



# Digital Magic: Reimagining Fate through Artificial Intelligence and Fantasy in Korean Webtoon

<sup>1</sup>Ms. Brundavanam P & <sup>2</sup>Dr. Priyadarshini M C

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English

Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Avadi, Chennai

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of English

Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Avadi, Chennai



Manuscript ID:  
BIJ-SPL3-Mar26-ES-072

Subject: English Studies

Received: 22.12.2025  
Accepted: 09.01.2026  
Published: 17.03.2026

DOI: 10.64938/bij.v10si3.26.Mar072

Copy Right:



This work is licensed under  
a Creative Commons Attribution-  
ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

## Abstract

*This paper, "Digital Magic: Reimagining Fate through AI and Fantasy in Korean Webtoon," discusses ways in which "The Abandoned Empress" upsets human emotion, fate, and talking to fate self-consciously through means of magical realism and artificial intelligence. This paper examines ways this webtoon is part of the "fairy tale aspects of recreation and insight into algorithmic logic as a means of portraying fate as something that could be changed," using "N. Katherine Hayles' conception of posthumanism theory that functions at the center of this webtoon's narrative matrix." In a sense, this work rethinks the human capability of resiliency and choice-making within a world built through technology. Furthermore, this paper posits the importance of a posthuman reality in regard to sharing identity and human emotion with the 'robot' that the webtoon portrays in the context of 'digital fantasy.' This paper concludes by demonstrating the ways in which the notion of fate has been evolving through the process of the Korean digital tales.*

**Keywords:** posthumanism, artificial intelligence, magical realism, korean webtoon, digital fate, human emotion

## Introduction

However, the correlation between creativity and technology is much more complex as it relates to the world of digital storytelling culture; the storytelling of harnessing the power of the computer through the subtlety of human emotions. Being a fluid form of visualization of storytelling as a mode of digital culture is the relevance of the Korean form of storytelling known as the 'webtoon,' as it emerges as a mediating discursive medium in understanding the correlation between digital culture affecting human

experiences. Of such examples is the story 'The Abandoned Empress.' Instead of being endowed with the expected resolutions in the storylines in the established fairy tales, "The Abandoned Empress" succumbs to the influence of fate in today's digital culture. The incorporation of AI logic in the illustrations about magical realism surfaces important perspectives on the definition of the posthuman experience, a realm in which human experience merges with digital technology (Manovich, 2001Jin, 2016).



The Korean webtoon has transformed the genre of picture storytelling by incorporating literary as well as technological concepts. The way of consuming a webtoon, which is a series of pictures, has made it easier for the whole world to enjoy stories of love, ethics, transformation, and liberty. The webtoon "The Abandoned Empress," authored by Yuna and illustrated by INA, is another new way of thinking about how themes of age-old concerns about agency and destiny can be reformed by using webtoon digital media. As the main character of the webtoon "The Abandoned Empress," Aristia La Monique moves ahead in various timelines of life and death, which describes the digital recursive pattern by which choices, outcomes, and reality can be tested and retested, again and again, by the webtoon digital recursive logic system. The concept of destiny will also accomplish the notion of being computational concepts of a computer system designed to simulate artificial intelligence featured by decision-making choices. The concepts of technology are interlinked with mythology, reflecting the webtoon notion of whether destiny is already programmed or going to be programmed by users (Manovich, 2001; Kim, 2018).

The posthumanist theory outlined by N. Katherine Hayles provides an essential theoretical foundation for comprehending this crossing point. As Hayles has outlined: 'The posthuman emphasizes the potential for information patterns to transgress the boundaries of the biological and reaches toward an account of human/machine intelligence' (Hayles, 1999). As follows from Hayles's work entitled "How We Became Posthuman," it can be seen just how the indexes about the concerns for the posthuman in the following understanding as it concerns the kinds of digital rewrite concerning the self, whereby the stories of memory, emotion, and will are reduced to mere information: The kinds of narrative leaps, deaths, and subsequent resurrections experienced by Aristia within all these narrative realities can be seen as analogous to this form of digital rewrite concerning the self.

