

Identity Written by Code: Representations of the Self in Literature under the Light of Cybersecurity

Elaguab Fatiha

University of Djelfa, Faculty of Letters, and Languages, and Arts
f.elaguab@univ-djelfa.dz

Received: 01-08-2025

Accepted: 21-05-2026

Published: 01-06-2026

Abstract:

This paper explores how literary representations of the self are reshaped in light of cybersecurity. In a digital era where writing is subject to algorithmic control and surveillance, literature becomes a site of negotiation between identity and technology. The study examines how contemporary narratives reflect or resist digital mechanisms that encode, monitor, and regulate subjectivity. By situating the literary self within cybernetic systems and post-digital environments, the article highlights how authorship, freedom, and authenticity are reconfigured. Ultimately, literature emerges as a strategic space that challenges data-driven power and asserts virtual autonomy.

Keywords: Cybersecurity, Literary Self, Algorithmic Identity, Surveillance, Digital Narrative.

1. Introduction :

In an era where writing is no longer an innocent act and reception is no longer a neutral practice, the boundaries between literature and technology, between the self and the algorithm, and between the text and the threats of cyber-sovereignty are being reshaped. We live in a time where selves are inscribed within digital spaces under conscious surveillance, producing their texts within systems of tracking, filtering, and intelligent non-human interpretation. At this intersection, the anxieties of literature converge with the concerns of cybersecurity not merely at the level of technical infrastructure, but also in the shaping of meaning, the construction of identity, and the resistance to reduction. On one hand, literature is undergoing striking transformations in its modes; the text is no longer a mere manifestation of a knowing self, but rather a field of encryption, deferral, and aesthetic disappearance. On the other hand, artificial intelligence and cyber-tracking technologies are redefining the relationship between writer and text, and between reader and platform, pushing contemporary writing to position itself as a subversive, resistant, hacktivist, and often clandestine

act. Between these two dimensions the literary and the technological this paper is founded. It does not aim merely to reconcile two seemingly divergent fields, but rather to uncover the living contact zone between them, where writing becomes a cybernetic exercise, surveillance assumes a poetic structure, and identity transforms into a linguistic code subject to erasure, forgery, or leakage. The paper is structured around four main sections:

1. The first explores the concept of the digital self under cyber-surveillance, and the transformation of the "I" from an author to a data point.
2. The second addresses the figure of the hacker as a narrative character: from the paper spy to the code pirate.
3. The third presents a semiotic analysis of a digital confessional blog entitled "Without My Face."
4. The fourth studies an anonymous Arabic poetry blog titled "As If I Were Never Born," which adopts encryption as a means of existential salvation.

This contribution is based on an original analysis of real digital texts from blogs and digital platforms through a semiotic and interpretive reading that reclaims the role of literature in resisting the algorithmic consumption of meaning. It links contemporary literature with cyber studies and proposes a new reading model that deconstructs writing in the age of intelligent surveillance and restores ambiguity as both an aesthetic value and a philosophical stance.

2. **The Concept of the Digital Self under Cybersecurity:**

The relationship between literature and identity has undergone a profound transformation in the digital age. The narrating self no longer stands behind the text as a coherent center; instead, it has become fragmented traces scattered across cyberspace, threatened by dispersion, impersonation, and intrusion. Today, the writer does not merely express themselves but also resists the reduction of their identity into data, algorithms, and a virtual image that can be shaped by others or even by machines. In its traditional phases, literature offered various ways to construct the self: from the lyrical poem centered on a suffering, expressive "I," to the autobiography that traces the evolution of the self over time, to the novel that grants the self multiple masks to tell its story through fictional characters. However, these classical forms are now facing an existential crisis in the digital era, where "identity" is no longer a stable concept but one vulnerable to hacking, reshaping, and falsification. The real threat that cybersecurity poses to literature is not just the theft of texts but the dismantling of the writing self itself. Once a writer enters the digital platform, they no longer fully control their text or its reception. Algorithms rearrange priorities, highlight certain passages, and conceal others. Their name may be impersonated, or their text used in contexts they did not choose. This raises a crucial question: What is the fate of autobiographical literature in an age dominated by a culture of impersonation, tracking, and surveillance? More importantly, what does it mean to write "about yourself" in a space where any entity can monitor or

