

Dimensions of Intelligence: between socio-literary articulations and scientific discourses

'Robo Sapiens' have come to rule. This is the underlying message given in an article published in New York Times in 2013 by John Markoff. This paradigm has also found its way into literature and art and new forms of aesthetic expressions are emerging from this interface of complex scientific algorithms and literary formulations. This merger has also provided a framework for authors to deliberate on manmade disasters like climate change and environmental degradation and how the world is moving towards an apocalypse. The trail of destruction left behind by technocratic regimes has to be amended by the very entities, which emerged out of human intellect, i.e. manmade artificial intelligence. This underlying framework becomes the dimensions of the novel 'Die Reinsten'¹ (*The Purest*). Published in 2019, Hansen paints a dystopic image of the world in 2191 where a select group of human beings are managed by AI Askit, a supercomputer functioning as the supreme leader of select people in a peaceful environment in the Askit City, located in New Zealand, where the founders of AI are located. The rest of the world has condensed into merely five large cities with human presence. These inhabitants of the Askit City are survivors of various crises like wars, epidemics and climate catastrophes. As the competent authority over human beings with power to monitor them and assess their personalities and its various dimensions, Askit chooses an elite group from the inhabitants whose abilities and system compliance is perpetually monitored and controlled by Askit to evolve them into an elite group 'Die Reinsten' (the purest). The 2041 Askit can read and control the emotions of the people, at times by using dopamine. Especially for the select group, Askit is always monitoring their physical and mental state, so that any deviation in the compliance can be ruled out. Thus, the purpose of Askit is to generate customized, homogeneous and controllable organisms that would save the planet from further human destruction. In this select group, Eve Legrand fulfills all the criteria to become the part of the select group and she is promptly selected by Askit after clearing certain tests. However, she is eventually not chosen to be a part of the team and instead marginalized. Facing rejection, Eve decides to escape the authoritarian regime of Askit. While managing her escape, Eve ends up in various zones which are beyond the control of Askit. Marginalized by one's own secure zone and trying to embrace another new world, Eve questions the values and ideas, which defined her world till now under the control of Askit.

Hansen's work visualizes an extremely complex world where the figure of Eve Legrand as the skeptical, ambiguous character acts as the Janus headed figure, who is trying to find reconciliation in a world of human intellect on the one hand and artificial intelligence on the other hand. Also, Hansen highlights the social inequalities which are still intact in the 22nd century where the marginalized section are depicted as still devoid of basic existential rights despite the massive technological progress. In Hansen's novel, the AI's control of the select group of people becomes the fulcrum of fundamental anthropological, ethical and moral questions. Based on these assumptions, the paper seeks to examine certain questions like, which concrete aspects in the context of AI are reflected in Hansen's work? What role does narrative and aesthetic strategies with their specific articulation forms are relevant while discussing these technologies? What contribution does fictional works like Hansen's novel make on the discourses of technology? Also, in the context of contemporary literature, the paper examines the notion of contemporariness and its relevance for literature and how does it influence the reading of literature not only as an aesthetic but also as a scientific discourse? These are the few questions which the paper seeks to examine.

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¹ The work is published in German and it is not translated into English.

Bionote

I am teaching at the Dept. of Germanic Studies at the English and Foreign Languages University since October, 2010. I have completed BA (Hons.), MA and M.Phil in German (Philosophy, Language Pedagogy, Translation and Literature) from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India with minors in English Literature, Sociology, Anthropology, Philosophy and Political Science in undergraduate and graduate programmes. My research areas are German Studies, history of ideas, inter-cultural studies and literature and science. I am at present pursuing my PhD in German Studies on the topic of intercultural text pedagogy at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. I would be submitting my dissertation in 2020.

Publications (selected)

1. Published Review: Mehrsprachigkeit und Grammatikerwerb. Die Bedeutung der mehrsprachigen Ausgangssituation für den Unterricht Deutsch als Fremdsprache by Tushar Chaudhuri, in: German Studies in India, Neue Folge Bd. 3/2012 (Ed.) Julia Afifi et.al, Iudicium, München, p 253-255.
2. Published Review: Valenz und Deutsch als Fremdsprache and Valenz, Konstruktion und Deutsch als Fremdsprache, (Ed.) Klaus Fischer et.al. in German Studies in India, (Ed.) Carmen Ulrich et.al. Iudicium, München (2015), p 254 – 259.
3. Published Review: Morgenland und Moderne. Orient-Diskurse in der deutschsprachigen Literatur von 1890 bis zur Gegenwart, (Ed.) Axel Dunker / Michael Hofmann. Peter Lang, 2015, In: Journal Global Humanities – Studies in Histories, Cultures, and Societies, Vol. 3 (2016): Migration and State Power.
4. Transcription of Panel Discussion In: Vibha Surana/ Meher Bhoot (eds). Revisiting Günter Grass; Voices from India and Germany. Mumbai University Press 2017. **Reprint** in Revisiting Günter Grass. Voices from India and Germany, (eds.) Vibha Surana/Meher Bhoot. Königshausen & Neumann 2017.

Under Preparation

1. Invited to contribute a chapter “Between Images and Words: Recalibrating Icons and Mediating Transcultural Exchanges” for the volume Iconizing Literature, Art, and Science. Intermediality and Value in Popular Culture, (Eds.) Paula Wojcik, Hannes Höfer, Sophie Picard to be published in 2021 by Palgrave Macmillan (Conference proceedings: ‘Kulturelle Ikonen – Zur Präsenz von Literatur, Kunst und Wissenschaft in der Alltags- und Massenkultur’ held at Alfred Krupp Wissenschaftskolleg Greifswald in cooperation with University of Jena from 29th – 31st August, 2019)
2. Invited to contribute a chapter “Ithaca: A Passage to India – Of Explorations and Transitions” in the volume Crossing Sacred Borders: Writing Journeys in Literature and Culture., (Ed.) Elena Shabliy / Dmitry Kurochkin to be published by Lexington Books, Rowman & Littlefield in 2021 at Maryland, United States.
3. Invited to contribute a chapter “Between Guilt and Duty: Aesthetic Dimensions of Reconciliation” in the volume Holocaust in Popular Culture., (Ed.) Mahitosh Mandal / Priyanka Das to be published by Springer in 2020.
4. Invited to contribute a chapter ‘Positionalities amidst Crossroads – Asymmetrical Aspects of Knowledge Production’ in the edited volume Positionalities in Area Studies (Eds.) Ashley Currier, Gergana Ivanova, and Sunnie Rucker-Chang to be published by 2021.
5. Invited to contribute a chapter ‘Geography of Exile: Christa Wolf in Los Angeles’ in the edited volume Geographia Literaria: Studies in Earth, Ethics and Literature (Eds.) Jagannath Basu & Jayajit Sarkar, Lexington Books (Rowman & Littlefield) to be published in 2021.

6. Invited to contribute a chapter 'The legitimization and delegitimization of circulating academic knowledge and the role of language' in Handbook on the circulation of academic knowledge (Eds.) Wiebke Keim, Leandro Rodríguez Medina et.al. to be published by Oxford University Press in 2021.