الرؤية الدائمة على المدى الطويل تُدمر الباطنية وتنتج شعوراً بالفراغ رغم كثافة التفاعل؛ وأن الوساطة التكنولوجية تستبدل الاتصال المتجسّد بأداء يتمشى أكثر مع الأيديولوجيا المؤسسية؛ إضافةً إلى تلعيب العمل العاطفي. وفي المحصلة، تنتهي الرواية إلى كونها تحذيراً ثقافياً، إذ تكشف عن الآثار العاطفية لعالم تُفرض فيه الاتصالية فرضاً، ويُعاد فيه تشكيل الذات بما يعكس اقتصاديات المراقبة.

### 1. Introduction

*The Circle* is a bright account of the world of affective life that gets exposed to continual visibility in this post-digital age. In the initial stages, the novel places emotion as an externalized condition; this is a state of exposure to technology. Rather than being coerced by a central authority, characters willingly surrender their inner lives to the digital collective in pursuit of social validation and perceived transparency. Eggers's *The Circle* is not a dystopia in the traditional sense. No tyranny or oppression that aims to suppress the individual acts [1, p. 74].

Maurer and Rostboll believe that the narrative depicts a realistic expression of the affective state and extremes designed by digital technology [2, p. 4]. Such emotional intensities move along an emotional spectrum where technologies create euphoria, joy, and excitement,





whereas on the other hand, technologies create anxiety, stress, and angst [2, p. 5]. It is possible to describe such tension with a reference to the situation of Mae Holland, who is excited, enthusiastic, even giddy, but, at the same time, there is a high degree of mix of these empowerment feelings and disempowerment [2, p. 5]. In its turn, this leads to the emergence of an emotional landscape of flux, an extended loneliness masquerading as continual communication and a medialized intimacy that replaces personal relationships with the act of publicity.

More importantly, it is an obligatory affective performance. The culture of *The Circle* stipulates that the employees are always on the social media platform, where they send frowns, likes, and statements about each other [2, p. 2], thus institutionalizing the expression of emotions, and that online popularity rankings are part of the work package. Consequently, the affective expression will be turned into a quantified project, and this argument justifies the criticism of the novel of what could be called emotional gamification: the necessity to quantify the inner world and make it sociable and visible to the corporate machine.

In addition to being quantified, the emotional hue of social life is also redesigned because of the ideology of complete transparency advanced by the company, which is also summarized in its slogans: privacy is theft, secrets are lies, sharing is caring [2 p. 9]. Through the See Change system, Mae exposes as it is to the whole world everything she does and sees [2 p. 10], which triggers, as the story underlines, a lack of place and time to relax, to be herself, and to be hidden. (*The Circle*, as Mercer warns us, is building a world of constant daylight which, as he puts it, will burn us all alive [2, pp. 10-11]. In this regard, his prophecy prefigures the key argument of the whole novel that visibility is an emotional violence when made absolute.

Besides, the collective aspect of digital affection is also pre-programmed. The novel dramatizes scenes where connectivity turns into the feeling of mass emotional synchronization: democracy impairs one into a trance, collective pleasure of seeing the immediate impact of voting, and the spectacle stretches across networks with millions of people livestreaming the occasion [2 p. 8]. Collectively, these episodes emphasize a novel expression of feeling in the post-digital age, where the emotional force is augmented, decentralized, and weaponized by technological immediacy.

It is against this context that this current work uses post-digital theory to question how *The Circle* redefines an affective life in the surveillance





and mandatory transparency conditions. So, the discussion prefigures the research issue, defines the topicality of digital affect in post-digital research, and paves the way to develop a series of guiding questions about how affective life is constructed using technological systems, how constant visibility redefines intimacy and solitude, and how the novel can add to the overall literary and theoretical discussion on surveillance, embodiment, and digital culture.

