



Published by  
*Centre for Languages and  
Translational Studies*

*Pakistan Journal of Languages and Translation Studies*

ISSN (Print) 2410-1230  
ISSN (Online) 2519-5042  
Volume 10 Issue 1 2022  
Pages 94-109

**Open Access**

# *Identity Formation and Subjugation of Human Agency in Cyber Culture: A Study of Scott Westerfeld's *The Uglies**

## **Publication Details**

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## **Paper Received:**

May 15, 2022

## **Paper Accepted:**

May 21, 2022

## **Paper Published:**

June 30, 2022

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## **Abstract**

Cyber culture is no longer a fantasy to be used for film-making. It is a reality that we are already living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That is why contemporary science fiction writers are reflecting upon the fears, challenges, apprehensions, threats, and anxieties that this culture is carrying in its train. They attempt to figure out how covert mechanisms are used to play with our essential humanness and how we are being given a docile identity by making us believe in an intransitive reality. This paper explores how the formation of identity of adolescents is used as a tool to check the free agency of the adolescents in the novel *The Uglies* by Scott Westerfeld. The study has used the critical realism theory propounded by Roy Bhaskar and identity concepts given by McCollum, Crojour and Foucault as its analytical tools. The novel has been explored to investigate the use of uglies as an identity marker and the role of espoused ideas about the uglies that triggers the transformation of humans into posthumans. The critical evaluation of this novel has exposed the independent mechanisms such as



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concepts and notions of beauty in the cyber culture and their role in the production of an intransitive knowledge for the people of cyber culture. This analysis has enumerated the effects of cosmetic surgeries on the human body and vicissitudes they encounter within themselves as a result of body transformation. The examination of *The Uglies* has enabled us to understand the power structures of the cyber culture society by applying Foucault's theory of docile body. The close investigation of the novel has revealed that the imposed identity stands as a shift from individuality and free agency to conformity and sameness. This endorses the paper's assertion that powerful structures contrive the desired identity of common people by exploiting the independent mechanisms. The research has concluded that the empirical reality in the selected novel is taken as real and intransitive. In order to create that empirical reality, electronic media, education, and social media have been very shrewdly deployed by the political regimes controlling the societies. The free agency is achieved when one encounters the other and challenges the conformity.

**Keywords:** Cyber Culture, Real, Human Agency, Conformity, Subjugation, Covert Mechanisms, Docility, Empirical Reality, Intransitive Knowledge.

## **1. Introduction**

Adolescence is a pivotal, sensitive, and transformative period of one's life. It hosts kindles, and galvanizes physical, psychological, and emotional vicissitudes and transformations in one's life. One tries to dig deep into one's self in order to explore one's reality, identity, and agency. This is the time when society endeavors to inculcate its norms, beliefs, values, and traditions in the young adults. The young adults play with their social and political agency and thus develop a unified and well-formed identity. This pivotal age offers the writers of Young Adult (YA) literature to investigate how these changes affect the adolescents and how they react to such transformations. Rudd (Date??) rightly puts forth that YA literature mostly focuses upon "how notions of identity are formed within specific contexts and shaped by larger social structures and processes" (p.140) This is a crucial phase in human life as it highly subjective and offers a taste of free will and agency. Adults begin to smell the danger of being victims of imposed docility due to the hidden machinations and traps of powerful society. They challenge all those norms and values that could hurt and damage their subjectivity. The human agency and subjectivity has been very accurately defined by McCallum (Date) as "an individual's sense of a personal identity as a subject—in the sense of being subject to some measure of external coercion—and as an agent—that is, being capable of conscious and deliberate thought and action" (p.4). She further suggests that subjectivity is multi-dimensional and is formed through interactions with other humans, social norms and values. It is also shaped by dominant philosophies, modes of education, and language choices within a given society. (8) The society intentionally and carefully employs Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA)

(citation) to achieve docility in its adults by assigning a well-defined and contrived identity. The society thus makes its adults espouse the standard social values, norms, ideology, and beliefs as an intransitive reality and knowledge. There is no possibility of otherness for the adults in the process of formation of their identity. YA literature encapsulates the traumas, problems, conflicts, and anxieties of adults during their identity formation and their struggle to maintain their agency. Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry have accurately and precisely figured out that “utopias predominate in children’s literature, whereas dystopias are far more common in young adult literature” (9). Science fiction writers have very cleverly used dystopia to unmask the machinations of super structures in providing the adults the identity that can be used to usurp their free will. It also shows how identity is formed in the cyber culture and whether cyber society unravels new modes of identity formation such as modern technology or it falls back on conventional modes? Dystopia also unveils the miseries of the adults when their real identity is at stake due to the implantation of chips and electronic body parts.