In addition, the combination of the logic of the AI and the method of the magical realism in the

webtoon represents the debate on the digital life in today's society beyond the technology in the narrative. Traditionally, the magical realism reconciles the impossible and the actual in the fusion of the life of the extraordinary (Hayles, 1999; Faris, 2004).

As this story and the use of AI interact, this kind of story represents the beginning of what may be called the "digital magic" story genre, which shows the true nature of the digital world as being a part of the moral and emotional explorations of the human world. The algorithms of the digital world being "magic" spells. All of this "digital magic" exists in "The Abandoned Empress" as the changes that occur in the protagonist's consciousness and emotion are the "writing of fate" which postulates that the human consciousness, in terms of its limitations as regards the capabilities of the computer, has the ability to "transcend the limits of fate." The combination of science and creativity erases the determination and definition of the reality of the human experience and the definition of how the technique of storytelling in the digital world changes.

"The Abandoned Empress" really shows the resilience of the human experience in its creative reframing of the construct of fate within technology-based environments. It begs the question of whether, within a simulation- and algorithm-saturated society, there could be a possible existence regarding the placement of emotional truth. The narrative form in webtoon orbits the fluidity of the self and the multitudinous nature of reality in ways that reflect how digital systems are comprised—they are chock-full of the vectors of time, memory, and choices.

This being the case, the webtoon finds itself ideologically allied with the cultural movement that posits the rejection of the notions of the deterministic function of the environment of the world. In short, it claims that even though it is within an artificial construction, the human experience is an exercise of the self that has intrinsic value (Manovich, 2001; Braidotti, 2013).

In summary, this critical analysis aims to highlight the implications in the evolution of the conjoined philosophy, aesthetic, and form in relation



to the subject of the notion of the transformation of the self in such a manner that the emotionally redeemed tale in *"The Abandoned Empress"* reconstitutes the notion of the construct of fate. The significance of this critical analysis lies in the centrality of the Korean webtoon in advancing this exploration in relation to the essentiality of the conjoined notion in relation to the examination in relation to the technology of art in establishing the boundaries that typify the human experience in relation to the notion that the story about the conjoined constructs of posthuman philosophy and artificial aesthetics defines the notion that the constructs of fate and self-develop in accordance with. It is, thus, the intent of this critical analysis that the implication in the notion in *"The Abandoned Empress"* in relation to the interplay between fate and self be (Exhales, 1999; Haraway, 1985; Braidotti, 2013).

### Literature Review

A Cyborg Manifesto by Donna Haraway (1985) further consolidates this theory as argued by Hayles, where the existence of a cyborg metaphorizes, postmodern identities transcending binary oppositions entailing the human-machine, male-female, and nature-culture dualisms. According to Haraway (1985), the hybrid existence of a cyborg liberates humans from the constraints of essential-identified beings of life. The theory of *The Abandoned Empress* by Haraway is validated by how Aristia exceeds patriarchal determinism by re-authoring herself by using the means of agency which lie beyond the social matrices. The element of controlling one's fate, thus, represents a notion of digital resistance in conformity with the cyberian liberation being referred to by Haraway (1985), as argued by Hayles (1999).

Leon Manovich's *The Language of New Media* provides an essential insight into the function of virtual narratives and their computing logic. In this context, Manovich defines the concept of "database aesthetic," where narratives are no longer linear and rely on the possibility and networks. The click functions to click on Webtoon's panel and its virtual

temporality signify a kind of interpretation based on modular and variable media according to the theory of "database aesthetic" in Manovich's work. The function of narrative recursion, where the predetermined destiny of the characters is changed in every cycle of time, exhibited by *"The Abandoned Empress"*, shows its interpretative ability to function according to the concept of multiple narrative terminations based on the dynamics of media according to *The Language of New Media* by Manovich (2001).

In his research article, "Webtoon as New Media Art: The Evolution of Visual Narrative in Digital Space," issued in the International Journal of Korean Arts and Media Studies in 2018, Kim, Jin states that: "In Webtoon, the cultural myth, modern fantasy, and digital interface are combined to signify 'the object that represents the cultural anxieties of control, autonomy, and emotion.' In a way, the webtoon series 'The Abandoned Empress' expresses the use of fantasy not just for a relief from reality but as 'the metaphorical tool that helps one 'grasp the concept of 'agency within the confines of algorithms.' Thus, these understanding places 'The Abandoned Empress' amongst other cultural debates in relation to digital artworks in redefining one's own 'social destiny.'"

