

Social Displacement in the Cyberworld Era as Presented in Nikesh Shukla's *Meatspace*

Nouf A. Alkhatabi¹

¹ College of Languages and Translation, Jeddah University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Correspondence: Dr. Nouf Alkhatabi, College of Languages and Translation, Jeddah University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. E-mail: naalkhatabi@uj.edu.sa

Received: December 1, 2024

Accepted: February 27, 2025

Online Published: May 15, 2025

doi:10.5430/wjel.v15n7p86

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v15n7p86>

Abstract

Social displacement refers to the feelings of alienation and isolation one experiences while living among others. Today, many have adopted new lifestyles in their quest for recognition, and technology is playing a significant role in this transformation. This paper examines the topic of the impact of technology and its role in distancing individuals from genuine physical connections. By analyzing the behavior of Kitab, the protagonist in Nikesh Shukla's *Meatspace*, the study aims to understand how social media as a form of technology has affected individuals. Using an interpretative method, the study also examines how superficial social norms shape identity development. It highlights the destructive effects of the excessive use of social media, which contributes to social displacement. By adopting a comparative perspective, the study delves into shared concerns related to identity formation within a fragmented digital world. Hence, the study, while encouraging a deeper engagement with *Meatspace* and its implications, suggests further studies on the topic as technological advancements and the dominance of cyberspace increasingly take control of individuals' identity.

Keywords: cyberspace, displacement, *Meatspace*, Nikesh Shukla, social media

1. Introduction

Social displacement is a concept according to which time spent online substitutes for in-person engagement, particularly with close friends and family, affecting one's well-being. According to Hall and Dong Liu (2022), "to know whether social displacement occurs, we must know how people use their time and whether that use of time changes." When people start using their bodies in notably different ways, whether because of technological advancements or other cultural changes, they go through new embodied experiences. This may cause them to stray from societal expectations of social interaction, to the point where their real-world interactions are replaced by loneliness and isolation (Hayles, 1999).

Nikesh Shukla is an acclaimed British writer and screenwriter. His upbringing as a son of Indian immigrants has influenced his work. He is a leading author and activist whose voice is prominent in discussions about the complexities of racial identity and cultural displacement, and about what it means to navigate life between identities with both humor and poignancy. Thematically, social displacement is one of the defining features of modern identity in literature. Dislocation from both physical and virtual spaces is explored in Shukla's *Meatspace* (2015). Through the book's protagonist, Shukla has investigated how individuals' lives are fragmented between their real and online personas. The novel revolves around an author, Kitab, who is obsessed with social media and is facing difficulties completing his second novel.

Meatspace, the title of the novel, is a colloquial term referring to the physical world where humans interact. The great science fiction writer Bruce Sterling (1992) popularized the term. He has written, "In the so-called meatspace, where we walk around in our bodies, things are never so obvious" (p. 22). In contrast, Julian Dibbell (1993), a journalist who writes extensively about online cultures, has described cyberspace as a place where everyone is two steps removed from meatspace because what happens there "is neither exactly real nor exactly make-believe, but profoundly, compellingly and emotionally meaningful" (p. 204). Hence, meatspace is a term used to refer to the physical, real-world environment as opposed to virtual environments. In meatspace, people interact in person using their bodies (meat) rather than through digital interfaces like the internet. The term is often used in contrast to activities or interactions that occur online, such as social media, virtual reality, or other digital forms of communication.

The current paper discusses the theme of social displacement in *Meatspace*. It investigates how the novel's protagonist experiences alienation in both the physical and digital realms, contributing to his identity crisis. Essentially, it examines technology's role in shaping the characters' sense of belonging and self-perception.

