

**MARXIST READING OF HERNAN DIAZ'S *TRUST* AND JENNIFER
EGAN'S *THE CANDY HOUSE***

BY

NDAH CHRISTABEL (MISS)

ART2100265

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE

FACULTY OF ATRS

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

OCTOBER, 2025.

**MARXIST READING OF HERNAN DIAZ'S *TRUST* AND JENNIFER
EGAN'S *THE CANDY HOUSE***

BY

NDAH CHRISTABEL (MISS)

ART2100265

**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
LITERATURE, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONS) DEGREE IN ENGLISH AND
LITERATURE**

OCTOBER, 2025.

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work was done by NDAH Christabel (Miss) of the Department of English and literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

PROF. E.B ADELEKE

Project Supervisor

Date

DEDICATION

With all humility and sincerity of heart, I dedicate this work to the Almighty God, whom by his infinite mercy helped me through this work. He is ever faithful and true, may His name be praised forever.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am eternally grateful to God Almighty for His guidance, wisdom, strength and favour throughout this academic Journey. God's name be praised forever.

Again, my deepest gratitude goes to my amiable project supervisor, Prof. E.B Adeleke for his tireless guidance, patience and corrective feedback which has greatly contributed to the great success of this research. In proof reading, and in correcting patiently which essentially enhances its quality, I say Thank very much sir.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my Parents Mr and Mrs Godswill Ndah whose unwavering support, love, care, advice, prayers and sacrifice brought me this far. They have been my source of motivation, their tireless support has been invaluable in completion of this work. Thank you very much sir and Ma, I'm forever grateful.

Furthermore, I sincerely acknowledge the immense contribution of my lecturers whose mentorship has shaped my academic growth. Also, to all non- academic of the English and Literature Department, for their guidance and encouragement, I say Thank you.

Additional, I'm also thankful to my friends, Nduke-Abasi Imo Sam ,Omuroyi Williams, Lillian, Ani Ada, Funmi and Joy for their shared knowledge and

encouragement through this research process. My course mates are not left out: Thank you for making the journey a sweet one, especially in team work: Thank you all.

Finally, I acknowledge all scholars whose work has provided a foundation for this study, their research has been instrumental in shaping my understanding and analysis.

Thank you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COVER PAGE	i
TITLE PAGE.....	ii
CERTIFICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	v
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Purpose of Study.....	1
1.2 Scope of Study.....	1
1.3 Methodology.....	1
1.4 Theoretical Background	2
Review of Related Scholarship.....	7
1.6 Thesis Statement.....	10
CHAPTER 2	11
2.1 Critical Analysis of Both Texts	11
2.2 Portraying Marxism in <i>Trust</i> Characters	12
2.3 MANIPULATION OF FACTS	14
2.4 CONCLUSION	15
CHAPTER 3.....	16
CAPITAL AND THE MYTH OF WEALTH IN TRUST	16
3.1 Wealth Interrogation in <i>Trust</i>	16

3.2 NAVIGATING THE DIGITAL CONSCIOUSNESS: MEMORY, IDENTITY AND CONNECTION IN THE CANDY HOUSE	19
3.3 TECHNOLOGY AND DYSTOPIA IN THE CANDY HOUSE	21
3.4 CONCLUSION	23
CHAPTER 4	24
CLASS AND POWER STRUCTUE IN BOTH TEXTS	24
4.1 Showing the Protagonist Attitude in Both Texts	24
4.2 Analyzing the Effect on The Proletariat	28
4.3 Giving a Critic Symbolic Representation of <i>The Candy House</i> and <i>Trust</i> ..	31
4.4 Conclusion	32
CHAPTER 5	33
5.1 Conclusion	33
WORKS CITED	37

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

Trust focuses on finance, wealth, and the manipulation of economic narratives making it a rich text for examining how capitalism shapes identity, history, and power. Jennifer Egan's 'Candy House' also explores data and capitalism, and commodification of memory, and self, which aligns with Marxist critiques of how personal lives are turned into economic value.

1.2 Scope of Study

This project will investigate how human relationships, identities, and experiences are commodified, especially the context of finance (*Trust*) and data/technology (*The Candy House*), also how the novels depict dominant ideologies, and the ways in which individuals internalize or resist capitalist values.

1.3 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative literary analysis approach seen in Marxist Literary Theory. It focuses on close reading textual analysis of *Trust* by Hernan Diaz

and Jennifer Egan's *The Candy House* to uncover how the texts engage with themes of capitalism, class, ideology, commodification and power. Secondary sources including scholarly articles, critical essays and theoretical frameworks from African/American Literature are utilized.

1.4 Theoretical Background

Marxism is a method of socioeconomic analysis that analyzes class relations and societal conflict, that uses a materialist interpretation of historical development, and a dialectical view of social transformation. Marxist methodology uses economic and sociopolitical inquiry and applies that to the critique and analysis of the development of capitalism and the role of class struggle in systemic economic change.

Orwell's 1984 critiques totalitarianism and class domination, illustrating how the ruling party maintains control through propaganda, rewriting history, and oppression—key themes in Marxist criticism of literature as a reflection of social and economic power structures.