Considering such facets of dystopian and YA literature I have selected Part one of the trilogy *Uglies* (2005) of YA fiction written by Scott Westerfeld. Westerfeld himself asserts: “[a] lot of YA is about identity” and claims that YA literature offers various ways and suggestions for the adults on how to live in a transformed society. According to him, science fiction also poses questions like why one should follow the rules, or why should it happen this way, and why this identity is given or thrust upon us. According to him; “Science fiction is about thought experiments. What does it mean to tell stories set in a different place than this one? How does that affect our world? It’s a completely philosophical enterprise.” Scott Westerfeld (Locus online). Westerfeld manifests his theory about science fiction in most of his cyber culture work. The trilogy selected for this analysis is the story of young adults’ social, psychological, and physical journey to seek their real identity by triggering their subjectivity, free will, power, and agency. Unlike science fiction of mid-twenties that only envisaged the apocalypse, the fiction of Westerfeld seeks the real identity of the posthuman by revealing the problems that threaten their real. The protagonist of the trilogy was given the identity of being ugly in the first book and she was to despise that identity owing to her transitive knowledge that she thought was intransitive. It means her first identity was formed through education that she was ugly and that she was to be naturally looked down upon.

The current study aims to investigate the role of super structures that control the human agency and the struggle of humans to create their own identity. I have opted for Bhaskar’s Critical realism theory as a lens to meet the purpose of my research. Unlike post structuralism and constructivism Critical realism asserts that the real world exists and this fact does not depend on any knowledge to be acknowledged. It does not require any theoretical construct to be explained. For Critical realism knowledge is meaningful if it is directly about the real world instead of any understanding or any

construct about the world. This claim frees us from vicious circularity of epistemological approaches. This stance of critical realism advocates the primacy of ontology and this analysis is primarily ontological. The different events and actions of the characters have been directly examined to find how social structures play with human agency and how these characters suffer and struggle to come out of certain dilemmas. Critical realism goes for causal analysis but does not stand with constructivists and positivists and gives a new dimension to the causal analysis. Critical realists argue that there are varieties of causality and that ultimately, we should look beyond empirical outcomes such as ‘if A, then B’, and instead seek to identify the underlying generative mechanisms. These mechanisms reside in the properties of things themselves, as well as in tendencies which may or may not be exercised under various different conditions.” (Bhaskar 1997: 14). Thus, for Critical realism causality is a complex phenomenon. I have analyzed this novel by following the concepts given by critical realism about causality. I have tried to locate the independent mechanisms that affect the causal relationships. Bhaskar believes in a stratified ontology and believes in many complex and overlapping layers that constitute the reality. On the one hand they possess their distinct characteristics but on the other they are a part of an interactive whole. These deeper, complex and underlying layers generate the causal affects at higher level. Bhaskar refers to these layers as “Empirical, Actual, and Real.” (Bhaskar 1997: 56) Empirical is what we have understood and what we have observed and experienced, Actual is the event that actually occurred or happened, and Real refers to those powerful mechanisms that cause the happening but are not visible or may not be observed. These can be explained at the emergent level and the investigator of critical realism tries to reach the Real by observing and figuring out the Empirical and Actual. More often than not it is difficult to study or to differentiate these domains of reality separately, as seeing the reality in stratification directly links the approach of critical realism with the structural or emergent powers approach. These approaches take any social phenomena or transformation as not only having its own distinctive properties, but also as emerging out of particular social, temporal, historical, or political conditions. The emergent comes out of ‘lower levels’ that provide them the necessary and required conditions like cultural, social or physical resources. It is, however, not possible to reduce ‘higher levels’ to these conditions. For instance, a social transformation is caused by some economic crisis due to its causal relationship but it cannot be reduced to its prior condition. Bhaskar very minutely discusses the relationship of structure and human agency in his famous model called (TMSA??) This model states, “society is both the ever present condition and the continually reproduced outcome of human activity.” (1989a: 34-5). According to Bhaskar society cannot exist without human activity. Human actions may not be conscious always but unconsciously they follow the structures that they belong to. Though Bhaskar believes in freedom of human agency, but close investigation of human actions reveals that they are in control or at least in the influence of some powerful mechanisms. These mechanisms depend on human activity for their existence but these also control and