Developing this conceptual framework, the post-digital world of *The Circle* by Dave Eggers reinvents emotional life, in which visibility has become a compulsory requirement, intimacy is filtered by technology, and selfhood is more and more quantifiable. The loss of privacy, the necessity of unceasing sharing, and the quantification of actions have far-reaching affective aftermaths as evidenced in the novel. Specifically, the breakdown of emotional state experience of Mae, the feeling that the world has turned into a black rip of loneliness, her lack of presence in the embodied relationships, and her emotional gamification are explained by the structural context of digital infrastructures, not as a personal malfunction. Although the topic of surveillance and the digital culture is increasingly being dealt with academically, there is a scarcity of involvement with the change of emotional experience as such. Thus, the key issue that is discussed in this regard is that *The Circle* reveals the transformation of affect into a post-digital resource, which can be monitored, harvested, and used.

Consistent with this issue, the analysis is framed by questions that probe how *The Circle's* expression of emotional experience is presented in a hyperconnected ecosystem of surveillance, how endless visibility breeds sustained loneliness despite social interactions, how mediated intimacy is produced as a technologically mediated form of relationality, and how emotional gamification is executed as a behavioral and mental reorganization mechanism. In line with this, the study will attempt to understand emotional life in the post-digital world, to analyze the affective implications of forced visibility, to analyze technologically mediated intimacy, and to investigate emotional gamification as a conditioning system that is woven into the ideological and platform-based fabric of the novel.

In a wider academic context, this text serves to add to the modern discourse about affect, surveillance, and post-digital culture, as it provides a more specific reflection on how *The Circle* also redefines the notion of emotional life in the context of complete visibility. In predicting





long-term loneliness, mediated intimacy, and gamification of emotions, the study is of great critical value in the way digital systems make use of human emotion and reengineer it. Moreover, it prolongs the digital literary criticism by working with the affective aspects of the algorithmic governance, proving how feelings are measured, monitored, and manipulated in a strategic way.

It is also vital because it generates an interdisciplinary alliance between the study of literature, affect theory, and critical analysis of the concept of surveillance capitalism, and provides a methodology of comprehending how technological infrastructures reshape the textures of everyday affective life. Finally, the analysis makes *The Circle* more than a dystopian work, but rather a post-digital map of emotional change in a world where human experience is made transparent, quantifiable, and commercial.

Even though the current body of work on *The Circle* has largely conceptualized the novel as an indictment of surveillance, erosion of democracy, and invasion of privacy, it is important to note that these approaches tend to focus on emotional life as a secondary process of regulation, as opposed to being central. Stated differently, a major knowledge gap still exists whereby the novel has yet to be systematically connected with post-digital surveillance capitalism through the affective logic. To be more precise, long-term loneliness has often been seen as an incidental effect, instead of a socio-technical manufacture itself, whereas the capture, measurement, and commodification of affect, which is emotional gamification, have only been given marginal follow-ups.

Consequently, the instrumental part of emotion in enforcing compliance, participation, and social monitoring is not theorized well. Also, no one has carefully discussed mediated intimacy, even though the novel presents the idea of social order where the experience of genuine human relations is substituted with performative interaction that is metric-based and controlled by algorithms and corporate needs. In response to these gaps, this work will combine post-digital theory, surveillance capitalism, and the politics of emotion to rethink loneliness, mediated intimacy, and emotional gamification as the foundational processes of behavior management (as opposed to secondary processes of generating narratives).

Although the extant literature concerning *The Circle* has extensively theatrically interpreted the novel as an indictment of surveillance, destruction of democracy, and intrusion of privacy, such methodologies





are inclined to consider emotional life as being a secondary effect of control, and not a primary method it employs. Little has been brought up as long-term loneliness, mediated intimacy, and emotional gamification, though not an intentional process (or even constructions), but as incidental outcomes. This scholarly gap highlights the necessity to address the problem of how not only is the practice of surveillance portrayed in the novel, but the instrumental nature of affect is theorized in terms of compliance, social interaction, and regulation of behavior.