2. Literature Review

Social displacement is an induced transformation in human behavior due to one or more types of social, economic, or geographical changes. Such experiences are often connected with broader systems of power, colonization, and cultural imperialism. In multicultural societies,

social displacement can isolate individuals to a point where they lose their sense of identity and self-belonging. Shukla's work serves a deep and contemplative exploration of social dislocation in myriad forms. In an era when so many people are vilified for their looks, backgrounds, or online identities, he delves into the complex nature of identity, belonging, and race through his novels, memoirs, and essays. By blending personal narratives with larger social observations, Shukla has become an important contemporary voice that reflects on the meaning of belonging or the implications of being exiled in a world that relegates people to the margins.

In the works of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Stuart Hall, displacement is a central theme expressed through concepts such as exile, hybridity, and identity creation in postcolonialist and globalized settings. In Said's seminal work, *Orientalism* (1978), the concept of displacement is deeply rooted in his analysis of how the West (the "Occident") represents the East (the "Orient") through constructed images and stereotypes. Said, a Palestinian who grew up in the United States, epitomized the experience of displacement and exile. His works reflect his commitment to exploring the alienation that displaced people experience. Said (2000) has described exile as "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (p. 181). He has rendered exile as both metaphorical and literal displacement, where the exiled person is caught between two worlds. He has asserted, "Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions" (p. 173). Said has emphasized that exile is both a productive and tragic experience that provides the perspective through which to critique power, but a sense of loss always accompanies it. His works have stressed that displacement is not merely a loss of physical geography, but a metaphorical rootlessness resulting from marginalization and "othering" by dominant cultural forces.

Bhabha, a postcolonial theorist, has engaged deeply with the notion of displacement through his idea of hybridity. In his most influential work, *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha has explored how cultures continually transform and develop through contact with and conflict against varying other cultures. Displacement for Bhabha is the essence of the colonial and postcolonial situation because it interrupts a homogeneous cultural identity. Bhabha has posited hybridity as a process in which both the colonizer and colonized mutually transform each other's cultures owing to the complexities of their colonial relations. According to Bhabha, there is a "third space" where identity itself is not a fixed concept but something which is negotiated. He has written, "The third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom" (p. 37). This third space is not just a site of displacement but of productivity, where new forms of cultural understanding and expression occur. Bhabha has also argued that displacement is never simply colonial or postcolonial. It cannot be so easily separated into binaries like colonizer/colonized and native/foreigner. Upon closer analysis, displacement is not only about a sense of loss; it also serves as a condition that allows for new hybrid forms of identity.

Hall, a British cultural theorist, has used diaspora cases to write about identity and displacement. In his highly persuasive essay, "Cultural identity and diaspora" (1990), Hall has suggested that cultural identity is not fixed; rather, it is a type of positioning in an ongoing unfolding landscape of history, culture, and power. For Hall, the feeling of being displaced is crucial to how modern diaspora identities are formed, particularly in postcolonial societies. Hall has rejected the idea of a stable or fixed identity by asserting that identity is always in formation. He has also challenged the notion of an essential or unchanging identity by asserting that identity is always in process. He has written, "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (p. 225). Hall has viewed displacement not simply as a historical fact for people of African, Caribbean, and South Asian descent but also as a metaphor for the wider postcolonial experiences in which individuals and groups must navigate more than one culture. Through his theories, Hall has reflected that whether the process is voluntary or forced, displacement leads to complex hybrid identities that challenge traditional notions of national or ethnic belonging. For Hall and Bhabha, this idea offers a possibility of new cultural forms that are open and dynamic.

Said, Bhabha, and Hall's theories provide a background for comprehending social displacement in both literal and metaphorical terms. Said has emphasized displacement's political and personal dimensions, presenting it as a devastating personal experience of loss that nevertheless provides critical insights into power dynamics. Bhabha has argued that displacement has the power to create hybrid identities and new forms of culture from the space between trespassing borders. Hall's diaspora identity has highlighted the fluidity and contingency of cultural identity in a globalized world shaped by migration and displacement.

In this review, it is essential to stress the ways in which critics have incorporated theories of displacement into technology to shed light on the complex experiences of those affected by its force. In their works, Manuel Castells and Sherry Turkle have explored this interactive relationship between modern technology and the shaping of personal identity.

