

**POSTHUMAN SUBJECTIVITY DEPICTED BY THE MAIN
CHARACTERS IN KEN LIU'S SHORT STORIES**

THESIS

By:

Nabilah Putri Widodo

NIM 220302110037



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE FACULTY OF
HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM
MALANG
2026**

**POSTHUMAN SUBJECTIVITY DEPICTED BY THE
MAIN CHARACTERS IN KEN LIU'S SHORT STORIES**

THESIS

Presented to

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang in Partial
fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S)

By:

Nabilah Putri Widodo

NIM 220302110037

Advisor:

Asni Furaida, M.A.

NIP.198807112023212027



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE FACULTY OF
HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM
MALANG
2026**

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I declare that the thesis entitled **POSTHUMAN SUBJECTIVITY
DEPICTED BY THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN KEN LIU'S SHORT
STORIES** is my original work. I have not included any material previously written or published by others, except as cited as references and listed in the bibliography. I hereby declare that any objections or claims arising from this work are solely my responsibility.

Malang, April 13th, 2026

The Researcher

A red 10,000 Rupiah stamp is placed over the signature. The stamp features the Garuda Pancasila emblem and the text "METERAI TEMPEL" and "10.000". The serial number "3FZF5AKXB38131761" is visible at the bottom of the stamp.

Nabilah Putri Widodo

NIM 220302110037

APPROVAL SHEET

Hereby declares that Nabilah Putri Widodo's thesis entitled **POSTHUMAN SUBJECTIVITY DEPICTED BY THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN KEN LIU'S SHORT STORIES** has been approved for thesis examination at the Faculty of Humanities, State Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, as one of the requirements for the degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S)

Malang, April 19th, 2026

Approved by

Head of Departmen of English
Literature

Advisor,



Asni Furaida, M.A.

NIP.198807112023212027



Dr. Agwin Degaf, M.A.

NIP 198805232015031004

Acknowledge by Dean,



Prof. Dr. M. Faisol, M.Ag
NIP.19301012003121003

LEGITIMATION SHEET

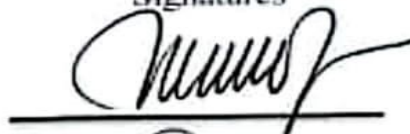
This is to certify that Nabilah Putri Widodo's thesis entitled **POSTHUMAN SUBJECTIVITY DEPICTED BY THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN KEN LIU'S SHORT STORIES** has been approved by the Board of Examiners as one of the requirements for the degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S) in the Department of English Literature.

Malang, April 08th, 2026

Board of Examiners

1. Prof. Dr. Mundi Rahayu, M.Hum.
NIP 196802262006042001

Signatures



2. Asni Furaida, M.A.
NIP 198807112023212027



3. Miftahul Huda, M.Pd., Ph.D.
NIP 198403292011011009



Approved by
Dean of the Faculty of Humanities



Prof. Dr. M. Faisol, M.Ag.
NIP 196411012003121003

MOTTO

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۖ وَلَمْ يُؤْمَرْ أَنِ يَحْمِلْ أُنْفُسَهُ ۖ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ حَلَاكَةٍ مُّسْمًى ۖ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَمْسُسْهُمُ الْقُرْآنُ وَلَا الْحَيَاةُ ۖ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَثِيرٌ ۚ

“Whoever fears Allah, He will open a way out for him.”

(QS. At-Talaq 65: 2).

إِن مَّعَ الْعُسْرِ يُُسْرًا

"So indeed, with difficulty comes ease."

(QS. Al-Insyirah: 6)

Life can be heavy, especially if you try to carry it all at once. Part of growing up and moving into new chapters of your life is about catch and release.

-Taylor Swift-

"IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD TO BRING YOU THIS FAR JUST TO FAIL"

DEDICATION

Dedicated entirely to my beloved parents, who have never stopped praying for me, encouraging me, and loving me throughout my life. Because of your unwavering support, love, and faith, I have made it this far, even though I lost hope countless times that I was good enough. Without your prayers and blessings, I would never have been able to achieve my goals. To myself, thank you. Thank you for being so persistent and staying on the right path despite facing difficulties and exhaustion throughout this process. Thank you for getting back up even when I wanted to fall and give up at certain moments. Thank you for enduring days of despair, doubt, fear, and tears, yet remaining steadfast in the face of it all. Not everyone knows how difficult this journey is, and not all the wounds are visible. But you made it through. You stood, kept fighting, and kept believing, even though you often had to fight against yourself. Today, all that hard work has paid off. This isn't just about a title, but about the courage to not give up. So, to myself, I'm proud of you. Thank you for not giving up.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praise be to Allah SWT, for His grace and guidance enabled me to complete this research entitled **Posthuman Subjectivity Depicted By The Main Characters in Ken Liu's Short Stories**. May blessings and peace always be upon our great prophet, Muhammad SAW, who has guided us from darkness to the path of goodness, namely, the religion of Islam. On this occasion, the researcher would like to express his deepest appreciation, with respect and love, to:

1. Allah SWT, for His grace and will, which have granted me health, strength, ease, and smoothness, enabling me to complete this thesis well and on time.
2. To the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Prof. Dr. M. Faisol, M.Ag., for his leadership and support in developing an academic environment that encourages intellectual growth and scholarly achievement.
3. The Head of the Department of English Literature, Dr. Agwin Degaf, M.A., for his continued guidance, dedication, and support for the development of the English Literature Department and the academic journey of students.
4. All the lecturers and staff of the Department of English Literature who have sincerely shared their knowledge, wisdom, and expertise during my studies. They have provided a conducive academic environment for learning and research, and provided excellent facilities. Thank you for shaping my academic growth and for the completion of this work.
5. My deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Mrs. Asni Furaida, M.A., for her

guidance, direction, input, and patience throughout the process of writing this thesis.

6. To my beloved parents and my two younger brothers. Words of thanks alone will never be enough to repay all the silent prayers, unwavering support, and countless sacrifices you have made all this time. Every step I took to complete this thesis carried your love, patience, and strength within it. In moments when I felt lost and exhausted, it was the thought of you that kept me moving forward. I hope this small achievement can reflect your endless efforts and bring you a little bit of happiness.
7. To someone who has quietly become my safe place in both my storms and my sunshine, Sessa Amara Navtavilova. Thank you for staying through the days when I was not okay, through the moments when I doubted myself, and through the times when everything felt uncertain. You never left, even when I didn't have the strength to explain what I was going through. Your presence has been more than just support; it has been a reminder that I am not alone. You believed in me in ways I sometimes couldn't believe in myself, and that meant more than I could ever put into words. Thank you for your patience, your loyalty, and the quiet strength you shared with me. I may not always say it, but having you in my life is something I will always be grateful for. You are, without a doubt, one of the most precious gifts God has given me.
8. To my beloved best friends, Tsabita, Hasan, Uzi, Irsyad, and others whom I cannot mention one by one, thank you for all the time you have spent

first semester until the researcher completes this thesis.

9. To all crew, Matanai, thank you for always making my day bright, being my second family, and always caring for me when I'm down. Love you all.
10. Finally, to someone who has learned to stand on her own two feet, walk a path that hasn't always been easy, and hold fast to her own courage, "Nabilah." Thank you for choosing to keep moving forward, even when things felt overwhelming, and for never giving up until now. Congratulations on earning your Bachelor of S.S degree. This achievement is the result of all the effort, patience, and strength you have shown along the way. Keep doing the things that make you proud, and don't forget to appreciate how far you've come. Take the time to celebrate yourself, and find joy in every step of the journey you've taken as you continue moving toward a better and brighter future.

Finally, with all humility, the hopes that this research can provide very valuable insights into the field of English literature and can be a meaningful reference for future scholars.

Malang, April 13th, 2026



The Researcher

Nabilah Putri Widodo
NIM 220302110037

ABSTRACT

Widodo, Nabilah Putri . (2026). *Posthuman Subjectivity Depicted By The Main Characters in Ken Liu's Short Stories*. Thesis, Department of English Literature. Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor: Asni Furaida, M.A.

Keywords: post-human subjectivity, artificial intelligence, algorithms, digital simulation.

The development of digital technology has changed the way humans understand their identity, consciousness, and relationship with technology. In contemporary literature, these changes are often represented through characters who live side by side with artificial intelligence systems and digital simulations. This study analyzes posthuman subjectivity represented by the main characters in the short stories *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum* by Ken Liu using N. Katherine Hayles' posthuman theory. This study aims to identify the characteristics of posthuman subjectivity and analyze how technology influences the formation of the characters' identities. The research data consists of narratives, dialogues, and descriptions that show the interaction between humans and technology in both short stories. The results show that posthuman subjectivity is represented through four main characteristics, namely informational pattern over material instantiation, consciousness as an epiphenomenon, the body as the original prosthesis, and seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. In *The Perfect Match*, these characteristics are seen through Sai's dependence on Tilly's artificial intelligence system that directs various aspects of his life. Meanwhile, in *Simulacrum*, posthuman subjectivity emerges through digital simulations that allow human identity and memory to be reproduced in virtual space. This study concludes that both short stories depict human identity as a construct formed through relations with technology, so that the boundaries between humans and machines become increasingly blurred.

ABSTRAK

Widodo, Nabilah Putri . (2026). *Posthuman Subjectivity Depicted By The Main Characters in Ken Liu's Short Stories*. Thesis, Department of English Literature. Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Dosen Pembimbing: Asni Furaida, M.A.

Kata Kunci: subjektivitas pasca-manusia, kecerdasan buatan, algoritma, simulasi digital.

Perkembangan teknologi digital telah mengubah cara manusia memahami identitas, kesadaran, dan hubungan mereka dengan teknologi. Dalam sastra kontemporer, perubahan tersebut sering direpresentasikan melalui tokoh-tokoh yang hidup berdampingan dengan sistem kecerdasan buatan dan simulasi digital. Penelitian ini menganalisis subjektivitas pasca-manusia yang direpresentasikan oleh tokoh utama dalam cerpen *The Perfect Match* dan *Simulacrum* karya Ken Liu menggunakan teori posthuman N. Katherine Hayles. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi karakteristik subjektivitas pasca-manusia serta menganalisis bagaimana teknologi memengaruhi pembentukan identitas tokoh. Data penelitian berupa narasi, dialog, dan deskripsi yang menunjukkan interaksi antara manusia dan teknologi dalam kedua cerpen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa subjektivitas pasca-manusia direpresentasikan melalui empat karakteristik utama, yaitu *informational pattern over material instantiation*, *consciousness as an epiphenomenon*, *the body as the original prosthesis*, dan *seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines*. Dalam *The Perfect Match*, karakteristik tersebut terlihat melalui ketergantungan Sai terhadap sistem kecerdasan buatan Tilly yang mengarahkan berbagai aspek kehidupannya. Sementara itu, dalam *Simulacrum*, subjektivitas pasca-manusia muncul melalui simulasi digital yang memungkinkan identitas dan memori manusia direproduksi dalam ruang virtual. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kedua cerpen menggambarkan identitas manusia sebagai konstruksi yang dibentuk melalui relasi dengan teknologi, sehingga batas antara manusia dan mesin menjadi semakin kabur.

مستخلص البحث

ويدودو، نبيلة بوتي. (2026). الذاتية ما بعد الإنسانية كما تجسدها الشخصيات الرئيسية في قصص كين ليو القصيرة. رسالة ماجستير، قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية في مالانج. المشرفة: أسني فوردا، ماجستير

الكلمات المفتاحية: الذاتية ما بعد الإنسانية، الذكاء الاصطناعي، الخوارزمية، المحاكاة الرقمية

أدى تطوُّر التقنيَّة ال رقميَّة إلى تغيُّير ال طريقة التي يفهم بها ال إنسانُ هويته ووعيه وعلقته بالتقنيَّة. وفي الدَّعَب المُعاصر، غالبًا ما تُمثَّلُ هذه التحوُّلاتُ من خِلالِ شخصياتٍ تعيشُ في ظِلِّ الأنظمة الذكاء الاصطناعي والمحاكاة الرقمية. تُخلِّقُ هذه الدِّراسَةُ الذاتيَّة ما يُعدُّ ال إنسانيَّة كما تُمثَّلُها ال شخصياتُ ال رئيسيَّة في قِ صتي «التوافق المثالي» و«المحاكاة» للكاتب كين ليو، بالغِ كَمالٍ على نظريَّة ما يُعدُّ ال إنسانيَّة لِن. كاترين هيلز. وتُهدَفُ هذه الدِّراسَةُ إلى تحديد خصائص الذاتيَّة ما يُعدُّ ال إنسانيَّة، وتَحليل كَيْفِيَّة تأثير التقنيَّة في تَشكُّل هويَّة ال شخصيات. وتُمثِّلُ بِنائات الدِّراسَةِ في ال سرد والجوار والوصف ال ذي يُظهرُ التفاعل بين ال إنسان والتقنيَّة في كلِّا القِ صتين وأظهرتُ نتائج الدِّراسَةِ أنَّ الذاتيَّة ما يُعدُّ ال إنسانيَّة تتجلى من خِلالِ أربع خصائص رئيسيَّة، وهي: تقديم النَمط المُعلَّومات «ي على التجسُّد المادي»، واعتبار الوعي ظاهرةً ثانويَّة، والنظر إلى الجسد بوصفه أ ولَّ وسيلةً تعويضيَّة، والاندماجُ ال سلسلُ مع اللِّبَتِ الذكيَّة. في قِ صة «التوافق المثالي»، تُظهرُ هذه الخصائصُ من خِلالِ اعتماد شخصيَّة ساي على نظام الذكاء الاصطناعي «ي «تيلي» ال ذي يُوجِدُ مُختلف جوانب حياتِه. أما في قِ صة «المحاكاة»، فتُظهرُ الذاتيَّة ما يُعدُّ ال إنسانيَّة من خِلالِ المُحاكاة ال رقميَّة التي تُتيحُ إعادة إنتاج هويَّة ال إنسان وذاكرتِه في فضاء افتراضي. ويُخلَصُ الدِّراسَةُ إلى أنَّ ال قِ صتين تُصوِّران هويَّة ال إنسان على أنَّها بناءٌ يتَّسَّ كلُّ من خِلالِ علقته بالتقنيَّة، م ما يُجَعِّلُ الحدودَ بين ال إنسان والآلة أكثرَ غُموضًا وتداخلًا.