It is here that the anti-empathic narrative distance that is utilized by Eggers is in harmony with the description of the affective life in *The Circle* that has been discussed in the introduction. Although the introductory part presents the novel as a post-digital map of emotional exposure as the process of externalizing emotions, quantifying them, and performing them socially, the growing distance between Mae and the reader supports this sense of affective alienation. Through the narration technique of free indirect discourse, Eggers places readers in a position of observing the mediation of the feelings of Mae by technological systems and not as an intimate witness into her inner life [3, p. 177]. This figurative ethos reflects the thematic issue of visibility in the novel of emotional control: similarly to the controlling of the affect that Mae is tested, ranked, and made visible to others, the empathetic feelings of the reader are carefully manipulated, which produces a dual impact of interest and alienation.

This kind of posthuman urbanism and techno spaces is criticized by Eggers in his novel in the way he demonstrates how merciless the pressure to contribute to this act of the community and self can be.

### 1. Literature Review

The paper is anchored on three overlapping theoretical frameworks, which are fundamental in explaining the technological, emotional, and economic systems represented in *The Circle*. It is proposed that post-digital aesthetics and critical mapping correspond to the upcoming era of art and design. It is hypothesized that post-digital aesthetics and critical mapping belong to the future stage of art and design.

The post-digital concept provides the necessary critical approach to the analysis of a situation where the boundary between digital and non-digital realities is becoming more and more unclear, making pervasive computation an invisible but dominant factor in everyday life.



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**Definition of Post-Digital:** The post-digital vision recognizes the blurring of historical separations between the digital and non-digital realms, with the digital now practically impossible to separate from ordinary experience [4, p. 21]. **Methodological Objective:** This one requires systematic mapping to understand the emergent rationalities of the modern world of instrumentalism and capitalism [4, p. 20].

**Aesthetic considerations:** The focus on the message is replaced with representation and perception, discussing the interfaces of *The Circle* as the tools of control and unspoken coercion [5, p. 25].

In order to analyze phenomena such as long loneliness and mediated intimacy, the research relies on the theory of emotion developed by Sara Ahmed that focuses on social and political dynamics of feelings, instead of individual psychological aspects of feelings.

• **Analytical Focus:** The framework focuses not on what the emotions are but on what the emotions do and has its functional role in the socio-technical system in *The Circle* [6, p. 5].

• **Circulation of Affect:** Emotions are perceived as social and cultural practices circulating among people and being attached to social structures, and not being locked up in individual bodies [6, pp. 5–7). Such a method is essential for examining how *The Circle* transforms the personal sense of loneliness into a socially mediated intimacy need.

The theory by Shoshana Zuboff (2019) offers the economic and political context to analyze the logic of the corporate operations of *The Circle*, making emotional gamification a conscious method of behavioral manipulation.

• **Definition of Surveillance Capitalism:** Surveillance Capitalism can be described as a system characterized by a unilateral use of human experience as raw material to predict as well as modify behavior [7, p. 14].

• **Systems of Behavioral Control:** *The Circle* alters the field of production in favor of the field of behavior change, using measures and gamification to influence social and emotional behavior [7, p. 338].

• **Critical Imperative:** This should be analyzed in terms of structures and logic of control, not in individual participants, discovering the corporate mechanisms within user-friendly interfaces [7, p. 18].





Within this theoretical context, existing scholarly interpretations of *The Circle* provide valuable insights that further illuminate how these conceptual frameworks have been applied in critical analyses of the novel. Maurer and Rostboll (2020) sought to break down the idea of so-called Demoxie, or the digitalized version of democracy as portrayed in *The Circle*, to learn more about how datafication and technological domination are threatening the established principles of democracy. They claim that the novel condemns the replacement of active citizen participation by algorithmic compliance and complete transparency. They conclude that *The Circle* reveals the technological imperative of measuring and knowing to be the foundation of all that is wrong in political freedom and autonomy, and eventually results in soft totalitarianism in the name of progress and community[2].

