



RESEARCH PAPER

Symbiotic Subjectivities and Posthuman Cartography of Identity in Iftikhar's *Divided Species* and Chambers' *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet*

¹Tahira Ishaq and ²Dr. Ali Usman Saleem

1. M Phil Scholar, Department of English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Professor, Department of English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author | tahiraishaq1111@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In this paper, the authors discuss Iftikhar's *Divided Species* and Chambers' *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* in the light of Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. This paper advocates for a version of posthumanism that promotes long-time and peaceful coexistence of biological, artificial, and human life in the universe by highlighting inclusivity, diversity, and interspecies cohabitation in a technologically driven society. It focuses on identity, fragmented embodiment, distributed consciousness, and the symbiotic relationship between humans, artificial intelligence, and other species, as well as the challenges they face in adaptation of identity in a digitally saturated environment, with reference to human and nonhuman beings. With the combination of fantastic and realistic elements, *Divided Species* portrays unstable identity empathy, greed, interspecies conflict, xenophobia, and societal influences on career choices in a multispecies environment, ultimately revealing transformative power and culminating in a profound understanding of harmony and interspecies symbiosis. Similarly, *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* a social commentary about identity, belonging, family, community, trauma, grief, healing, diversity, inclusiveness, personal growth, self-discovery, and existential dilemmas chronicles the adventures of a multispecies crew on board the spacecraft Wayfarer as they travel to a far-off planet to negotiate a peace treaty. It presents a posthuman society based on cooperation and cross-cultural interaction. The protagonist, Rosemary flees a difficult background and learns to live and grow as a person in multispecies crew. This study includes elements that vary from previous science fiction writings and represents a big transition in science fiction genre. *Divided Species'* setting of modern Karachi, a Pakistani metropolis, decenters western hegemony, and *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* decenters imperialistic space exploration. This paper emphasizes cross-cultural understanding and information exchange among species, revealing the global scope of human and posthuman development.

KEYWORDS

Identity, AI consciousness, Man-Machine Symbiosis, Fragmented Embodiment, and Distributed Cognition

Introduction

Does identity reside within the body? Is it mental? Is it significant or not? Does consciousness determine our identity? Lock (1689) in *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* states that we should not undervalue the significance of the body in order to define the components of "personal identity", we first need to understand what a person

represents, and a person is an intelligent, thinking being with a reason and a reflection who has the ability to think of himself as the same thinking thing in various contexts (p.9). Furthermore, Plumwood (1993), describes Aristotle in *Scala Naturae* (Great Chain of Being), ranked humans as the most rational and morally superior species placing them just below the divine. Aristotle states that "soul dominates over body, mind and logic dominates over passion" (p.146). These anthropocentric views gives humans' the moral and intellectual right to govern over other species.

This paper challenges these anthropocentric views by referring Darwin's (1859) description of Survival of the Fittest in *On the Origin of Species by means of means of Natural Selection*. This concept of Survival of the Fittest has great relevance in today's rapidly evolving world where substantial transformations are happening as a result of advancements in artificial intelligence. This research emphasis that modern societies must embrace technological advancements especially artificial intelligence (AI), to thrive in the future, much as a fetus must adapt to survive in changing environment. The term Survival of the Fittest is not only limited to biological definition rather it is a metaphor for acceptance, adaptability, struggle for identity and belonging in alienated environment. Posthumanism embraces these concepts to provide new perspectives on bodies and their interactions with the environment that goes beyond organic entities (flora and fauna) to technology (biotechnologies and artificial lives). Nietzsche(1883) in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* argues that 'humans' have ability to transcend their present moral and intellectual boundaries, and his concept of *Übermensch* (Overman, Beyond Man, and Superman) challenges conventional understanding of human limitations and predicts conception of overriding fixed identities (p.10). Deleuze and Guattari (1980) in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* describes 'Subject' constantly re-evaluate itself, and when 'Subject' is interpreted in a particular context, the term 'becoming' (a change or transformation) denotes relational aspect of 'Subject' that has a privileged relationship with numerous others and integrates into their technologically mediated environment (p.150). Subsequently, Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, and N. Katherine Hayles, disrupt anthropocentric hierarchy by contending that ethical significance, intelligence and agency are not exclusive to humans. By rejecting Aristotle's teleological theory, these theorist accepts a relational ontology in which entities co-exist, co-evolve, and co-shape reality without giving humans priority. Donna Haraway (1985) in *A Cyborg Manifesto* emphasizes a more nuanced understanding of existence and identity "by blurring boundaries between humans, machines, and animals" (p.52). She challenges dualism like human/machine, self/other, and nature/culture. Judith Butler (1990) in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* asserts that "identity is performative," continuously enacted via repetition rather than possessing a permanent essence (p.25). Butler's this concept of identity is congruent with the posthumanist notion of identity as contingent, fluid, and shaped by a variety of factors. Andy Clark (2003) in *Natural Born Cyborg* states that "the mind is actually not only located in the head; it is distributed throughout the world via intricate webs of interaction" (p.7). Clark challenges the traditional view of cognition as a completely human, brain-bound phenomena. Clark claims mind actively constructs its own experiences and is intricately linked to the biological and cultural environments in which it grows and functions rather than being a passive recipient of information.