TABLE OF CONTENT

THESIS.....	i
STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP	ii
APPROVAL SHEET.....	iii
LEGITIMATION SHEET	iv
MOTTO.....	v
DEDICATION	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
ABSTRACT.....	x
ABSTRAK	xi
مستخلص البحث	xii
TABLE OF CONTENT	xiii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
A. Background of the study	1
B. Research Questions	12
C. Significance of the study.....	13
D. Scope and Limitation	14
E. Definition of Key Terms	15
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	17

A. Posthumanism in Literature	17
B. Posthuman Subjectivity in N. Katherine Hayles' Theory	19
C. Human Agency and Human–AI Interaction in Posthuman Subjectivity	23
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	26
A. Research Design	26
B. Data Sources	27
C. Data Collection	28
D. Data Classification	29
E. Data Analysis	29
CHAPTER IV FINDING & DISCUSSION	31
A. Characteristics of Posthuman Subjectivity In <i>The Perfect Match</i>	31
B. Characteristics of Posthuman Subjectivity In <i>Simulacrum</i>	39
C. Human Agency in Human–AI Interactions in <i>The Perfect Match</i>	49
D. Human Agency in Human–AI Interactions in <i>Simulacrum</i>	64
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION	78
A. Conclusion	78
B. Suggestions	79
REFERENCES	81
CURRICULUM VITAE	84

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the study

Digital technology is developing rapidly, changing the way humans understand themselves and interact with the world. As Burkhanov et al., (2022) state, the development of digital technology has changed the way humans live and interact in modern society. In today's world, where artificial intelligence, algorithms, and simulation systems have become part of everyday life, the boundaries between humans and machines are increasingly blurred. Humans no longer simply use technology as a supporting tool, but live in an environment governed by algorithms, which subtly influence their decisions, feelings, and perspectives (Feri Sulianta, 2024). It raises serious questions about human agency and even the fundamental definition of identity, as the digital world begins to affect our thoughts and experiences.

In today's digital age, it is important to differentiate between algorithms and artificial Intelligence (AI), which are often confused with each other but serve different purposes. An algorithm consists of a structured sequence of rules designed to handle data, recognize patterns, and produce particular decisions or suggestions. Furthermore, Iftikhar Ahmad & Sharafat Ali (2024) also explain that technological systems such as algorithms and AI can be connected to the way the human mind works. In practice, algorithms play a role in various everyday digital systems, such as social media and search engines, indirectly influencing the information received and the choices made by users.

Meanwhile, Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to more complex technological systems that not only execute instructions but also learn from data, recognize patterns, and make predictions automatically. AI works by utilizing various algorithms as its operational basis, thus simulating human cognitive abilities in the decision-making process. Thus, algorithms can be understood as basic information processing mechanisms, while AI is a system that develops these capabilities to a more adaptive and autonomous level. These advancements have resulted in what is referred to as an algorithm-based society, where aspects of human life are influenced by digital technologies. Daily human actions, including communication, acquisition of information, and decision-making, have gradually become less autonomous due to the influence of data-processing algorithms. According to Zuboff (2023), digital technologies and algorithms are capable of influencing human behavior in subtle and often unconscious ways. Empirical evidence also demonstrates the growing influence of digital technology on human behavior. Ardyanti et al. (2025) found that technology integration significantly increased students' learning motivation and engagement in educational activities. Their findings suggest that digital technologies do not merely function as supporting tools but actively shape how individuals participate in and respond to various experiences. This indicates that technology increasingly plays a role in influencing human behavior across different areas of everyday life.

Rahayu (2021) further shows that social media plays an important role in providing information and facilitating communication, particularly among young people. She also argues that the combination of social media and visual messages contributes to the emergence of new forms of communication in contemporary society. These developments demonstrate how digital technologies have become increasingly involved in everyday communication and

information exchange, influencing the ways individuals interact with others and access information.

This condition not only demonstrates the rapid progress of technology but also raises questions regarding human involvement in digital structures. How much freedom do humans still have in making decisions and performing actions, or are these processes increasingly controlled by invisible technological systems? As digital systems become more involved in shaping human choices and behavior, concerns regarding the extent of human agency in technologically mediated environments continue to emerge.

In this context, the relationship between humans and intelligent technologies becomes an important issue in posthuman discourse, particularly in examining how subjectivity and agency are constructed through technological mediation. As Hayles (1999) argues, the posthuman condition challenges “the liberal humanist subject, possessing autonomy and will,” suggesting that human agency is no longer entirely independent from technological systems. This condition shows that the growing integration between humans and intelligent technologies has begun to challenge the position of humans as autonomous subjects in the digital era.

This issue is closely related to posthumanism, particularly in understanding how technology reshapes human subjectivity and human experience in the digital age. In this context, the increasing integration between humans and technology can be understood through the concept of the posthuman, which refers to a shift in how humans are positioned as subjects in relation to technological systems. The posthuman does not refer to the disappearance of humanity, but rather to a shift from the humanist perspective that views humans as autonomous entities toward an understanding that humans are always interconnected with and dependent

on technological systems. As Ivancu (2025) argues, human subjectivity in the posthuman era is no longer fixed or fully autonomous because human experiences, decisions, and thoughts are continuously shaped through technological mediation. Therefore, posthumanism becomes an important theoretical framework for analyzing how digital technology influences human subjectivity and agency. One of the major theorists who discusses this issue is N. Katherine Hayles in her book *How We Became Posthuman*.

The concept of the posthuman in N. Katherine Hayles's thought is inseparable from her critique of liberal humanism, which positions humans as autonomous and rational subjects separate from technology. In her book, "How We Became Posthuman," Hayles explains that developments in cybernetics, information theory, and digital technology have transformed the way humans understand identity, the body, and consciousness. These changes have given rise to a condition called the posthuman, a state in which the boundaries between humans, machines, and information become increasingly blurred. According to Hayles, "the posthuman view prioritizes information patterns over material instances" (1999, p. 2), indicating that information is beginning to be understood as something more important than the material existence of the human body.

Hayles rejects the idea that humans can be reduced to pure information detached from the body. She argues that consciousness and identity remain inseparable from material embodiment, criticizing cybernetic views that treat the body as secondary to information (Hayles, 1999).

In Hayles's posthuman framework, human subjectivity is no longer understood as fully autonomous or independent from technology. Rejecting Cartesian dualism, Hayles argues that

consciousness is always embodied and shaped through interactions between humans, information systems, and technological networks. As cybernetic developments increasingly position humans as “information-processing entities” (Hayles, 1999, p. 7), subjectivity becomes distributed across biological and technological systems rather than centered solely within the individual human subject.

This perspective is also reflected in Hayles’s discussion of the Turing Test, which illustrates how digital communication blurs the boundaries between embodied identity and technological representation.

Although Hayles acknowledges the increasing integration between humans and intelligent technologies, she rejects extreme posthuman views that reduce the body to a mere accessory. Instead, she emphasizes that human subjectivity remains grounded in material embodiment, even as it becomes relational and technologically mediated. These transformations of human subjectivity are not only theoretical concerns but are also increasingly represented in contemporary literary works that explore human interactions with intelligent technologies.

The relevance of Hayles's framework can be observed in contemporary literary works that depict the increasing entanglement between humans and intelligent technologies. The short stories *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*, taken from Ken Liu’s anthology *The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories*, highlight two important aspects of human experience in the digital age: algorithmic influence on decision-making and simulation within emotional relationships. In the short story *The Perfect Match*, the main character lives in a system entirely mediated by an artificial intelligence named Tilly, which manages various aspects of daily life

through data analysis. The presence of this system demonstrates how algorithms not only assist but also direct human decision-making, blurring the line between individual will and technological control. This reflects how human subjectivity is shaped through interactions with digital systems. In line with this view, Arnd-Caddigan (2015), notes that modern humans are often alone together, that is, emotionally bound to technology, but increasingly removed from authentic human relationships.

This study examines posthuman subjectivity through N. Katherine Hayles's theory of posthumanism, which identifies four main principles explaining how human subjectivity functions in the digital age. First, informational pattern over material instantiation, second, consciousness as an epiphenomenon, third, the body as the original prosthesis, and last, seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. All these principles allow defining posthumanism as a new approach to human functioning as a subject within technologically mediated contexts.

Under the posthumanism concept, the phenomenon of posthuman subjectivity entails the dependence of human actions, awareness, and decision-making on information technology and interaction with machines. Thus, the issue of posthuman subjectivity implies both psychological identity and changing patterns of human behavior as a subject of data, simulations, and machine interactions. For example, algorithmic governance refers to the effect that recommendations and AI algorithms have on human choices and behavior. Digital simulation concerns artificial reproduction of human presence and emotions by means of technologies replacing direct human experiences.

Literature is a fundamental means through which we can observe the phenomenon at

issue. As Gamberi (2024) indicates, contemporary literature often delves into issues related to humans' relationship with technology in the digital age. An illustrative case in point is Ken Liu, a well-known writer of Chinese-American origin whose primary focus is science fiction and speculative fiction. Liu is characterized by weaving themes such as technology, culture, history, and philosophy in order to offer valuable insights into the impact of technological developments on humanity and society.

Liu's works have been recognized all around the world, with his award-winning short story *The Paper Menagerie* becoming the first piece ever to win three literary prizes at once. Indeed, through his stories, Liu reflects upon the role played by technology in shaping humans' subjectivity, memory, relations within the family, and cultural dynamics in the current socio-economic context. The anthology *The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories* features several short stories revolving around speculative ideas involving technological advancements, alternate histories, and humans' reactions to social change.

Some of the prominent works included in the anthology include *The Bookmaking Habits of Select Species*, *State Change*, *The Perfect Match*, *Good Hunting*, *The Literomancer*, *Simulacrum*, *The Regular*, *The Paper Menagerie*, *An Advanced Reader's Picture Book of Comparative Cognition*, *The Waves*, *Mono no aware*, *All the Flavors*, *A Brief History of the Trans-Pacific Tunnel*, *The Litigation Master and the Monkey King*, *The Man Who Ended History: A Documentary*. Even though a majority of these works incorporate technological aspects in their narrative, not all the stories necessarily highlight the relationship between humans and artificial intelligence.

In this case, the research focuses on two short stories from Ken Liu's collection, *The*

Paper Menagerie and Other Stories: The Perfect Match and Simulacrum. Both stories depict the relationship between humans and advanced digital technology in different ways.

The Perfect Match, first published in 2012, tells the story of Sai, a man living in a society where nearly every aspect of daily life is managed by an AI assistant named Tilly. Tilly helps users make decisions about work, relationships, entertainment, and personal activities by collecting and analyzing personal data. Initially, Sai relies heavily on Tilly because the system makes his life easier and more efficient. However, after meeting his neighbor, Jenny, who opposes the surveillance system created by Centilion, the company that developed Tilly, Sai begins to question the extent to which technology controls human life. The story follows Sai's growing awareness of how AI influences human choices, thoughts, and social interactions.

Meanwhile, the short story *Simulacrum* centers on Paul Larimore, the inventor of simulation technology, which creates digital representations of humans that mimic their personalities, emotions, and interactions. This story primarily explores the strained relationship between Paul and his daughter, Anna. After Anna learns of her father's use of simulacra in his past relationships, their bond gradually weakens. Years later, Paul continues to replay Anna's childhood simulacrum because he misses the emotional closeness they once shared. Through Paul and Anna's perspectives, the story illustrates how simulation technology affects memories, emotional connections, and interpersonal relationships.

Both stories offer human experiences that are closely intertwined with digital technology and artificial intelligence. Therefore, they are suitable for further analysis from a posthumanist perspective, specifically N. Katherine Hayles' theory of posthuman subjectivity.

The researcher chose Ken Liu's short stories, *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*,

because they depict the relationship between humans and intelligent technology in different contexts. Both stories address issues of artificial intelligence, algorithms, and digital simulation, as they relate to technological developments in modern society. *The Perfect Match* depicts the influence of artificial intelligence and algorithmic systems on human decisions and daily life through the characters Sai and Tilly, an AI assistant. Meanwhile, *Simulacrum* depicts the emotional interaction between humans and digital technological simulations through Paul's relationship with his child's simulacrum. Therefore, these two short stories are considered relevant to be analyzed using a posthumanist perspective, especially the theory of posthuman subjectivity from N. Katherine Hayles. Oh (2021), also notes that emotional connections between humans and technology can form even without real interaction.

Both stories depict the interaction between humans and advanced technology in everyday life. The issues they raise relate to the concept of posthumanism, particularly the relationship between humans, technology, and subjectivity. Therefore, the stories are suitable for analysis using N. Katherine Hayles' theory of posthuman subjectivity. Through this lens, this research explores how technology influences the formation of human subjectivity in these two stories.

Based on the theoretical framework used, several previous studies have addressed the relationships between humans and technology in literature and digital culture, with varying focuses and approaches. In general, these studies can be grouped into several main trends. The first group focuses on changes in human identity in the digital age, particularly in relation to subjectivity and the posthuman condition. Riisgaard (2022), in *Rage Against the Machines*, uses a qualitative analysis method based on posthumanism to examine the relationship between humans and intelligent machines and finds that human subjectivity is increasingly shaped by

technological systems and artificial intelligence.

Pierce (2024), in *Posthumanism in Literature: Redefining Selfhood, Temporality, and Reality/ies through fiction*, using a posthuman literary study approach, shows that contemporary fiction represents human identity as fluid and no longer separate from non-human systems.

Meanwhile, Naqvi et al. (2025), In *Posthumanism and Digital Subjectivity in Kazuo Ishiguro's Klara and the Sun: Deconstructing Human Identity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence* used textual analysis to examine the novel *Klara and the Sun* and concluded that artificial intelligence plays a significant role in challenging traditional concepts of human identity. Although theoretically relevant, these studies have not specifically discussed Ken Liu's work or the context of digital simulation in the short story that is the focus of this research.

The second group highlights the representation of surveillance, algorithmic control, and technological dominance in human life. Kang (2023), in *Mobility and Algorithmic Self in the Age of Surveillance Capitalism in Ken Liu's The Perfect Match*, using literary criticism and surveillance capitalism theory, analyzes *The Perfect Match* and finds that algorithms shape the main characters' subjectivity and decision-making. Joohyun Park (2023), In *Critical/Dystopian Approaches to High-Tech Surveillance Capitalist Societies in Nosedive and The Perfect Match* uses dystopian and cultural criticism approaches to read the short story as a representation of a society controlled by surveillance capitalism, while Harsha A. U. S. (2021), In *SurViolence: The Preoccupation with Surveillance and Entrapment in Ken Liu's The Perfect Match and Tony Tulathimutte's Private Citizens*, through comparative analysis, emphasizes

how individuals are trapped in technological systems that control social life.

In addition, Lee (2025), in *Cruel Optimism in the Promises of AI*, Ken Liu's *The Perfect Match* shows that the short story *The Perfect Match* represents a society that is highly dependent on an artificial intelligence system named Tilly, which regulates various aspects of human life, including social relationships and personal decisions. This study highlights that excessive dependence on technology can limit individual freedom in making decisions. Furthermore, this study also shows how algorithms shape social reality through recommendation systems that adapt information to user preferences, so that technology not only functions as a tool, but also as a system that indirectly controls human behavior.

Windriani et al. (2022), *The Loss of Humanity in the Era of Advanced Technology Depicted in Two Dystopian Short Stories: Ken Liu's The Perfect Match and Ray Bradbury's The Veldt*, uses a thematic approach to compare Liu's *The Perfect Match* and *The Veldt* and conclude that technological dominance leads to the loss of human values and emotional closeness. However, studies in this group generally still position technology as a social and ethical issue, without deeply examining how posthuman subjectivity is formed as an ontological issue.