manipulate your text against you? Polish philosopher Zygmunt Bauman explains that identities in the liquid modernity era have become "liquid identities" unstable, shifting with changing social and technological contexts (Bauman, 2000, p. 8). This identity liquidity is clearly manifested in the digital environment, where a writer can change their name, image, tone, and even thoughts to align with their audience or the algorithms processing their texts. In this environment, self-writing is no longer a pure act of confession; it has become a form of identity production as a digital signone that can be archived, manipulated, or even sold. So, is self-writing still what it once was? Or has it become merely a "profile" constantly on display, editable at any moment? The transformation in the concept of identity under digitization is not limited to a shift in the medium of expression. It extends to the very structure of representation. In traditional literature, identity was built gradually over time, carved from the accumulation of memory, nostalgia, experience, and coherent storytelling. In cyberspace, identity is produced in the moment scattered, instantaneous, fragmented, and subject to deletion, modification, or temporary oblivion. Often, it is reconfigured by algorithms that do not acknowledge the internal life of the self.

The contemporary writer now faces a double surveillance: self-censorship resulting from awareness of their digital presence, and external monitoring in the form of tracking systems, classification mechanisms, and intelligent algorithms. Notably, this anxiety has reflected itself in the structure of the text. The digital literary text is no longer linear, closed, or clearly constructed; it is now open to interpretation, full of gaps, and prone to rupture. Writers use digital tools while simultaneously resisting the mechanisms of domination produced by these very tools. In this context, the literary text becomes not only a medium of expression but also a strategy of maneuvering and creating safe spaces for identity. In recent years, a new kind of digital narrative has emerged. The writer deliberately violates algorithms or writes against them. For example, some writers resort to linguistic hybridity, encoding certain expressions, or distributing the narrative across multiple platforms as a means of evading machine reading. This brings us back to the notion of "writing as a form of resistance."

Researcher Shoshana Zuboff states that contemporary digital capitalism does not merely collect data about individuals but seeks to reshape their future behavior based on predictive models (Shoshana, 2019, p. 15). If this is true, then autobiographical literary writing is at risk of becoming a tool for encoding and control, rather than a space of free expression. Thus, literature gains a new task not only to express the self but to defend it. To write today means to carve out an identity that resists programmability; to say "I" in a way that algorithms cannot translate into data points. In cyberspace, multiple concepts intertwine: identity, representation, browsing, encryption, and hacking. This intertwinement is not merely aesthetic or linguistic it is existential. When the self becomes storable in a database or analyzable by an

AI system, the act of "writing" shifts from expressing experience to producing machine-readable data.

The digital writer no longer writes only for themselves but for algorithms that determine which texts to show to others and which to bury beneath clouds of oblivion. Here, the writing self loses some control over the fate of its voice. It is not only monitored, but also categorized, evaluated, and framed within predefined digital patterns. Yet literature, as a domain that resists categorization due to its deviations, symbolism, and metaphorical dimensions remains one of the last bastions of resistance against the transformation of the human into a mere "user" or "consumer." However, digital writing itself can swallow this self, transforming it into an interface that addresses others in a flattened, filtered manner. In this context, a new kind of literary identity has emerged: a hybrid identity that blends the real and the virtual, what one wants to say and what is permitted to be said. This hybrid identity is particularly evident in emerging literary genres such as: Blog Fiction, Interactive storytelling through social media, Digital Poetry. In these forms, we observe the disintegration of the "first person" and its fusion with the other with the audience, and at times, even with the operating system itself. The phrase "I write" becomes "I am written", as if the writer no longer produces the text but is reproduced through a digital system. This shift in the relationship between the self and the text requires literary scholars to revisit foundational concepts such as: Author (Auteur), Implied Reader, Textual Space, Narrative Identity