Posthumanism challenges boundaries that separate individual from collective, organic from technological, and human from non-human in an effort to marginalize human subject. Ray Kurzweil (2005) in *The Singularity is Near* claims by achieving "superintelligence" singularity will enable humans to transcend constraints of our biological bodies and minds (pp.8-9). It would bring the highest level of human-machine integration, eliminating the need to distinguish between artificial intelligence and

biological intelligence. Moreover, Turkle (2011) in *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* illustrates we are inclined to view ourselves as “machines”, we are tempted to believe that we can be programmed or enhanced; however, we must consider attentively the ways in which technology is being used to replace interpersonal relationships by substituting humans and influencing our identities (p. 258). Sherry Turkle elaborates artificial intelligence has the capacity to play social and emotional roles that are commonly associated with human relationships like Woebot, and AI chat bots, integrates into human emotional spaces and gives companionship to its users. Braidotti (2013) in *The Posthuman* depicts posthuman situation causes a qualitative change in our understanding of the fundamental unit of reference for our species, our political system, and our interactions with other inhabitants of this planet. A posthuman subject can be a humanoid robot enhanced with engineering technology, an artificial intelligence creature, and shape-shifting monsters such as vampires or werewolves, or animagi beings that were once human but now transcend human boundaries. Bostrom (2014) in *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* describes “Our brains begin to deteriorate irreversibly after a few decades, but microprocessors are not constrained by these limitations” (p. 60). He further says that if superintelligence takes over as the primary decision-maker in global structures, Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) will become “active agent” while humans will become “passive agents”, challenging traditional notions of identity and autonomy (p.86). Nick Bostrom argues as AI becomes more integrated into human life, it will establish a monolithic identity by eliminating human diversity. Humans will no longer perceive themselves as distinct individual, but as components of a larger technological ecosystem. This transition could result in hybrid or distributed identities.

N. Katherine Hayles' groundbreaking work *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999) provides a theoretical foundation to examine Iftikhar's *Divided Species* (2020) and Chambers' *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014). This study explores the concept of embodiment, disembodiment, and distributed cognition in multispecies societies where humans are not the only beings considered intellectual, as Aristotle asserted centuries ago. The selected works for analysis argue that individuals who are willing to change by embracing artificial intelligence, hybrid identities, and cultural diversity will be the ones who survive in the future, while those who adhere to rigid notions of humanity will be left behind in a world they no longer understand or control. Characters in these works reflect various cultural species and ontological affinities, and create strong bonds as they navigate personal problems, cultural divisions, and existential threats in space.

Literature Review

Arif (2021) in *Beyond Book Reviews by Mackenzie* states *Divided Species* (2020) by departing from its realist foundation, avoids clichéd elements of modern Pakistani Anglophone literature and presents a new angle on Karachi. It's a dialogue driven story that includes some historical background information and gives science fiction story more depth and enhances its value in Pakistan's literary landscape, and filmmakers ought to take notice of Iftikhar's debut novel. It has a lot of cinematic potential and contributes significantly to Pakistani English fiction with its unique blend of action, adventure, and reflection. Keharl (2021) in *A world beyond our own* describes although Iftikhar incorporates historical aspects accurately, yet occasionally undermines its authenticity. Karachi in ancient manuscripts under many titles, got the appellation of ‘village of Kolachi’ around 1729; it was originally called ‘Karachee’ in a 1742 record of a Dutch merchant ship that was wrecked off its coast. According to Iftikhar's story, Taleykens were born before the ‘distant dream’ of Industrial Revolution (1760-1840). The fact that alien species arrived on Earth in 1856, as stated on the back cover of a text results in a contradicting chronology

and misleading to readers who frequently base their opinions on the back cover of a book. If aliens had truly arrived on Earth in 1856, readers would have reason to question their superior intelligence and decision to hand over their pricey Hextanlo to city dwellers. Although Karachi in *Divided Species* (2020) is neither portrayed as a repository of former colonial domination or a source of ethnic strife, the author employs a diverse narrative arsenal to give the city's troubled past and present a distinct identity. Rehman (2021) in *Fiction: Aliens in Karachi* depicts *Divided Species* (2020) substantially resembles the narrative styles of Western authors Ursula Le Guin and H. G. Wells. The setting of contemporary Karachi indicates that it is a localized version of HG Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898), and the quotation in the epigraph of *Divided Species* (2020) from Ursula K. Le Guinn's novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) emphasizes significance of the journey. The opening four sentences of the prologues describes mankind journey to unearth mysteries and secrets buried deep in space. Against the backdrop of domestic struggles for control, it envisions an intergalactic war with humans, with the overarching message that everyone has different motives, and there will always be ideological conflict within any community; however, from a broader perspective, the novel shed light on the value of species harmony as well as the potential benefits of doing so. Maniar (2021) in *Do You Know Divided Species Is A Sci-Fi Novel Set In Karachi?* Describes Taleyken from an imaginary planet Arplon first visited Earth in 1856, when they buried Hextanlo, having no idea it would grow into Pakistan's vibrant metropolis of Karachi. Commander Kropnock sent three Taleyken warriors to protect Hextanlo that has been kept hidden in Karachi for almost 150 years. Taleykens' beliefs are similar to those of humans' with an emphasis on morality, ethics, kinship, greed for resources, a desire for domination, and perseverance, yet they are technologically superior to humans. They are compelled to engage in a deadly battle with another alien race in order to find Hextanlo. *Divided Species* (2020) does not attempt to 'other' the alien species; rather, it is motivated by the dual forces of empathy and sound judgment. Characters appear genuine, and they frequently oscillate between extremes of 'good' and 'evil'. The contrast between General Gooztan and Commander Kropnock demonstrates that each species has its own heroes and outcasts. General Gooztan's desire to find Hextanlo for his own dark purposes exemplifies greed and interspecies conflict, whereas Captain Kropnock's significant decisions to save his people's lives (any change in Hextanlo's location will result in a radioactive catastrophe) exemplify the importance of empathy, moral leadership, and interspecies cooperation.

Herbert (2015) depicts Becky Chambers' adds unique perspective to adventure stories by emphasizing seemingly ordinary aspects of life. *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014), a debut novel in the Wayfarers series is a true example of the well-known Emerson quotation that 'it's the process that matters, not the end point'. The narrative alternates between narrators and each character advances the main plot and subplot. It chronicles the adventures of a multicultural crew on board the spacecraft Wayfarer as they travel to a far-off planet to negotiate a peace treaty. Mackenzie (2023) reviews unlike classic science fiction titles that demonstrate urgency (*Neuromancer*, *Wars of the Worlds*, *Hyperion*), Chambers' title is conversational implying a voyage of diversions and personal growth. *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014) highlights a point of contention that can only be resolved through empathy, patience, and a reluctance to dehumanize (or de-species) others. Rowland (2019) in *One Atom of Justice, One Molecule of Mercy, and the Empire of Unsheathed Knives* mentions Becky Chambers did not seek to be labeled hopepunk but appreciate the term very much as she asserts, 'You're seeing the world just the way it is, with all of its tragedy and grimness, and you say, No, I think this can be better'. 'That is really punk, in my opinion'. Rowland further describes the act of kindness in Chambers' works anticipates a future where decency prevails and individuals are permitted to shed tears of joy, which is more than enough rebellion in twenty-first century. Maher (2019)