mould the human actions. It is also noted that independent mechanisms are also in conflict with each other and in order to survive they play with humans by making them free from the clutches and influence of other mechanisms. In doing so, they start to control the human action themselves. This race of survival makes social transformation possible. According to critical realism, being an agent of a particular structure an individual has to perform some actions that plays the role of mediation between the structure and its agent. With the help of these practices one can understand how much an agent is free and how much it unconsciously is trapped in the net of generative mechanism. Since the focus of my research is on the lives of individuals, I would critically examine how they become victims of structures, what they suffer being agents of social structures, and how they manage to rescue themselves from extra influence of the super structures.

The fear of technology, the anxiety of the loss of identity, the horror of being placated by the posthumans, the dangers of infringements on individuals' freedom, the extinction of humans, and the subjugation of humans by cyborgs is perpetuated through social media, popular culture, movies, and science literature. The fear of cyborgs, the resistance against posthuman, and the struggle to keep the Real of humans alive provide the plotline to cyber culture literature. The cyber culture fiction depicts the fights between human and posthuman and their battle ground is the human body. The technology is used to transform the human body in a way that it cannot show or display any kind of resistance or rebellion against the designed identity of the transformed body. It is frequently asked as to how human body is threatened by the latest technology? The dilemma of the transformed humans to follow their previous identity or new is also highlighted. This fiction shows that in cyber culture, the violation of body not only threatens its sanctity but also strangles the freedom of human agency. It is also suggested that the act of transformation of body is always an attempt to destroy humanity and to produce robots like humans without their own thinking and free will. The science fiction of fifties, particularly the movies of fifties in Hollywood, portray posthumans as aliens and presented the human body as an entity to be fought about. The aliens tried to capture the human body and the one who captured the body gave the body the identity he or she wanted. The films such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), and *Invaders from Mars* (1953) took up the issue of the threat of identity loss at the hands of the aliens. The twenty first century science fiction too delineates the cruel and threatening posthuman confronting with the human and play havoc with the lives of individuals. One can find such destructive posthumans in the *Doctor Who's Cyber men* (2006), David Thorpe's *Hybrids* (2007) and *Star Trek's Borg* (1990). This otherness in science fiction is subverted and defeated as "popular culture was committed to a defense of humanism (the aliens were always defeated, frequently by a uniquely 'human' quality) ... this was destiny, the law of nature" (Badminton 8). This trilogie emulates the current cyber fiction by portraying a posthuman society where the

technophobia wrecks the potential coercions for the identity and agency of the human who are ambivalent towards terminal identity. However, in current cyber fiction the writers through their protagonists postulate the possible measures that can ensure the revitalization of their real and would liberate them from the technophobia. The uglies encompasses the idea as to how the human accomplish their continuity as human. Westerfeld does not give leverage to the formation of posthumans. At the same time posthumans in *Uglies* function as other in the identity process of the human and the posthuman body is the epitome of what the technology has contrived in comparison with what nature has created. Bukatman discerns that in posthuman formation, Cartesian dualism of body and mind have given way to an embodied mind which infers new ways for understanding corporeality (1993: 208). The presence of cyber culture offers new challenges for the identity formation of individuals. They idealize the perfect body and try to mimic the appearance of their ideal body. They use cosmetic, surgeries, machines, and special diet as well as physical exercises to look gorgeous and unique. This notion of achieving the desired or imagined shape of one's body directly influences the formation of one's identity. Since body is the fundamental entity in the life of adolescents, it produces and enhances very crucial qualities in adolescents such as confidence, elation, competition, love for truth and beauty, frustration, anxiety, aggression, love for liberty, etc. The trilogy on the one hand exhibits how the cosmetic surgery and youths' obsession with the body incorporate the formation of their identity and on the other, it depicts fears of the consequences of body's transformations that ultimately deprive or can deprive the human to feel humanness. In this connection Elaine Ostry rightly observes "biotechnology is used as a metaphor for adolescence...and adds a dramatic dimension to the changing adolescent body and the identity crisis that arises from it" (222). For Erik H. Erikson identity crisis crops up when it appears to individuals that they lose their "sense of personal sameness or historical continuity" (17). The trilogy has been analyzed to see how the transformation of cyber culture snatches the 'sameness' and 'historical continuity' from the individuals resulting in the loss of identity which ultimately triggers a war with in the individual's self. Their real is thus being manipulated by imposing a docile identity upon them. The trilogy has very vividly exposed the crisis of identity of individuals and the groups as a result of their predestined identity. The failure of individuals of seeing the covert operations of the powerful structures and mechanisms that control the formation of their identity and their free agency is the main signature theme of this trilogy. I have used the three tools of identity formation namely displacement, memory, and body to explore the journey of different characters towards their identity. I have made an attempt to unveil the three layers of reality to reach out to the secret mechanisms that social structures use to impose identity on the individuals. The events of the trilogy have been taken as actual domain of reality and the responses of the characters as empirical reality. In order to highlight the empirical reality, I have used the concepts of identity formation given by McCollum and Crojour