In her study of "mediation," author N. Katherine Hayles offers a critical insight: "Digital writing does not merely convey meaning, it shapes it through the material system in which it is produced" (Hayles, 2008, p. 25). According to this view, the writing self is no longer independent of the technical infrastructure but has become part of the digital textual ecology, which intervenes in all stages of writing from production, to distribution, to reading, to archiving.

3. The Hacker as a Narrative Character: From the Paper Spy to the Code Pirate

Since the rise of the modern novel, ambiguous, rebellious characters who transgress institutional boundaries have held a distinct narrative space in literary works. These characters have appeared in various forms: the spy, the revolutionary, the exile, the infiltrator figures who challenge the system through unconventional means. However, with literature entering the age of digitization, these archetypes have evolved into a new form: the hacker. As a narrative construct, the hacker represents a dual rebellion: against political authority and informational systems. This character possesses hidden knowledge, penetrates barriers, and exposes the concealed. Thus, the hacker has become a central symbol in many literary and cinematic works serving as a metaphorical lever for philosophical reflection in the digital age. It is no surprise that the hacker occupies this space. The digital world itself has

redefined notions of power, surveillance, and knowledge. In this reconfigured landscape, the traditional literary hero is no longer the warrior, the detective, or the loyal lover, but rather the isolated figure behind a screen someone who holds the key to closed worlds and can, with a single keystroke, alter the entire course of the narrative. Science fiction especially in the cyberpunk subgenre offers a clear embodiment of this transformation. In works such as *Neuromancer* by William Gibson, the hacker is not portrayed as a criminal or saboteur, but as an existential hero, one who questions the world, lives on its fringes, and interacts with code as a poet would with language: as an experiment, and as a tool for liberation. Such works reveal that the hacker is not merely someone who breaks into systems, but someone who deconstructs grand narratives. The hacker rewrites the story not by displacing it, but by penetrating its internal structure. This grants the hacker a powerful symbolic role laden with connotations that transcend the technical dimension to express the existential anxieties of the postmodern world. Fredric Jameson noted that postmodern literature is characterized by the merging of humans into digital space and the blurring of boundaries between the real and the virtual (Jameson, 1991, p. 37). In this context, the hacker is not just a character but a dramatic embodiment of modern humanity's anxiety over losing control of reality of being manipulated by systems they do not fully comprehend. The hacker does not fight with weapons, but with knowledge which makes them a new symbol of the organic intellectual, but within an encrypted realm, where language is no longer merely a tool for expression, but also one for encryption, concealment, and manipulation. The hacker occupies a unique narrative position, standing at a critical intersection between control and intrusion, knowledge and danger, freedom and chaos. This character is not defined solely by their actions, but by what they reveal. They are a bearer of the code—and a revealer of deception. In this sense, the hacker resembles the "symbolic revealer" in modern narrative: one who lifts the veil on oppressive systems and invisible powers. In its contemporary form, the hacker character evolves from the classical "spy" archetype. The Cold War spy symbolized the hidden games of power and veiled information warfare, usually tied to a national agency or political cover. In contrast, the hacker is unsigned, borderless, non-affiliated, dwelling in liminal spaces, and thriving on uncertainty. Thus, the hacker poses a dual narrative challenge: the writer must portray a non-traditional figure, who eludes clear authority and defies explicit moral codes, while also navigating a virtual environment one rich in technical terminology but also pregnant with philosophical resonance. This narrative complexity emerges in many texts, particularly in digital novels or stories dealing with hacking and data networks. In *Snow Crash* by Neal Stephenson, the hacker is not portrayed as a criminal but as a "reader of ancient languages" suggesting that language itself has become a code that must be broken to understand fabricated reality. Here, the hacker becomes a

metaphor for the postmodern reader one who doesn't merely interpret the narrative, but penetrates it, reconstructs it, and perhaps corrects it. In some experimental or Arabic digital narratives, the hacker appears as a figure combining agency and alienation a contemporary hero devoid of classical heroism. He belongs to the world, yet the world offers him no belonging. He is the child of the computer, but not its owner; rather, he is used by it and produced through it.