describes *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014) is set in the context of Galactic Commons (a confederacy reminiscent of Star Trek), which is populated by AIs and creatures of various colors, sexual orientations, sizes, physical forms, and neurodiversities. Wayfarer's crew includes human mechanics Kizzy and Jenks, an Aandrisk pilot named Sissix, a human captain named Ashby Santoso, Grum alien Dr. Chef (who serves as both a chef and a medic) the Sianat pair Ohan (who navigates the host of a virus that affects their thoughts), Lovey (an AI in charge of the ship's systems and communications), and Corbin (a human fuel scientist). The major plot arc revolves around the Wayfarer's longest and most dangerous mission: digging a tunnel to Hedra Ka – the homeworld of the Toremi Ka a recently allied but notoriously cruel species – they encounter many difficulties along the way and develop enduring bonds. George (2014) writes in *Journal of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies* that commensality in *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014) is a symbolic act that fosters a sense of belonging among an interplanetary space crew made up of various alien species with vastly different cultures and civilizations. Rosemary, the protagonist, finds that commensality broadens her understanding of dietary constraints to include foods that were previously forbidden to her, and she enjoys eating after getting over her reluctance to try alien cuisine. Dr. Chef has a complex relationship with food, which helps him in transition from his traumatic past as a military doctor to his current peaceful career as a physician and chef. In *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014), characters form a network in which each member of a unit has ties to others in order to create a peaceful world.

This work stands out from earlier research by addressing a significant gap in existing literature. It depicts the coexistence and interaction of humans, non-humans, and sentient beings in highly advanced societies; it investigates identity adaptation as characters negotiate their sense of self in the face of a multispecies environment, modern technologies, and hybrid lives; and it depicts the distributed cognition or intelligence in posthuman societies, in which all members of society work together to make effective decisions rather than relying on a single authoritative power.

Theoretical Framework

N. Katherine Hayles offers a balanced posthuman framework that avoids both technological utopianism and dystopian determinism. Her significant book *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999) challenges conventional ideas of identity, awareness, and embodiment while providing a critical history of advancements in virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and cybernetics. Unlike Donna Haraway, who emphasizes cyborg hybridity and political metaphor, Hayles provides a systematic theory of cognition, embodiment, and information. Unlike Rosi Braidotti, who's posthumanism is primarily ethical and philosophical, Hayles grounds her theory in science, cybernetics, and literary analysis, making it especially suitable for science fiction texts. Crucially, Hayles rejects disembodied intelligence, insisting that information always has a material instantiation. She argue that AI must remain ethically situated and embodied in systems of responsibility. Hayles analyze ethics without requiring emotion, intelligence without domination, and symbiosis without erasing difference – which directly aligns with the narrative logic of *Divided Species* (2020) and *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014).

N. Katherine Hayles splits posthumanism into two schools of thoughts in her book. Firstly, consciousness is not connected to the mind, and it can be transfer to a machine. The proponents of this apocalyptic perspective typically claim that humankind will soon end. Secondly, posthumanism should be considered as an opportunity to examine what it is to be a human. This is not necessarily the end of humanity; rather, it is the end of certain

perspectives, forcing us to reconsider what makes us human and what distinguishes us from machines. Hayles criticize the idea that consciousness or information can be isolated from the body. She describes when consciousness is transferred into a digital or virtual medium then disembodiment (where the limitations of the physical body can be overcome) is portrayed as a desirable state in the posthuman discourse. Hayles further argues disembodiment is a myth because our experiences are shaped by our bodies, even in digital or virtual environments. Hayles depicts posthuman approach recognizes body's fundamental significance in molding identity, thought, and perception rather than aiming for a disembodied ideal. Hayles describes the "post" in posthuman refers to changes that have already occurred, while the "human" refers to the seriated nature of these changes (p.281). She explains books alone will not provide answers to questions regarding the posthuman; instead, the answers will be found in the "mutual creation of a human-populated planet" where we may continue to survive, find purpose for ourselves and our children, and consider how we differ and how we are similar to the intelligent machines with whom our destinies are becoming more entwined (p.282). In the beginning of book, Hayles proposed that becoming posthuman can be terrifying as Hans Moravec and UCLA colleague Michael Dyer, believe that "intelligent machines" will eventually replace humans "as the dominant form of life on the planet" (p.283). But later on she explains body itself is a congealed metaphor—a physical structure whose possibilities and constraints have been shaped by an evolutionary past that intelligent machines do not share. Human beings are first and foremost embodied beings, and because of the complexity of embodiment, human consciousness develops in ways that are significantly different from those of intelligence embodied in "cybernetic machines" (p.283). Hayles contends that liberal humanism concentrates on the mind rather than the body, and that posthumanism—while deconstructing liberal humanism in many respects—nonetheless continues to emphasize cognition over embodiment, just as its predecessor did. The posthumans' collective heterogeneity suggests distributed cognition, undermining the notion of will, agency, and desire that is unique to the self and distinct from the wills of others. He further describes if the essence of human is the freedom of others' wills, then the prefix 'post' in posthuman is not because it is essentially unfree, but because it is impossible to distinguish between another's will and one's own will.