Similarly; in the attempt to unmask the real that plays with the agency of humans I have applied the critical notions of Foucault and Crojjour.

Unlike the earlier science fiction, the characters in the *Uglies* did not despise being transformed into the posthumans rather they were eager to embrace the identity of being posthumans. They were swayed to believe the posthumans were immune to diseases and even the ravages of old age. They were sure that they would scale perfection as far as the beauty of their body was concerned. However, they could not escape from the thoughts that were fraught with fears of losing the humanness or of the failure of operation that might result in missing the desired target of a perfect body. This caused anxiety and frustration in the uglies though there was no instance of the failure of such an operation. It was a common practice that the adolescents were made pretty through a special operation as soon as they turned 16 but before the operation they were given the identity of uglies. The adolescents despised their identity of being uglies which resulted in another phobia that they might be denied to become pretty. This fear was always with Tally, the young girl who was so anxious about the identity of being pretty that she broke the norms and challenged the authorities by secretly visiting the pretty town before her sixteenth birthday. It was because of her tricky pranks and her violations of rules that she feared “being caught...and never being turned pretty at all” (*Uglies* 25). As stated earlier that the powerful social structures use the prevailing notions of beauty to construct the desired identity of their people, in part one of the trilogy the cult of beauty is very cunningly used to meet the set targets. At the very outset one can see that in the world of *Uglies* it was a popular idea that their body was not natural or ideal and it was natural to seek its perfection with the intervention of technology. Therefore every teen aged anxiously looked forward for the operation sponsored by the Govt and had no objection against it. Nobody ever thought that the operation could be a managed and designed tool to secure conformity of majority of the population. For this they exploited a natural inclination of humans towards the physical beauty. They used beauty as a lack in the words of Lacan in his concept of mirror stage where child idealizes the image in the mirror and longs to acquire it. In *Uglies* the ideal image of the perfection of one’s body is introduced to the characters which results in a feeling of lack in the individuals and they willingly yield themselves to the covert treachery of the authority by considering the operation a source to achieve their ideal. Anne A. Balsamo deems the cosmetic surgery to be a peculiar method of rheostat that exploits the aspiration to redress the ugly and undesirable features of body, “When a woman internalizes a fragmented body image and accepts its “flawed” identity, each part of the body becomes a site for the “fixing” of her physical abnormality” (56-57). However, in *Uglies* only females are not victims of such notion of “abnormality”. All the population is made to believe that they are “abnormal” and are persuaded to embrace their “flawed identity”. That made them eager to undergo the operation to be transformed into “normal” and to take their