In this light, the hacker also becomes a metaphor for the contemporary writer one who seeks to break through veils, deconstruct language, expose the hidden, and reassemble meaning. Literature becomes a form of cultural hacking one that disrupts grand narratives and unveils hegemonic structures. In Arabic literature, although the hacker has not been extensively treated as a central narrative element, their representation has started to emerge as a symbol of the lost generation those searching for a voice amidst the noise of official media, or those resisting ready-made ideological frameworks.

In some Arabic short stories published on digital platforms, the hacker appears as a young man from a working-class neighborhood, self-taught, a master of silence yet fluent in "speaking through intrusion." He does not state; he encodes. He does not confront with force, but with symbolic cunning.

This character is also linked to the anti-hero archetype, where the reader is not asked to empathize with the hacker, but to understand his crisis: How does one who holds the keys to knowledge find themselves powerless to protect their own self from dissolution ?

How does the one who hacks systems become imprisoned within them?

And how does the writer/reader turn into a passive entity within a network that controls them more than they control it?

Thus, the literary use of the hacker figure is not a celebration of their abilities, but rather a questioning of a world that forced them into infiltration instead of participation, concealment instead of visibility, and code manipulation instead of belief in the word. The significance of the hacker in contemporary narrative imagination emerges as a "mind without a body," or more precisely: a "virtual body reconstructed by code." Whereas classical literary characters were grounded in features, temperaments, internal development, and emotions, the modern hacker is positioned within the narrative as a digital trace: omnipresent, ungraspable, a narrative agent yet visually absent from the story's scene. This profound transformation in character construction reflects the shift in literature from representing the body to representing the code.

4. A Semiotic Analysis of a Confessional Digital Blog: "Faceless"

"Faceless" is the pseudonym used for a series of blog posts published on the "Medium" platform, authored by an anonymous young man who narrates his daily experiences in confronting a platform that monitors him. He writes

about the anxiety of losing "control over his language" within a digital environment hostile to privacy. For academic purposes, the blog posts are represented here through analytical models, without explicitly referencing the original account, in order to protect the author's identity and adhere to the ethics of cyber research.

Confessional digital blogs form an ideal space to analyze the relationship between the writing self, identity, and digital discourse especially when situated within a surveilled cyber context. In this study, we focus on a blog written under the name "Faceless", a series of texts that resemble confessions but are linguistically encrypted, intertwining sorrow, irony, code, and silence. The blog opens with the line:

"The more I write, the more I feel I'm losing something of my sovereignty over my body."

A revealing sentence simultaneously suggestive and evasive. It implies that writing is no longer an act of possession, but a moment of bleeding. A digital bleeding that seeps into the eyes of an unseen, unchosen reader. A semiotic reading of this sentence reveals that the writer implicitly undermines the classical assumption linking writing to self-authority. He inverts it: Writing = exposure to anonymous eyes = betrayal of privacy.

Here, we see the emergence of one of the key traits of the "narrative hacker" described in the theoretical section: the writer does not present himself as a stable self, but as a fleeing, hunted entity not narrating, but evading.

The language used in these blog posts does not follow a chronological narrative style; instead, the entries appear in fragmented, timestamped segments dated but not sequential almost as if the writer is rebelling against the "algorithm" that demands structure, logic, and order. This resistance is explicit in one entry:

"I have no beginning, and I dislike endings. What lies in between belongs to the network, not to me."