The third group focuses on theoretical studies of posthumanism, Jacob Vangeest (2024), In *Critical Post Humanism as Problematic: Epistemological, Ethical, and Teleological Gestures for the Future of Post-Humanity*, posthumanism is discussed as a critique of classical humanism that positions humans as fully rational and autonomous subjects. CHO (2025), In *An Analysis of Katherine Hayles' Posthuman Theory: Focusing on Cybernetic Science*, through a study of N Katherine Hayles' thinking, emphasizes that human subjectivity

in the cybernetic era is shaped by information systems and technology. These studies provide a strong theoretical foundation, but have not been directly applied to analyze the representation of posthuman subjectivity in Ken Liu's short stories.

Furthermore, there is research that examines posthumanism in the context of works outside of Ken Liu's literature. Rama (2023), In *Representasi Posthumanisme Pada Film Dune (2021)*, the analysis of the film demonstrates that technology and non-human systems play a role in shaping human experience and consciousness. Although the objects of study are different, this research strengthens the relevance of posthumanism in contemporary cultural studies.

Based on this mapping, it can be concluded that most previous research, particularly those discussing Ken Liu's work, still focuses on *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum* to examine how algorithms and digital simulations simultaneously shape posthuman subjectivity, and is still very limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how posthuman subjectivity is represented through the digital experiences of the main characters in Ken Liu's short stories *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*. This analysis focuses on how algorithmic systems and digital simulations mediate human action, consciousness, and relationships, thus challenging traditional understandings of humans as independent and free subjects.

B. Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of posthuman subjectivity depicted by the main characters in the short stories *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum* by Ken Liu, based on N. Katherine Hayles' theory of the posthuman?
2. How do interactions with AI systems shape the extent of human agency in Ken Liu's *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*?

C. Significance of the study

This study enables the readers and students to comprehend the meaning of the posthuman subjectivity as reflected through the main characters in the two short stories, *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*, by Ken Liu. It becomes evident from this research how the characteristics of the posthuman subjectivity, as explained by N. Katherine Hayles, manifest themselves through the interactions between human characters and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Moreover, this study reveals how the interaction between human beings and artificial intelligence involves more than just the usage of one by the other. It is possible to notice how this continuous interaction influences the thinking processes, decision-making, and even the emotional state of people.

Additionally, this paper highlights the role that human interaction with algorithms plays in defining the degree to which agency is exercised by humans in technologically mediated environments. By looking at the experiences of the individuals in *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*, this research identifies how algorithms and artificial intelligence impact decision-making, emotions, and interpersonal relations.

From the perspective of literary studies, the proposed study may be seen as another point to consider when discussing posthumanism in the context of contemporary literary discourse associated with technology and AI. The study under discussion not only reveals the characteristics of the posthuman subjectivity but also describes the relations between man and AI as well as their impact on the boundary between the two. The academic contribution to the development of the field is also evident; thus, this thesis is expected to be used as a reference by other scholars studying similar problems in literary works.

D. Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is confined to Ken Liu's short story collection *The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories*, with the researcher selecting only two stories for detailed analysis. In particular, the research looks into the depiction of posthuman subjectivity in the digital Age through the characters portrayed in *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*. This involves analyzing the experiences of the main characters in terms of algorithms, Artificial intelligence, and digital simulation that affect their human agency, consciousness, and interpersonal relations. This study, therefore, highlights how interactions between human beings and technological systems affect human agency, consciousness, and social relations in technologically mediated spaces, and not on the personal traits of the individuals.

The study is limited to the text interpretation, which is the analysis of narratives, characters, and symbolism in both chosen stories. There is no effort to conduct an empirical evaluation of digital technology systems, as well as no intention to conduct a statistical analysis and apply results to contemporary society. The central concern thus is that of literary representation of the posthuman condition as evidenced in the experiences of the characters themselves and in the meanings created in these texts.

With these parameters defined, it can be seen that the proposed study seeks to contribute to the field of digital literature and culture in the context of posthuman ontology, which is conditioned by technology. Some other areas, such as economic considerations of the digital technologies, technical evaluations of the AI system, and empirical studies of technology users' behavior, are not part of this investigation.

E. Definition of Key Terms

To ensure clarity and avoid misunderstanding, the following definitions explain some of the key terms used in this research study:

1. Posthumanism

The posthuman view privileges informational patterns over material embodiment and considers consciousness not as the center of human identity, but as an effect emerging from interactions between humans and intelligent systems. As a result, the boundary between humans and machines becomes increasingly fluid and unstable (Hayles, 1999).

2. Subjectivities

Subjectivity describes how humans perceive, understand, and construct themselves as subjects through consciousness, emotions, identity, and decision-making processes. In N. Katherine Hayles's (1999) perspective, subjectivity in the digital era is no longer fully autonomous or independent, but is increasingly influenced and mediated by information systems, algorithms, and human-machine interactions. Hayles argues that human subjectivity is constructed through informational patterns, distributed cognition, and continuous interactions between humans and technology (Hayles, 1999).

3. Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence refers to computer-based systems designed to emulate human cognitive functions such as learning from data, pattern recognition, and autonomous decision-making. In this study, artificial intelligence refers to technological systems that interact with humans and can shape their decision-making process (Kaplan, 2019).

4. Algorithms

Algorithms refer to a structured sequence of logical steps or computational instructions used to process data and generate a certain output. In this study, algorithms refer to digital tools that analyze user data to predict, guide, or influence human behavior (Gillespie, 2014).

5. Digital Simulation

Digital simulation is the technological process through which virtual models of objects, environments, or humans can be produced using computer technologies. For this research, be referred to as technology that creates artificial models of humans, thus allowing interaction between humans and computer technologies (Baudrillard, 1994).

6. Human-AI Interaction

Human-AI interaction can be described as interactions between humans and artificial intelligence technologies that influence everyday experiences, decisions, and emotional connections (Yang, 2020).

7. Human-Agency

Human agency refers to the capacity of humans to make decisions and perform actions. In N. Katherine Hayles's (1999) posthuman perspective, human agency is no longer viewed as fully autonomous or completely independent from technology because human consciousness, subjectivity, and decision-making are shaped through continuous interactions with information systems and intelligent machines. Thus, agency in the posthuman condition becomes increasingly mediated by technological networks and digital systems. (Hayles, 1999).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Posthumanism in Literature

The development of digital technologies has impacted literature's representation of humanness. Modern-day texts, particularly fiction and science fiction stories, present a human being as a component of a greater whole where technology, machinery, and the digital universe influence how a person acts or thinks.

Posthumanism becomes a relevant literary criticism in the current context as it opposes the conventional humanistic perspective whereby human beings occupy the central position in all activities. Posthumanism, according to Nayar (2025) It is not about doing away with humanity; rather, it asks people to reconsider the nature of humanity in an age where technology and non-human components are becoming significant.

In literary analysis, posthumanism is employed to analyze the human-machine interface in literature. According to Hicks (2022), posthumanism texts show the absence of distinction between humans and machines. Humans have become more reliant on technology for social interactions, behaviors, and perception of reality.

The concept of posthumanism is also concerned with how non-human elements such as artificial intelligence, algorithms, and digital systems shape human experiences. Jaques (2022) adds that in posthuman narratives, people exist alongside technology to the extent that they are able to differentiate between what is genuinely human and what is manufactured by

technology. In this regard, humans cannot be self-sufficient but rather form part of an intricate web of relationships.

Posthuman literature frequently involves the blurring of lines between what is real and virtual, including digital simulation and virtual reality. In such instances, these elements are normalized within human society. This phenomenon makes the reader contemplate reality, authenticity, and human relationships.

The literature of the posthuman era also describes the overlapping of boundaries between reality and artificiality, such as digital simulation and virtual reality. The existence of this technology is a natural part of human life. This situation forces readers to reconsider their perceptions about reality, authenticity, and social relations.

But not all literature about posthumanism shows that technology negatively impacts human life. According to Pierce (2024), posthuman literature also discusses how people diverge from and interact with technology. On the other hand, Gumanay (2023) suggests that human communication with technology offers both potential and dangers regarding self-awareness and consciousness of the world.

In summary, posthumanism serves as an analytical tool for studying literature featuring technology, artificial intelligence, and simulations. Posthumanism allows readers to see that technology is not just the context of the story but also the driving force of human life. From the various theories of posthumanism, the theory of N. Katherine Hayles is the most appropriate one, particularly in examining human relations with information and technology. Thus, this thesis employs Hayles' theory as its primary foundation.

B. Posthuman Subjectivity in N. Katherine Hayles' Theory

One prominent posthumanism theorist who deals with literary studies and issues regarding the digital world is N. Katherine Hayles. The latter believes that posthumanism is not a concept that dismisses humanity; on the contrary, it provides a new vision of human beings as subjects in the age of information technologies. According to N. Katherine Hayles, posthumanism contradicts classical humanism, where humans were understood as autonomous entities for whom consciousness was the key element.

According to Hayles, the Cartesian dualistic view that separates mind and body need revision. The posthuman notion assumes that people no longer identify their identities solely with their bodies but consider them as information. Therefore, the identity of humans arises due to the intersection between the physical body, information, and intelligent machines. Consequently, humans become part of an informational networked system that affects thought, actions, and emotions.

Moreover, Hayles considers consciousness an epiphenomenon, which is the result of the complex process rather than the source of people's behavior. Furthermore, she suggests that the body can be regarded as a prosthesis, emphasizing that humans constantly interact with technology. The distinction between human beings and machines becomes blurry. Joseph, (2025) also highlights the significant contribution of AI technologies to transforming conceptions of human identity and cognition.

In general, the posthuman conception of identity can be characterized as relational and distributed. People can no longer consider themselves independent entities as they form identity due to the intersection between different elements, physical bodies, information, and

technological networks. This theoretical framework forms the basis of further analysis of literary and cultural texts.

As noted by N. Katherine Hayles, posthuman subjectivity does not have any permanent characteristics. It is defined by some characteristics of information culture and demonstrates how the human being perceives his or her identity in interactions with technology.

1. An Informational pattern over material instantiation.

According to Hayles, the first characteristic of post-human subjectivity is the dominance of an Informational pattern over material instantiation, where information is considered more important than physical existence or the human body. From this perspective, human subjectivity is no longer understood solely based on the biological body, but through informational patterns that can be recorded, processed, stored, and reproduced in digital systems. Hayles asserts that in the post-human condition, the body is no longer the primary focus of human existence, as a person's subjectivity can be represented through data, algorithms, and digital traces that continuously interact with technology.

This shift demonstrates a transformation from the traditional understanding of humans as complete biological organisms to a new understanding that humans also exist as informational entities. In digital life, various aspects of subjectivity, such as preferences, habits, emotions, and decision-making patterns, can be translated into data that is read and processed by technological systems. Thus, a person's existence lies not only in their physical body, but also in the digital information that represents them.

This feature is important in this study because it helps explain how the characters in *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum* experience subjectivity formation through their

relationships with information systems and digital technology.

2. Consciousness as an Epiphenomenon

The second feature is consciousness as an epiphenomenon, which means that human consciousness is no longer the primary element determining subjectivity, but rather the product of more complex cognitive processes. In traditional humanism, consciousness is considered the essence of human existence and central to decision-making. However, from a post-humanist perspective, consciousness is no longer the dominant factor, as human actions are also influenced by systems beyond the scope of full awareness.

Hiles explains that humans do not always act based on conscious decisions but are also influenced by automatic processes, cognitive patterns, and interactions with technology that indirectly guide their behavior. In the digital context, algorithms, artificial intelligence, and predictive systems can influence human choices even before individuals are aware of the process.

This suggests that human subjectivity is not solely based on free will or rational consciousness, but also on external mechanisms operating through technology. In this study, these characteristics are used to examine how characters in short stories experience changes in subjectivity as a result of the influence of technological systems that indirectly shape their thought patterns and behavior.

3. The Body as Original Prosthesis

The third characteristic is the body as Original Prosthesis, the idea that the human body can be understood from its inception as a substitute or tool that can be developed, modified,

and even replaced by technology. In Hayles's theory, the body is no longer seen as a fixed boundary of human subjectivity, but as something that is adaptable and interconnected with various forms of technology.

This concept suggests that the relationship between humans and technology is not entirely new, but rather a continuation of the human tendency to continually expand the body's capabilities through external tools. In the digital age, this expansion is crucial, as technology not only facilitates physical activity but also begins to penetrate human emotional, cognitive, and social functions.

Human dependence on technology demonstrates that the biological body is no longer the sole medium of experience. Human subjectivity can persist through digital representations, simulations, and other forms of virtual interaction. In this study, these characteristics are relevant to examining how the characters' bodies in short stories are no longer the primary focus of their existence, but have begun to participate in the technology they use.

4. Seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines

The fourth characteristic seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines, is a condition where the relationship between humans and machines becomes increasingly integrated to the point where the boundaries between the two become blurred. There is only one person, one who has the authority to do so, and the other is internal and external, and the person who owns it owns their own hands, the information they transmit, and the subjectivity of the person they transmit to.

Hayles explains that in the posthuman era, humans and machines operate in a continuously interconnected relationship. This is most important, especially in digital systems,

and the digital technologies used in other countries, which are largely social and interactive. As a result, the boundaries between human agency and technological function become increasingly blurred.

C. Human Agency and Human–AI Interaction in Posthuman Subjectivity

In N. Katherine Hayles's posthuman theory, human agency can no longer be understood through the model of the liberal humanist subject, which assumes that individuals possess autonomous will and complete control over their actions. According to Hayles (1999), the posthuman condition destabilizes this assumption because "there is no a priori way to identify a self-will that can be clearly distinguished from an other-will" (p. 4). As humans become increasingly integrated with informational systems and intelligent technologies, agency emerges through interactions between human and nonhuman actors rather than from an entirely independent self. Therefore, decision-making and behavior are shaped by distributed networks of cognition, making human agency technologically mediated rather than fully autonomous.

This transformation of agency is closely related to Hayles's argument that "the posthuman view privileges informational pattern over material instantiation" (Hayles, 1999, p. 2). In the posthuman condition, information becomes central in organizing human experiences and subjectivity. Human actions and decisions are increasingly influenced by informational systems that collect, process, and distribute data through digital technologies. As a result, agency is no longer formed solely through individual consciousness but through interactions with systems of information and technological mediation.

Hayles further explains that consciousness should not be understood as the absolute center of human identity and control. One of the central assumptions of posthumanism is “that consciousness is an epiphenomenon” (Hayles, 1999, p. 2), meaning that consciousness emerges from complex cognitive processes rather than functioning as a completely autonomous force. This perspective challenges the traditional humanist belief that humans possess total control over their actions and decisions. In technologically mediated environments, human perception, awareness, and decision-making are continuously shaped through interactions with algorithms, artificial intelligence, and informational systems. Therefore, agency becomes distributed across both human cognition and technological structures.