natural body as pathological. For them the only cure was to replace their natural body with “augment nature” and construct “natural” beauty (Balsamo 71). It is obvious in our world that people are not immune to mutability specially when restricted to the human body. It makes us feel our humanness and it is a unique and pivotal marker of our identity. “The most tangible feature of what it is to be human, encapsulating our humanness in form and providing an outlet for humanity” (Scott and Dragoo 2). This kind of possession and attachment was not present in the world of Tally as they took their body as a liability and it was espoused that natural body was not the natural body rather a configured body was normal and natural body. It was through such social constructs that the ideal epitome of a perfectly beautiful body was familiarized. This is where the social structures manipulate the independent mechanisms to produce a transitive knowledge which appears as an empirical reality to the people. Same is the story in *Uglies* where the narrative of the ideal beauty is the production of social institutions. On the bases of beauty they form the identity of their people and the identity that the adolescents form appears more as an imposed and docile identity than an agency that has a free will. With the help of social construct, the idea is propagated among the adolescents that they are ugly and the ideal beauty could be achieved by allowing the state to perform an operation on them which would transform them into the pretty state where everybody was perfect and nobody was ugly. As a result of operation everybody would enjoy equal status, the real of human would not face any discrimination and it would leave no possibility to be despised merely on the basis of appearance. They are made to believe that in the past it was appearances that initiated many problems: “Yeah, yeah, I know,” Shay recited. “Everyone judged everyone else based on their appearance. People who were taller got better jobs, and people even voted for some politicians because they weren’t quite as ugly as everybody else. Blah, blah, blah.” “Yeah, and people killed one another over stuff like having different colored skin.” Tally shook her head. No matter how many times they repeated it at school; she’s never really quite believed that one. “So what if people look more alike now? It’s the only way to make people equal.” (*Uglies* 44-45) The children are motivated to take part in morphing programs where they learn how to refashion the body and they are taught how to recreate their image to make it the ideal one. This activity was enough to reassure them about their flawed identity and through this transitive knowledge it is inculcated in them to decide what would be the most appropriate and perfect transformation of their body. The games and morphing programs were the actual layer of reality and out of this actual reality empirical reality was fashioned. This empirical reality was imposed upon them to postulate that becoming pretty would be a free choice and it would never distort the real of human rather it would help them to accomplish their humanness.

So the kids remain passionately engaged in refashioning their body features such as their hair, shape of their lips, the shape of their noses, etc. but the coercive state had



never gives a thought as to what an individual wished to see him or her rather they worked according to their own designed models which would achieve conformity instead of individuality. Shay tried to disillusion Tally about her own free choice of perfection: "It's stupid. The doctors do pretty much what they want, no matter what you tell them" (41). She further deemed such activities a waste of time. Naomi Jacobs, while discussing the subjectivity and agency, asserts that: "although the individuals may espouse that they are free in opting and choosing whatever they act and accept from a certain position of integrity but their options and actions are not more than but just duplicate of a subject positions to which they have been "called" [and] this notion of unity or self-identity itself is an emblem of an extent to which a subject subsists in a state of subjection." (93). In the process of recreating and reshaping the physical identity, the individuals fall prey to state agenda by practicing self-surveillance. This is how the ugly training imparts the notion of body's objectification in the adults. They were encouraged to see their body as objective. Considering their body as temporary, it was inculcated in them that there was no need to develop any kind of emotional attachment with their body. Thus they embrace the identity the state imposed on them and they reproduced the social structure through their initiatives to become pretty. They eagerly participate in the games that encompass the ugliness of humans and offer them to manifest their own ideal image in those games. However it was Shay who rebelled against the 'game' and told Tally, "Making ourselves ugly is not fun." But well contrived and brain washed Tally retorted, "We are ugly!" (Uglies, emphasis in original, 44). The identity formation is achieved through the act of objectification in uglies. For this objectification they cunningly and affectively used the technology as when any individual placed his or her image, they could visualize what their ideal image was and what their natural image was. Shay's face was scanned and "[seconds later, two faces appeared on the screen. Both of them were Shay, but there were obvious differences. One looked wild, slightly angry; the other had a slightly distant expression, like someone having a daydream]" (41). Through the novel image not only objectification is scaled but it also served as a realization of the follies and shortcomings of her real image. So, the technology reminded Shay that she needed some special transformation to her real image in order to be acceptable for the society. Apparently, technology was a healer, and savior who would rescue her from the inferiority complex and would remove all the frailties of her body thus providing her the identity she was striving for through a particular social conditioning. The act of indulging in the games relieved the despondency of being ugly and provided the characters the optimism to be rescued from the imposed despair of accepting the ugly identity. Tally herself knew that the ideal image formed on the screen would never be materialized even after her pretty operation since the decision of her physical appearance was in the hands of the committee of doctors who had to refashion her body which in fact was to refashion her identity. So her identity is controlled by a powerful mechanism. The super structure had already instructed the committee to