In the analysis of *The Circle*, Paramagururaj and Subha (2023) aimed to explore the topic of power as theorized by Michel Foucault, namely the connection between digital knowledge and power in the modern digital era. They emphasized the way that the technically dominant company gains power due to digital knowledge to reshape the form of a democratic society. Their study concludes that *The Circle* manages to alter the old structure of power through the help of digitized knowledge, which digitally subordinates the people of the world and takes control of both the virtual and the real world, thus demonstrating the Foucaultian theories of disciplinary power in modern society[8].

Saudi (2024) researched *The Circle* to reveal the notion of Data Colonialism as it offers a critical framework to understand the implementation of colonial aspects in the modern digital period. The paper set out to demonstrate the manner in which the practices of *The Circle* corporation, which entail surveillance, datafication, and control of information, act as a contemporary mode of digital exploitation that is akin to historical colonialism. The conclusion is that the novel serves as an important text that draws attention to how data technology, despite the positive effects, is inextricably connected to the risks of privacy and the development of greater social inequality in a new and more pervasive context of the digital sphere of dominance[9].

Allami and Sasani (2025) sought to conduct a post-humanist reading of *The Circle* in an attempt to explore how the advanced digital technology affected the identity, selfhood, and social relationships of the protagonist. Using posthumanism as their major theoretical framework, they were able to investigate how Mae Holland transforms into a



technologically mediated life. They conclude that the novel reflects how the posthuman condition has already been reached and that the incessant integration of human and digital systems results in an irreversible loss of the autonomous self and a constructed, quantified self-determined by the machine[10].

## 2. Methodology

The paper takes an interdisciplinary approach to its methodological framework, which places *The Circle* at the intersection of the areas of surveillance capitalism, post-digital aesthetics, and the cultural politics of emotion. Collectively, these strategies can be used to accurately analyze how the technological infrastructure used in the novel generates emotional gamification, mediated intimacy, and extended loneliness.

The analysis has Shoshana Zuboff and her version of surveillance capitalism as the logic that she describes as the unilateral take on human experience in the form of free raw material to be translated into behavioral data [7, p. 14]. This is a theoretical prism that gives an economic and political context to the mechanisms of extraction and emotional control of *The Circle's* corporation. According to Zuboff, modern digital systems work based on automated protocols that are meant to affect and modify human behavior in large numbers, with the traditional mechanisms of production becoming subservient to the mechanisms of behavioral modification [7, p. 21]. The performance metrics as well as popular scores, zings, and constant visibility of the novel is not an isolated aesthetic decision but a complete regime of behavior whereby certainty can be in place of trust [7, p. 338].

The work of Zuboff also offers a meta-analytic approach methodologically: instead of analysing single interfaces, it finds the puppet master, not the puppet. That is, the technologies of *The Circle* are discussed not as individual instruments but as manifestations of a more comprehensive infrastructural reasoning that is said to infuse technology and bring it into action [7, p. 18].

This is in keeping with the own approach of Zuboff to isolate the underlying motif in the clamour of technological minutia and corporate discourse [7., p. 20] to clarify that compliance by digital systems engineers is facilitated by emotions. This exploration of the mechanics of affective control and structural logic of emotional gamification is an attempt to make legible the processes of change that were unfamiliar, but her focus on mapping the unprecedented grounds of this study. In order to supplement this economic and political system, the analysis





relies on post-digital aesthetics as defined by Berry and Dieter (2015). Their writing recognizes the post-digital condition as a condition where the old divisions between the online and offline life have become so blurry that to discuss the digital presupposes a split of experience that becomes less and less sensible [4, p. 21].

*The Circle* exists within such a collapse, and the approach thus does not just serve the interests of what the novel symbolizes, but how it symbolizes the interface, atmosphere, and experience of ubiquitous computation. It is then vital to map and comprehend this novel rationality, as demonstrated by, and to examine the interface as a place where a symptomology can be exercised to pose questions about our modern condition [4, pp 20-24]. It is in this way that the architectural design, social feedback loops of user interfaces, and the immersive sense that is the architectural design of the novel are read by the study as aesthetic expressions of computational rationality, and that emotional life is formatted, channeled, and made measurable.