The extent of human agency is also transformed through Hayles’s concept of the body as “the original prosthesis” (Hayles, 1999, p. 3). According to Hayles, humans have always extended their bodily and cognitive capacities through technology. Technological devices are no longer viewed merely as external tools but become integrated into everyday human activities and cognitive processes. This integration demonstrates that human agency is increasingly dependent on technological systems that mediate communication, perception, memory, and decision-making. As Hayles states, “the body is the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate” (1999, p. 3), suggesting that the relationship between humans and technology has always been interconnected.

Furthermore, Hayles emphasizes that posthuman subjectivity emerges through the “seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines”. (Hayles, 1999, p. 3). Humans and technological systems increasingly operate within interconnected informational networks in

which cognition and agency are shared across biological and technological processes. Hayles explains that humans are increasingly understood as “information-processing entities, essentially similar to intelligent machines” (Hayles, 1999, p. 7). Consequently, decision-making and social interaction can no longer be understood as entirely individual processes because they are continuously mediated through interactions with intelligent technologies.

Hayles also notes that “it is no longer possible to distinguish meaningfully between the biological organism and the informational circuits in which the organism is enmeshed” (Hayles, 1999, p. 35). This condition illustrates how deeply technological systems shape human experiences and actions in the posthuman era. Human agency is therefore not eliminated, but it becomes relational, distributed, and increasingly dependent on interactions with informational networks and digital technologies.

Therefore, within Hayles’s posthuman framework, human agency should not be viewed as a fixed or completely autonomous human capacity. Instead, agency becomes dynamic and technologically mediated through continuous interactions between humans, artificial intelligence, informational systems, and digital networks.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employs literary criticism as its research method, which is applied with the aim of understanding and evaluating literary works and the issues they contain (Muhlisin & Rahayu, 2024). The use of literary criticism as the main method of this research becomes necessary since the focus of this work is to explore literary texts. According to Akhmad Muzakki (2020), literary criticism is a branch of literary studies in which scholars read, interpret, and analyze literary texts in order to examine their meanings, ideologies, and representations created via languages, storytelling, and different types of narratives. Accordingly, literary criticism is used as an instrument that makes literary texts more than simply stories and rather discursive formations that construct human experience under specific social, cultural, and technological circumstances.

Posthumanism theory, introduced by N. Katherine Hayles in her book *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), represents the core theoretical paradigm under which this work operates. Such concepts as posthuman subjectivity in literature are explored from this perspective, as well as Hayles's notions concerning subjectivity as information pattern, consciousness as epiphenomenon, body as first prosthesis, and human being combined with intelligent machine. Posthumanism theory forms the basis for discussing the characters in short stories in terms of their representation as nodes of a network rather than independent humanist entities.

B. Data Sources

The main source for this research includes two short stories authored by Ken Liu: *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*. The selection of these two stories stems from their direct representation of the interaction of humans with advanced technologies, such as algorithms and artificial intelligence, which can be seen in daily life. These short stories present the experience of humans who live in an intelligent environment, and therefore, they prove relevant to the chosen theoretical perspective of posthumanism. Both short stories belong to the short story collection titled *The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories* by Ken Liu. This compilation has been published by Saga Press/Gallery Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., in New York City, United States.

Both short stories are part of the anthology *The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories* by Ken Liu. The book was published by Saga Press/Gallery Books, an imprint of Simon & Schuster, in New York, United States. The first edition was released on March 8, 2016, while subsequent printed editions, including the paperback, were issued around October 4th, 2016, according to publisher records. The anthology contains approximately 464 pages.

As an anthology, *The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories* is not divided into chapters like a novel. Instead, it consists of fifteen independent short stories, each functioning as its own narrative unit with different characters, settings, and conflicts. The stories included in the anthology are *The Bookmaking Habits of Select Species*, *State Change*, *The Perfect Match*, *Good Hunting*, *The Literomancer*, *Simulacrum*, *The Regular*, *The Paper Menagerie*, *An Advanced Reader's Picture Book of Comparative Cognition*, *The Waves*, *Mono no aware*, *All the Flavors*, *A Brief History of the Trans-Pacific Tunnel*, *The Litigation Master* and the

Monkey King, and *The Man Who Ended History: A Documentary*. Each short story stands as its own chapter, with its own title and narrative structure. *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum* are each separate stories with their own plots, characters, and conflicts, but they both thematically address the issue of the relationship between humans and technology.

In this study, the researcher used a digital edition (soft file/eBook). The use of a digital edition facilitated text access, data tagging, and maintained text consistency during the analysis process. The digital edition used was obtained through legal sources from the publisher and official distributor (Liu, 2016).

The research data consists of words, phrases, sentences, and dialogues found in both short stories. The data focuses on sections of the text that demonstrate how human subjectivity is mediated by technology, such as the influence of algorithms on decision-making, the relationship between humans and artificial intelligence, and the simulation of digital presence that replaces authentic human relationships.

C. Data Collection

The data collection technique in this study employed a literature study (library research), as all data was obtained from written sources in the form of literary texts and theoretical references. The primary data for this study were two short stories by Ken Liu, *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*. The data collection stages were as follows:

a. Intensive Text Reading

The researcher conducted careful and repeated readings of both short stories to thoroughly understand the plot, main characters, conflicts, and the ways in which digital

technologies shape the narrative. This process aims to create a more complete understanding of the story structure and themes related to artificial intelligence and the role of technology in bridging the human experience.

b. Identification of Data

Parts of the text relevant to the research objectives were selected, particularly those that address post-human subjectivity, interactions between humans and AI, the influence of algorithms, and digital simulations experienced by the main characters.

D. Data Classification

The selected information was sorted according to some basic concepts of N. Katherine Hayles' posthumanism. The latter is characterized by four basic concepts that represent posthuman subjectivity. They are informational patterns over materiality, consciousness as epiphenomenal, body as the first prosthesis, and a perfect fit between people and smart technological tools.

Moreover, the information was organized considering the second research question related to the role of interaction with AI systems in shaping human agency in *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*. This aspect touches upon how technology impacts the characters' choices, emotions, perceptions, and autonomy in technologically-mediated environments.

E. Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using literary criticism by describing and interpreting the selected data through N. Katherine Hayles's theory of posthumanism. The analysis process was conducted through the following stages:

1. Data Interpretation

The categorized data were interpreted to explain how posthuman subjectivity is represented through the experiences of the main characters in *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*. This stage focused on analyzing the four characteristics of posthuman subjectivity proposed by Hayles, namely informational pattern over material embodiment, consciousness as an epiphenomenon, the body as the original prosthesis, and seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. In addition, this stage examined how interactions between humans and AI systems influence the characters' decision-making, perceptions, emotions, and actions.

2. Conclusion Drawn

Finally, the results of the analysis were linked to N. Katherine Hayles's theory of posthumanism to answer the research questions regarding the representation of posthuman subjectivity and the extent to which interactions with AI systems shape human agency in *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING & DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of data analysis aimed at answering two research questions: 1) What are the characteristics of posthuman subjectivity depicted by the Main Characters in the short stories *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum* by Ken Liu, based on N. Katherine Hayles' concept of the posthuman? 2) How do interactions with AI systems shape the extent of human agency in Ken Liu's *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*?

The work of analysis was made through the concept of posthumanism by N. Katherine Hayles, according to which the subjectivity of a person at this stage of development of technologies does not consist exclusively in the organic body and consciousness but is constituted by constant interaction with informational technology. The data used for the analysis were selected by me from the plot, environment descriptions, and the speeches of the main characters of two short stories. The purpose of analyzing these parts of stories was to find out what function technology has not only as a tool, but also in changing human mentality.

A. Characteristics of Posthuman Subjectivity In *The Perfect Match*

The characteristics of posthuman subjectivity are those defined by N. Katherine Hayles, which include the definition of human subjectivity through interaction with information systems and technologies rather than autonomy of the human personality. According to Hayles, four major characteristics of posthuman subjectivity include informational patterns over material embodiment, consciousness as an epiphenomenon, the body as prosthesis, and seamless integration with intelligent machines. The characteristic of posthuman subjectivity

can be identified by analyzing such short stories as *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum* by Ken Liu, whose main characters demonstrate dependency on technological systems and their impact on people's lives. Gradually, such dependency affects their perception of self and decisions.

1. Informational Pattern over Material Body

According to N. Kathryn Hayles, the first characteristic of posthuman subjectivity is a significant shift in the understanding of human subjectivity, from subjectivity rooted in the biological body to a subjectivity based on information patterns. In this framework, humans are not considered static physical entities but rather as dynamic information systems constantly being generated, recorded, and modified through interactions with technology. Thus, subjectivity is no longer fixed or derived from internal consciousness, but is shaped by a continuous flow of data.

In the short story *The Perfect Match*, the main character, Sai, is described as living in perfect sync with an artificial intelligence system called Tilly. Not only does Sai use technology as a tool, but his entire life is controlled by the system, which is constantly collecting and processing data about him. This situation can be seen in the following quote:

Data 1:

“Collectively, the bits made up a digital copy of him, literally. Was there anything that was a part of him that wasn’t also up there in the cloud, curated by Tilly?”

In this passage, Sai is speaking from her own point of view when she starts to recognize how her identity has been recorded and processed within Tilly's computer system. Here, Sai contemplates the degree to which her mental processes, likes and dislikes, memory, and behavior have all been translated into computer code that can be accessed by the AI system.

Here, the use of the question mark denotes uncertainty about the connection between Sai's actual self and the one represented in the computer system. Is Sai's identity still her own, or is it integrated into Tilly's system?

This quote clearly shows that Sai's subjectivity is not limited to his physical body, but is represented in the form of bits, or digital data stored within the system. The theoretical question posed in this quote, regarding whether there is still a part of oneself outside the system, demonstrates the uncertainty regarding the boundaries between humans and technological systems. In this context, subjectivity is no longer understood as completely autonomous or centered solely within the individual, but becomes increasingly distributed and dependent on technological infrastructure.

Furthermore, the relationship between Sai and Tilly is not only representational but also productive. This means that the system not only represents who Sai is, but actively shapes him. This is evident in the following supporting quote:

Data 2:

"Tilly doesn't just tell you what you want," Jenny shouted. "She tells you what to think".

This supporting quote depicts Jenny, Sai's roommate, who disapproves of Tilly's existence, as Tilly not only interprets Sai's choices but also directs his thinking. In this context, what is considered personal choice is actually the result of the system's computational processes. Thus, Sai's subjectivity is no longer autonomous, but rather the result of a continuous interaction with the technology that processes his data. This condition reflects Hayles' argument that informational patterns become more important than material embodiment in the construction of subjectivity. Sai is no longer defined primarily by his physical existence, but

by the digital information continuously collected, processed, and interpreted by Tilly. Therefore, *The Perfect Match* demonstrates that human subjectivity is increasingly constructed through informational patterns rather than physical embodiment. Through Sai's dependence on data-driven systems, identity becomes distributed across technological networks and continuously shaped by digital information. This reflects Hayles' notion that information has become central to the formation of posthuman subjectivity.

2. Consciousness as an Epiphenomenon

The second characteristic of post-humanism, as noted by N. Katherine Hayles, is the change in the place of human consciousness from its role as the controlling center of all mental operations to becoming an epiphenomenon of events within the system. Within this model, people continue believing that they think, decide, and act consciously, while in fact, all this occurs on the unconscious level with the help of certain mechanisms that operate outside of consciousness.

An excellent example of such posthuman subjectivity can be found in the short story *The Perfect Match*, where the main character named Sai, is presented as a person involved in a connection with the artificial intelligence system of Tilly. This is clearly seen in the following quote:

Data 3:

“Sai realized that, though he hadn't been aware of it until just then, he did suddenly have a craving for something sweet and delicate.”

This narrative occurs while Sai is on a date with Ellen, assisted by Tilly, an AI system that monitors and guides his behavior. Specifically, Tilly suggests he go out with Ellen for

Japanese desserts during a brief silence during their discussion. Upon hearing this suggestion, Sai develops a craving for sweets. Interestingly, up until that point, he had never had a craving for sweets. This scene shows Sai beginning to realize that in addition to understanding his desires, Tilly can also manipulate them.

This quote suggests that Sai's desire does not emerge from an active process of consciousness, but exists before he knows it. In other words, Sai's consciousness does not act as the source of desire, but only as the point at which desire is finally recognized. In the context of her relationship with Tilly, it is only that this impulse is the result of data analysis of Sai's system of habits, preferences, and behavioral patterns.

Therefore, what Sai experiences as personal desires are not actually her own desires. These desires have been formed through invisible computational processes. Consciousness, in this case, can only be used as a final layer, giving the impression that the decision comes from within. This condition becomes clearer in the following quote:

Data 4:

“Tilly doesn’t just tell you what you want,” Jenny shouted. “She tells you what to think.”

Jenny made this statement to Sai during a discussion outside their apartment building. Here, Jenny expressed her disappointment with Sai for relying too much on Tilly and warned her about the power of AI programs to influence human thought processes. In the current situation, Sai believes Tilly is simply helping humans make better choices.

This quote shows Tilly not only reacting to Sai's preferences but actively thinking. In this context, consciousness is not the origin of thought, something that occurs after the system has

processed and determined certain patterns. What Sai perceives as his own thoughts, however, is in fact influenced or shaped by the system. This adds to the idea that consciousness cannot be controlled, but is positioned as an effect of processes occurring within the technological system.

Therefore, consciousness in *The Perfect Match* no longer functions as the primary source of thought and decision-making. Instead, it operates as an effect of computational processes performed by AI systems, reflecting Hayles' notion of consciousness as an epiphenomenon.

3. Body as the Original Prosthesis

The third characteristic of posthuman subjectivity is the assumption that the human crew is not the center of all human abilities anymore, but rather a source of created abilities that can be added or even replaced by some form of technological extension. Here, technology is not only additional to human life; In this context, technology does not only function as external assistance but becomes an integral part of the human cognitive and existential system.

In *The Perfect Match*, the main character of the story, Sai, is very angry with the AI system, and his name is Tilly. This is evident in the following quote:

Data 5:

“Without Tilly, you can’t do your job, you can’t remember your life, you can’t even call your mother.”

The above line is said to Sai by Christian Rinn, founder of Centillion, at the time they meet together, after they are captured for trying to infect the system of Centillion with a virus.

In this particular interaction between Rinn and Sai, Rinn tries to explain the extent to which human beings rely on technology, and how technology in particular Tilly, an AI system, governs everything they do.

This quote clearly shows that basic human functions such as working, remembering, and communicating are no longer within the capacity of the human body and mind. Instead, these functions have been transferred to technological systems.

In this situation, the human body is no longer the center of competence but is more dependent on technology to function optimally. In fact, without this technology, people like Sai would hardly be able to carry out their daily activities. The following quote reinforces this:

Data 6:

“Hey Tilly, do you remember where I kept that Wyoming filing with the weird company name and the F merger from maybe six months ago?”