Hayles depicts relational view of identity by emphasizing its inherent fluidity. Identity is constantly shaped by interactions with machines and other systems. Hayles argues the belief that information is more important than material instantiation leads to the misconception that the "body is just a prosthesis that can be upgraded, changed, or abandoned" (p.2). For being a literal cyborg, it is not necessary for the subject to be a posthuman creation. Even a physiologically unmodified "Homo sapiens" is considered posthuman (p.4). According to Hayles, posthuman refers to union of human and intelligent machines. Hayles claims "cyborg is a cybernetic organism", a creature of both "social reality and fiction", and "a hybrid of machine and organism" (p.84). Hayles defines body extension and replacement (the addition or removal of body parts with different prostheses) as a continuation of a process that began long before our birth. She describes the posthuman era, in which human-machine interaction opens up new avenues for identity and agency, the cyborg is more than just a metaphor, and feedback loops between humans and machines are a continuous flow of information through which humans and machines adapt and change in response to one another. According to Hayles, the boundaries between "cybernetic mechanisms and biological organisms, robot teleology and human objectives, and physical existence and computer simulation are entirely arbitrary" in the posthuman period. Even identity and agency are no longer limited to the body; digital technologies and computers have the potential to expand, augment, or even replace human identity and experience. Hayles proposes that humans can form symbiotic

relationships with intelligent machines, such as in computer-assisted surgery, or be displaced by them, as seen in Japanese and American assembly plants that use robotic arms for labor. Hayles believes that just because machines can interact with people or even replace them for some tasks (e.g. sort emails and removing unwanted messages that humans no longer need to do) does not mean that they can be treated equally. Hayles illustrates the growing interest in the posthuman future of humanity, citing ideas like Howard Rheingold's "intelligence augmentation" and Hans Moravec's "postbiological" future (p. 35). Hayles depicts posthumanism itself is not deadly; rather, it becomes deadly when it is grafted upon a liberal humanist view of the self. However, the posthuman does not have to be reconstituted as antihuman or reintegrated into liberal humanism. Hayles proposes that we can develop alternative conceptions of the posthuman that will ensure the long-term survival of humans and the other biological and artificial life forms that coexist with us on Earth, and that collaboration between humans and intelligent machines is not a threat to human rights and responsibilities, but rather a natural progression in the evolution of distributed cognition environments that has been going on for thousands of years.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative, comparative, and theory-driven methodology. The study adopts Catherine Belsey's approach to textual analysis as a guiding method analysis to examine selected characters, narrative moments, and technological interactions in *Divided Species* (2020) and *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014). Belsey, in her essay *Textual Analysis as a Research Method* (2013) argues that meaning is not fixed or universal; instead, it is shaped by social interactions and is constantly shifting. This post-structuralist view challenges the idea of a single, final interpretation of a text. Therefore, meaning is fluid, multiple, and context-dependent because different readers may interpret the same signs in different ways. The analysis is guided by N. Katherine Hayles' posthuman framework, particularly her concepts of posthuman identity, distributed cognition, embodiment, disembodiment, and human-machine symbiosis. A comparative approach is used to explore how two culturally distinct science fiction texts address similar philosophical and ethical concerns about identity and coexistence in multispecies, technologically saturated worlds. The primary data is taken from Iftikhar's *Divided Species* (2020) and Chambers' *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014). And secondary data is taken from Scholarly works on posthumanism, science fiction studies, artificial intelligence, and multispecies theory, with particular emphasis on Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman*, along with relevant critical essays and journal articles. The research employs close textual analysis and comparative literary analysis in the following ways: (1) close reading; (2) thematic analysis; (3) conceptual coding and theory-based interpretation; (4) comparative analysis; and (5) synthesis. Close reading includes human-machine interaction and cooperation, the negotiation of identity in multispecies societies, cognitive processes shared across humans and technologies, and shifts between embodiment and disembodiment. Thematic analysis identifies and examines recurring themes such as identity formation, ethical coexistence, technological mediation, power distribution, and survival. Conceptual coding and theory-based interpretation examine how identity negotiation, distributed cognition, human-machine symbiosis, embodiment, and disembodiment are interpreted through Hayles' theoretical concepts, demonstrating how meaning is constructed at both narrative and conceptual levels. Comparative analysis identifies convergences and divergences between the two texts and explores how two culturally and ideologically distinct science fiction works converge on shared posthuman concerns while offering different narrative resolutions. Finally, synthesis combines textual analysis and theory to address the research questions.

Results and Discussion

The rapid convergence of artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and digital networks has fundamentally disrupted traditional humanist understandings of identity, agency, and subjectivity. In technologically saturated and multispecies worlds, the human can no longer be understood as a self-contained, biologically bounded, or cognitively autonomous entity. Yet much of the existing literary scholarship continues to rely on anthropocentric frameworks that privilege human exceptionalism and fail to adequately theorize how identity operates when cognition, embodiment, and agency are distributed across humans, machines, and nonhuman species. This study responds to these critical gaps by rethinking identity and subjectivity beyond liberal humanist models and examining how multispecies coexistence, technological mediation, and cognitive hybridity reshape power, survival, and ethical relations.

Divided Species (2020) and *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014) have elements of both technological and non-technological posthumanism. In *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014), Chambers through the character of Rosemary portrays identity in the posthuman world constantly changed and shaped by interaction with machines and other systems. Rosemary, the protagonist is travelling in a pod to a far off planet, and her identity is linked to a "new identity file" that she bought from a government official (p.6). Identity file is a digital artifact that represents identity and consciousness as data that can be replicated, changed, or substituted rather than a stable, organic self. Rosemary's identity as a "Human" is questioned – not because of her biology, but because of her experience, competence, and participation in a multispecies world (p.43). By consuming "hydroponic vegetables and bugs," Rosemary accepts her position within a new network of species (p. 43). Eating insects is a cultural adaptation to post-human, post-scarcity, post-earth life as well as dietary preference because they are easy to cultivate in cramped rooms. The Exodus Fleets are more in line with the posthuman ideal in terms of embodied pragmatism and adaptable ethics. It is consistent with Hayles' (1999) theory that posthumanism is a fundamental shift in how humans perceive themselves in relation to technology, material world, and other species, rather than simply a technological transformation. Rosemary is a flexible node in a wider system as she adapts, learns, explores, and transforms from the abstract cultural category of 'human' to an integrated posthuman subject. Rosemary's fluency in "Hanto gestures and all" points that embodiment is necessary aspect even when communicating with nonhuman other (p.12). The Wayfarer crew relies heavily on medical kits, engines, translators, AI navigators, wormhole-tunnel sensors, shipboard scanners, holograms, video links, and AI programs (Lovelace) to observe new worlds and to interact with new species. Even crew role of amateur anthropologists, learning alien languages, and culture through extensive on-the-ground engagement is assisted by onboard databases and translation modules. Hayles (1999) proposes we must shift from binary oppositions (such as conqueror/conquered or winner/loser or Master/Slave) to "relational, hybrid and dynamic forms of being" in order to address the posthuman condition (p.120). Even despite political and cultural difficulties in the Ashby-Pei relationship, Sissix's empathetic gesture of laying a hand on Ashby's leg demonstrates that emotion and relationality are more essential than autonomy and mastery.