create sameness so that nobody seemed different than others. This actual event is supported with the empirical reality that favors the narrative that this operation on one hand makes everyone equal and on the other hand it remodels the human body on the image of perfection. In this way, the subjectivity and freedom of human agency is curtailed. This trap is invisible for these people since they are not allowed to encounter any other identity and thus squeezes the possibility of visible choice for the people like Tally. In the absence of any option they cannot exercise their free agency and they are left with no choice but to surrender in front of the powerful structure based on an imposed conformity. The power of the social construct about the ugly and to come out of the ugly state can be estimated from the instance that though Shay tries her best to convince Tally that to become pretty is to lose one's subjectivity and diversity which could strangle the free thoughts, proved futile as Tally did not believe in her warnings. Shay said: "We don't have to look like everyone else, Tally, and act like everyone else. We've got a choice. We can grow up any way we want" (89). But Tally is trapped in the social construct that she is not ready to even think beyond the transitive reality and is unable to visualize any alternative and tells Shay: "I don't want to be ugly all my life. I want those perfect eyes and lips, and for everyone to look at me and gasp" (92). Even in this state Tally's real is challenged as she feels anxiety about her ugliness and is haunted by a phobia that she might be refused to be operated. At the same time another independent mechanism appears to help the humans to construct their identity and turns the cyber society into an arena of battle between two opposing and contrary approaches about how the adolescents would be transformed and what kind of identity should be most appropriate for them. These two visions are about the future of the adolescents where one wished to resurrect the free agency by accepting diversity in their thoughts and actions and the other plotted to steal their free will and sought conformity and so-called equality that would suppress any revolting spirit in them. The former refuses to become the pretty and runs away to reside in an area called smoke. They are the first who smell the rat. Two of the smokeys were previously the doctors who operated upon the uglies and found that the operation impaired free thinking and paralyzed the subjectivity of the individuals. They are turned into a docile puppet who could never challenge the authority. They thought this change to be a threat to the humanness of the individuals. So they stand against the imposed identity and announce an open revolt against such docile identity. They have a son David who launches a covert campaign against malicious and totalitarian coercive government. He strives to enlighten the teenagers about the utopian pretty town. He persuades them to put aside the distorted notions about the depravities of being ugly. He tries to arouse their slumbering agency. Soon people like Shay find some blood in his convictions. Shay is not ready to throw her freedom, agency and voluntarism to acquire conformity and uniformity. Shay, being a sincere friend, offers Tally to sneak to the smoke and avoid the operation and subsequently throws back the attire of identity the coercive government wanted them to be wrapped in. But Tally

being utterly fascinated by the narrative of her society is unable to look beyond the surface and rejects Shay's idea not to become pretty. In other words, Tally was quite content to reproduce the structure Shay informs Tally that she wants to join the runaway group because; "[i]t's about becoming who I want to become. Not what some surgical committee thinks I should" (92). It is very obvious that Shay's real is in danger and she finds her agency being strangled so she retaliates and rejects the constructed identity. On the other hand, Tally is with the social construct that beauty incorporates power and those who are not beautiful are left far behind. This construct itself is ironic since in her cyber culture when everyone is pretty, beauty loses its vigor and it also loses the other which is needs to be felt. Thus, in cyber culture the diversity is eliminated to make the humans more like machines as machines are easy to be controlled and manipulated. It was a royal road for them to achieve the desired conformity. It is the miracle of the programmed social construct that Tally willingly surrenders before them. David rightly unveils the real face of the pretty operation and tells her: "You are all brainwashed into believing you're ugly" (276). Such brainwashing makes the population eager to sacrifice their natural body and to prefer the artificial body which would alter their real. Such a docile population poses no threat to the affairs of state as Michel Foucault asserts, "A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (*Discipline & Punish* 136). The state uses the independent mechanisms of education and conditioning to put the idea in the common people's minds that they are ugly or their bodies were defective and shabby. Thus the real of these people is presented as unnatural and they suffer certain kinds of complexes which pave the way for accepting the transformation of ugly body in to the pretty. It is here that a conflict begins between the state and individuals who reject the imposed identity or in other words who did not want to bargain their freedom with so-called pretty paradise. Though they were very few but they put resistance and endeavored to keep their naturalism alive and thus retain the humanness with its diversity and free will. Among these rebels are Shay, David, and his parents.