On the basis of the framework presented by Faris, the following is an additional example of a publication that follows this framework: *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines: The Automaton in the European Imagination*. Published in 2011, the book was written by Minsoo Kang. The publication examines the mechanical entity and the means by which it became the representation of the human desire for the control of one's destiny. In the book, the writer, Minsoo Kang, states, "Robot-statues and digital beings represent the mirrors of the human desire for immortality and self-perfection." The "digital magic" of *"The Abandoned Empress"*, therefore, clearly has antecedents entwining technology and the idea of the transgressive, based on the cultural hegemony of the West and the East, referring back to the ideas of Faris, published in



2004, and again referenced, but citing 2011, and the ideas of Kang.

Regarding the wider field of Korean media studies, specifically, there is a book by Dal Yong Jin called "*The New Korean Wave: Transnational Cultural Power in the Age of social media*", published in 2016, that focuses on the effects that online media have on the distribution of Korean culture. According to Jin, webtoons are the best example that South Korea uses the technological developments that are occurring to produce globalized forms for stories and narratives centered on culture with the intention and aim to ensure that the use of emotional authenticity takes place through this method. The transformation of "*The Abandoned Empress*" to one that connects to online media and gives an amalgamation of emotions and digitalism re-emphasizes that fact.

Taken together, it is hereby established that digital storytelling in webtoons is necessarily linked to the realm of philosophical discourses on the concept of posthumanism, the aesthetics of artificial intelligence, as well as hybridity. Thus, the convergence of the aesthetics of magical realism and technological rationality offers an opportunity to embark on the search for innovative ways to story through emotions morals. While a profound underpinning is provided through the ontology presented by Hayles, Haraway, and Braidotti about posthuman identity, Jin Kim offers a more pinpointed perspective on how these concepts are realized through local forms of digital art in the Korean context. All in all, these resources collectively illustrate how "*The Abandoned Empress*" redefines fate, no more a metaphysical proclamation but an algorithmic expression based on the never-ending dialogue between humans and their creations in cyberspace (Hayles, 1999; Haraway, 1985; Braidotti, 2013; Kim, 2018; Jin, 2016).

### Methodology

"The research paper at hand will be grounded on the qualitative approach of interpretation based on the theories of posthumanism to examine the webtoon "The Abandoned Empress" in the context of the

representation of destiny, identity, and emotions in post humanized narratives of the webtoon. Since the webtoon operates on the intersection of technology, fantasy, and the emotions of the reader, the approach of the paper will be the combination of three different strands of methodology: the application of theories, the interpretation of the webtoon, and the act of interpretation of the webtoon based on media studies of digital culture. Firstly, the application of posthumanism, specifically the work of N. Katherine Hayles, will be the guiding approach of the theoretical framework of the research paper. According to the theories proposed by N. Katherine Hayles, the posthuman subject "is the fusion of human consciousness and information pattern" to create "a new habit of being" (Hayles 1999). Specifically, the concept of the posthuman subject will be understood based on the theories of Katherine Hayles's work with respect to the reincarnations of the female lead, "Aristia's" reincarnations being the algorithmic recursion of her "data" in her different reincarnations of being reborn."

In this paper, I will present the textual analyses of narrative, visual, and symbolic elements of "*The Abandoned Empress*". I focus on the character development, the structure of temporal loops, emotional tropes, as well as aesthetic strategies that blur the lines between magical realism and digital rationality. I will also apply Haraway's cyborg thesis from 1985 as a critical device to argue for Aristia's agency as a nexus between emotional intelligence and technological self-transformation. The concept of relational posthuman subjectivity by Braidotti, 2013, is also at play when I analyze the changes in relationships and emotional transformations that occur to and by Aristia as she traverses amongst different timelines. These nuanced analyses demonstrate the ways in which the webtoon constructs the concept of emotion as computational as well as ethical power (Hayles, 1999; Haraway, 1985; Braidotti, 2013).