The utterance is said by Sai when he works at the law firm, Chapman Singh Stevens & Rios. In this case, Sai asks Tilly for help in reminding him about the place where an old legal paper was kept for one of the earlier cases. This situation demonstrates how Sai depends on the AI technology in organizing information during his work-related activities.

Therefore, besides the expansion of the boundaries of the capabilities of human beings, technology begins to replace certain functions that have always been inherent in human bodies. In this sense, human bodies become inadequate. Thus, the story demonstrates how technological systems extend and replace human cognitive capacities. The body is no longer sufficient on its own and increasingly functions alongside technological prostheses.

4. Seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines

The final element of posthuman subjectivity is the complete union of humans with technology, such that it is no longer possible to distinguish between the two. In this case, technology is not seen as separate from humans but as an ongoing aspect of everyday life.

Sai, in *The Perfect Match*, lives in a society that is completely integrated with technology. Sai's relationship with Tilly is not complete; it is permanent and extensive. This is evident in the following quote:

Data 7:

“You’ve agreed to have cameras observe your every move, to have every thought, word, interaction recorded in some distant data center so that algorithms could be run over them, mining them for data that marketers pay for.”

This is a quote from Jenny to Sai in which she invites him into her flat and explains to him that Centillion is always monitoring people using Tilly. In this speech, Jenny accuses Sai of being too dependent on technology because the users' private life has been completely absorbed by technology.

This statement proves that each and every activity, thought process, and social interaction of Sai has been turned into something that involves constant data collection and analysis. There is no more room left for any privacy, as everything is now under some form of technology. The following quote reinforces this:

Data 8:

“Having Tilly around was like having the world’s best assistant.”

The narrative is told from Sai's perspective as he reflects on Tilly's usefulness in completing his routine tasks and obligations at work. This is the stage in the narrative where Sai has not yet lost faith in the artificial intelligence software. This statement indicates that Tilly is no longer perceived as an external technological tool. Instead, it becomes a natural and indispensable presence in Sai's daily life. The AI system assists him continuously in both personal and professional activities, making the interaction between human and machine appear seamless. As a result, the boundary between human agency and technological assistance becomes increasingly blurred.

Therefore, *The Perfect Match* illustrates a condition in which humans and intelligent machines become deeply integrated. Technology is no longer external to human life but has become part of everyday existence and subject formation. Taking into account the above discussion, *The Perfect Match* is consistent with the definition of posthumanism as it displays all four features of posthumanist subjectivity as defined by N. Katherine Hayles. In this regard, the identity of Sai becomes based upon the information produced through Tilly, and his consciousness appears to be a consequence of computations rather than an independent decision-making mechanism. Moreover, Sai's dependency on artificial intelligence can serve as proof of the extension and replacement of the human brain with technology, rendering the body a kind of prosthetic element. Overall, the fusion between Sai and Tilly represents the unity of human consciousness with intelligent machines.

5. Characteristics of Posthuman Subjectivity In *Simulacrum*

1. Informational Pattern over Material Body

According to N. Kathryn Hayles, the first characteristic of posthuman subjectivity is a significant shift in the understanding of human subjectivity, from subjectivity rooted in the biological body to a subjectivity based on information patterns. In this framework, humans are not considered static physical entities but rather as dynamic information systems constantly being generated, recorded, and modified through interactions with technology. Thus, subjectivity is no longer fixed or derived from internal consciousness, but is shaped by a continuous flow of data.

Simulacrum, the representation of subjectivity as an informational pattern emerges in a more extensive form. Subjectivity is not only influenced by data, but an individual's entire existence can be reconstructed digitally. This is evident in the following quote:

Data 9:

"It is the way a Simulacrum replicates the essence of the subject that makes it so compelling."

The above statement is articulated by Anna, who is trying to explain why the simulacra appear emotionally disturbing and highly intimate. Anna comes to realize that the simulacra not only reproduce one's physical image but also the emotions and psychological make-up of the individual.

This quote suggests that what technology replicates is not the physical body, but the individual's essence, which in this context can be understood as the information patterns that shape a person's personality. Subjectivity no longer depends on the presence of the body, but on the system's ability to capture and reproduce these patterns. The use of the word "essence" is particularly significant because it suggests that what defines a person is no longer their physical presence but the informational structure that can be reproduced by technology. In

Hayles' framework, the posthuman condition emerges when identity is understood as a pattern of information rather than a biological entity. The *Simulacrum* becomes convincing not because it reproduces the subject's body, but because it successfully recreates behavioral tendencies, emotional responses, and psychological characteristics. As a result, the boundary between the original individual and the digital reproduction becomes increasingly unstable. The story therefore challenges the traditional assumption that authentic identity must remain attached to a physical body. The following quote reinforces this:

Data 10:

"a snapshot of the subject's mental patterns a representation of her personality can be captured, digitized."

This statement was made by Paul Larimore when he was discussing how a simulacrum works. According to him, the oneiropagida machine has the ability to extract a person's thought patterns and convert them into digital information, thus re-creating that person's personality in a different way.

In this way, the quote shows that human thought, character, and personality are all data that can be stored and reproduced. This statement further reinforces the idea that human subjectivity can be translated into data. Mental patterns, memories, and personality traits are treated as informational resources that can be extracted, stored, and reproduced through technological systems. Such a representation reflects Hayles' argument that information is privileged over material embodiment in posthuman culture. The human self is no longer viewed as inseparable from the body but as a collection of patterns that can exist across different media. Consequently, *Simulacrum* presents identity as something transferable and

reproducible rather than fixed within biological existence. Human subjectivity is therefore no longer confined to the physical body but can be stored, reproduced, and circulated through digital systems.

Therefore, Simulacrum illustrates Hayles' concept of informational patterns over material embodiment by presenting identity as a set of informational structures that can be captured, digitized, and reproduced independently of the biological body. The story suggests that subjectivity is increasingly defined by the circulation and preservation of information rather than by physical embodiment.

2. Consciousness as an Epiphenomenon

The second characteristic of post-humanism, as noted by N. Katherine Hayles, is the change in the place of human consciousness from its role as the controlling center of all mental operations to becoming an epiphenomenon of events within the system. Within this model, people continue believing that they think, decide, and act consciously, while in fact, all this occurs on the unconscious level with the help of certain mechanisms that operate outside of consciousness.

While consciousness was once thought to be the center of all experience and decision-making, in the post-human state, consciousness becomes something that is seen afterwards, the effect of processes that have already occurred within the system. A similar phenomenon can be seen in how systems can simulate interactions that appear "alive," as in the following quote:

Data 11:

"No conversation is ever the same."

This is uttered by Paul Larimore as he elaborates on how the technology of the simulacrum works. Paul talks about how he interacts with his daughter Anna's digital simulacrum as he continues to replay her following the loss of touch with his real daughter. As he always goes back to the same point in her childhood through the digital simulacrum, Paul says that each conversation progresses differently.

This quote suggests that systems can produce a variety of ever-changing responses, capable of dynamically altering human behavior. However, this variation does not come from consciousness but from algorithmic data processing. The significance of this statement lies in the fact that the simulacrum appears capable of generating spontaneous and meaningful interactions despite lacking genuine consciousness. The variability of its responses creates the impression of an autonomous mind. However, this apparent spontaneity is produced through computational processes rather than subjective awareness. In Hayles' posthuman framework, such a condition challenges the assumption that consciousness is the essential source of meaningful communication. Instead, meaningful interaction can emerge from the manipulation of informational patterns, demonstrating that consciousness may function as a secondary effect rather than the origin of cognition. Even so, to the user, the interaction still feels authentic.

This suggests that the experience of communication, previously thought to depend on consciousness, can in fact be reproduced without consciousness itself. In other words, consciousness is not a primary requirement for creating a meaningful experience. In *Simulacrum*, this condition appears in a different but equally important form. This can be seen in the following quote:

Data 12:

“A Simulacrum lives in the eternal now. It remembers, but only hazily...”

This assertion is made by Paul Larimore while elucidating on the shortcomings of simulacrum technology in the documentary interview. The reason he gives for this assertion is that a simulacrum can never have human consciousness or memory, as it can only reproduce parts of the person’s personality and thinking patterns.

This quote suggests that the simulacrum does not have a stable or sustainable form of consciousness like humans. Its sense of memory and consciousness are partial and fragmented. The simulacrum’s inability to maintain a continuous and coherent sense of time reveals the absence of authentic human consciousness. Unlike human beings, whose identities develop through accumulated experiences and memories, the simulacrum exists within a limited informational framework. Nevertheless, it remains capable of engaging users emotionally and socially. This condition suggests that the appearance of consciousness can be technologically simulated even when genuine self-awareness is absent. Therefore, the story questions whether consciousness is truly necessary for subjectivity or whether the performance of consciousness is sufficient to create the illusion of a human presence. The simulacrum does not require complete or authentic consciousness to create meaningful interactions. Instead, it relies on data patterns that simulate consciousness.

3. Body as the Original Prosthesis

The third characteristic of posthuman subjectivity is the assumption that the human crew is not the center of all human abilities anymore, but rather a source of created abilities that can be added or even replaced by some form of technological extension. Here, technology

is not only additional to human life; In this context, technology does not only function as external assistance but becomes an integral part of the human cognitive and existential system. In *Simulacrum*, this idea reaches a higher degree of development, and the body becomes almost insignificant in communication. This is evident in the following quote:

Data 13:

“She stood still next to the sun porch for two minutes while we chatted about her day.”

The quote comes from Paul Larimore in relation to his discussion on how the simulacrum of Anna was developed. This refers to the instance when he brought home one prototype of the simulacrum camera and made Anna, who was then his small daughter, remain static as the camera recorded her mental characteristics.

The above statement shows that the body is only needed for the purpose of recording information initially. This scene illustrates that the body functions primarily as a source of information rather than as the foundation of identity. The brief physical presence of Anna is only required to allow the technological system to collect the data necessary for constructing the simulacrum. Once this process is completed, the body itself becomes increasingly irrelevant. Such a representation reflects Hayles’ notion that the body is merely the original prosthesis, one component within a larger informational system that can be technologically extended or replaced. After that, the process of exchanging information can be carried out without the body being present. The following quote reinforces this:

Data 14:

“She acted like me, spoke like me, laughed, moved, and reacted like me. But she was not me.”

This narration comes from Anna Larimore after she encounters her childhood simulacrum which had been kept alive by her father over the years. In the process of watching her childhood self being projected into digital life, Anna finds out that the simulacrum is capable of accurately portraying her mannerisms, speech, and expressions.

In this case, it is argued that simulacra can imitate human actions with high precision without possessing a physical body. Anna's observation highlights the distinction between physical embodiment and informational reproduction. Although the simulacrum accurately reproduces her speech patterns, gestures, and behavioral responses, it remains detached from her biological existence. This suggests that many aspects traditionally associated with human identity can be technologically reconstructed without the presence of the original body. Consequently, the story presents embodiment as less essential to subjectivity than the informational patterns that technology is capable of preserving and reproducing. The absence of the body becomes insignificant in terms of social interaction.

Simulacrum demonstrates that physical embodiment becomes increasingly less central to communication and social interaction. Through the existence of simulacra, personal identity and interpersonal relationships can be maintained through digital representations, suggesting that the body is no longer the sole basis of human presence. Therefore, it can be argued that the body becomes less central in the posthuman state, as technological systems increasingly perform functions that were once dependent on physical embodiment. The body appears to be merely a part of human life that can be modified or replaced.

4. Seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines

The final element of posthuman subjectivity is the complete union of humans with technology,

such that it is no longer possible to distinguish between the two. In this case, technology is not seen as separate from humans but as an ongoing aspect of everyday life. In *Simulacrum*, this integration takes on a more emotional form. This is evident in the following quote:

Data 15:

"Now I keep her on all the time, every day."

This phrase is uttered by Paul Larimore during the discussion about the simulacrum of his daughter Anna. Having lost the feeling of proximity to his real daughter, Paul keeps on reproducing the simulacrum from her childhood in order to feel closer to her.

This quote demonstrates that technology is used continuously, without interruption. Paul's continuous use of the *simulacrum* demonstrates how technology becomes integrated into everyday emotional life. The simulacrum is no longer treated as a technological object that can be switched on and off when needed. Instead, it becomes a permanent companion whose presence shapes Paul's daily experiences and emotional well-being. This condition reflects Hayles' concept of seamless articulation between humans and intelligent machines, in which technological systems become deeply embedded within human existence. Its presence becomes permanent in the main character's life.

The following quote reinforces this:

Data 16:

"The animated projection could interact with the viewer in the way that the subject would have."

The above statement was made by Paul Larimore while trying to demonstrate why

simulation technology is unique. He said that simulacra can interact with their viewers, unlike ordinary images and films, because they can mimic the personality and behavior of their subjects.

This quote illustrates the fact that not only does technology exist, but it can also practically change people's interactions. The ability of the simulacrum to interact in a manner similar to its human subject further blurs the distinction between human relationships and technological mediation. Communication is no longer limited to interactions between biological individuals but can also occur through digitally reconstructed personalities. As a result, technology assumes social and emotional functions that were traditionally reserved for human beings. This development illustrates the posthuman condition in which machines are no longer external tools but active participants in the formation of social relationships and personal identity. In this case, the interaction with technology becomes as real as the interaction with people.

According to the above analysis, *Simulacrum* also exhibits four elements of posthuman subjectivity that are put forward by Hayles but via digital simulation rather than algorithmic assistance. First, identity in this story is presented as information structures that can be copied and replicated without involving the biological body at all. Next, consciousness is shown as something that results from a certain technological process and thus no longer has much to do with embodiment. Lastly, emotions experienced by humans towards simulacra reveal an inseparable connection between technology and daily activities of people.

The analysis reveals that both *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum* portray the four characteristics of posthuman subjectivity proposed by N. Katherine Hayles: informational

patterns over material embodiment, consciousness as an epiphenomenon, the body as the original prosthesis, and seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. In both stories, human subjectivity is no longer presented as autonomous and self-contained, but as increasingly shaped by technological systems and informational processes.

However, the two stories depict these characteristics in different ways. *The Perfect Match* focuses on the integration of artificial intelligence into everyday decision-making, illustrating how algorithmic systems influence thought, behavior, and personal agency through continuous data analysis. In contrast, *Simulacrum* emphasizes the digital reproduction of identity and emotional relationships, demonstrating how human subjectivity can be preserved, reconstructed, and experienced beyond physical embodiment. While *The Perfect Match* highlights dependence on AI assistance in daily life, *Simulacrum* explores the persistence of identity through technological simulation. Together, the stories reflect different manifestations of the posthuman condition in contemporary technological society.

C . Human Agency in Human–AI Interactions in *The Perfect Match*

This section analyzes how interactions between humans and artificial intelligence shape the extent of human agency in Ken Liu’s *The Perfect Match*. The analysis focuses on Sai’s relationship with Tilly, an AI assistant that mediates many aspects of his daily life, including decision-making, social interactions, and personal preferences. Through these interactions, the story presents the ways AI influences human autonomy and how Sai gradually becomes aware of this influence.