Marxist Literary Theory, noted in the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, centers on the material conditions of life, class struggle, and the economic system. that shape social relations. In Literature, Marxist criticism seeks to understand how texts reflect, reinforce, or critique the ideologies and power structures of

capitalist society. It pays close attention to themes such as commodification, class conflict, the role of ideology and the means of production, examining how literature either upholds or challenges dominant capitalist narratives.

Applying Marxist theory analyzes characters, plot structures, and narrative techniques in terms of their economic and class implications. George Lukács emphasized the importance of historical totality and class consciousness in realist Literature, while Theorists like Louis Althusser explored the role of ideology and state apparatuses in sustaining capitalist hegemony.

Hernan Diaz's *Trust* (2020) critiques capitalism through a metafictional narrative that revolves around wealth, finance and truth-making in 20th-century America. The novel dissects the ideological mechanisms that allow economic elites, economic elites to control narratives and rewrite history, particularly in the context of market speculation and wealth accumulation. A Marxist reading of *Trust* examine the novel's depiction of capital as both a material force and an ideological construct, and how the control of capital translates into control of truth, art, and human relations. Also, Jennifer Egan's *The Candy House* (2022) a speculative follow-up to *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, engages with themes of data commodification, digital surveillance, and identity in the age of tech capitalism. Through Its fragmented narrative and exploration of technology called 'Own Your Unconscious', the novel questions the commodification of money and the erosion of privacy. A Marxist reading would focus

(Lens) more on interrogating the novel's depiction of personal experience as data, the role of Tech Corporations as new ideological apparatuses, and the implications of surveillance capitalism for human agency and authenticity. Furthermore, Marxist-Literary Criticism is grounded in the socio-economic theories of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). At its core, Marxist theory posits (position) that human societies progress through class struggle. Within a capitalist system, this struggle manifests between the Bourgeoisie (owners of the means of production) and the proletariat (working class). Literature, according to Marxist Critics, is not autonomous but is influenced by the economic base of society. It is both a product of its material conditions and an ideological instrument that may either uphold or challenge prevailing power structures.

The key principles of Marxist Literary Theory are; Historical Materialism, all societal Change arises from material economic conditions, not ideas alone. Literature reflects the material and ideological forces of It's time. Class conflict, class divisions and economic inequality are central to social development. Literature can be read as a reflection or critique of these dynamics.

Again, ideology and power are the power-force of Marxist Literary Theory, which critics and examine how dominant ideologies are reproduced through cultural institutions (including Literature). Althusser's theory of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAS) explains how literature can reinforce the reader's worldview, often without

the reader's awareness.

Commodification and Alienation: From Marx's Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of (1844), alienation describes the estrangement of people from their labor, products, and selves under capitalism. Literature portrays this alienation or becomes commodified itself.

Late capitalism and postmodernism: Fredric Jameson, a key Marxist Theorist, links Literature to the logic of late capitalism. He argues that narrative fragmentation, metafiction, and the loss of historical consciousness in contemporary literature reflect the cultural conditions of global capitalism. Reification coined by George Lukacs, refers to the process by which social relationships are objectified, making it seen in Jennifer Egan's *The Candy House*, people's rights are exploited upon using the social tools of 'Own your unconscious', making people see human relations as things or commodities.

Trust being a metafictional novel set in 20th Century New York, centering on a wealthy financier and the ways narratives are constructed to conceal or distort the truth about capital, wealth, and labor. From a Marxist perspective, the novel critiques ideology of wealth and how the capitalist class manipulate public narratives to sustain its power. It exposes the invisibility of labor and the gendered dimensions of economic storytelling, particularly through the marginalization of women's intellectual contributions (Helen's role in constructing her husband's financial success).

The text challenges the myth of the self-made man showing how economic success is often propped up by exploitation and ideological manipulation.

Egan's novel, a follow-up to *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (a group of thugs, usually muscular henchmen usually little intelligence), deals with a future in which technology enables people to externalize and share their memories. It raises critical issues related to surveillance capitalism, identity, and digital commodification from Marxist standpoint; the novel represents data as commodity - turning human consciousness into capital for tech firms.

Drawing from Jameson, Egan's fragmented and nonlinear narrative structure can be seen as symptomatic of postmodernism reflecting a world where historical & personal continuity is fractured under the pressures of Global Capitalism.

Conclusively, by applying Marxist Literary Theory, this project will analyze how *Trust* and *The Candy House* critique the mechanisms of capitalism – focusing on narrative control, commodification, and alienation. The study will show the foundational Marxist thinkers (Marx, Engles) structuralist & post-structuralist theorists (Althusser, Jameson Lucka'cs) and recent critiques of digital Capitalism (Zuboff Fuchs) provide a clear reading of the novels.

Review of Related Scholarship

The scholarship surrounding The Marxist Theory and the Marxist reading of Hernan Diaz's *Trust* and Egan's *The Candy House* have increasingly applied Marxist frameworks to contemporary fiction, especially works that critique capitalism, wealth accumulation, and digital commodification. *Trust* by Hernan Diaz and *The Candy House* by Jennifer Egan have emerged as significant texts in the recent years, giving its critical landscapes due to their exploration of financial systems, identity and technological power.