Thirdly, this perspective also takes into account the analysis of digital media and the meaning-making process with regard to the inherent vertical scrolling structure of the webtoon. The analysis



would greatly benefit from the works of Lev Manovich on the concept of “database logic” (Manovic, 2001). The analysis would also benefit from the Korean webtoon studies on the impact of the webtoon format on the narrative and the encoding of the reader (Kim, 2018). This perspective would conceptualize the interface more as a part of the algorithmic reality of the narrative (Manovic, 2001).

Data for this study derives exclusively from the primary text—the complete episodes of *The Abandoned Empress*—and from peer-reviewed scholarship on posthumanism, webtoon studies, magical realism, and AI aesthetics. No quantitative coding is applied; instead, interpretive patterns emerge through close reading and theoretical alignment. Such a methodology combines theory of posthumanism, interpretation of narrative, and analysis of digital media to create a coherent framework through which to understand how webtoon *The Abandoned Empress* constructs fate as programmable and affectively driven in the greater landscape of Korean storytelling in digital form (Hayles 1999; Manovich 2001; Kim 2018).

## Discussion

Applied to *The Abandoned Empress* and similar stories in which the dying and rebirth of the protagonist across several ages materializes the fluid identity of the posthuman subject. Her rebirth has something to do with a computer-like replication of consciousness in which memory and emotion are data that persist across worlds and thus cannot be thought of in merely magical terms. If the thesis of Hayles were applied, this recursive structure could also be read metaphorically both for the programmability of human destiny and technological rebirth Hayles, 1999.

This reading is further supported by Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto*, which appeared in print in 1985 and introduced the cyborg—a hybrid between machine and organism that disrupts dualistic thought. According to Haraway (1985), the cyborg contests essentialist and patriarchal modes of thinking. By using emotional intelligence and self-awareness to edit a pre-ordained destiny, the female

protagonist of *The Abandoned Empress* resists deterministic fate in a cyberian act. Haraway's cyborg thus, as a metaphor for empowerment and dissolution of boundaries, finds congruence with the protagonist's digital-fantastical behavior (Haraway, 1985).

Where Rosi Braidotti's book *The Posthuman* (2013) intervenes is to bring an ethical dimension: that of relational subjectivity, whereby human identity is co-constituted with technology, the environment, and other agents. According to Braidotti, a posthuman subject results from relations rather than from isolation. *The Abandoned Empress* will act through this relational framework by putting forward interdependence rather than control through emotional adaptation and technological time loops. In embracing the transformative potential of technology, the protagonist attains rather than eschews post humanity (Braidotti, 2013).

These posthumanist theories combined give a conceptual framework for analyzing the intersection of digital logic with the magical realism found in “*The Abandoned Empress*.” These theories make clear how the webcomic subverts the traditional role of humanity in a digital-age space through the re-mapping of the notion of fate according to a flexible combination of logic processes and emotional aspects identified for the posthuman subject by such analysts as Hayles (1999); Haraway (1985); Braidotti (2013).

Technology and imagination, as lenses for analysis, have brought the webtoon context in Korea to further position itself as a major platform for the re-interpretation of perennial human concerns. The web-based narrative re-maps the content scope of traditional notions pertaining to destiny, emotions, and identity in the algorithmic, posthuman discursive paradigm. Such a reading can best be expressed in “*The Abandoned Empress*” as well as the accompanying illustrations done by iNA, which establish a context where destiny is a programmatic experience in the realm of emotional consciousness, where it is not just a determined, unchanging decree issued down from above, but a post cognitive, repetitive experience in the digital realm. Therefore,



this research will examine the re-orientation of human resilience in the Electronically Mediated world in the webtoon *"The Abandoned Empress"* where posthumanism constructs AI logic together with magical realism (Jin, 2016; Kim, 2018).