The third methodological pillar is based on the cultural politics of emotion of Sara Ahmed (2014), which transforms the object of emotion study from internal psychology to social practices. In place of questioning what emotions are, Ahmed underlines that the question of the analysis should be What do emotions do. Her approach follows the circulation of emotions between bodies and how they stick and move out, in addition to moving, which can be considered an essential framework to analyze mediated intimacy and the emotionally filled atmosphere of *The Circle's* campus [6, p. 5].

The analysis of emotion as being a privatized psychological experience is what supports Ahmed to read the engineered affective mood of the novel, its likes, frowns, smiles, rankings, and compulsive sharing as cultural practices aimed at making subjects conform to the collective. According to her, emotions are not neutral, but they produce very effects on the surfaces and boundaries that constitute social belonging [6, p. 7]. This observation validates the argument of the study that emotional gamification in *The Circle* is not only a way of entertaining, but it also generates obedient subjects whose connections strengthen surveillance conditions.

The approach of reading the text used by Ahmed to match subjects with collectives by assigning others as the origin of our emotions elucidates the way in which *The Circle* re-aligns the emotional responsibility and moralizes transparency. The fact that she noticed that





our emotions tether us to the same conditions of our subordination [6, p. 11] offers a critical instrument in understanding the motivation of *The Circle's* members to fuel their eagerness to adopt systems that slowly undermine their autonomy. This part of the methodology enables the research to explain how the affective investments of excitement, shame, and desire to be visible generate types of voluntary servitude that are enacted in ways that seem enjoyable instead of oppressive.

### 3. Discussion

This discussion targets the main issue, which has been identified in this paper, namely, that emotional life has been, by and large, a marginal result of *The Circle* in terms of the critical readings of this phenomenon, but it has not been considered as a power mechanism, and what the central point of control is. However, in this analysis, it becomes evident that the novel creates emotion itself as a key location of control in a post-digital ecosystem where surveillance, hyperconnectivity, and algorithmic regulation intersect. Technology does not passively influence emotional life in *The Circle*, but, on the contrary, is produced, governed, and even exploited, and affect is one of the main forms of reorganization of the subjectivity and social relations. The discussion is built on the post-digital theory, cultural politics of emotion, and emotional gamification as interrelated systems of influence to reveal how control is conducted not through direct coercion, but through feeling.

In Eggers' novel, the ideological foundation of this system is condensed into the *Circle's* absolutist motto that "all that happens must be visible." Crucially, as Nayar observes, Mae encounters this principle not first as a slogan but as an embodied practice during her initial encounter with the company's offices, where transparency is spatially and socially enacted before it is verbally articulated [11, p. 208]. In the post-digital state defined by Berry and Dieter(2015), there is no longer a distinction between online and offline experiences, which makes visibility a stable state and not a situational option. This collapse is dramatized in *The Circle* in a manner that directly helps us to comprehend the research problem in that emotional interiority is unsustainable under the conditions of constant exposure. The affective life of Mae is experienced in the regime wherein there is no time to be off, no time to be not available, no time when she is not under observation, and the expression of emotions is no longer episodic or personal but constant and assessed publicly [12, p. 122].





This situation is supported by the absolutist reasoning of the company: you could see everything, and that was it. Nothing was hidden” [12, p. 219]. It is not connectivity that leads to loneliness, but rather the compulsory circulation as a structural result of forced circulation that creates loneliness. The fact that Mae sees a persistent black rip in her [12, p. 195] is the expression of an affective depletion brought about by excess exposure, and her awareness of the reality that the more she meets people the less she feels like herself [12, p. 321] becomes the manifestation of the erosion of interiority as brought about by constant visibility. Follow the work by Sara Ahmed, emotions in the novel are not part of the subject as internal psychological conditions; instead, they circulate, are stuck to, and concentrated on interfaces and audiences. This circulation empties emotion of its contemplative power, and brings about, as a lasting and systemic affective state, and not as a personal psychological defect- namely, the very affectivity that so much current criticism fails to take into account.