Kelly,Adam. 'Trust, Trust, and Trust' Hernan Diaz's liberal *pedagogy*, May (2024). *American Literary History*.

This article reads Hernan Diaz's *Trust* as a contemporary commentary on Literature's entanglements with capitalism, liberation, finance, and law. Beginning with an outline of the history of legal and corporate trusts and connecting that history to the rise of the modern novel, the article spotlights the complex role played by notion of trust in Diaz's metafictional text, *Trust* tells the story of a Wall Street financier, his Philanthropist wife, and the ghost writer of his memoir through a four-part structure, moving from a realist novel called *Bonds* through two Memoirs ending with a diary titled Futures. This structure serves as the aim, reaffirmed in Diaz's interviews, of teaching his novel's reader about the ideological implication of Literary

forms and about the kinds of power-financial and patriarchal involved in turning reality into fiction.

The work explores *Trust's* revision of these forms and the ways in which its aesthetics forge an alignment among modernism, feminism, and financial expertise. Reflecting on the novel's metacommentary on its own values and operations, this work concludes by asking whether *Trust's* liberal pedagogy (teachings) offers a persuasive alternative to the narrative forms it sets out to critique with its carefully wrought aesthetic architecture.

Trust confidently insists on his own autonomy from complicity, reaffirming the liberal idea that art symbolizes and texts in a realm outside the market.

Again, Critics such as Claybaugh, Amanda. (2023) and Brouillette, Sarah.(2024) have situated *Trust* within “a lineage of American novels that deconstruct economic power”. Claybaugh argues that Diaz destabilizes the traditional capitalist hero by offering fragmented narratives that reveal the constructed nature of financial history, Brouillette further contends that the novel interrogates gendered dynamics of financial authorship often silences or appropriates alternative narratives especially those of women.

Logan, Anne. Literary Fiction. May 4, 2022. “*The Candy House* for many of us today is the unending possibilities of the Internet, and the collective consciousness”

Additionally, Jennifer Egan's *The Candy House*, a companion of her earliest *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, has been interpreted through post-modern and digital humanities lenses, but recent Marxist readings have emphasized the novel's interrogation of surveillance capitalism. Critics such as McGurl, Mark. (2023) and Zuboff, Shoshana. have again underscored how Egan's depiction of *Own Your Unconscious* serves as a metaphor for the commodification of memory and identity. McGurl links the novel to a broader critique of late capitalism, where human experiences become 'datafied' commodities in digital economics.

Few comparative studies, however, have analyzed *Trust* and *The Candy House* together through a Marxist lens. Yet both novels, when examined side-by-side, reveals how 21st century fiction is engaging with Marxist concerns: the alienation of labor, the fetishization (obsession) of commodities, the control of narratives by elites, and the digital reification of the self.

In Conclusion, this project seeks to fill that gap by reading Diaz and Egan together, highlighting how each author critiques capitalist systems through innovative narrative structures and thematic complexity.

1.6 Thesis Statement

Trust and *The Candy House* reveal the hidden power of capitalism through money and technology and expose how people, memories and stories are controlled and turned into profit.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Critical Analysis of Both Texts

For Diaz's *Trust*, this research reads contemporary commentary on and re-imagining of Literature's entanglement with capitalism, liberalism, finance and law. The novel is concerned with the novelization of crisis pointing readers to the way that capital crisis which should, if the world made any sense, provoke a loss of faith in capitalism itself are rationalized and incorporated into factional narratives of progress. Deconstructing the myth of the great man of finance, *Trust* enters a dialogue that stretches back to the late 19th century and that has intensified in the past decade, with the successions and billions and Elon Musks and Donald Trumps. While great men of finance, fictional and non-fictional, might insist on their absolute power over capital. For Diaz, financial crisis is beyond human control, and the illusion of control is a destructive one. Everything about these men, Diaz suggests is fictitious, because the system over which they claim sovereignty abounds with contradiction and anarchy. The central figure in *Trust* is Andrew Bevel, a financier who has set out to repair the damage done to his reputation by a popular novel called *Bonds* - a novel -within- the novel that appears as the first of four sections in *Trust*. The other three sections - Bevel's unfinished memoir drafted by a ghostwriter named Ida Partenza. Partenza's own memoir and the journals of Bevel's wife, Mildred - work in divergent ways to qualify

the version of Bevel that appears in *Bonds* Diaz has claimed that *Trust* is about the ways that great fortunes - distort and wrap the reality around themselves (Hernan Diaz). It's significant that the subject of the phrase is fortune and not Bevel in *Trust*, such distortions are beyond human control, because finance wraps the reality of individuation itself, which is another way of saying that 'finance' breaks the foundation of the novel. Men like Bevel believe they control both the markets and the narrative, but the former are uncontrollable and the latter inevitably breaks down.