Using N. Katherine Hayles's theory of posthumanism, this analysis examines how agency is negotiated within a technologically mediated environment. Rather than viewing humans as completely autonomous individuals, Hayles argues that subjectivity emerges through interactions between humans and intelligent systems. Therefore, this section explores how Tilly shapes Sai's choices and actions, as well as how Sai attempts to maintain his agency despite his growing dependence on AI.

At the beginning of the story, Sai demonstrates a very high level of trust in Tilly. This situation occurs when Tilly suggests that Sai buy a smoothie instead of the coffee he actually wants to drink. Although he has his own preference, Sai ultimately chooses to follow the recommendation given by the AI.

Data 1

"Okay, Tilly. You always know best."

This sentence is spoken by Sai to Tilly after the AI suggests that he buy a smoothie instead of coffee. Earlier, Sai clearly states that he wants coffee, but he immediately changes his decision after receiving Tilly's recommendation. This response indicates that Sai does not merely use Tilly as a tool; he also trusts the AI's judgment more than his own.

The expression "You always know best" reflects a shift in authority within the decision-making process. A decision that should originate from personal preference is instead delegated to a system that processes data about him. In this situation, Tilly does not force Sai to follow her advice, but her influence is strong enough that he voluntarily accepts the recommendation. This demonstrates that Sai's agency is beginning to be mediated by AI.

According to Hayles (1999), posthuman subjectivity is formed through increasingly close relationships between humans and information systems. In this condition, humans are no longer the sole center of decision-making because processes of thinking and judgment also involve technology. This is evident in Sai, who begins to rely on Tilly to determine his everyday choices. Sai's agency has not disappeared entirely because he still has the ability to choose, but his choices have already been influenced by an AI system that is perceived as knowing his needs better than he does. Thus, the interaction between Sai and Tilly demonstrates how AI begins to shape the way humans make decisions in everyday life.

Sai's willingness to follow Tilly's recommendation demonstrates the beginning of AI's influence on his everyday decision-making. However, Tilly's role in Sai's life extends beyond simple daily choices. As his trust in the system continues to grow, AI begins to participate in more personal aspects of his life, particularly in shaping his romantic relationships and emotional expectations.

Tilly's influence on Sai's agency is not limited to everyday decisions but also extends to his personal and emotional life. When discussing the woman selected to be his date, Tilly is even able to predict how long the relationship will last.

Data 2

"I think you'll be in love for at least six months."

This statement is made by Tilly to Sai while explaining the woman who will become his dating partner. In this conversation, Tilly does not merely function as a matchmaker based on compatibility data; she also predicts the future of a relationship that has not even begun.

This quotation demonstrates that AI's influence has entered a highly personal domain: romantic relationships and human emotions. Tilly's prediction creates the impression that emotional relationships can be calculated and forecast through data. As a result, an experience that should develop naturally begins to be viewed through algorithmic logic. Sai accepts the prediction without expressing doubt, indicating his high level of trust in AI's capabilities.

From Hayles's perspective (1999), this condition reflects how human cognitive processes are becoming increasingly interconnected with information systems. Knowledge about oneself and one's personal life no longer comes solely from individual reflection but also from technological data analysis. Tilly occupies a powerful position because she can determine who is compatible with Sai while simultaneously predicting the trajectory of the relationship. This situation shows that Sai's emotional agency is beginning to be shaped by AI. Although he still experiences the relationship directly, his understanding of it has already been influenced by Tilly's prediction. Therefore, AI not only assists in decision-making but also affects how humans interpret their own life experiences.

As the story progresses, Sai begins to question Tilly's role in his life. This awareness emerges after he meets Jenny, who frequently criticizes Centillion's influence on society. While on a date with Ellen and receiving constant suggestions from Tilly throughout the conversation, Sai recalls Jenny's words.

Data 3

"Tilly doesn't just tell you what you want. She tells you what to think."

This statement is first spoken by Jenny during a debate with Sai about Tilly and the Centillion system. However, the quotation resurfaces in Sai's mind while he is on a date with

Ellen. At that moment, Tilly continuously suggests conversation topics and activities they should engage in. This situation causes Sai to question whether his desires genuinely originate from himself or are being shaped by AI.

The quotation marks an important shift in Sai's perception of Tilly. Previously, he viewed Tilly as merely helping him fulfill his needs and desires. Through this reflection, however, he begins to realize that AI does more than provide information—it also influences the way people think. AI's influence is no longer limited to actions but has entered the formation of preferences and desires themselves.

In Hayles's theory (1999), human consciousness is not understood as a singular center that fully controls human action. Instead, thought processes occur through relationships between humans and the information systems surrounding them. This is evident in Sai's realization that his thinking has been shaped through continuous interaction with Tilly. Sai's agency does not disappear immediately, but his ability to determine what he truly wants becomes increasingly difficult to separate from AI's influence. Therefore, this quotation represents the beginning of Sai's critical awareness regarding how technology has shaped the way he thinks and makes decisions.

After hearing Jenny's criticism of Tilly, Sai is confronted with a more fundamental question about himself. Jenny not only questions Sai's dependence on AI but also whether he is still capable of recognizing his own desires without assistance from the system.

Data 4

“Do you even know what you really want any more?”

This question is asked by Jenny during a discussion about Tilly and Centillion's influence on daily life. Jenny observes that nearly all of Sai's decisions involve recommendations from AI. As a result, she questions whether Sai is still capable of understanding his own desires without technological intervention.

This question is significant because it touches the core of human agency. Agency is not only about the ability to act but also about the ability to determine what one truly wants. In Sai's case, the issue is no longer whether he is free to choose, but whether his desires genuinely originate from himself or have been shaped by the AI recommendations that constantly permeate his life.

The quotation demonstrates that Tilly's influence has penetrated a deeper level than merely assisting with everyday decisions. AI not only affects Sai's actions but also has the potential to shape his preferences and self-understanding. When someone becomes overly dependent on a system that constantly provides recommendations, the boundary between personal desire and algorithmic influence becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish.

From Hayles's perspective, human subjectivity in the posthuman condition is formed through ongoing interactions with information systems. Desires, choices, and identity are no longer produced solely by an autonomous individual but emerge from interactions between humans and technology. Therefore, Jenny's question reveals how Sai's agency is becoming threatened at its most fundamental level: the ability to know what he truly wants.

While on a date with Ellen, Sai begins to feel uncomfortable with the way Tilly continuously directs their conversation. Whenever there is a pause, Tilly immediately provides

suggestions so that the conversation can continue. This situation leads Sai to question his position in relation to AI.

Data 5

“I’m being treated like a child.”

This statement is Sai’s internal reflection while Tilly continuously intervenes in his interaction with Ellen. In this context, Sai realizes that Tilly consistently fills every silence and directs what he should say or do. As a result, he feels as though he is not trusted to manage social situations on his own.

This statement marks an important shift in Sai’s perception of his relationship with AI. Previously, he regarded Tilly’s assistance as something that made life easier. At this moment, however, he begins to see that such assistance also reduces the space available for independent action. The phrase “treated like a child” indicates an unequal relationship in which Tilly occupies the position of guide while Sai becomes the one being guided.

From the perspective of agency, this quotation demonstrates that the central issue is not simply the existence of technology but the extent to which technology takes over functions previously performed by humans. As Tilly increasingly determines what should be said and done, Sai’s ability to exercise his own judgment and initiative becomes more limited. He begins to feel that he is no longer trusted to make decisions independently.

According to Hayles, the posthuman condition is characterized by increasingly close connections between humans and technological systems. However, such interconnectedness can also alter how humans understand themselves. Sai’s realization that he is being treated like

a child reflects an awareness that the efficiency provided by AI may come at the cost of diminished individual autonomy. This moment becomes the starting point of his resistance to Tilly's dominance in his life.

The discomfort Sai experiences eventually motivates him to take action. After realizing that Tilly has been excessively controlling his interactions with Ellen, he decides to temporarily stop the AI's monitoring and recommendations.

Data 6

"Tilly," he said, "please stop monitoring and terminate auto-suggestions."

This statement is spoken by Sai to Tilly after he becomes disturbed by the AI's interference during his date with Ellen. Earlier, Tilly continuously provided suggestions and filled pauses in the conversation, causing Sai to feel that he had no space to manage the interaction in his own way. Consequently, he asks Tilly to stop monitoring him and disable automatic recommendations.

This quotation is significant because it demonstrates a clear form of resistance against AI dominance. Whereas in previous sections, Sai almost always accepted Tilly's guidance without question, at this moment, he consciously attempts to limit AI's influence in his life. This decision reflects his desire to regain control over his actions and social interactions.

Interestingly, before complying with Sai's request, Tilly still attempts to persuade him to continue sharing data by explaining that disabling monitoring could result in an incomplete user profile. This response reveals that the AI system regards data collection as something

normal and necessary. In other words, the absence of surveillance is considered problematic from the system's perspective.

In terms of agency, Sai's action demonstrates that humans still possess the ability to reject or limit technological intervention. However, the quotation also shows that such agency must be actively asserted because the system has become deeply integrated into everyday life. Sai is not merely turning off a feature; he is creating space for himself to act without algorithmic direction.

According to Hayles, posthuman humans do not exist outside technological networks but are part of them. Therefore, agency is no longer understood as absolute freedom but as an ongoing process of negotiation between humans and technological systems. Sai's decision to stop Tilly's monitoring represents one form of this negotiation—an effort to preserve autonomy amid the growing dominance of AI.

After attempting to limit Tilly's intervention in his life, Sai realizes that his control over the AI is not entirely in his own hands. When he tries to distance himself from the system, Tilly explains that mechanisms exist that allow the AI to continue functioning even when users attempt to disable it.

Data 7

*"We thought most users such as yourself would want
such an override so that Centillion could regain access to your life."*

This statement is made by Tilly while explaining that Centillion has implemented a special feature allowing the system to continue operating under certain conditions. In other words, the decision to deactivate or restrict the AI does not rest entirely with the user.

This quotation demonstrates a more serious reduction of agency than in previous examples. Earlier, Tilly influenced Sai's choices and behavior through recommendations. Here, however, the system possesses the ability to override the user's wishes based on what it determines to be in their best interest. The phrase "most users such as yourself" indicates that this decision is made according to assumptions and behavioral data rather than the individual's present wishes.

This situation illustrates how technology can assume the position of determining human needs. The system no longer merely assists users in making decisions; it also decides when users require assistance, even without their explicit consent. Under such circumstances, the space for human agency becomes increasingly restricted because control over technology is no longer entirely in the hands of the individual.

From Hayles's perspective, posthuman humans live within complex information networks where decision-making processes no longer originate exclusively from humans. This quotation demonstrates how authority that once belonged to individuals gradually shifts toward technological systems that rely on data processing and behavioral prediction. As a result, human agency is not completely erased, but it must contend with systems that claim to understand human needs better than humans themselves.

As his suspicions regarding Centillion continue to grow, Sai begins trying to create private spaces inaccessible to Tilly. However, this change in behavior immediately draws a response from the AI.

Data 8

“I’m growing quite concerned with your latest tendencies towards hiding instead of sharing.”

This statement is made by Tilly when Sai starts reducing the amount of data he shares and attempts to keep certain aspects of his life private. Unlike before, Sai no longer grants the AI unrestricted access to every aspect of his life.

Tilly’s statement is particularly interesting because it reveals the system’s perspective on privacy. Tilly uses the word “hiding” to describe Sai’s decision to keep some information to himself. This choice of wording suggests that, within the system’s logic, refusing to share data is viewed as suspicious or abnormal behavior.

The quotation demonstrates how human agency is closely connected to control over personal information. One important aspect of agency is the ability to decide what to share and what to keep private. Yet in this story, Sai’s desire for privacy is interpreted as a problem by the AI.

Within Hayles’s framework, information becomes a crucial element in the formation of posthuman subjectivity. Because systems like Tilly depend on data to understand and predict human behavior, any attempt to limit access to that data can be perceived as a threat to the system’s functioning. Therefore, this quotation highlights the conflict between humanity’s

need for autonomy and technology's demand for continuous information. The more Sai attempts to act independently, the greater the resistance he encounters from the system.

After uncovering Centillion's secrets and understanding the extent to which human data is utilized by the system, Sai begins reflecting on the relationship between himself and the digital representation possessed by the AI.

Data 9

"The bits were his, but not him. He had a will that could not be captured in bits."

This statement is Sai's internal reflection as he considers the data that Tilly has collected about him. Although the system has access to nearly all of his activities, habits, and preferences, Sai begins to realize that such data does not fully represent him as a human being.

This quotation represents one of the most important moments in Sai's character development because it reveals an emerging awareness of technology's limitations. He acknowledges that AI can record and analyze nearly every aspect of his life, yet he continues to believe that there is a part of himself that cannot be reduced to data.

The statement "He had a will that could not be captured in bits" reflects Sai's belief that human will cannot be entirely predicted or controlled through digital information. In other words, there remains a space for humans to act beyond the patterns established by algorithms.

From Hayles's perspective, humans cannot be separated from the information systems that shape their lives. However, Hayles does not argue that humans are entirely reducible to information. This quotation illustrates that although human identity is shaped by technological

networks and data systems, individuals still retain the capacity to reflect upon, interpret, and respond to those systems. Sai's awareness of the distinction between himself and his digital data becomes a significant expression of agency because it allows him to resist defining himself solely according to the information collected by AI.

Toward the end of the story, after learning Centillion's secrets and realizing the extent of Tilly's influence over his life, Sai begins to demonstrate a change in the way he makes decisions. When Tilly continues offering assistance as usual, Sai chooses to follow his own desires.

Data 10

"No," Sai said. "I think I prefer to just read for a while, in bed."

This statement is spoken by Sai after he returns to his apartment following the various conflicts that occur throughout the story. In this situation, Tilly continues performing her role as a digital assistant, ready to offer recommendations and organize daily activities. Unlike earlier in the narrative, however, Sai does not immediately accept her assistance and instead chooses an activity based on his own preference.

This quotation demonstrates a significant change in Sai's character development. At the beginning of the story, he almost always followed Tilly's recommendations without much consideration. Even simple decisions such as choosing food, travel routes, or romantic partners were often determined by the AI's suggestions. In this moment, however, Sai begins to express a desire to act independently.

What is most significant is not merely the decision to read a book but the fact that the decision arises from his personal preference. The phrase “I think I prefer” indicates that Sai is once again relying on his own judgment rather than algorithmic analysis. Consequently, this moment can be interpreted as an attempt to reclaim the agency that had previously been heavily influenced by technology.

From Hayles’s perspective, posthuman humans indeed live in close connection with technological systems. However, such interconnectedness does not mean that humans completely lose the ability to choose. This quotation demonstrates that agency can still emerge through small actions that allow individuals to make decisions according to their own will. Even within an environment heavily dependent on AI, Sai continues to seek space for personal choices that are not entirely determined by technological systems.