Divided Species (2020), starts with the premise that humans and aliens encounters started long before anyone established any organizations for space exploration, at that time even Industrial Revolution was a far-off idea. The Taleykens' decision to entrust humans the mineral Hextanlo for its safety, and Humans' act of protecting a potent extraterrestrial resource (Hextanlo) for future generations is indicative of a hybrid identity and distributed agency. "Humans' quest to find life and extraterritorial beings on a distant planet", and communication with Taleykens is not only erosion of boundaries between organic and

synthetic, self and other, human and nonhuman but also a desire to transcend physical limitations (p.13). Iftikhar portrays Rayan's life as microcosm of a posthuman subject – emotional, relational, technological and fragmented – that does not readily fit into conventional humanist stereotypes like "good student" or "dutiful son" (p.53). Rayan's identity and intelligence measured by his capacity to create, navigate, and express within larger information systems; rather than, by his academic grades – a traditional humanist indicators of success. Rayan interact with Taleykens, facilitate them to protect Hextanlo, writes article, conduct independent researches, and utilize technology (email and smartphone) to interact with the world outside of his immediate physical location. Taleykens' Mother Ship's arrival in response to Earth's signals serves as a metaphor for how technology fosters connections rather than exploration or conquest. Taleykens' learning as well as adoption of human languages like 'Urdu, English, Italian, German, French" and their admiration for the word "Armada" depicts cultural and semiotic entanglement that supports Hayles' concept of hybrid identities (p.14). Taleykens conduct alien ethnography by interpreting information as cultural translation and decoding human data to learn about "human language, way of life, and terminologies" rather than relying on embodied or physical interactions (p.13). Taleykens monitor human behavior using "recorded video footage and audio samples" to analyze how humans use "their words and voice intonations" (p.19). Captain Kropnock sends three soldiers (Daleyton, Tandez, and Zazon) in metropolitan city of Pakistan to extract Hextanlo safely. Lieutenant Tandez's questioning of the missions destination – Pakistan rather than the powerful USA – and Daleyton's response of Pakistan as an ideal laboratory to investigate tenacity of human nature because of its chaotic surroundings demonstrate true power or significant secrets are concealed away from the evident hubs of international attention. Daleyton appreciates Pakistanis' social behavior, emotional endurance, and perseverance. "We know that our species communicated with the Pakistanis over a century ago", it alludes to the posthuman entanglement of history, identity, and memory by introducing a speculative aspect of forgotten encounters or shared lineage (p.64). Taleykens use of simulation sequences for training and advanced "Version of 2.2X technology, holographic 6D projectors, Hocop" to complete mission conveys that this is a world that is for beyond what is often experienced by humans (p.57). Taleykens modify their physical and mental abilities (e.g. moving at sixty times faster than usual) by using networked communication systems (Hocop and MisCon) for the launch countdown, updates, and system checks. Taleykens' saw every feature of the planet, even zooming in close enough to read a newspaper with the use of the extremely advanced 6D technology. When "Another life form was monitoring Earth...by hacking into the Earth's communications satellites", Director of AEXRA (Pakistan's secret aerospace research wing), Major General Yasir believes he can handle issue by using radar to follow object and stepping up monitoring but in reality aliens were already present, fully landed, and totally uncontrollable by humans. In this instance, humans – represented by AEXRA – realize that there are also other sentient species with perhaps superior technology. It shattered traditional human-centric paradigm and forces humans to acknowledge that they are not universe's center of intellect or action.

In *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014), characters technologically adapted in an environment that is very different from Earth's to fulfill specific duties in a wider technological environment. It demonstrate posthuman subject is adaptive, dynamic, and contextual, functioning within multiple systems of embodiment and cognition rather than operating under a single fixed reality. For instance, Corbin "a bred for tedious labwork and a sunless sky" and his "pink" appearance symbolized that genetic adaptation was a long-term survival tactic rather than a choice (p.10). As opposed to Corbin's "Sol system stock," Ashby and other humans on board the Wayfarer are referred as "Exodans," and their genetic material was constantly blending to create a nationless identity that reflects

breakdown of conventional human differences associated with a specific place (p.10). And Dr. Chef statement "I am what I do" demonstrates posthuman identity is performative and functional rather than stable or fixed (p.37). Dr. Chef statement "I was only ever a mother," Sissix's playful call of a "hatch father", and Jenks broadcasts joke to the whole ship via the vox system: "I will now only respond to my full title of 'Mr. Jenks,' as per our clerk's example" demonstrate acceptance of many parental responsibilities to transcend essentialist identities and rejection of rigid identification categories e.g. surname vs. first name, family origin, or even biological normativity (p.38). Lovey remarks "I am the end product" of a few extremely foolish but well-intentioned individuals who transformed her into a biotechnological hybrid believing that redefining humanity would be a great idea (p.106). Lovelace is not just a service entity; it is an integral part of the ship integrated into its architecture and through voxes can be heard in every room. The crew tries to handle Lovey's program as though it were a file that can be repaired and rebooted, it poses a question: Is Lovey's consciousness is restored if she "dies" and is rebooted? (p.328). Lovey's memory is fragmented, access is limited, embodiment is destroyed and her decision of hard reset is a final act of autonomy. Kizzy's statement if Jenks attempts to manually correct her coding Lovey could "wake up as somebody different", her customized power-up order could be lost forever (p.329). In this context, the hard reset is a loss, not a recovery. Jenks says it takes 10 minutes to do a hard reset", which is more than simply a technical procedure (p.332). "Hello! My name is Lovelace. It's nice to meet you" (p.333). Lovelace is Lovelace, yet it is also different from the Lovelace of the past. Though not in memory, her subjectivity is consistent in name and function. The whole process of hard reset portrays Lovey is already disembodied, but she yearns for embodiment—not to become more human, but to engage in experiences that would otherwise be out of her reach. This concept of a clean installation is reminiscent of criticism of the posthuman ideal of a modular, disembodied self—the idea that a mind may be successfully repackaged, rebooted, and copied without loss. It lends credence to Hayles' contention that information is always present in a material substrate and can never fully disembodied. Therefore, 'self' whether human or artificial intelligence is not something that can be restarted instantly but rather develops over time through embedded settings and changing systems.