2.2 Portraying Marxism in *Trust* Characters

Pieter Vermeulen

PMLA 138 5 1281-1236, 2023

Bonds, the novel-within-a-novel that makes up the first part of Hernan Diaz's *Trust*, presents the lives of the Wall Street tycoon Benjamin Rask and his wife, Helen Brevoort (fictional versions), *Trust* as a whole implies of the real Andrew and Mildred Bevel, as rigorously complementary. His life consists in his dispassionate dedication to the contortions of money and the isolated, self-sufficient nature of speculation (16), hers is committed to philanthropic support for the arts, most visibly exclusive monthly recitals organized in their private home. Her art serves as the public facade of his backroom financial dealings (63). This marriage of convenience between financial and cultural capital breaks down when the public blames the crash of 1929 on Rask's

market manipulations: he is cast as the hand behind the invisible hand (75). At the moment in the story, the narrative, is interrupted by five italicized letters from members of Helen's artistic network that in sardonic, hypocritical, and soirees (77-79): Once the destructive force of financial capital can no longer be denied, cultural capital must renounce its dependence in it. In versions of this episode contains in *Trust*, the dissociation of financial and cultural capital instigates Helen's mental decline - a process of the mind becoming the flesh for its own teeth (83) that end with her death in a Swiss sanatorium.

The account of art's relation to financial capital *Bonds* is a customary one in literary studies. Pierre Bourdieu's axiom that claims to cultural distinction serve to perpetual social and economic privilege has naturalized convictions of the constructed relativity and instrumentality of literary value. (Meyer Lee 338).

Diaz delves into the nature of money and wealth portraying them as abstract constructs that hold power over individuals and societies. Through the character of Ida Partenza's father, an Italian anarchist, the novel critiques the financial system: Money is a fantastic commodity, you can't eat, or wear money, but it represents all the food and clothes in the world. This is why it's a fiction; finance capital is the fiction of a fiction that exposes the stark contrasts between the lives of the wealthy elite and the working-class characters like Andrew Bevel, the financier, embody the capitalist class that accumulates wealth while characters like Ida and her father represent the

emphatic classes offering a critique of the systematic inequalities inherent in capitalist societies. The novel explores the ways in which the wealthy manipulate stories and histories to maintain their power. Andrew Bevel's efforts to control his public image and the of alternatives reflects the capitalist tendency to shape reality to serve the interests of the elite.

2.3 MANIPULATION OF FACTS

This reads Jennifer Egan's 2022 Novel *The Candy House*

Journal of Development and Social services 5

(3) 527-535, 2024

The research paper focuses on the portrayal of the impact of Artificial intelligence (AI) and Technology on subjectivity of characters. This work explores the hyperreal modification of characters' perceptions and emotions of rapidly advancing technological environment. This research exposes the depiction of AI driven characters and different methods through which technology shapes their personalities in order to investigate the emotional construction and evolution of these characters. The paper exposes different approaches by Egan in portraying the influence of technology on character development and emphasizing the blurred boundaries between human and AI identities. The narrative explores the profound influence of technology on the lens of Jea Baudrillard's concept of 'hyperreality'. This analysis

investigates the implications of AI and technological incorporation on subjectivity of characters giving a deeper understanding of the ever-evolving relationship between humans and technology. The novel's thesis focuses on the question of identity and its formation in the novels of the contemporary American Author. In Egan's novel, truth is twisted into innovation. One of the novel's core manipulations is how Bix Bouton takes credit for creating Own your unconscious, presenting it as a breakthrough of his own genius. In reality, the inherited key insights - algorithms for predicting human behavior - from Miranda Kline, an anthropologist and the true originator of the science underlying Mandala's technology.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Diaz and Egan throughout the analysis exposes the activities of capitalism, class struggles, power dynamics and even the hyperreal modification of characters. It delves deep by exposing it through the use of different characters like Partenza's father and Bix Bouton and one of the novels are manipulation using the medium called Own Your Unconscious. Through portraying these characters, we evidently see oppressions and class struggles, identity and twisted innovation leading to fight and physical chaos in the novel.

CHAPTER 3

CAPITAL AND THE MYTH OF WEALTH IN TRUST

3.1 Wealth Interrogation in *Trust*

Hernan Diaz's novel *Trust* explores the concept of capital and the 'Myth of Wealth' in *Trust* primarily by dissecting the narratives surrounding America's capitalism and wealth accumulation especially during the 1920s and the Great Depression era. It critically examines the Mythic American Dream – the belief that anyone can rise to great wealth regardless of background – and exposes it as a myth that masks inequalities and inherits privilege rooted in historical exploitation.

The core of *Trust* features Benjamin Rask, a fictional financier who builds immense wealth in the 1920s Manhattan through stock market activities and complex financial trusts. Rask creates investment trusts, including one designed to help working-class people accumulate wealth. However, the novel reveals the darker reality; just before the 1929 crash, Rask manipulates markets to his advantage, divesting from these trusts before the catastrophic collapse, profiting while others lose everything. This underscores the irony embedded in the concept of *Trust* as both a legal financial instrument and a moral concept. The supposed trust is shown to be untrustworthy, exemplifying deceit and inequality under capitalism. *Trust* employs

metafictional techniques, presenting multiple conflating narratives from different perspectives that challenge the different reliability of any single version of truth. Through its layered story-telling, he reveals how wealth and power shapes and distort reality to sustain themselves. Diaz shows capital as an abstract, inter connected system - Investments bunds, equalities, and debt - that distances the wealthy from the human labor and exploitation underlying their fortunes. This abstraction adds to the mythology that wealth is somehow fair and deserved, rather than built on unequal social structures.