Manuel Castells, in his groundbreaking work, *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture* (1996), has provided an extensive critique of how information technologies have reshaped our experience of space and time. He has written about the "space of flows," in which all our old geographical boundaries are replaced by constant, dynamic networks of interaction facilitated through the ever-expanding world of Internet communication:

The space of flows is the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows. These flows are purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in the economic, political, and symbolic structures of society. (p. 414)

This theory is central to Castells' works, where digital and networked spaces change the way people relate to and interact with each other regardless of their physical environment. Because of technology, people can engage in social relations that transcend the traditional

boundaries of place and space. Hence, social interactions have become deterritorialized; an individual can now be one person in many spaces, whether physical or virtual. This indicates how power in the physical and cyber world is mediated through technology, leading to newly established inequities.

Further, Sherry Turkle, one of the early investigators of human–technology interaction, has discussed how individuals construct their identities in virtual places. In her books, including *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (1995), Turkle has examined how digital spaces can construct personal and social identity. She has called these spaces “liminal zones” where people have the opportunity to play around with other aspects of their identity without being forced back into their real-world boxes:

Where does real life end and a game begin? Is the real self always the naturally occurring one? Is the real self always the one in the physical world? As more and more real business gets done in cyberspace world, could the real self be the one that functions CULTURE

in that realm? (p. 241)

As such, Turkle has primarily examined the psychological and sociological implications of meatspace, referring to the space where real-life physical aspects coexist with simulated realities. She has argued that in meatspace, individuals can engage in “identity play” using avatars and social media, giving them the flexibility to choose how to appear to others. This freedom can liberate them to discover who they really are, but Turkle (2012) has expressed concern that it can withdraw them from the messiness of real-life relationships and into safer virtual spaces: “We’ve become accustomed to a new way of being alone together . . . we are able to be with one another, and also elsewhere, connected to wherever we want to be” (para. 4).

Turkle, in her later work *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (2011), has explored how people’s increasing dependence on digital communication has increased their isolation despite giving them the illusion of constant connectedness. She has written, “We are lonely, but we’re afraid of intimacy. Digital connections and the sociable robot may offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship. Our networked life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other” (p. 2). Turkle has contributed to meatspace theory by providing a way of exploring how it shapes relationships and identities and, in so doing, analyzing how technology alters psychological patterns.

Castells’ theory of the “space of flows” aligns with Turkle’s notion of “identity play” because both recognize the fluidity of communication through digital networks. If we read Turkle in the context of Castells, his themes of “the networked society” represent a landscape where digital identities as discussed by Turkle are created and developed. Whereas Castells has examined technology as a restructuring of power and society, Turkle has investigated the personal effects of this change, especially psychological displacement and the possibility for both empowerment and alienation. Both authors have offered valuable perspectives on the technological reformulation of both material and mental spaces, resulting in social displacement.

Shukla’s *Meatspace* delves into the complexities of social displacement in a hyperconnected, urban environment, where the digital realm creates an even greater sense of estrangement. The theme of social displacement in Shukla’s *Meatspace* is echoed in the works of other pioneering writers who have been preoccupied, like him, with identity crises. For example, in Zadie Smith’s *NW* (2012), characters grapple with their complexity of identity within a multicultural London. Smith has written, “You can’t help but feel that something’s being lost. The streets are full of stories, but they often go unheard” (p. 78). A similar experience is prevalent across Shukla’s work, where the characters’ fight for acknowledgement mirrors wider societal issues of invisibility and dislocation.

Similarly, Dave Eggers’ *The Circle* critically examines technology’s impact on human relationships. Eggers (2013) has asserted, “We have a love for each other that is insatiable, but it is also stifling” (p. 438). This observation is also found in *Meatspace*, where the characters have a tendency to elevate their social media personas but feel alienated because they cannot live up to their own expectations, despite always being “connected.” This struggle is a significant part of Shukla’s works, where traditional ideas of community and belonging are further complicated by the digital age. Eggers (2013) has also asked, “Is it okay if I don’t want to be social all the time?” (p. 417). Because of the prominence of social displacement in a tech-heavy world, this question finds resonance in Gary Shteyngart’s *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010), whose characters find it difficult to communicate in real life because they would rather connect through devices. Shteyngart has described this as “the death of personality” (p. 7).