The experience of Aristia La Monique in *The Abandoned Empress* illustrates a posthuman reconstruction of identity: she finds herself back in her own past with a complete understanding of her own experience before being violated, killed, and reborn-as if she had experienced a digital rebirth akin to salvaged information or a systems renewal. "This specific posthuman change corresponds to a philosophical definition described by N. Katherine Hayles: "The posthuman vision takes the body as the original prosthetic we all learn to manipulate"" (Hayles, 3). In this case, it can be seen that it is the character's identification via her consciousness that is self-governed from her actual physical body that incorporates posthuman identification itself: "knowledge information pattern. retained" (Hayles, 1999).

However, aside from the supernatural connotation, her rising from the dead also represents the immortality of data in a digital platform. The cycle of life also has a feedback loop, similar to how correction in algorithms occurs through recalibration for the smooth functioning of error correction. Each of her time lines functions in a way akin to a computer simulation where varied moral and emotional choices are simulated. *The Abandoned Empress* also resizes the idea of fate in favor of computational logics, making her mutable code, unlike a predetermined script. Since she remembers her past life, she corrects her future because once again, her past experiences are signified in this instance by her memories also functioning as digital data and her emotional undertones in the form of knowledge traditionally connected with human emotion (Hayles, 1999; Manovich, 2001).

This text illustrates the relational subjectivity of Rosi Braidotti. The posthuman subject, as discussed by Braidotti (2013), emerges through relations between human beings, nature, and technology. Correspondingly, the posthuman subjectification's of

Aristia in the relational ontology are engaged not in isolation but in relation to the magical and technological systems that structure her reality. In the digital chronotype, fate does not decree but relates. This relational subjectivity can further be found in the webtoon format in which the reader can scroll back, pause, and replay the very process of the posthuman subjectification of identity in interaction and feedback (Braidotti, 2013; Manovich, 2001).

### *Artificial Intelligence and Algorithmic Consciousness*

Within *"The Abandoned Empress,"* the idea of AI is employed metaphorically as "a structural principle that governs the world's clockwork or emotional mechanisms" because "There is no machine presence as such," but the logic of the narrative is "guided by the structure of AI," as "it learns through repetition," "it evolves through emotional stimulation," and "delivers the best possible result" because "Recursive self-improvement is the principle of AI" or "efficiency," whereas in the narrative "through reiteration of the timelines, emotional acuity or moral aptitude" is achieved (Hayles, 1999).

But it is possible to apply a further concept to this: "database narrative," as conceptualized by Lev Manovich, wherein stories are understood as dynamic processes of choice and not as linear processes. This is reflected in how the webtoon is organized as a narrative: Aristia's path branches out into many other possibilities based on her choices that are reflective of how an AI system recalculates data to form a prediction model. This story employs the metaphor of machine learning as a process of self-correcting and algorithmically based re- or rectification, compared to the development of emotions (Manovich, 2001).

However, this algorithmic nature is further emphasized in the visual and digital form of webtoons. Indeed, one could interpret the narrative structure in terms of 'segmented narrative flow, vertical scrolling pattern, and Emotional expressions derived from Expression Panels and Color Gradients to mimic mobile scrolling within the predefined area'. Such an arrangement is utilized in the present



narrative not only for the ease of narrative in *“The Abandoned Empress”*, but also to exhibit such an effect of digital immersion, in which the reader comes to be situated inside an Emotional circuit that is powered by Artificial Intelligence. Indeed, the Logic of Artificial Intelligence gets demonstrated through the interface of this story, in which the readers are transformed into players in whom the concept of Fate is malleable.

Hence, it is clear that the self-consciousness of Aristia eventually tends to take a leap of immense magnitude, wherein it occurs within the horizon of an AI-based form of consciousness, including emotional intelligence, transformation, and foresight. The conception of Hayles in which the posthuman subject has "distributed cognition" (Hayles 14), which tends toward thinking inside and between human and technical systems, is understandably present in the dynamic of Aristia's consciousness of her doleful end and the technological configuration of her world a real posthuman union of the algorithm and agency (Hayles, 1999).

### ***Magical Realism and Emotional Transformation***

Magical realism is thus established as a narrative dynamic that links technology with emotions. Historically, magical realism has made it possible for both the exceptional and the mundane to cohesively exist together; such a genre has made it possible for the exceptional to deliver emotional truth. According to Wendy Faris, magical realism is a narrative style whereby "the miraculous is accepted as part of everyday reality" (Faris 17). In a reverse manner, a realization has occurred whereby the transgression of technology is normalized within the context of a webtoon, with a setting that is based on a digital format, such that one's fate is manipulable, with resurrection attainable from a perspective that leans towards emotional truth (Faris, 2004).