Diaz also highlights the suppression of marginalized forces, especially women who are erased from the dominant myths (mentally altered state) spun around capital. The novel's structure – four distinct texts with differing styles and perspectives reflects this struggle over whose story is told and believed. Ultimately, *Trust* critiques capitalism's capacity to manipulate narratives and reality itself, suggesting that great fortunes wield the power not just to accumulate wealth, but to send history and truth to their end.

In addition, wealth interrogation in Hernan Diaz's *Trust* operates as a metafictional critique of capitalism by exposing how wealth, power, and narratives intertwine to shape social reality and obscure (hidden) exploitative economic mechanisms. The novel's layered structure – comprising a novel, an autobiography, a memoir and a diary, each narrating versions of events revolving around the financier

Benjamin Rask (Andrew Bevel in some parts) – challenges the reader to critically analyze the construction and presentation of wealth.

Diaz interrogates wealth on multiple levels;

- i. Wealth as fiction and power: Money is portrayed as a kind of fiction that requires trust to function but ultimately wields real power. Diaz's narrative exposes how financial instruments like trust and investments are abstract and often deceptive structures distanced from the actual labor and exploitation behind capital accumulation. The story reveals the legal entity of trusts as inherently untrustworthy when wielded by the wealthy to manipulate markets and evades the catastrophic impact suffered by ordinary people during financial crisis like the 1929 crash.

- ii. Narrative Control and Wealth: Wealth is shown not only as economic capital but as a force that shapes narratives and 'truth' itself. The competing and contradictory narratives in the novel illustrates how the wealthy control stories about the lives and legacies, often whitewashing or hiding the ethical means of their fortune-building. The novel's metafictional form encourages skepticism (doubt) about dominant narratives that glorify or legitimize capital accumulation highlighting the ideological work wealth does to maintain social and economic hierarchies.

- iii. Class and marginalization: Diaz's work sharpens focus on how the myth of wealth – the belief in fair and deserved accumulation – is deeply entangled with erasure, particularly of women's voices and the marginalized. Wealth's legitimacy is interrogated by revealing the exclusionary social structures and by contrasting the lived realities behind the carefully constructed public facades.

- iv. Critique of capitalism's cycles: The novel reveals the capitalist system as dependent on crisis and the creation of fictitious capital, credit, and debt, which are manipulated by financiers like Rast/Bevel to amass personal gains at others' expense

3.2 NAVIGATING THE DIGITAL CONSCIOUSNESS: MEMORY, IDENTITY AND CONNECTION IN *THE CANDY HOUSE*

Jennifer Egan's novel *The Candy House* explores the intricate relationship between technology, memory, and identity in a contemporary society increasingly dominated by digital culture. Building on the narrative universe established in her Pulitzer winning. *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, Egan introduces a futuristic

technology, 'Own your unconscious' which allows individual to externalize and share their memories. The paper examines the novel's thematic exploration of digital memory and its impact on personal identity and human connection. Through a detailed analysis of the narrative structure, character development, and thematic content, this paper argues that the Candy House presents a critical commentary on the consequences of technological advancements and their effects on self and society.

The study also situates Egan's work within broader literary and cultural trends, demonstrating anxieties surrounding privacy, autonomy, and the fragmentation of identity in the digital age. The novel deeply explores themes of digital consciousness, memory, identity, and connection through a speculative technology called 'Own your unconscious' which allows users to upload all their memories into a device called the 'Mandala Cube'. This technology evolves into the collective conscious, a shared digital space where memories and consciousness are accessible to others, challenging traditional boundaries of privacy, identity and individual experience. This raises complex questions about the nature of selfhood and memory: how much of our personal experiences should be digitized and shared? The novel dramatizes the tension between human intimacy and technological connection, highlighting the transformation and potential mutation of human identity in the digital age. Egan's narrative engages with post-humanist (school of thought) ideas, examining how technology might extend or stimulate the self rather than simply preserving it.

Mandala Cube and collective consciousness serve as metaphors for social media's intrusive and pervasive nature but taken to an extreme where consciousness itself becomes data to be owned, accessed, and commodified. Overall, *The Candy House* sees this digital consciousness as a literary device to probe how identity and human connection are redefined in an era when memory can be externalized, shared & monetized.

3.3 TECHNOLOGY AND DYSTOPIA IN *THE CANDY HOUSE*

In *the Candy House*, Jennifer Egan introduces a futuristic technology called 'the Mandala Consciousness Cube' developed by the tech company Mandala and its founder Bix Bouton. This technology enables users to upload and externalized their entire consciousness and memories, a process termed 'Own your unconscious'. Users wear neurological (cure) tethers (The limit of one's ability) connected to the cube for several hours, after which their memories are digitized and stored. These memories can be re-experienced, externalized, or shared with others.

A key feature of this technology is the Collective Consciousness wherein users can upload all or parts of their externalized memories into a collective digital network. This created a linked, shareable pool of memories and subconscious experiences accessible to others, effectively forming a new kind of shared, digital mono, blurring the boundaries between individual and collective identity.

