

# The Holographic Self: Self-Representation and Logics of Digitality in Three Contemporary Narratives of Cosmopolitanism.

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## The Holographic Self: Self-Representation and Logics of Digitality in Contemporary Narratives of Cosmopolitanism

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**Title:** The Holographic Self: Self-Representation and Logics of Digitality in Three Contemporary Narratives of Cosmopolitanism

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**Abstract:** This dissertation is an examination of the holographic self in three contemporary narratives of cosmopolitanism. The holographic self is a concept I present which expands upon the cyborg to suggest foreground a self that operates in relation to a hologrammatic public-digital self-representation or operates in the logic of such. In this project, I deploy two models of the holographic self: one in which the hologram functions as an interface or fantasy to move toward an actualization of an ego-ideal; and another in which the array of holograms or instantiations of self form a rhizomatic or constellational arrangement of subjectivity in which movement itself is prioritized. In each of the focal novels Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani*; Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*; Teju Cole's *Open City* the protagonist functions as a holographic self in a manner that expresses a desire for a post-positivist subjectivity, where traditional notions of bodily or singular identity itself are exceeded. In chapter one I argue that in *Londonstani*, protagonist Jas seeks to produce a culturally specific self in which the virtual is used as a tool of self-actualization, as it ultimately prioritizes the bodily self reconfigured by its holographic dimensions. I compare the novel to Wilde's *Portrait of Dorian Gray* to suggest that text has no similarly phenomenal ground for an outsourced self. In chapter two, I assert that in *Transmission*, Arjun also operates in relation to a hologram of self, but the text's desire for Arjun to exceed identity itself expresses a yearning for a non-bodily notion of selfhood that seeks to escape the policing of identity. I compare the novel to Brontë's *Jane Eyre* to argue that Jane's trajectory functions to manifest a set of inescapable material socio-ideological constraints that demand a particular conclusion. In chapter three, I examine William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* and its explosion of taxonomy and signification in relation to digitality, and then argue that *Open City* manifests such ideas through a holographic self that desires escape from not just identity but consequence. I conclude by suggesting a potential harmony between the concept of the holographic self, digitality, and narratives of cosmopolitanism.

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