Shukla’s *Meatspace* has served as an essential reflection on social dislocation, drawing parallels with many other contemporary authors’ works that are concerned with themes of social displacement and technology. Through his body of work, he has navigated the themes of identity crisis, belonging, and technology’s inextricable impact on our lives in a globalized world. These themes bring to the surface his characters’ predicament and sense of place.

Shukla’s earlier work, *The one who wrote destiny* (2018) has addressed themes of cultural identity and belonging. In it, he has written, “Every story carries the weight of its ancestors,” emphasizing how past experiences shape contemporary identities (p. 2). This theme is central in *Meatspace* as well, with the characters’ cultural backgrounds framing their present conflicts and thus showing that displacement is not only physical but also rooted in one’s culture and legacy. Additionally, Shukla’s *Coconut Unlimited* (2010) has depicted South Asian youth and the conflicts they face as a minority in a predominantly White society. He has written, “We are not just what we appear to be; we are the sum of our experiences” (p. 10). This idea also reverberates in *Meatspace*, whose characters strive to balance their cultural heritage with modern society’s demands. Shukla has woven personal and collective narratives together in different levels of complexity, focusing on

the notion that displacement is multi-layered. In his essay collection, *The Good Immigrant* (2016), Shukla has articulated the intricacies of being a minority in contemporary Britain, stating, “We carry our identities like heavy backpacks, filled with expectations and stereotypes” (p. 11) This metaphor resonates throughout *Meatspace*, where the characters’ journey are shaped by their own experiences as objects against a backdrop of perceptions both real and imagined.

Meatspace is a deep reflection on social displacement and the identity-confusing aspects of living in a digital era. When this novel is placed within the scope of Shukla’s larger work, it becomes evident that isolation and the struggle to remain true to cultural legacies are prevalent themes in much of his writing. Through rich character development and insightful commentary, Shukla has urged readers to comprehend the varied complex feelings of belonging in a world that is rapidly changing because of technology. This has made his work seem relevant, timely, and provocative.

3. Methodology

This paper employed an interpretative method involving a close reading of *Meatspace* and complementary works to analyze the topic of social displacement. Through selective readings, the analysis showed how Shukla has captured moments of experience regarding identity, alienation, and interpersonal technology. Relevant quotes were used to support the argument and underline displacement as experienced by the protagonist. Contemporary works exploring similar themes were cited to enrich the analysis. Approaching the topic through a comparative lens helped deepen the discussion and address shared concerns related to identity crises and belonging across various narratives.

The methodology drew on critical theory, particularly postcolonial studies and digital humanities, providing a theoretical framework to interpret characters’ experience through the context of social displacement. Integrating these approaches, the paper sought to offer an enriched interpretation of social displacement in *Meatspace* while locating identity formation within a fragmented digital world. It was hoped that this would encourage deeper engagement with the text and its implications in the future.

4. Discussion

In a world where technology continues to progress at a fast pace, the concept of social banishment becomes more apparent. In *Meatspace*, Shukla has examined the profound effects of both disconnection and alienation in today’s society. Le Guin (1974) has explained how displacement leads to isolation and a loss of belonging, noting that “to be dispossessed is to be removed from your place in the world, both physically and spiritually” (p. 6). This is a serious issue the book has dealt with through its vivid characters and plot, highlighting the plight of individuals who may be suffering alone in an ever-evolving world.

The theme of social displacement in a virtual world has been strikingly portrayed through Kitab, the protagonist, whose interactions are confined to a digital screen. He is immersed in the virtual world to such an extent that meatspace as opposed to cyberspace seems insignificant and secondary to him: “I am so connected I am completely disconnected” (Shukla, 2015, p. 8). Kitab reflects on the irony of being digitally more connected, yet feeling isolated in real life. This is a problem that many people today will recognize because they too feel profoundly alone in the presence of family and friends.