Simultaneously miraculous and emotionally grounded now, Aristia's reincarnation also enables her to speak more directly and profoundly about human suffering, betrayal, and enlightenment. Through the fanciful logics of magical realism, technical recursion becomes a practice of emotional

cure. Each "loop" is a form of cathartic rethink as much as a repeat, enabling pain to be healed and dignity restored. By doing this, magical realism extends what was simply not possible within AI logics and instead makes posthuman experience more human, shifting technology from a technical to an emotional-medium (Faris, 2004; Hayles, 1999).

This amalgamation is also created through the visual aesthetics of this webtoon. Blazing colors, mythical themes, and pixel lights create a mystical atmosphere, catering to the states of emotions. This further translates into a symbolism of art, where the boundaries of technology, or digital magic in the title, and human emotions get entangled. This, in turn, can be described as the technological magic in the title, personifying technological and human arts of identity recreation. The story represents what Hayles calls "embedded virtuality," or the interpenetration of material and informational existence in which Aristia's feelings do have real and transformative effects upon her virtual world (Hayles, 1999).

### ***Digital Fate and Reader Interactivity***

The interactive ness of the webtoons enables the reader to engage with the material instead of just passively consuming it. The concept of the "digital fate" where the reader of the story and the character interact to determine the processing of the fate of the story is linked to the new structural approach. The process of decision making of the world of the story, specifically the act of the reader scrolling to the end of the story, reflects the readers.

In this instance, dialogism by Mikhail Bakhtin proves to be very useful. According to Bakhtin, "Meaning is created in the dialogic process of voices, situations, and interpretations" (Bakhtin, 1981). Here, through a dialogic relationship between the viewer, character, and narrative, *“The Abandoned Empress”* engages in this dialogic relationship between viewer, character, and narrative along various lines- viewer and character, human and digital, and emotion and algorithm. It can be noted how this webtoon, through its digital interface, becomes a point where technology determinism and



human agency interact to become a sort of co-authorship. It's this dialogic relationship that pushes both viewer and character to drastically re-evaluate control and emotion, from a narrative device to a process of becoming, according to Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1981).

The Abandoned Empress exists in the moral economy of digital logic in which the repeated stress on decision-making through emotions like forgiveness, trust, and resilience features prominently. It's the place where fate has become a moral calculation process in which the result gets recalculated with every expression of emotion. The webtoon under discussion signifies a paradigm shift in digital ethics in which empathy appears as a variable in the algorithm in which fate gets determined (Hayles, 1999; Braidotti, 2013).

### ***The Emotional Core of Posthuman Existence***

*"The Abandoned Empress"* is based on human emotions/feelings despite the technology and philosophy behind it. Here, the addition or existence of AI and posthuman themes leads to an accentuation of emotions rather than their abolition. According to Sherry Turkle, "technology proposes itself as the architect of our intimacies" (Turkle 11). This also emphasizes the manner in which true emotional experiences occur as a consequence of interaction with digital others. Here, rather than the alienation of the self, technology leads to increased empathy, self-reflection, or growth in the webtoon *"The Abandoned Empress"* through emotions such as love, courage, or sadness experienced by the protagonist Aristia, which "serve as the code that changes her fate" (Turkle, 2011, p. 11).

The fact that such a deep emotion could exist in a logically based computerized system reveals that emotional intelligence is what makes us human, not our physical bodies. The above complements Hayles' assertion that 'Posthumanism does not signal the end of humanity but its continuation in different material incarnations' (Hayles 5). In a posthuman paradigm, Aristia's emotional development therefore means a continuation rather than a negation of humanity. From a narrative and symbolic perspective, Aristia's

emotional intelligence is a corrective algorithm in a distorted paradigm (Hayles, 1999, p. 5).