Mediated intimacy also explains the reorganization of emotional life under the surveillance of post-digital conditions, which is the solution to the question of how the relational experience may be reconfigured in the case of the public regulation of affect. Interpersonal relationships in *The Circle* are getting more mediated by screens, metrics, and requirements of visibility, and intimacy becomes performative, its practice directed toward spectatorship instead of the mutual presence. Mae has continuously had a third party mediating her relationships, as Mercer explains that an inevitable third party is present whenever a message is being relayed through *The Circle*, in which every message flows through *The Circle* [12, p. 131].

The only thing that makes emotional interactions valuable is that they are visible, shareable, and measurable, supported by corporate ethics that say that it is always better to share, to be available, and to be a good member of the community. In this type of moral economy, emotional restraint is ethically questionable because withholding is to be suspicious [12, p. 304]. The point made by Ahmed that social belonging surfaces are created by emotions assists in understanding how mediated intimacy is formed as a kind of moral control. Relationships no longer serve as places of emotional refuge and become, in fact, extensions of surveillance, and this indicates that intimacy itself is recycled as an instrument of obedience.





The form of emotional gamification is the most explicit in its revelation of the way in which emotion is deployed as a governance measure, which directly answers the worry of the study about the way in which emotion is conceptualized within the context of surveillance capitalism. Emotional expression is translated into quantifiable work through rankings, feedback loops, and participation metrics. Affective output, i.e., the number of zings, comments, and smiles sent by Mae in less than an hour [12, p 190], proves how emotion is turned into action. She cannot imagine her self-worth without the algorithmic analysis since she can feel that her PartiRank had dropped, and she could feel it at the moment [12, p. 192], which proves the assertion of Zuboff that surveillance capitalism has repurposed human experience as a primary raw material of the behavioral change. This process is supported by ideology, which is brought out clearly through the belief that when you are under observation, you are at best. It keeps you honest” [12, p. 305]. Feelings are not spontaneous anymore but are planned and developed with the help of reward systems, which stimulate constant activity. Visibility, therefore, serves as both money and punishment, as the emotional virtue is in agreement with the platform activity, and the control is disguised as the willingness to express enthusiasm freely.

Not only is this pervasive system of surveillance and visibility abstract in nature, but it can be observed in the daily dealings of Mae, too, in which even intimate relationships are mediated by *The Circle*, and the presence of a third party is inevitable. The commentary by Mercer pinpoints the ubiquitous mediation of the relationships of Mae using the platforms of *The Circle*: “Every time I see or hear from you, it's through this filter. You send me links, you quote someone talking about me, you say you saw a picture of me on someone's wall. It's always this third-party assault” [12, p. 131].

This indicates that interpersonal communication is no longer face-to-face and intimate, but subject to a digital mediator at all times, making emotional involvement a spectator sport. The emotional life of Mae turns theatrical, which is organized around the visibility and not the presence of each other. It is this performative relationship that is reinforced by the ideological structure of *The Circle*, which transforms emotional expression into a morally required action. “Privacy is Theft” [12, p. 303].

Having absorbed this slogan, Mae learns to regard sharing, availability, and emotional manifestation not as a personal choice but as a moral duty. The relationships are measured by metrics, feedback systems,





and visible interactions, which make intimacy more of a game. Feelings are no longer spontaneous and self-directed, but controlled, observed, measurable, and social approval and reputation (as PartiRank) is the reward and punishment.

Collectively, these dynamics solve the research problem by showing that power in *The Circle* is exercised more through the implementation of affective alignment, as opposed to being coerced through coercion. The novel unveils the re-direction of emotional needs (belonging, recognition, and connection) to support surveillance infrastructures. The increasing need of Mae to be visible, which is manifested in her understanding of the fact that she needed to be seen. This necessitates her being seen, as it is necessary to be seen [12, p. 312], which points to the fact that emotional vulnerability makes subjects subject to systems of control.