The Dystopian aspects of the novel revolve around the consequences of such pervasive memory technology. The loss of privacy is central-people must intimate experiences become accessible, leading to involuntary exposure and vulnerability. The novel explores how such transparency and sharing undermine personal autonomy and mental solitude. Memory, a traditionally private and subjective realm, becomes commodified, exploitable, and surveilled (surveillance). Characters in this novel experience a wide range of impact. Some benefit from enhanced connectivity and insight, others resist or struggle with the invasive nature of the technology. The story includes a countercultural movement of eluders (to escape using cunning stall) who reject or evade the digital consciousness, emphasizing themes of authenticity, privacy and human connection beyond technology's reach. One Character, Lulu, embodies dystopian tech intrusion by having embedded devices controlling and surveilling her for covert government purposes, illustrating technology's potential for exploitation and control.

Ultimately, the Mandala Cube technology and the collective in the Candy House illuminates the duality by digital innovation – the promises of new forms of the intimacy and understanding on one hand and on the other, the dystopian erosion of privacy connected digital society.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The Novel - *The Candy House* centers on the profound and often troubling consequences of the technology central to the story – namely, their ability to externalize and share all of one's memories through a product called ‘Own your unconscious’ This technology culminates in a collective consciousness where people can access anonymous thoughts and the memories of others, raising complex questions about intimacy, identity, privacy, and the nature of truth and memory.

Throughout the interconnected narratives, characters grapple with the emotional and ethical fallout of this technology on their personal lives and society. Relationships are complicated by the pervasive presence of memory sharing, and the novel explores the interplay of human connection & alienation in a hyper-connected world.

Ultimately, the novel does not offer a simple resolution but rather presents a warning wrapped in a layered story about how this deep, shared access to consciousness reshapes intimacy, trust and self-understanding. It leaves readers to consider the costs and consequences when the boundary between private and collective memory dissolves, reflecting both hope and disquiet about technological integration into human life.

CHAPTER 4

CLASS AND POWER STRUCTUE IN BOTH TEXTS

4.1 Showing the Protagonist Attitude in Both Texts

In Jennifer Egan's *The Candy House*, Power Structure and Power:

The novel presents a tech-dominated society where power stems from data control and digital influence. The collective consciousness technology creates new hierarchies based on access to shared memories and information. Traditional class markers are supplemented by digital capital – those who control algorithm, social media influence, and technological infrastructure hold significant power

Protagonist Attitude: The multiple protagonist; The novel uses a near future society dominated by tech oligarchy, where Bix Bouton's social media empire creates new forms of digital surveillance capitalism. Power flows through:

- Corporate tech leaders who control information and memory
- Government agencies that partner with tech companies
- A new digital economy where personal data and memories become commodities
- The Bix Bouton represents the tech elites complicated relationship with power.

This creation of 'own your unconscious' technology reflects a Silicon Valley

mindset that sees technological solutions as inherently democratizing yet his position allows him to shape how consciousness itself is commodified. His attitude reveals the tech call's tendency disruptors while accumulating unprecedented power over human experience.

Rebecca Amari embodies the anxieties of the professional creative class. Her resistance to the collective consciousness technology stems partly from her investment in individual artistic authenticity – a luxury that reflects her cultural privilege. Her attitude towards the technology reflects how the creative class use resistance to mass culture as a form of the collective consciousness often do so from positions of social malignity, seeing it as democratizing access to experiences and connections previously available only to the privileged.

In Hernan Diaz's *Trust*

Trust explicitly centers class dynamics through its multiple protagonists varying relationships to wealth and power.

Benjamin and Helen Rask (as portrayed in Vanner's novel – within the novel) represent old money's attitude towards their inevitable, with Helen's mental illness partly stemming from the contradictions of her position.

Ida Partenza embodies working class pragmatism and skepticism towards wealth. Her attitude as Bevel's ghostwriter reveals how the working class navigate proximity to

power using it strategically while maintaining a critical distance. Her perspective exposes how the wealthy construct narratives to justify their dominance.

Andrew Bevel represents new money's aggressive self-justification. His insistence on controlling his story reflects the nouveau niche need to legitimize wealth through narrative mastery, revealing anxieties about the social position that old money does not typically display.

Mildred Bevel (in her diary section) shows how women of the wealthy class navigate the contradiction between their privilege and their subordination within patriarchal structures.

In Jennifer Egan's work, she presents a near future panel dominated by Tech oligarchy, where power is concentrated among those who control data and digital infrastructure. The central power structure revolves around 'own your unconscious' technology, which allows people to externalize and share their memories. This new forms of inequality.

Digital aristocracy - Tech entrepreneurs and data controllers held immense power.

Surveillance capitalism: Personal data becomes the primary currency of power where the rich in mind and in finance has upper hands in decision making and controlling others individual thoughts.

General Decision: Different attitudes towards privacy and digital sharing create class distinctions. Here, classes are shared, levels are graded. The Bourgeoisie exercise dominance over the proletariat. Oppression and ill-mannered treatment are dominant here. Salaries, class, opportunities are not majored accordingly. The poor are being marginalized.

Access inequality: Those who can afford or choose to participate in digital consciousness; sharing versus those who cannot or will not. This comes in as a result of inability to afford the chances leveled but by those in command er position.