This confluence of posthumanism and the mode of magical realism gives rise to the process that could be termed as emotional techno genesis: the integration of technology and narrative to achieve emotional significance. The narrative aptly illustrates the potential of emotional transformation, even in the context of AI reasoning. The human heart, in the revised paradigm of human intuition as the source of knowledge, manifests as the governing principle in the re-definition of the digital destiny (Turkel, 2011; Hayles, 1999).

### **Conclusion**

The webtoon *"The Abandoned Empress"* portrays the emotional and philosophical aspects of the posthuman era in Korean webtoons. Through the combination of AI logic and magical realism in the webtoon series, the webtoon depicts the concept of fate alternatively and instead as a dynamic and revisable process influenced by intellect, memory, and empathy. Through posthumanist discourses developed by N. Katherine Hayles in *\*How We Think\**, the webtoon shows that identity in the posthuman era experiences change and not annihilation in the digital era. The webtoon's depiction of death and rebirths of the protagonist symbolizes the posthuman experience of becoming in which mind exists in the form of an information and emotion circuit in continuous loops of time. Through the webtoon, technology enhances feelings and exists for the expansion of human feelings in the form of their supplement rather than their opposite. In the world that *The Abandoned Empress* poses, algorithms and emotions coexist, and thus destiny is revised via ethical thinking and emotional evolution. In other words, the storyline postulates that technology and technological systems are not deterministic but rather 'open systems' that are 'open to revision via compassion, resilience, and self-awareness' and that 'can be revised and improved via moral learning' (Hayles). In light of this, the webtoon not only embodies Hayles's idea of distributed cognition and Haraway's approach to hybrid agency



but also embodies Braidotti's idea of relational subjectivity. In other words, the digital 'magic' of *The Abandoned Empress* enables 'algorithms and emotions to work together' such that 'the main author and maker and maker and author' remains 'the human heart' because 'in a world mediated by technology and computers, and dependent on computer simulations and models of reality, human hearts are still and will always be the main authors of our fates' (Hayles, 1999; Haraway, 1985; Braidotti, 2013).

### Reference

1. Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (M. Holquist, Ed.; C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). University of Texas Press.
2. Braidotti, R. (2013). *The posthuman*. Polity Press.
3. Braidotti, R. (2019). *Posthuman knowledge*. Polity Press.
4. Faris, W. B. (2004). *Ordinary enchantments: Magical realism and the remystification of narrative*. Vanderbilt University Press.
5. Ferrando, F. (2019). *Philosophical posthumanism*. Bloomsbury Academic.
6. Haraway, D. J. (1991). *A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century*. In *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature* (pp. 149–181). Routledge. (Original work published 1985)
7. Hayles, N. K. (1999). *How we became posthuman: Virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics*. University of Chicago Press.
8. Hayles, N. K. (2012). *How we think: Digital media and contemporary technogenesis*. University of Chicago Press.
9. Jin, D. Y. (2016). *New Korean wave: Transnational cultural power in the age of social media*. University of Illinois Press.
10. Jin, D. Y. (2021). *Korean digital culture: Media, technology, and society*. Lexington Books.
11. Kang, M. (2011). *Sublime dreams of living machines: The automaton in the European imagination*. Harvard University Press.
12. Kim, J. (2018). *Webtoon as new media art: The evolution of visual narrative in digital space*. *International Journal of Korean Arts and Media Studies*, 4(2), 55–74.
13. Kim, S. (2020). *Platform storytelling and the rise of Korean webtoons*. *Journal of Asian Cultural Studies*, 12(1), 87–104.
14. Manovich, L. (2001). *The language of new media*. MIT Press.
15. Manovich, L. (2013). *Software takes command*. Bloomsbury Academic.
16. Murray, J. H. (2017). *Hamlet on the holodeck: The future of narrative in cyberspace* (Updated ed.). MIT Press.
17. Ryan, M.-L. (2015). *Narrative as virtual reality 2: Revisiting immersion and interactivity in literature and electronic media*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
18. Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. Basic Books.
19. Yuna, & INA. (2017–2021). *The Abandoned Empress* [Webtoon series]. KakaoPage.
20. Žižek, S. (2019). *Hegel in a wired brain*. Bloomsbury Academic.