While observing and exploring the ugly society one can candidly claim that segregation percolates in it naturally. In the words of Bhaskar this segregation is the actual layer of reality that creates the otherness in the society. On one hand this segregation leaves no fear of offence or rebellion of people and on the other hand this segregation is used by the state indirectly as a stimulus to persuade the people to become pretty or to be marginalized. As Michel Foucault postulates, the control of space leads to control of individuals. This kind of society is directly analogous to the idea of prison put forth by Foucault; a demarcated place that is divided into sections and cells. Tally's city is like that prison as it is separated from the other cities and further divided into areas for the uglies and for the pretties. This segregation is based on social stratification where the privileged class lives separately and the lower strata was not able to mix with them as the uglies could not travel to the space where the

pretties were residing. This segregation of environment is used as marker of identity and a product of post humanism. Thus, identity formation is unswervingly caused by post humanism as a linking action in the words of Bhaskar. Ironically this post humanism is imposed without making the characters aware of it. This results in a desired control of the state as Foucault states: “Disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed. One must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation” (Discipline & Punish 143). It is very easy to locate the identity of any individual by determining where they resided or how they appeared physically. One can clearly envisage that the humanness or the real of the individuals is no longer the marker of their identity. These boundaries bring forth a clear distinction between the people who belonged to the structured society and those who are not the members of that society. The sense of the otherness provides the humans an alternative which can redeem their real humanness but the constant and coercive surveillance diminished the chances for the pretties to come across the otherness in the uglies as they were never allowed to go beyond their comfort and designed spaces. This lack of interaction deprives of sensing the otherness which could entice them to revitalize their humanness. Considering this, one can claim that it is only the uglies who are the real humans as they have the potential to restore their agency and are free to choose whether they want to live as ugly or they should go for the pretty operation. Thus the uglies are able to keep their agency alive and those who go for the operation are actually the result of a constant and well-planned process of different institutions like the schools, hospitals, work places etc. According to Foucault these institutions play a special role in the creation of docile bodies. Bhaskar believes these institutions to be serving as linking actions that work independently but indirectly manipulate the agency of the common people of the society. That raises a question as to where these spaces are controlled from? In fact, it is the powerful state that chalks out the functions for these spaces and these are used to create desired puppets through producing conformity in the common folk of the society. In other words, these institutions are the actual layer and domain of the social reality that helps to generate or contrive the empirical reality for the people of the society which ultimately is portrayed as the real reality. Same tactics are employed in the Uglies as the schools and media prepared the uglies to go for the pretty operation and their manipulation is so ingenious that the uglies are eagerly and anxiously waiting for the miracle of science. According to Foucault the linking actions such as institutions are controlled by the state so the state promotes its own will upon the people. Therefore it can be asserted that the control of space is actually the control of time by setting and imposing the strict schedule in the society to “exercise power over [individuals] through the mediation of time” (Discipline & Punish 162).

. The sense of lack is so intensively felt by the uglies that some of them wish to be operated even before reaching the desired or required age. Through media, games, and education they are shown the mirror which reflects the ideal image of beauty, and the uglies find themselves incomplete and imperfect. They even do not realize what they have to sacrifice for achieving the desired image. In the beginning of the novel one can clearly and vividly observe the enthusiasm of young Tally towards the ideal beauty of the pretty people. She finds herself inferior to the pretties and is eagerly waiting to be transformed into pretty as soon as possible. Her real is badly shaken by the state constructed narrative or image of the real beauty and she is in a grip of fear that she would not be able to join her friend Paris who was a few months older than she.

The beauty is another linking action which is very shrewdly contrived into the formation of the action which subsequently results in the agency of the young people. Though Tally found some activities of the pretties very odd, injudicious and imprudent still she was over joyed and pleased to look at the pretties She was unable to see the real of the pretties as they could not feel the limitations upon their agency which was at the mercy of the coercive social system. The real was nothing more than an empirical real. This real of the posthumans strips them of their free will and they face certain psychological and social problems. Their privacy is challenged as the pretties are always in the grip of strict surveillance; their emotions are dried, as Paris does not recognize Tally and their social activities are already decided as they were given a schedule beyond which they could not imagine. Thus, they were caged and converted into a machine. Tally's dormant agency is aroused when she is shocked by the authority informing her on her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday that she would not be transformed into pretty until she tells them about the whereabouts of the smokes that the uglies were refusing the operation. Their leaders are the doctors and their son David. The doctors are the members of the team of the state authority but now they do not like to snatch the free will from the people so they rebel against the state. Dr Cable asks Tally to help them by going to smokes and send them a signal so that they could locate them but Tally being a real human refuses to do so. However, she has to surrender before Dr Cable as she is told that she would not be operated until she helped them. Since the linking actions are free and work independently according to Bhaskar so this sending Tally to the runaways marks a great milestone for the redemption of her identity. In other words it helped Tally to be familiar with the other which is the pivotal factor for the transformation of one's identity. This decision of Dr. Cable proves another blow to the dormant agency of Tally. It generated a guilt in Tally that she is betraying her friends. So, she suffers mentally and psychologically in the smoke. She misses the image of the ideal beauty of the pretty world. She, in the beginning, is finding it impossible to tolerate and face the uglies as she was not able to swallow the truth that she will have to remain ugly throughout her life if she stayed with the smokies.