The protagonist attitudes in this novel cut across various interconnected stories, but generally, they exhibit: Ambivalence toward technology; characters are simultaneously drawn to and repelled by digital connectivity.

Resistance and compliance: Some characters actively resist the surveillance apparatus while others embrace nostalgia for authenticity. Many protagonists yearn for genuine human connection in an increasingly mediated world.

Pragmatic adaptation: Due to the forced nature and deceit of the protagonists, their actions and decisions, character often reluctantly engage with systems they morally question. There is no room for investigations, research and findings toward a particular incident, they are often forced and coerced to learn and unlearn.

As earlier mentioned, in Diaz's *Trust*, class and power structure set in 1920s New York, explores financial capitalism and its human costs through multiple narratives.

Financial aristocracy: Wall Street titans who manipulate markets and control vast wealth.

Gender Hierarchy: Women's exclusion from financial power despite their intelligence and credibility. Women like Helen Rask were restricted from several contribution to economic growth and the wellbeing of every lady in the society. This work briefly stops by, paused to highlight inappropriate treatment leveled against the women in the society. Here, feminism speaks, it tries to bring out women's role/voice, it exposes intimidation and low self-esteem among women In our own voices Julie Okoh, The phenomenal woman Maya Angelou and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. All of these point out and make references to feminism.

4.2 Analyzing the Effect on The Proletariat

Hernan Diaz's *Trust* explores themes of wealth, power and class through multiple narrative perspective centered around a wealthy financier and his wife in 1920s New York. The novel examines how different social classes experience and understands the same events differently. The working-class characters - servants, secretaries, and laborers often appear as observers or victims of the wealthy. Diaz

seems to highlight how the proletariat stories are frequently overshadowed or erased by the narratives of the powerful, with their labor and suffering are rendered invisible in official account of history.

Jennifer Egan's *The Candy House* data workers, set in a near future tech landscape where a technology called own your unconscious allows people to share memories. In this context, the proletariat might be understood as data workers, content moderators, and gig economy participants who power digital infrastructure. Egan appears to examine how technology both exploits and potentially empowers working-class characters, showing how digital labor creates new forms of class stratification.

Bix Bouton represents the Bourgeoisie. He is one of those demi-gods, whose Company Mandala creates the revolutionary technology 'Own your unconscious' which allows people access to every memory they've ever had and to share them in exchange for access to the memories of other. Bix Bouton as a Tech Capitalist represents the contemporary tech elite profits from the commodification of human consciousness itself. Unlike traditional capitalists who exploited physical labor, Bix's model extracts value from the most intimate aspects of human experience – memories, thoughts and unconscious processes. This creates a new form of class division where the 'connected' (those who participate in memory sharing) become a kind of collective consciousness, while the 'disconnected' represent a new under class people.

Effects of His Subject/The New Proletariat

1. **Memory as Labor:** Users essentially provide their personal data (memories) as unpaid labor to feed the system, similar to how social media platforms extract value from user-generated content, but on a far more intimate scale.
2. **Psychological Dependency:** The technology creates addiction-like dependency where users become reliant on accessing others' memories, making them subjects of Bix's digital empire.
3. **Privacy as Luxury:** The novel explores themes of authenticity, privacy, and meaning in a world where our memories are no longer our own. Those who can afford to remain 'disconnected' represent a new privileged class, while those who participate become commodified subjects.
4. **Collective Consciousness vs Individual Agency:** The technology promises connection but potentially erases individual identity, creating a form of digital feudalism where Bix controls the infrastructure of shared consciousness.

The proletariat in Egan's vision are not traditional workers but rather the users whose consciousness becomes the raw material for Bix's technological empire, representing a dystopian revolution of capitalist exploitation into the realm of human interiority itself.

4.3 Giving a Critic Symbolic Representation of *The Candy House* and *Trust*

The symbolic analysis reveals how both novels operate as sophisticated critiques of contemporary capitalism's evolution. *The Candy House* and *Trust* function as parallel symbols for how power has adapted to extract value not just from physical labor, but from consciousness, creativity, and human relationships themselves.

Both Egan and Diaz seem to be warning us about a future where the most intimate aspect of human experience – our memories, our stories, our capacity for trust – become commodified resources in increasingly sophisticated systems of exploitation. The tragic irony in both texts is how these systems present themselves as liberation while actually depending on subjugation, particularly for the working classes who become the raw material for elite power structures.

The striking thing is how both authors show the proletariat not just as exploited workers, but as people whose very consciousness and narrative agency are consumed by these systems – suggesting that contemporary capitalism has found ways to extract value from the most fundamental aspect of human experience.

4.4 Conclusion

The analysis of both novels and their treatment of the proletariat in conclusion argues that both works reveal a fundamental evolution in capitalist exploitation from appropriating what workers produce to appropriating who workers are as conscious beings.

The key insight is that contemporary capitalism has learned to colonize not just labor, power, but consciousness narrative itself. This Creates new challenges for revolutionary politics, as the very mechanisms through which people might develop critical awareness are themselves commodified.