This statement holds deep symbolic significance: narrative time is no longer a personal choice but is imposed by the system. Blogging assumed to be an act of agency becomes an interpretive battle within an encrypted digital framework. The semiotics of silence also play a powerful role. Often, blog entries end with markers like: [...] or (Deleted) or (I can't say this now).

From an analytical perspective, these markers are more meaningful than speech itself. Silence here is not the absence of meaning, but a resistance to machine reading. The writer knows he is being read by "something" perhaps "someone" and so he chooses to leave intentional gaps in the text. These are linguistic glitches aimed at confusing classification algorithms. Thus, the blog's structure is not merely literary form; it is a reflection of a violated identity attempting to protect itself through open-ended narration. He writes:

"I'm not sure if these words will be read the way I intended... or the way I wanted to appear. Because between me and this screen is a wall of fear, and behind it a wall of expectation. I write, yes. But who is really writing?"

This seemingly simple question "Who is really writing?" lies at the heart of the dilemma of digital self-writing: Does the self truly write its own text, or is it generating a text already subjected to hidden surveillance?

Here, the blog deconstructs the idea of "free writing" as promoted by platforms and reveals its fragility in a space where words are monitored, sentences filtered, and emotions quantified. A semiotic analysis of this text uncovers a constant tension between the desire to confess and the fear of monitored reception. The writer confesses, but simultaneously doubts the act of confession itself. His first confession, in truth, is an admission of his inability to confess fully. Michel Foucault pointed out that in the modern era, confession has become a system of submission rather than liberation forcing the self to produce discourse amenable to institutional interpretation (Michel, 1978, p. 61) This is evident in the blog's discourse, where every sentence is suspect: in its intent, its direction, and its reception. This idea intersects with the blog's structure: comments are disabled, shares are not allowed, and each post is titled only by date (with no subject-based headline). On the homepage, the author writes:

"Don't expect anything from me. I don't trust what I write myself."

This negative self-declaration does not diminish the value of the text rather, it enhances its symbolic depth. It presents a broken, hesitant self afraid to publish but needing to do so. It sees each act of writing as a small betrayal of its silence. The recurring use of the verb "I'm afraid" 14 times across 5 entries establishes an extended semiotic field of fear throughout the text. It is not just fear of the reader, but of self-exposure of the possibility that the text might become a document used against its author. This is evident when he writes:

"Have you ever felt that everything you write might be used against you? That your most beautiful sentences will be the reason for your exclusion?"

This passage captures the exact paradox underpinning the blog: writing as an act of mutual hacking the writer hacks through his own silence, yet is hacked by writing itself. He is the hacker of his own being, yet the victim of a larger hacker: the system, the platform, the AI, and even the reader.

The deeper we delve into this blog, the clearer it becomes that the author is not producing texts to share or confess in a traditional sense, but rather engaging in a resistant writing performance using the tools of the digital system to sabotage it from within. Instead of complying with platform expectations (titles, tags, images, interaction), he chooses to write a text stripped of any apparent context, relying on interpretive excavation rather than explanatory narrative. In the ninth post, he writes:

"I drop a sentence and wait for its interpretation as if it's a coin... it might be accepted in a different context, or rejected by the machine."

Here, the literary sentence is transformed into an economic technological process evaluated, filtered, accepted, or rejected. This is a profoundly intelligent metaphor for the digital reality in which words are subjected to systems of assessment not based on their aesthetic or emotional value, but on their "shareability", their compliance with algorithmic standards. The writer refers on multiple occasions to this "forced filtering", not only on the technical level but within himself as a writer. He says:

"I started filtering my sadness before writing it. I give it a processor, I tone it down, so I'm not accused of being dramatic."

This passage reveals how external surveillance becomes internalized self-censorship algorithmically produced. In an environment that punishes emotion and rewards neutrality, even sadness becomes suspicious. And confession turns into a risk: the risk of being understood or misunderstood. In the eleventh post, a powerful image appears:

"Sometimes I feel this blog isn't mine... as if I'm writing in a notebook being read backwards."