Meatspace has explored the alienation people feel when their physical self is displaced in cyberspace by an avatar, a virtual representation. The real world of the novel becomes a reflection of its characters’ status as posthumans. The material embodiment is thus presented as accidental, suggesting that the informational pattern rather than materiality truly defines humans. As a result, individuals become devoid of emotions and socialize less with their peers. Eventually, they become a symbol of isolation and loneliness.

Kitab is a writer whose identity is shaped by his online persona rather than his real physical existence. He constantly searches for validation and approval through social media. Early in the novel, he states, “The first and last thing I do every day is see what strangers are saying about me” (Shukla, 2015, p. 5). This reveals the extent of Kitab’s obsession with his digital identity, which gradually replaces all his real-life preoccupations. The virtual world becomes so meaningful to Kitab that it supersedes the physical reality of his life. He admits to his girlfriend, “I was just trying to make a name for myself” (p. 9). His pursuit of digital fame takes priority over his actual relationships.

The novel has focused on how the constant need to remain digitally connected makes one feel anxious and cut off from real life. The reliance on social media not only isolates Kitab from real social interactions but also makes him endlessly seek external validation, affecting his emotional well-being. The more Kitab is followed online, the more he becomes detached from his identity: “I refresh my Twitter feed obsessively, watching the follower count tick up. Each new follower feels like a validation of my existence, but I can’t shake the feeling that I’m losing touch with who I really am” (Shukla, 2015, p. 8). The quote emphasizes the dual nature of online fame: chasing online popularity can lead to displacement from one’s true self.

Kitab’s dependence on social media and other digital tools draws attention to the incorporation of technology into our interactions with society. Shukla has argued that technology stands in the way of meaningful human connection rather than facilitating it. Kitab’s relentless smartphone use, even when he is disconnected from the internet, illustrates how compulsive digital interaction can be. In one scene, he checks his phone to see whether he’s received a message, despite knowing he has no service:

I check my phone, knowing there’s no signal in these tunnels. I scroll the screen down to refresh, like a tic, knowing there’s no reception. I need to be plugged in. I need to know what’s going on. How do our brains function in these short bursts of signal outages? How do the commuting masses cope when their 3G signal drops in and out, and they have to read, listen to music, or converse? I’m trembling, desperate to check my Twitter. (Shukla, 2015, p. 136)

Kitab's reliance on social media turns into an addiction. At one point, while using his smartphone, Kitab states, "All this takes up to 10% of my battery, which is a currency in modern life. Without battery, you can't tell anyone where you are or what you're eating" (Shukla, 2015, p. 134). Virtual presence, according to Kitab, is as important as physical presence. Hence, he turns restless when he cannot connect to the internet. The virtual world is integrated into his extended cognition system, such that a minor instance of disconnection from it becomes as painful as an injury to any part of the nervous system. This can have agonizing consequences.

Kitab reflects on how "Google destroyed the journey, man. All you have to do is look him up on Facebook and boom, journey over" (Shukla, 2015, p. 145). This introspection shows that the depth of real experiences is sacrificed for fast and shallow interactions facilitated in the digital realm. Shukla has criticized online interactions for being superficial. The more Kitab becomes immersed in the virtual world, the less contact he has with real people, leading to sorrow and isolation. This aligns with Turkle's (2011) argument that while social media seems to offer connection, it actually increases loneliness: "We are lonely, but fearful of intimacy. Digital connections . . . offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship. Our network life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other" (pp. xx–xxi). In one pivotal scene, the protagonist Kitab reflects, "I'm not sure where I end and my online self begins anymore. It's like I'm living two parallel lives, and I'm not sure which one is real" (Shukla, 2015, p. 52).