However, both novels also suggest that something incredible about human experience resists total commodification, pointing toward the need for new forms of cognitive and narrative liberation alongside traditional economic struggle.

Lastly the conclusion positions these literary works as essential for understanding how the nature of exploitation itself has transformed in the 21st Century.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Conclusion

Analytical Summary: It consolidates the key findings about how both novels reveal the transformation of proletariat from physical labor to consciousness itself.

The chapter Trust and Candy House in the novel *The Candy House* by Jennifer Egan explores themes of human connection, technology, and trust through the intertwined lives of its characters. The narrative often shifts between different perspectives and timelines, focusing on how individuals relate to each other and to the digital world around them.

In this chapter, a central thread is the complex family dynamics, trust issues, and the impact of technology on relationships. The title hints at the metaphorical Candy House, a place or state where characters grapple with the allure and dangers of transparency enabled by technology—where memories and personal data can be shared or exposed, challenging trust.

The chapter presents the struggles and developments in the lives of the characters, showing how they confront feelings of isolation, longing for connection, and the

consequences of their choices. It reflects on how trust is built, broken, and sometimes restored amid technological advances that blur private and public boundaries.

Overall, the chapter serves as a microcosm (a smaller system) of the novel's broader examination of the interplay between human intimacy, memory, and the digital age's transformative impact on identity and relationships.

This summary is synthesized from multiple chapter analyses and summaries focusing on the themes of trust, family dynamics, and technology as presented in the book *The Candy House*

Theoretical Contributions: It positions the novels within broader theoretical frameworks, showing how they extend and complicate traditional market analysis for the digital age.

Critical Assessment: It addresses the limitations of both works, including the positioning within elite cultural systems and relative absence of collective resistance narrative.

Future Implications: It suggests a new direction for both literary study and political practice that emerge from the analysis.

The conclusion argues that these novels reveal Consciousness Capitalism, a new form of exploitation practices where human interiority itself becomes the primary

site of value extraction. This requires new forms of solidarity and resistance that can operate at the level of consciousness and narrative, not just economic relations.

The chapter concludes by positioning literary fiction not merely as representation but as potential political practice that can help develop new ways of seeing and resisting contemporary forms of exploitation.

Core Marxist Concepts Applied

- Base and superstructure in the digital age
- Use-value and exchange - value transformation
- Class struggle in new forms (consciousness proletariat is digital proletariat)
- False consciousness and ideology
- Alienation from consciousness and narrative
- Commodity fetishism and verification

Historical materialism and capitalism's dialectical development.

Key Marxist Insights

Both novels reveal how capitalism has evolved to extract value from consciousness itself, not just labor. They demonstrate new forms of class formation while maintaining fundamental antagonisms. They show how ideology operates through

promises of connection and innovation to secure consent for exploitation. They reveal more profound forms of alienation than Marx originally theorized.

Revolutionary implications

Individual resistance (disconnection, narrative relation) is insufficient collective control over the means of consciousness production is necessary. Contemporary class struggle must operate at both economic and cultural levels.

It positions these novels as Crucial texts for understanding ‘Late-stage Cognitive Capitalism’ and demonstrates how Marxist analysis remains relevant while requiring significant theoretical updates for the digital age.

WORKS CITED

- Lukács, György. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. MIT Press, 1971.
- Kelly, Adam. Trusts, Trust, and Trust: Hernan Diaz's *Liberal Pedagogy*. *American Literary History*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2024, pp. 489-515.
- Brouillette, Sarah. *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007
- McGurl, Mark. *The Novel Art: Elevations of American Fiction after Henry James*. Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Das,Raju J. *Marxism and revisionism in the world today*. 2003,p.17.Books
- Logan,Anne. *Literary Fiction*. “*The Candy House for many of us today is the unending possibilities of the Internet and the collective consciousness*” . May 4,2022.
- Marx,Karl, and Friedrich Engles. *The communist Manifesto*, penguin ,2015.
- Petersfield C. Reopening the debate on open Marxism: *A Radical Historicist Alternative* . 2025
- Orwell, George. *1984*. Signet classic,1950.
- Woolf,Virginia. *A room of one's own*. 1929
- Angelou,May. *The. Phenomenal woman*. 1995

Pells, Richard H., and Romer, D. Christina. *Stock Market Crash of 1929*.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, 19 July 1998, www.britannica.com/event/stock-market-crash-of-1929. Accessed 1 Oct. 2025.

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/58437521-the-candy-house>

The Candy House by Jennifer Egan | Goodreads

From one of the most dazzling and iconic writers of our...

npr.org favicon

npr

<https://www.npr.org/2022/05/12/1098478246/herman-diaz-trust-novel-review>

'Trust' review: The truth is slippery in Hernan Diaz's complex novel - NPR

Hernan Diaz's novel is constantly pulling a fast one on the reader. It opens with the saga of a Wall Street tycoon, but soon another narrative comes to upend the truth of everything that came before.

ivereadthis.com favicon

ivereadthis

<https://ivereadthis.com/2022/05/04/book-review-the-candy-house-by-jennifer-egan/>

Book Review: *The Candy House* by Jennifer Egan

Book review and summary of *The Candy House* by Jennifer Egan, published by Simon and Schuster Canada in 2022.