The vision of the company of complete integration that can result in the statement that the end is the completion. The fact that emotional life itself becomes the glue of governance is confirmed by the fact that we are all circling one another [12, p. 481]. Introducing regulation as a part of pleasure, affirmation, and moral necessity, the post-digital system can comply without its visible displays, which proves that affect is not only predetermined by surveillance, but it is the primary way the surveillance works.

In order to develop this point, the affective government portrayed in *The Circle* can be fruitfully interpreted through an intersectional prism, which helps to understand that emotional rule does not work in a homogeneous manner among subjects. Intersectionality, as developed by Kimberle Crenshaw, holds that power is occupied and managed at the intersection of more than one social position, and not on one axis. In the novel, emotional visibility, participation measures, and constant affective performance requirements do not merely train a generic subject; however, bodies within hierarchies of gender, labour, class, and precarity are differentially pressured. This affective obedience of Mae, therefore, is not just a matter of the individual but of the organization, as a young woman with her employability, belonging, and moral value always evaluated using emotional availability. The formulation provided by Crenshaw is instructive in this case: "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated[13, p. 140]."





Although the original intervention by Crenshaw touches on race and gender specifically, its power of analysis reaches the post-digital emotional economy of *The Circle*. Emotional gamification and mediated intimacy can become processes that increase vulnerability at the intersection, where gendered expectations of care, communicative work, and emotional openness intersect with algorithmic assessment. In this regard, the affective control of the novel is not merely a method of universal surveillance capitalism but an unequally spread load, which further increases domination by taking advantage of the overlapping social statuses. Intersectionality thus adds to the discussion by showing that, as a site of governance, emotion is not a neutral phenomenon: it is a differentiated space where power is more firmly attached to certain bodies than to others, and in which emotional life itself is a stratified infrastructural space of control.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper concludes that *The Circle* is a critical portrayal of post-digital affective life where emotion serves as a dominating force instead of a by-product of technological transformation. The analysis shows that emotional transformation, mediated by loneliness and emotional gamification, is structurally embedded in systems of surveillance and hyperconnectivity in the novel.

Through excessive visibility as opposed to social absence, the analysis demonstrates that extended loneliness in *The Circle* is created. The interiority is broken down by constant exposure, and there is no room to process or withdraw. The subject feels emptier than ever before despite the uber-present connectivity, and it turns out that the forced connectivity fails to satisfy but destroys relational needs. Loneliness is thereby a prolonged emotive state that is produced by digital means of post-digital structures.

It is also shown in the study that the technological imperatives play a fundamental role in mediating and redefining intimacy in the novel. Performative transparency has taken the place of authentic relationality, in which the value of emotional exchange is one of its visibility and measurability, not depth. This is the technologicalized intimacy, which converts social affiliation into a moral duty in accordance with corporate ideology, which makes privacy and silence deviant.

Lastly, the discussion makes emotional gamification one of the key processes by which affect is measured, controlled, and used. Emotional expression is transformed into calculable work, which enhances the



conformity of behavior and covers the control with participation and reward. Basing the research on the concept of surveillance capitalism, it has revealed that emotions are systematically gathered and maximized to enforce dominance on the platform, breaking the line between personal emotion and economic value.

This paper alters the definition of *The Circle* as a diagnosis of affective government in modern digital culture by incorporating the post-digital theory, the cultural politics of emotion, and the criticism of surveillance capitalism. The novel exposes the fact that the most significant effects of surveillance are not just the loss of privacy but the reconstruction of the very emotional life. In a world where visibility is mandatory, and affect is commoditized, the ability to experience privately, relate in a way that is genuine, as well as be out of measure, becomes further unstable. *The Circle* is therefore a warning tale as it reveals how post-digital systems are transforming the nature of feeling, relating, and eventually, being human.

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