The dualism between cyberspace and meatspace is central to Shukla's exploration of social displacement. The physical world has been presented as dull and slow within *Meatspace* compared to the thrill and gratification of the virtual world. Kitab at one point wonders if "I'm more interesting online than I am in real life. I certainly feel more interesting. More verbose. Wittier" (Shukla, 2015, p. 51). Kitab's digital representation provides him with fulfilment and validation that he is incapable of finding among real people. Steve Mann (2001) has observed that as time progresses, "the wearable computer begins to function as a true extension of the mind and body, and no longer feels as if it is a separate entity. In fact, the user will adapt to the apparatus . . . to such a degree that being without them would make most of us feel extremely uncomfortable" (p. 7). This proves that the virtual space has become an essential part of people's lives. Conversely, the illusion of the digital persona has distorted reality, further deepening the disconnection from their authentic selves.

Not everyone welcomes this change. Kitab's girlfriend, for example, opposes it. Kitab himself wonders at one point, "What happens to the us in cyberspace when the real us no longer exists?" (Shukla, 2015, p. 175) The introduction of Kitab's doppelganger, a digital replica of the character, serves as a metaphor for the fragmentation of the self. While navigating both cyberspace and physical space, Kitab loses contact with his identity and drifts far away from it. The doppelganger embodies the duality of contemporary existence, where people paint artificial portraits of themselves on social media that are little or nothing like their actual lives. In many ways, Kitab's doppelganger reflects his inner struggle to balance two worlds with their different realities at the same time. The real Kitab suffers from isolation and hopelessness that his digital self lacks. The latter thrives on affirmations received from strangers online. This inevitably leaves his meatspace experiences feeling unsatisfactory:

"So," I say quietly. "What are you doing here, man? Were you just passing through this part of the city and thought you'd say hi? I mean, how? How did you find me?" "I messaged you and asked where you were a whole lot of times, dude," he says anxiously, nodding his head with worry. "You didn't accept my add request." "I didn't understand why you kept doing that. We've never met. Why would I tell you where I was?" "So I could come and find you" [. . .] "No, but seriously, Kitab. Were you just passing through? What are you doing here, man?" My brain is scrolling, I have itchy feet, I want to get up and leave. (Shukla, 2015, p. 62)

In simple terms, when social media replaces normal social activities like peer-to-peer interactions, an individual will be more likely to avoid social relationships and resort to social media relationships. According to a contemporary systemic review, social media use reduces physical social interactions and psychological health (Hall et al., 2019). In the long run, Kitab ends up feeling isolated because of his social media addiction. According to Clark (2003), loneliness is the distressing feeling that results from an individual's social network being inadequate in some significant way: "As our worlds become smarter and get to know us better and better, it becomes harder and harder to say where the world stops and the person begins" (p. 7).

The protagonist's reliance on social media causes him to miss out on important relationships to such an extent that he transforms into a subjective introvert. In one particularly telling scene, Shukla has written, "I realise I haven't spoken to my brother in weeks. I've been too busy tweeting to actually pick up the phone and call him" (2015, p. 170). This moment of realization hints at the paradoxical nature of social media, which is designed to connect us more but secretly isolates us from the real world. Pondering over his relationship with his ex-girlfriend, Kitab states, "Rachel once said, after reading through my Twitter stream, that she couldn't believe I'd had all these thoughts and opinions and never thought to share them with her" (p. 137). However, he does not see his exchanges with others as anything exceptional. In his view, there is no contradiction between living an authentic life and the digital version of it simultaneously. In fact, his reality is made up of the two. Rachel states that Kitab is not grounded in reality: "You don't go out. You don't do anything. And yet you are living this life that's not real. It's not real. None of it is real" (p. 174). Kitab disagrees, responding, "It is real" (p. 174). One of the best lines in the novel that relates to the human experience in the age of pervasive computing is "We're all just avatars, Kit" (p. 122). This underscores the modern human's dilemma: technology is not only surrounding us but also controlling our mind and consciousness. According to Clark (2003), the procedure is still in progress and gaining momentum:

As technology becomes portable, pervasive, reliable, flexible and increasingly personalized, our tools become more and more part of who and what we are . . . What makes us distinctively human is our capacity to continually

restructure and rebuild our own mental circuitry, courtesy of an empowering web of culture, education, technology, and artifacts. (p. 10)

With its fascinating exploration of identity and rich dialogue, Shukla's novel invites readers to reflect on the modern human's desire for belonging and connection in a fragmented world. In *Meatspace*, the author deeply explores the theme of modern social displacement. By using Kitab as a character, Shukla has shown how the concepts of identity and belonging have changed with technology. The main character suffers from an identity crisis in reality and in the virtual world. His online identity begins to overshadow his actual self, so he feels alienated and displaced. Kitab remarks, "The problem with your online self is that it's more efficient than your real self. It's quicker, sharper, wittier. It's more attractive. It's all the best bits of you but amplified" (Shukla, 2015, p. 128). Here, Shukla has captured the essence of digital displacement: the sense of isolation that stems from being detached from the online identity that one has created. The absurd nature of Kitab being replaced by his digital self also serves as a satirical commentary on how our understanding of identity has been distorted by digital culture. At one point, Kitab muses, "I used to be somebody before the internet told me I was somebody else" (p. 163). This ironic observation confirms the absurdity of identifying ourselves with such capricious digital standards.

Shukla's incorporation of humor along with his sharp social commentary creates a story that is a critique of modern society and a reflection on the universal search for identity in a world that has been dominated by technology. It is through Shukla's humor that his readers are able to engage with the heavy theme of displacement in a way that is both approachable and thought-provoking. The novel explores the psychological effects of living in two worlds while criticizing the superficiality of digital connections. By blurring the lines between cyberspace and meatspace, Shukla has compelled readers to reflect on their relationships and on how technology is playing a significant role in reshaping and displacing their social realities. Shukla has balanced traditional storytelling with tweets and blog posts to show the dual nature of his protagonist. This fusion of styles mirrors the theme of displacement between the digital and physical worlds. As unsettling as it might be to follow this narrative for some readers, the novel has been praised for its ingenuity in capturing the darker side effects of our online personas.

5. Conclusion

Meatspace has challenged the traditional division between physical existence and cyber existence, suggesting that both are increasingly blending into one unified experience. Social displacement is the cost of this fusion, with people feeling alienated from their meatspace and unable to connect with the physical world in which they move in favor of pursuing a digital existence. This raises questions about identity, authenticity, and human connection in the digital era. That said, it is important to note that not everyone would relate to the experiences the characters go through. Further, considering the rapid progress of technology, some parts of this story might be outdated. However, it remains true that social media is one of the major sources of social displacement in contemporary life.

This paper argues that individual identity is constructed by technological forces beyond one's control. Shukla's *Meatspace* is an excellent piece of work that shows how the technological milieu in which we find ourselves not only influences but also shapes our consciousness. Once individuals are addicted to social media, they become so deeply engrossed in it that they can rarely escape it. The novel depicts people's excessive use of social media, to the extent that they isolate themselves from their environment and become socially displaced.

Ultimately, Shukla's exploration of social displacement in *Meatspace* brings up relevant themes for many people today. Using engaging characters and relatable circumstances, Shukla has demonstrated the emotional toll of alienation and shown how communities can alleviate it by addressing it. Only by identifying the early signs of social displacement and taking steps to create a sense of belonging can a more promising future be established. This sense of belonging to a tight community is vital because it minimizes feelings of isolation. Community centers and local organizations, for example, allow people to meet and connect, share their experiences with each other, and build strong relationships in a safe place. Shukla's novel serves as a strong reminder that cultivating a sense of community is crucial for overcoming social displacement and its effects in a world filled with contradictions and for achieving fulfillment and peace.

Acknowledgments

Not applicable.

Authors' contributions

Not applicable.

Funding

Not applicable.

Competing interests

Not applicable.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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