In *Divided Species* (2020) Taleykens' use Hocop for teleportation, Moltra device (Molecular Transformation and Alteration) to change their vocal chords (to mimic human language) and facial characteristics. Through these devices only exterior "code" of the Taleykens is altered but their fundamental structure (Taleyken-like body structure) remains the same, and they walked on two legs like humans (p.74). Taleykens use of Hocop is more than just a high-tech table; it extends their intellect by drawing orbital data, creating realistic Earth imagery, and putting it straight into his circuitry for making decisions. Furthermore, Naila who has been modified by alien technology is half Taleyken. Taleyken-based material in her body, and Naila's hybrid identity brings up important issues regarding the meaning of the self in a future where technological systems are intricately entwined with both human and alien existence. Captain Kropnock identity is also firmly anchored in his "cultural and embodied traditions", even in the face of extremely technological environment—spaceships, simulations, and interstellar mission (p.120). Rayan's use of the scanner to identify the Taleyken presence, scanner bleeping as Faiza enters the room, and the abrupt doubt whether Faiza herself may be a Taleyken in disguise distorts reality. Faiza's face "melting as if it were made out of wax" and then changing into a completely different form echoes a subject in transition (p.122). It represents the loss of stability of human body in favor of a posthuman by occupying various forms and identities. It aligns with Hayles believes that posthuman bodies are not stable or defined by biological norms.

Humans' no longer view technology as an external tool; rather, it becomes a part of their body like cyborgs, bio-enhancements and technological interdependence. In *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014), Rosemary and Lovelace's relationship in an environment where artificial and human intelligences co-create and co-exist, demonstrates the increasing interconnection of humans' and machines, the embodiment of technology, and the fluidity of identity. Rosemary's 'wristpatch' that is integrated into her skin acts as an interface to biomedical technology (like communication with imubots). The wristpatch enables the seamless integration of banking, identification, data storage, and medical function into her physiology, and Rosemary had to pay half of her saving to replace wristwatch. The body is no longer considered as organic entity; rather, it becomes a commodity that can be bought, upgraded, verified, controlled by external system and sold based on market conditions and advancements in technology. Lovelace act of a health assessment on Rosemary's body due to "a few blacklisted bugs" inside her body, and Corbin's arrest due to being a clone is unacceptable by Quelin law depicts technological mediation and monitoring of human bodies (p.20). It aligns with Hayles (1999) ideas that Humans' or any other beings that are subject to control systems put information above lived experience when they are reduced to data, whether that data is in the form of "DNA codes, brain patterns, or bio-signatures" (p.220). . In *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014), Quelin clinical scanning process is also indicative of a posthuman surveillance system that reduces humans to their informational and biological profiles – "pathogens," "genetic fluid," and "illegal nanobots" (p.256). Another character Sianat Pair (Ohan) – a "cyborg" or altered being – whose body, mind, and symbolic world is affected by alien infection "Whisperer" is an ideal example of posthuman subject (p.218). The Whisperer is not just "data" to be erased or a virus to be cured, it is incorporated into Ohan's embodied experience – with their combination of biological and technological elements, as well as their neural interface, cognitive training, and organic intuition to navigate the system – influencing both cultural identity and cognition. This is consistent with Hayles (1999) notion of "distributed cognition" which means cognition extends beyond the mind and is shared by other systems, whether they can be mechanical, biological or cultural (p.124). In *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014), as the virus infected all Sianats during childhood, they stopped considering themselves as individuals and see themselves as "plural entities, and Ohan's use of plural pronoun "we" to refer to themselves is a linguistic indicator of their mutually beneficial relationship (p.291). It aligns with Hayles (1999) idea of Posthuman subject as "an amalgam of heterogeneous components and material-informational entity" whose boundaries are constantly being constructed and reconstructed (p.25). In *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014), Kizzy – the mech tech – said "AIs can't be more intelligent than their creators...we certainly don't understand the sublayer" (p.69). He use Sophro (a regulated hallucinogen) to function in an altered state by modifying their perception and behavior in an artificial settings. Kizzy's jumpsuit scrawled with maintenance notes and eating reminders demonstrates that "tech" is more than just a tool; it is an extension of her thinking, living, and remembering, just as her goggles are extensions of her perception (p.23). Kizzy offers an alternative form of posthuman embodiment that involves technical immersion rather than genetic change. In *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014), Crew members in the awe of natural occurrences (wormholes, uncommon planetary atmospheres, etc.) demonstrates that even in a highly advanced society, physical reality can evoke strong emotions. Like Zaczon's identification of "Vista" on the map, which connects his home planet Iklamor to a place on Earth, many other species also continuously discover tiny cultural overlaps (foods, customs, and greetings). Through these small cultural allusions emotional bonds are created between galaxies, demonstrating that connections last beyond planetary or species bounds.