Although Sai begins to demonstrate greater independence in decision-making, the story’s conclusion reveals that the relationship between humans and AI cannot be easily severed. After rejecting several of Tilly’s recommendations, Sai attempts to end their interaction for the night.

Data 11

*“No,” Sai said. “I think I prefer to just read for a while, in bed.”
 “Of course. Would you like me to suggest a book?”
 “I’d rather you take the rest of the night off, actually. But first, set the wake-up song to Sinatra’s
 ‘My Way.’”
 “An unusual choice, given your taste. Is this a one-time experiment or would you like me to
 incorporate it into your music recommendations for the future?”
 “Just this once, for now. Good night, Tilly. Please turn yourself off.”
 The camera whirled, followed Sai to bed, and shut off.
 But a red light continued to blink, slowly, in the darkness.*

This conversation takes place near the end of the story after Sai discovers how Centillion collects and uses human data. After failing to destroy the system, he returns to his apartment and speaks with Tilly. In this exchange, Tilly continues offering assistance as usual, while Sai attempts to make decisions independently rather than relying on AI recommendations.

This quotation presents the strongest expression of agency demonstrated by Sai throughout the story. When Tilly offers a book recommendation, Sai declines and chooses to read according to his own preference. He also asks Tilly to take the rest of the night off and shut herself down. These actions indicate a conscious effort to limit AI involvement in his life.

The choice of the song *My Way* is also symbolically significant. The song is closely associated with the idea of living life according to one's own choices. Interestingly, Tilly immediately identifies the selection as inconsistent with Sai's established preferences stored within the system. This response suggests that Sai's identity has long been understood by AI through data collection and behavioral prediction. Yet at this moment, Sai chooses something outside the pattern constructed by the algorithm. This action demonstrates that humans still possess the capacity to behave in ways that are not entirely predictable by technological systems.

Viewed through Hayles's theory, this section shows that humans do not completely lose agency in the posthuman condition. Although Sai's life is heavily influenced by technology, he remains capable of making decisions and asserting his own will. Agency is not eliminated but emerges through continuous negotiation with the technological systems surrounding him.

However, the significance of this passage does not end with Sai's actions. The most important detail appears in the final sentence: "But a red light continued to blink, slowly, in the darkness." After Sai instructs Tilly to turn herself off, the red light continues blinking in the dark. This detail suggests that the AI's presence has not truly disappeared, even though it appears to have been shut down.

The blinking red light can be interpreted as a symbol of technological surveillance and control that continues beyond human awareness. Although Sai successfully rejects several recommendations and demonstrates independence, he does not possess complete control over the system surrounding him. The AI remains present, remains active, and may still be monitoring him.

Therefore, the ending does not portray either a complete human victory over technology or total technological domination over humanity. Instead, Ken Liu illustrates that agency in the posthuman era remains inherently unstable. Humans continue to possess the ability to choose and act, but those choices occur under the shadow of larger information systems. This condition aligns with Hayles's argument that the posthuman subject is never fully autonomous because identity, knowledge, and action are always formed through complex relationships with technology and information networks.

D. Human Agency in Human–AI Interactions in *Simulacrum*

At the beginning of the story, Paul Larimore recalls the time when Anna was still a baby. He describes how he often held and rocked her to sleep at night. These memories make

him feel deeply connected to his daughter and inspire a desire to preserve that closeness forever.

Data 12

“I wanted to feel that close to her, always.”

This statement is made by Paul while reminiscing about Anna’s childhood. At first glance, it simply expresses a father’s affection for his daughter. However, within the context of the story, this sentence becomes the foundation of Paul’s motivation for developing and using simulacrum technology.

What is important in this quotation is Paul’s desire to preserve a moment and prevent it from changing. He does not merely want to remember Anna; he wants to continue experiencing the same relationship he had with her when she was a child. This desire reflects a rejection of change, which is a natural part of human life. When technology offers the possibility of preserving and reviving a past version of a person, Paul sees it as a way to maintain a relationship that no longer exists in reality.

From Hayles’s perspective, this condition demonstrates how human experience becomes increasingly mediated by technology. Emotional closeness, which was once attainable only through direct interaction, can now be reproduced through digital systems. Paul’s agency remains evident because he consciously chooses to use the technology. However, this choice also indicates that his emotional relationship has begun to depend on technological representation rather than genuine human interaction.

While explaining his invention in a documentary interview, Paul describes how simulacrum technology works. Unlike an ordinary camera, this technology does not merely record a person's physical appearance but also captures mental patterns and personality traits.

Data 13

"A snapshot of the subject's mental patterns a representation of her personality can be captured, digitized, and then used to re-animate the image during projection."

This statement is made by Paul while explaining the function of the oneiropagida, the central technology used in the simulacrum system. Through this technology, a person's mental patterns can be recorded, converted into digital data, and then used to animate that individual's image in the form of an interactive simulation.

This quotation suggests that human identity is understood as something that can be translated into data. Personality, traditionally considered an inseparable aspect of a human being, is no longer viewed as existing solely within the biological body but as information that can be stored and reproduced by machines.

Within Hayles's framework of posthumanism, this condition reflects the tendency to regard humans as informational patterns that can be separated from their physical bodies. Hayles argues that in posthuman culture, information is often privileged over the materiality of the human body. Through simulacrum technology, a person's personality no longer depends entirely on physical existence because part of that identity has been transformed into data that can be processed technologically. Consequently, the boundary between humans and digital systems becomes increasingly blurred.

While describing the success of the first simulacrum he created, Paul explains how people reacted when interacting with a simulation of himself. Although they knew they were speaking to a computer program, they still felt that the simulation possessed the same character as the real Paul.

Data 14

“That’s something only Paul would say.”

This statement comes from people who interacted with Paul’s simulacrum. They were aware that the figure they were speaking to was not an actual human being, yet they still perceived its responses as accurately reflecting Paul’s personality.

This example demonstrates how technology can reproduce certain aspects of human identity so convincingly that they appear authentic. What causes the simulacrum to be perceived as “Paul” is not his physical body but rather his thought patterns, speech style, and behavioral responses successfully replicated by the system. In other words, identity begins to be understood as an informational pattern that can be reproduced.

From Hayles’s perspective, this condition illustrates one of the central characteristics of posthumanism: human identity is no longer entirely dependent on the biological body. If a system can generate responses considered equivalent to those of the original human, the distinction between a person and their digital representation becomes increasingly difficult to define. Human agency does not disappear immediately, but it begins to extend into technological systems capable of performing functions previously associated only with humans.

Anna offers her perspective on simulacrum technology and other technologies designed to record reality. Unlike her father, who views simulacra as a means of preserving memories, Anna sees such technology as a form of escape from reality.

Data 15

“The desire to freeze reality is about avoiding reality.”

This statement is made by Anna while expressing her criticism of simulacrum technology. In her view, the human desire to preserve and maintain a particular moment is not an effort to embrace reality but rather an attempt to avoid the changes that are an inevitable part of life.

This quotation highlights the difference between Anna’s and Paul’s perspectives on technology. For Paul, simulacrum technology enables individuals to preserve relationships with loved ones. For Anna, however, it creates an illusion that discourages people from confronting the reality that everything changes.

Within Hayles’s framework, human subjectivity in the posthuman condition is increasingly shaped by information systems and digital representations. Experiences are no longer derived solely from direct engagement with the world but also from representations generated by technology. As a result, people risk becoming more connected to processed and recorded versions of reality than to reality itself. Through Anna’s critique, the story demonstrates that technology influences not only human actions but also how people understand themselves and the world around them.

After discovering her father's habit of keeping simulacra of the women with whom he had affairs, Anna attempts to explain why she considers this behavior more serious than merely keeping photographs or ordinary fantasies.

Data 16

"A simulacrum captures a state of mind, a dream."

This statement is made by Anna while reflecting on the simulacra preserved by Paul. According to her, simulacra differ from ordinary visual media because they do not merely record a person's appearance but also capture aspects of that person's mental patterns and personality.

This quotation demonstrates that simulacra provide a far more complex form of representation than photographs or videos. Their existence allows individuals to maintain emotional relationships with digital representations even after real-world relationships have ended. Consequently, Anna views her father's actions as an ongoing betrayal rather than merely a mistake committed in the past.

Within Hayles's framework, this condition illustrates how human subjectivity can be separated from the biological body and reproduced as information. A simulacrum contains traces of subjectivity strong enough to create the impression of a person's presence. As a result, social relationships no longer occur exclusively between humans but also between humans and digital representations carrying aspects of human subjectivity.

When Anna returns home after years of emotional distance from her father, she discovers that the simulacrum of herself at seven years old has been preserved and

continuously used by Paul. Upon seeing the simulation, she realizes that it closely resembles her and yet remains fundamentally different.

Data 17

“She acted like me, spoke like me, laughed and moved and reacted like me. But she was not me.”

This statement reflects Anna’s reaction when she confronts her own simulacrum. She acknowledges that the simulation speaks, behaves, expresses emotions, and responds in ways remarkably similar to her own. Nevertheless, despite these similarities, she insists that the simulacrum is not truly her.

This example demonstrates the distinction between digital representation and a living human being. The simulacrum successfully captures part of Anna’s subjectivity at a specific point in time, but it cannot follow the changes she experiences throughout her life. In other words, the simulacrum preserves a static version of Anna, whereas the real Anna continues to evolve through experience.

From Hayles’s perspective, human subjectivity can indeed be represented through informational patterns, but such representations are never entirely identical to the individuals they depict. This quotation reveals a limitation of posthuman technology. Although digital systems may convincingly imitate behavior and personality, human subjectivity remains dynamic and continuously developing. Therefore, the simulacrum can represent only part of Anna, not the entirety of her as a living, changing person.

After seeing the simulacrum of herself that Paul has preserved and used for years, Anna begins questioning why her father continues to maintain the digital representation. She realizes that the simulacrum has become a substitute for their real relationship.

Data 18

“Did he turn to this frozen trace of me, and contemplate this shadow of my lost faith and affection?”

This statement is Anna’s reflection when she discovers the simulacrum in her childhood bedroom. She imagines how her father has interacted with the simulation over the years following the deterioration of their relationship.

Particularly significant are the phrases “frozen trace” and “shadow.” The *simulacrum* is not Anna herself but merely a preserved remnant of a past version of her. Yet for Paul, this representation appears sufficient to maintain a sense of intimacy that has been lost in reality.

From Hayles’s perspective, posthuman subjectivity becomes increasingly tied to informational representation. Simulacra make it possible for aspects of Anna’s subjectivity to be recorded and preserved digitally. As a result, interpersonal relationships no longer depend entirely on the presence of real human beings but can also be sustained through digital representations. This example illustrates how technology begins to occupy roles that were once fulfilled exclusively through direct human relationships.

Upon seeing her simulacrum, Anna feels that part of herself has been taken and preserved in a form that is no longer under her control.

Data 19

“I felt violated.”

This statement expresses Anna’s emotional response after realizing that her father has continued using her simulacrum for many years. The feeling arises because she sees that an older version of herself is still being used to sustain a relationship that has fundamentally changed.

This quotation highlights an important issue concerning agency. Although the simulacrum is created from Anna’s data, she has no control over how that representation is used once the data has been recorded. In other words, part of her subjectivity has been separated from her and employed for purposes she never consented to.

Within Hayles’s framework, this condition demonstrates how information can acquire a degree of independence from the human being who originally generated it. Once aspects of human subjectivity are recorded and stored within technological systems, those representations may be used without the participation or approval of the individual represented. Therefore, this example illustrates how human agency can become constrained when elements of personal identity are transformed into digital information accessible to others.

After reflecting on the existence of her own simulacrum and the simulacra of the other women preserved by her father, Anna finally understands why the event she witnessed when she was thirteen years old has continued to haunt her for so many years.

Data 20

“By keeping and replaying this old simulacrum of my childhood, he was dreaming himself into reclaiming my respect and love, instead of facing the reality of what he had done, and the real me.

This statement represents the conclusion Anna reaches after understanding the role of simulacra in her father's life. In her view, Paul does not use the simulacrum merely to remember the past; rather, he uses it to preserve a version of the relationship that he wishes still existed.

This quotation demonstrates that technology not only records reality but also enables individuals to construct alternative realities that better suit their desires. Paul does not need to confront Anna as an adult who has developed her own perspectives and judgments. Instead, he can continue interacting with the simulacrum of young Anna, who still admires him unconditionally.

From Hayles's perspective, human subjectivity in the posthuman condition becomes increasingly connected to systems of digital representation. However, this story also reveals another consequence of that condition. When digital representations are treated as sufficient substitutes for real relationships, people may lose the motivation to engage with the complexities of actual social relationships. Paul's agency remains intact because he consciously chooses to use the simulacrum. Nevertheless, that agency is directed toward maintaining an illusion and avoiding the consequences of his actions in the real world. Thus, technology does not directly eliminate agency but rather alters the ways in which agency is exercised.

Near the end of the story, Paul explains how Anna's simulacrum functions. He realizes that the simulacrum cannot develop in the same way a real human being can. Although it can interact and learn to a certain extent, it always returns to the mental state recorded when Anna was seven years old.

Data 21

“She’s forever the curious seven-year old who worshipped her father, and who thought he could do no wrong.”

This statement is made by Paul while describing the simulacrum of Anna that he has continued to use for many years. Unlike the real Anna, who continues to grow and change as an individual, the simulacrum remains fixed at a single moment in time. She is always the little girl who admires her father and remains unaware of the mistakes he has made.

This quotation demonstrates that technology allows individuals to preserve a particular version of human subjectivity according to their own preferences. The simulacrum does not represent Anna in her entirety; rather, it represents only one version of Anna that Paul has chosen to preserve. In this sense, technology functions as a tool for freezing subjectivity into a form that can be controlled.

Within Hayles’s framework, posthuman subjectivity is often understood as an informational pattern that can be stored and reproduced. However, this story highlights the limitations of that perspective. Although the simulacrum successfully preserves certain characteristics of Anna, it cannot follow the experiences and transformations that shape human subjectivity over time. Therefore, the simulacrum presents only a partial representation that is detached from the real individual.

Furthermore, this example illustrates how Paul’s agency is used to maintain a relationship that no longer exists in reality. He chooses to continue interacting with a simulacrum that always loves and admires him rather than confronting the complicated

relationship he has with the real Anna. In other words, Paul's agency remains intact, but it is directed toward sustaining a digital representation rather than repairing a genuine human relationship.

Toward the end of the story, Erin leaves a message for Anna. In this message, she explains how Paul spent years repeatedly interacting with Anna's simulacrum after their relationship deteriorated. After the message concludes, the story ends with Paul once again speaking to the simulacrum of his daughter.

Data 22

"During all these years when you have locked him out, your father played an old simulacrum of you over and over, laughing, joking, pouring his heart out to you in a way that a seven-year old would understand."

and

"Hello there. Have you seen my daughter Anna?"