As discussed earlier, the active identity formation where agency gets a role in the formation of identity begins with the existence of the other, Tally has never experienced the otherness before she is compelled to go in smoke to facilitate Dr. Cable and her state but ironically she facilitated Tally to have an encounter with the otherness. In the absence of the otherness the identity formation is passive which the target of the state was. In order to capture the runaways, The identity enables the individual to differentiate himself or herself from the others by realizing what she or he possesses and what the others possess: “Organic functions constitute the very core of our experiences of personal identity.” (Kroger 8). Tally is sent to the wild where she had an opportunity to observe the other. The experience of the otherness is conditioned with displacement as Tally had to leave her place to face the otherness. This visit of Tally to runaways on one hand aggravated her sufferings in the posthuman era and on the other hand it revitalizes her free agency that leads her to revoke her real. In the absence of the other Tally has a very limited range of identities as she has no other to compare with herself but just a designed and constructed pretty. According to McCallum displacement occurs when characters are “removed from their familiar surroundings and placed in an environment which is physically, culturally, or linguistically alien” (104). These encounters in the words of Bhaskar are independent mechanisms that can be used to form or shape the empirical reality but at the same time these mechanisms can play pivotal role to restore the agency of the humans as they provide the humans a path to think beyond the thinking pattern of the society. The conformity is not found in the smoke where luckily Tally discovers the difference between her and others. Her interaction with the others in the smoke gave her an opportunity to ponder who she is? “Others now become important not merely as potential sources of identification but rather as independent agents, helping to recognize the ‘real me’” (Kroger 9). Considering this statement in the context of Tally the question arises as to whether a “real me” existed in her? Her ugly identity is a mere cultural construct and she is determined to embrace the pretty identity which itself is not an independent identity. However, her encounter with otherness convinces her that she is natural and normal and the transformation is abnormal. as technology was used to manipulate her memory. This reconfiguring directly affects her identity and herself. The experience of Smoke teaches Tally that being “ugly” is the real and more humane. She further learns through the books that it is difference that makes the life of the human beings normal instead of the sameness. She realizes that the real beauty rests in diversity. She understands that the people should never challenge nature and should remain contented with their physical appearance. She finds a marked difference between what her education taught and what she was experiencing her in the presence of the otherness. This experience helps Tally subvert the narrative that unhappiness was due to ugly appearance. Tally grasps that beauty did not merely rest upon appearance rather it depends upon how one thinks and behaves. Thinking about the pretty operation she passionately and prudently speaks to David; “I don’t want you

to look like everyone else” (279). This endorses the change in Tally’s reaction to the pretty construct as she decides to vote for the real of humans and stands against the mechanical life that kills diversity and humanness. It is, however, ironic that the identity that Tally secured with the consent of her free will had to be surrendered as she had to accept the pretty operation in order to facilitate the cure that David’s parents had discovered to get rid of the brain lesions. Apparently Tally gives her own consent for the experiment but the close reading and analysis of these events shows that Tally was trapped into the net of another covert mechanism that manipulated Tally in order to survive itself. However, the agency here seems to be freer and more active despite being in the pressure of another empirical reality. Her sacrifice is to resurrect the humanness and reject the robotic life.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude it is safe to say that in the cyber culture writings the writers are highlighting the current issues that post humans have to face when the technology is being used by the powerful structures of the society to create conformity. They have the view that the only way to survive in the cyber culture is to keep the real alive. The more the human agency appears free the more the humans will enjoy and relish their lives.

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