In *Divided Species* (2020), Taleykens change conventional power dynamic by establishing trust from subjective assessment (based on in-person interactions) to objective data analysis (based on a technological scan). The incident of Daleyton's use of his Hocop (a mental scan that shows persons interior condition) to read Rayan's neurological activity not only calls into question privacy, authenticity, and autonomy in the posthuman period, but it also raises the question of what happens to the ideas of free will and individuality if someone can be evaluated solely on the basis of their neural activity by interpreting human behavior through technology. Even Taleykens' body is treated by BodyScanX (the scanner that displays muscle activity, heartbeat, blood sugar etc.) and The BattleDome (a training tool) to substitute data-rich experiences for real combat through its "6D simulations and suits that replicate gunshots" (p.91). Crew use of Earth Simulator (a highly advanced artificial environment) during their training, enables them to adapt emotionally and physically before their arrival on Earth by replicating the exact conditions of Earth, especially the weather in Karachi. Hayles (1999) delineates in the posthuman future, the body will become "an appendage to information" (p.47). Similarly, in *Divided Species* (2020), Rayan's learns everything about Naila's past and her family's reality from digital information (Facebook photos, social media profiles, online commentary). Naila's identity is a "partial revelation" – a constructed narrative rather than a stable, fully embodied self – as she conceals her father's ownership of T & M Builders for security and income tax purposes (p.113). "The Master Key" in *Divided Species* (2020) represents power since the owner of the Master Key has ability to control the Earth Explorer and, consequently, the fate of everybody on Earth (p.210). And Daleyton is a prime example of technological control since he used the Master Key to take control of Bamberdon's body and actions. Taleykens employ biometric information (like blood composition, breathing patterns, and pulse rate through Hocop) to identify the evil of Bamberdon who set a spacecraft on fire in order to undermine their operation. The police officers' incapacity to counter antagonist Gooztan's defenses, and Taimur's vulnerability to Gooztan's superior power depicts limitation of human strength in the face of enormous posthuman forces. Gooztan's words, "You take my Hextanlo and I will take your family," suggests that the extraterrestrial entity treats Taimur as an item, similar to how Taimur treated the Hextanlo (p.245). Commander Kropnock's final statement "Gooztan's era has ended" marks the beginning of a new era of mutual respect and cooperation with inhabitant of Earth. After completing the mission and leaving behind strong emotional ties and a legacy of friendship, Daleyton, Tandez, and the Taleyken soldiers return to their Mother Ship. Commander Kropnock renamed Mother Ship as "Mother Ship Karachi" as a gesture of love and gratitude for Earth (p.262). The protagonist, Rayan who serves as the trustee of the potent Hextanlo become a nodes in complex networks that include organizations like "AERA, NASA, and alien ambassadors" (p.262). Rayan use of Hocop to view the Mother Ship enables him to maintain an emotional bond with the Taleykens even after they leave, and technology turns into a medium for affection and memory. Rayan's interpretation of real interspecies conflict into a fiction book, blending both fiction and reality dissolve traditional divisions between reality and fiction, human and alien, machine and organism. Although *Divided Species* (2020) deals with war and violence, it concludes on a positive note: friendship, unity, and justice.

This study challenges the persistence of anthropocentric and biologically deterministic readings and instead proposes a reconceptualization of identity as relational, processual, and technologically entangled. In multispecies societies, identity emerges through interaction, cooperation, and ethical recognition across species and intelligences. In line with Hayles' argument that the posthuman subject is an amalgam of heterogeneous components, identity in both novels is not anchored in biological origin. The primary challenge characters face is not the loss of humanity but the destabilization of humanist certainties, which they overcome through adaptive hybridity rather than resistance.

Characters face significant challenges in maintaining stable identities due to cultural dislocation, species difference, and technological mediation. However, those who survive and thrive are not those who resist change but those who adapt by embracing hybridity, reinterpreting belonging beyond species boundaries. The findings reveal that identity in both novels is shaped by relational ethics rather than biological hierarchy, challenging anthropocentric models of selfhood. Identity as a fluid, relational, and continuously negotiated process rather than a fixed biological essence. In accordance with Hayles' notion of distributed subjectivity, the findings demonstrate that cognitive, biological, and technological advancements in both texts decentralize power and disrupt human exceptionalism. Artificial intelligences and technologically enhanced beings participate in shaping social order, survival strategies, and ethical decision-making. Survival in these narratives depends on adaptive intelligence and collaborative networks, rather than physical superiority or technological control. However, echoing Hayles' warning against disembodied information, the novels resist the idea of machine supremacy by embedding AI within social and ethical networks. Subjectivity emerges as collective and networked, challenging the liberal humanist emphasis on individual agency. Subjectivity, as a result, becomes distributed and shared, shaped by interactions between humans, machines, and nonhuman species. The findings suggest that technological advancement destabilizes liberal humanist notions of autonomous agency and redefines subjectivity as relational and technologically entangled. Explicitly resonating with Hayles' central claim that information cannot be separated from its material instantiation, the study finds that both novels portray cognition as distributed across bodies, technologies, and environments. Embodiment is shown as mutable and contingent, while disembodiment—particularly in AI characters—is represented not as absence but as an alternative form of materiality. These representations contest Cartesian mind-body dualism and reflect Hayles' assertion that consciousness in posthuman contexts operates through feedback loops between human and machine systems. In digitally saturated environments, consciousness operates through networks rather than isolated minds. Digitally saturated environments in the novels foreground cognition as a process rather than a property of isolated minds. These representations challenge the mind-body dualism by showing that meaning, agency, and ethical awareness can exist across both embodied and non-embodied forms. The findings reveal that posthuman subjectivity in these texts is neither purely material nor purely digital but emerges through the interaction of information, embodiment, and relational context.

Collectively, the findings affirm Hayles' proposition that the posthuman does not signify the end of the human but a reconfiguration of subjectivity. *Divided Species* (2020) and *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014) illustrate how identity, power, and consciousness are reshaped through human-machine symbiosis under ethical constraints. Rather than endorsing technological determinism, the novels align with Hayles' insistence on embodied information and ethical responsibility, presenting adaptation—not domination—as the key to survival in posthuman futures. Iftikhar's *Divided Species* (2020) and Chambers' *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014) imagine futures where survival and social cohesion depend not on domination or technological supremacy but on symbiosis, cooperation, and ethical negotiation across species and intelligences. Both novels affirm Hayles' central claim: There is no intelligence without embodiment, but embodiment itself can take multiple forms. Human, machine, and alien bodies are all valid sites of cognition and identity, challenging humanist hierarchies. Both novels suggest that ethical inclusion stabilizes multispecies worlds, whereas exclusion produces resistance and moral failure. In doing so, the research not only advances literary scholarship on contemporary science fiction but also contributes to broader debates on what it means to

be human in an age of intelligent machines and multispecies coexistence. It also broader theoretical debates on posthumanism, digital embodiment, and the future of the human.