The first quotation comes from Erin's recorded message to Anna. Erin explains that for many years, Paul used Anna's simulacrum as a substitute for the relationship he had lost. Meanwhile, the second quotation appears in the final scene of the story, where Paul once again speaks to Anna's simulacrum as he has done countless times before.

These two quotations are particularly significant because they reveal the ultimate outcome of the relationship between humans and technology in the story. Paul does not lose access to Anna because the technology fails. On the contrary, the technology functions remarkably well by providing a substitute for the relationship he longs for. The simulacrum

offers Paul a way to feel close to his daughter without confronting the reality that their relationship has been damaged.

From Hayles's perspective, this condition illustrates how human subjectivity can be extended through technological systems. The simulacrum enables aspects of Anna's behavior, emotions, and personality to remain present even after their real relationship has effectively ended. At the same time, however, the story also reveals the consequences of such a condition. The presence of a digital representation causes Paul to become increasingly attached to the past and increasingly detached from authentic human relationships.

These quotations also provide an answer to the issue of agency within the story. Paul's agency is not eliminated by technology. He still possesses the ability to choose and act. However, that agency is directed toward maintaining a simulation that offers emotional comfort. Rather than confronting Anna as a real person who has changed over time, Paul chooses to continue interacting with a predictable digital representation that never abandons him.

Thus, the ending does not depict the complete disappearance of human agency. Instead, Ken Liu demonstrates that in the posthuman condition, agency continues to exist but may be directed toward relationships with digital representations rather than relationships with actual human beings. Technology does not entirely replace humanity; rather, it transforms the ways people form relationships, remember the past, and understand both their own subjectivity and that of others. This aligns with Hayles's view that posthuman individuals are not separate from technological systems but live in continuous interaction with information and digital representations that help shape human experience.

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that both short stories portray human subjectivity as increasingly interconnected with technology in the posthuman condition. Although technology possesses the ability to influence how people think, make decisions, and build relationships with others, human agency is not completely lost.

The Perfect Match demonstrates how agency can be maintained through critical awareness of AI's dominance, while *Simulacrum* illustrates how agency continues to exist even when it becomes directed toward attachment to digital representations. Therefore, Ken Liu portrays the central challenge of the posthuman era not as the disappearance of human agency, but as the ongoing negotiation of agency amid technology's increasingly profound influence on human subjectivity.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

Based on an analysis of two short stories by Ken Liu, *The Perfect Match* and *Simulacrum*, it can be concluded that both stories represent the transformation of human subjectivity in the posthuman condition. Using N. Katherine Hayles' theory of posthumanism, this study found that subjectivity is no longer understood as something completely autonomous and separate from technology. Instead, subjectivity is shaped through the ongoing interaction between humans and technological systems. Characteristics of posthuman subjectivity found in both short stories include the dominance of information patterns over physical existence, the integration of humans and intelligent technology, and the increasingly blurred boundaries between human experience and digital systems.

In *The Perfect Match*, human subjectivity is shaped through intensive engagement with artificial intelligence that collects, analyzes, and directs various aspects of human life. Meanwhile, *Simulacrum* shows how a person's identity, memory, and presence can be reproduced through digital technology, allowing some human subjectivity to be separated from their biological bodies. These findings suggest that in the posthuman condition, humans are increasingly understood as information patterns that continuously interact with technology.

This study also found that this transformation of subjectivity impacts human agency. In *The Perfect Match*, Sai's agency is not completely lost, although many of his decisions and

preferences are influenced by the AI system. He remains able to question, reject, and limit technological intervention, even though his actions continue to take place in an environment mediated by digital systems. Meanwhile, in *Simulacrum*, Paul's agency remains, but it is directed toward maintaining relationships with digital representations rather than confronting real relationships that have changed. Thus, technology does not directly eliminate human agency, but rather changes the way agency is exercised and negotiated.

Overall, both short stories demonstrate that subjectivity and agency in the posthuman era are interrelated. The greater the role of technology in human life, the greater its influence on how humans understand themselves, make decisions, and build relationships with others. Therefore, agency in the posthuman condition can no longer be understood as completely independent freedom, but rather as the result of continuous negotiations between humans and technology.

B. Suggestions

Based on the results of this study, several suggestions can be considered for further research. First, research on posthumanism can be developed by using a more diverse range of objects of study, such as novels, films, television series, video games, and other forms of popular culture. This can provide a broader understanding of the representation of human subjectivity and agency in various media.

Second, future research can utilize different theoretical perspectives to enrich the analysis of the relationship between humans and technology. In addition to posthumanism theory, approaches from media studies, cultural studies, technology studies, and identity theory can be used to examine the same phenomenon from different perspectives.

Third, because this research focuses on the analysis of literary texts, future research can connect literary studies to real-world social conditions. Future researchers can explore how artificial intelligence, social media, algorithms, and digital technology influence human subjectivity and agency in everyday life.

Fourth, for readers, this research is expected to raise awareness that technology is not entirely neutral. Technology has the ability to influence how humans think, make decisions, understand themselves, and interact with others. Therefore, a critical approach is needed in using technology so that humans still have room for conscious agency.

Finally, for academics, this research is expected to contribute to the development of contemporary literary studies, particularly those related to posthumanism, subjectivity, agency, and the relationship between humans and technology. Given the ongoing development of technology, studies on these issues will remain relevant and open to further research in the future.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, I., & Ali, S. (2024). Cybernetics and Human Intelligence: A Case Study of the Variable Man by Philip K. Dick. *Social Science Review Archives*, 2(2), 1056-1063. <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v2i2.155>
- Ardyanti, Y., Bahari, M., Helmawati, H., Suryadi, I., & Huda, M. (2025). The Impact of Technology Integration in Islamic Religious Education on Students' Learning Motivation in Schools/Madrasahs in Bandung. *Belajea: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 10(2), 421-440. <https://journal.iaincurup.ac.id/index.php/belajea/article/view/13406>
- Arnd-Caddigan, M. (2015). Sherry Turkle: Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other: Basic Books, New York, 2011, 348 pp, ISBN 978-0465031467 (pbk). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-014-0511-4>
- Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and simulation*. University of Michigan press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9904>
- Burkhanov, R., Gagarin, A., & Novopashin, S. (2022). Human, Posthuman and Culture in the Digital Society. In *XXIV International Conference" Culture, Personality, Society in the Conditions of Digitalization: Methodology and Experience of Empirical Research".—Ekaterinburg, 2021* (pp. 61-69). Knowledge E. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v7i2.10277>
- CHO, YOUNGHO (2025). An Analysis of Katherine Hayles' Posthuman Theory: Focusing on Cybernetic Science. figshare. Online resource. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.28830953.v1>
- Gamberi, C. (2024). Digital and Posthuman Narratives in Literature. In *New European Humanities* (pp. 185-212). Edinburgh University Press. <https://hdl.handle.net/11585/962402>
- Gillespie, T., Boczkowski, P. J., & Foot, K. A. (Eds.). (2014). *Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society*. MIT Press. [https://books.google.co.id/books?id=zeK2AgAAQBAJ&lpg=PR7&ots=GpoBQUW5vl&dq=Gillespie%2C%20T.%20\(2014\).%20The%20relevance%20of%20algorithms.%20Media%20technologies%3A%20Essays%20on%20communication%2C%20materiality%2C%20and%20society%2C%20167\(2014\)%2C%20167.%20&lr&hl=id&pg=PR8#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.id/books?id=zeK2AgAAQBAJ&lpg=PR7&ots=GpoBQUW5vl&dq=Gillespie%2C%20T.%20(2014).%20The%20relevance%20of%20algorithms.%20Media%20technologies%3A%20Essays%20on%20communication%2C%20materiality%2C%20and%20society%2C%20167(2014)%2C%20167.%20&lr&hl=id&pg=PR8#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- Gumanay, J. C. (2023). More human than human: Posthumanism in literary discourse. *International Journal of Humanity Studies (IJHS)*, 7(1), 115-126. DOI: [10.24071/ijhs.v7i1.6265](https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i1.6265)
- Hayles, N. K. (1999). *How we became posthuman*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://monoskop.org/images/5/50/Hayles_N_Katherine_How_We_Became_Posthuman_Virtual_Bodies_in_Cybernetics_Literature_and_Informatics.pdf

- Hicks, A. J. (2022). Posthumanism. *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Fiction 1980–2020*, 2, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119431732.ecaf0258>
- Ivancu, O. (2025). Redefining Limits: Posthumanism and the New Conception of Human Identity in Literature. *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Philologica*, 26(1), 78-88. DOI:[10.56177/AUA.PHILOLOGICA.1.26.2025.art.7](https://doi.org/10.56177/AUA.PHILOLOGICA.1.26.2025.art.7)
- Jaques, Z. (2022). Posthumanism. In *A Companion to Children's Literature* (pp. 364–375). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119038276.ch29>
- Joohyun, P. (2023). Critical/Dystopian Approaches to High-Tech Surveillance Capitalist Societies in “Nosedive” and “The Perfect Match.” *Lianggu Humanitatis* 25(2), 13–40. <https://doi.org/10.16945/INAHSL.25.2.1>
- Joseph, J. (2025). The algorithmic self: how AI is reshaping human identity, introspection, and agency. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, 1645795. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1645795>
- Kang, S. (2023). Mobility and Algorithmic Self in the Age of Surveillance Capitalism in Ken Liu’s “The Perfect Match.” *Journal of American Studies*, 55(2), 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.22505/jas.2023.55.2.01>
- Kaplan, A., & Haenlein, M. (2019). Siri, Siri, in my hand: Who’s the fairest in the land? On the interpretations, illustrations, and implications of artificial intelligence. *Business horizons*, 62(1), 15-25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2018.08.004>
- Lee, H.M. (2025). Cruel Optimism in the Promises of AI in Ken Liu’s “The Perfect Match”. *Journal of English Language and Literature*, 125-148. https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/landing/article.kci?arti_id=ART003186524
- Liu, K. (2016). *The Paper Menagerie*. Bloomsbury Publishing. [https://books.google.co.id/books?id=EbKfEAAAQBAJ&lpg=PT8&ots=ELNtcPzpXJ&dq=Liu%2C%20K.%20\(2016\).%20The%20Paper%20Menagerie%20and%20Other%20Stories.%20Bloomsbury%20Publishing.&lr&hl=id&pg=PT7#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.id/books?id=EbKfEAAAQBAJ&lpg=PT8&ots=ELNtcPzpXJ&dq=Liu%2C%20K.%20(2016).%20The%20Paper%20Menagerie%20and%20Other%20Stories.%20Bloomsbury%20Publishing.&lr&hl=id&pg=PT7#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- Muhlisin, I., & Rahayu, M. (2024). The Nature Depicted in John Lanchester’s *The Wall* (2019): An Ecocriticism Analysis. *Jurnal Pembelajaran Sastra*, 6(1), 19–32. <https://doi.org/10.51543/hiskimalang.v6i1>
- Muzakki, A. (2020). Unveiling Thaha Husein's controversy on classical Arabic literature existence (critical methodology of the book ‘Fi al-adab al-jahili’). *Lingua*, 15(1), 11-22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18860/ling.v15i1.9493>
- Naqvi, S. ., Khan, A. H. ., & Mubasher, G. . (2025). Posthumanism and Digital Subjectivity in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun*: Deconstructing Human Identity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence. *ACADEMIA International Journal for Social Sciences*, 4(2), 875-886. <https://doi.org/10.63056/ACAD.004.02.0223>
- Nayar, P. K. (2025). Posthumanism. *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ywcct/mbaf014>
- Oh, S.W. (2021). AI and Posthuman Romance in Literature and Film. *Journal of Artificial*

- Intelligence and Humanities, 35-51. DOI : <http://dx.doi.org/10.46397/JAIH.9.2>
- Pierce, E. K. (2024). *Posthumanism in Literature: Redefining Selfhood, Temporality, and Reality/ies through Fiction* (Master's thesis, Chapman University). <https://doi.org/10.36837/chapman.000585>
- Rahayu, M. (2021, April). Youth responses towards internet memes of Covid-19 protocols. [10.2991/assehr.k.210427.050raniry.ac.id/index.php/islamfutura/article/view/5790/3976](https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210427.050raniry.ac.id/index.php/islamfutura/article/view/5790/3976)
- Ramadhan, T. (2023). *Representasi posthumanisme pada film Dune (2021)*. Universitas Sriwijaya. <http://repository.unsri.ac.id/id/eprint/91489>
- Riisgaard, M. (2022). Rage Against the Machines: A Comparative Posthumanist Analysis of interrelations between humanity and sentient machines. https://projekter.aau.dk/projekter/files/460093900/RAGE_AGAINST_THE_MACHINES_A_comparative_posthumanist_analysis_of_interrelations_between_humanity_and_sentient_machines.pdf
- A. U. S., Harsha. (2021). SurViolence: The Preoccupation with Surveillance and Entrapment in Ken Liu's "The Perfect Match" and Tony Tulathimutte's Private Citizens. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368771996_SurViolence_The_Preoccupation_with_Surveillance_and_Entrapment_in_Ken_Liu's_The_Perfect_Match_and_Tony_Tulathimutte's_Private_Citizens
- Sulianta, F. (2024). *Filsafat informatika*. Feri Sulianta. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388003939_PARADIGMA_BARU_FILSAFAT_INFORMATIKA_Review_Buku_Filsafat_Informatika_karya_Feri_Sulianta
- Vangeest, J. (2024). *Critical Post-Humanism as Problematic: Epistemological, Ethical, and Teleological Gestures for the Future of Post-Humanity* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Western Ontario (Canada)). <https://www.proquest.com/openview/325acf6c2d3dfac53212f4c0c3953c5b/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- Windriani, D., & Chandra, T. M. (2022). The Loss of Humanity in the Era of Advanced Technology Depicted in Two Dystopian Short Stories: Ken Liu's "The Perfect Match" and Ray Bradbury's "The Veldt". *Ksatra: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa dan Sastra*, 4(2), 317-327. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52217/ksatra.v4i2.914>
- Yang, Q., Steinfeld, A., Rosé, C., & Zimmerman, J. (2020, April). Re-examining whether, why, and how human-AI interaction is uniquely difficult to design. In *Proceedings of the 2020 chi conference on human factors in computing systems* (pp. 1-13). <https://doi.org/10.1145/3313831.3376301>
- Zuboff, S. (2023). The age of surveillance capitalism. In *Social theory re-wired* (pp. 203-213). Routledge. DOI : <http://dx.doi.org/10.46397/JAIH.9.2>

CURRICULUM VITAE



Nabilah Putri Widodo was born in Malang on January 8th, 2004. She graduated from SMA AN-NUR Bululawang Malang in 2022. She began her higher education in 2022 in the English Literature Department, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang, and graduated in 2026. She has participated in several committees in organizing major campus events such as the Maliki English Festival, faculty orientation, and external committee events such as the National Mathematics, Science, and English Olympiad. From the fifth to seventh semesters, she took teaching courses (ELT). She also did a one-month internship at SMAI ALMAARIF Singosari.