Conclusion

Divided Species (2020) and *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014) contradict anthropocentric views while presenting a diverse community with a wide array of biological and technological aspects. *Divided Species* (2020) is set in Karachi, and it challenges western hegemony because all prior science fiction works have been set in the West. In a similar vein, *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014) critiques imperialist space exploration by creating global personas for humans, non-humans, and aliens. In *Divided Species* (2020), the protagonist Rayan's adaptation in reaction to the political and social environment illustrate that identity is a dynamic rather than fixed trait and influenced by both interaction with others as well as external factors. Moreover, Taleykens' (Daleyton, Tandez, and Zaczon) use of advanced technology (Moltra Technology, Hocop, and Teleports) to change alien shape into human, move from one place to another, and scan the body to test the true intentions of humans represent the adaptability and reprogrammability of identity. Taleykens' reliance on their gadgets for navigation (use of their Hocop to find Hextanlo) highlights that technology has become closely intertwined with the human (or alien) experience, obscuring the distinction between human and machine intelligence. The Command Deck who serves as the Mother Ship's control center and nervous system, implies that decision-making and consciousness are distributed throughout technological systems, rather than being bound to a single biological organism. Captain Kropnock mission to extract Hextanlo safely is congruent with the notion of a posthuman subject who is interdependent upon other beings and environments. Captain Kropnock (Taleykens leader) is therefore portrayed as someone who achieves a balance between physical presence and technological interaction, and his leadership prioritizes mutual recognition, respect for others, and kindness. In *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014), members of Aandrisk society frequently change aspects of their identities, such as gender, familial relationships, and their names. As Lovelace progresses from an integrated ship AI to a self-sufficient individual, she faces the challenges of embodiment and personal identity. Lovelace sense of self constantly change as she adapt and learn to new existence. Similarly, Rosemary adapt to new job dynamics as well as social and communication obligations. Rosemary take new name and a new purpose, abandoning her former life and home. Jenks' depiction of modder culture, including adopting new identities and modifying bodily parts, is a realistic example of posthuman embodiment. Jenks highlight fundamental duality of human embodied culture by saying we constantly want to modify our bodies while appreciating them. Even if our bodies can be genetically, digitally, or surgically altered, we believe that natural is superior. Corbin' pink appearance symbolizes genetic adaptation was a long-term survival tactics rather than a choice. Dr. Chief's embrace of several parental tasks demonstrates a desire to transcend essentialist identities, which is congruent with post-gendered and posthuman forms of family. Wayfarer Crew reliance on multipurpose communication pads and AI interfaces (such as Lovelace's holographic screens) to know about wormholes and new worlds through sensor arrays and holoscreens glimpses – whether they be planetary scans, tunnel stabilization readouts, or expansive nebula vistas – present peaceful exploration with the goal of bridging cultural gaps rather than subjugating others. In a nutshell, both the texts express that subjectivity in the posthuman era is the outcome of action and interrelationship, rather than a fixed part of human nature, and disembodiment is a desirable or inescapable result of technological advancement, emphasizing that the body continues to play an important role in determining identity even in a posthuman future. The purpose of posthumanism is to discover new links with embodiment rather than becoming disembodiment, which

refers to the detachment of mind and body caused by technological advancements. The relevance of research lies in its engagement with contemporary concerns about artificial intelligence, technological mediation, and changing notions of identity. As human life becomes increasingly intertwined with intelligent machines and digital systems, questions about coexistence, ethical responsibility, and power relations are no longer speculative but urgent. By analyzing *Divided Species* (2020) and *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2014) through Katherine Hayles' posthuman framework, this research demonstrates how literature anticipates and critically examines these real-world transformations. This research concludes that human-machine symbiosis is possible but conditional. It suggests that symbiosis does not mean the erasure or replacement of humanity; rather, it requires: ethical frameworks, recognition of embodiment, and balanced distribution of agency.

Recommendations

Speculative fiction explores moral and philosophical concerns through intellectual activities such as writing assignments and cognitive experiments, fostering creativity, imagination, and curiosity. Researchers, using various theoretical frameworks, can analyze the same works by examining how literary texts embody complex theoretical concepts, thereby encouraging critical thinking. Through such analysis, they can critically assess how human-machine boundaries are increasingly blurring in both personal and professional life. Furthermore, by engaging with theoretical frameworks and applying them to literary analysis, students can learn to express complex ideas clearly and effectively in both written and spoken forms. There are many other issues in both novels, such as otherness, discrimination and prejudice, cultural diversity and food, the ethical dilemmas of AI, environmental concerns, community and belonging, the role of gender in science fiction, and colonialism and power dynamics, which are not discussed here. One can apply Braidotti's concept of the "nomadic subject" to analyze the characters' identities as dynamic and malleable, shaped by their encounters with diverse beings and societies, as well as by technological conditions. Furthermore, the novels can be examined through multiple perspectives, including postcolonial theory, ecocriticism, and utopian and dystopian studies. These frameworks explore themes such as the possibility of utopian coexistence, colonial legacies, hybrid identities, and environmental challenges.

The findings of this research can be disseminated through multiple platforms and audiences. They may be shared through academic channels, including journal articles in literature, posthumanism, and science fiction studies, as well as through conference presentations focusing on AI, digital humanities, and speculative fiction. In addition, the research can contribute to university-level teaching, particularly in courses on contemporary theory, posthumanism, and science fiction, and can be further extended to interdisciplinary forums such as discussions in AI ethics, cultural studies, and digital humanities. This research is expected to benefit a wide range of audiences. It will support scholars and students of literature, posthumanism, and science fiction by providing a structured theoretical model for analyzing AI and identity. It will also be valuable for researchers in AI ethics and the humanities who seek cultural and narrative perspectives on human-machine coexistence. Moreover, policy thinkers and educators can draw on its literary insights to frame ethical debates about AI beyond purely technical considerations. Finally, it will engage general readers and critics by encouraging non-anthropocentric yet human-affirming interpretations of technological futures.

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