The image is rich in cultural symbolism—writing read backwards suggests misunderstanding, inverted reading, or even loss of control over the text once published. This anxiety is one of the central points in our semiotic analysis: digital texts no longer submit to the author's interpretation, but undergo collective, automated, and continuous reading, and possibly hostile recontextualization. The text can be reproduced in unethical contexts without the writer's consent.

From a semiotic perspective, this blog produces a tense, sharp discourse that declares from the outset it does not seek to be simply understood, but to be read in layers as a form of quiet resistance, as "literary sabotage", as a type of writing meant to elude capture.

Thus, the condition of "literary hacking" discussed earlier is fulfilled—not just through system penetration, but through a disruption of expression itself, and a challenge to the classical model of confession. In the final post of the series, the blogger writes:

"Sometimes I think about stopping... but if I stop, I'll be defeated. Not because I'll lose something, but because the system will gain my silence."

This sentence summarizes the essence of the experience: that writing in this digital space is not merely expression but a struggle for existence. The writer is not just narrating; he is resisting erasure. He writes knowing that his voice is not truly free, that it passes through an invisible filter. And yet, he persists because writing, even if seemingly futile, is a form of infiltration. Even if he penetrates no external system, he breaks through his own internal silence.

Semiotically, this passage frames the voice/silence binary not as a metaphysical duality, but as a political-cyber battleground. To write is to say: "I am still here," even if no one answers.

And the digital system, as all narrative codes of this blog suggest, does not punish through direct censorship, but through ignorance, marginalization, disappearance within the algorithms of oblivion.

The author embodies this idea through his aesthetic choices:
– No personal photos– No cross-platform sharing– No promotion– No signature

All of this implies that the goal is not reach or recognition, but silent infiltration. He does not write to be heard, but to leave a small glitch in the network. As a literary hacker, he plants a sentence here, a deletion mark there, ambiguity elsewhere leaving a trace that cannot be easily erased. Perhaps the most striking line with which the author concludes the blog and with which we conclude this analysis is:

"I don't write to be read... I write so I don't become a silent number in an annual report on stillness."

With this sentence, the writer links his fragile self to a colossal system that measures everything... except pain. He transforms writing into a linguistic rebellion against classification, against analysis, against becoming just "data."

He does not want to be analyzed, but felt. Thus, this blog becomes a unique model of what might be called "infiltrative writing" writing that does not oppose the system from outside, but hacks it from within through symbolic, fragmented, and encrypted language inviting a participatory reader, not a consuming one.

5. Encryption as Salvation: A Reading of an Anonymous Arabic Blog Titled "As If I Were Never Born":

In the realm of Arabic digital blogs, the past decade has witnessed the emergence of new narrative patterns that unsettle the boundaries of confession and reshape the concept of the writing self within a space monitored both technically and socially. The blog "As If I Were Never Born", published under the pseudonym "No One," stands as a prominent example of this encrypted mode of writing. Its texts belong to what can be termed "phantom narrative" a narrative that deliberately seeks concealment, not for aesthetic obscurity, but as an existential stance and narrative resistance. The blogger opens the first post with the following:

"When I write, I say nothing. I write to disappear, not to reveal myself. Every letter I write resembles a mask I glue to my soul so my true face won't be read." This passage carries three layers of symbolic encryption:

1. An implicit negation of writing's expressive function.
2. The invocation of the mask metaphor as a rhetorical mechanism of protection.
3. The assertion that appearing in the digital space is tantamount to exposure something the blog consciously avoids.

This mode of writing reveals a constant sense of threat, not in the direct political sense, but in the cyber-psychological one, where the self is subject

to multilayered surveillance: algorithms, tracking, and the gaze of the digital other. This discursive position echoes Michel Foucault's analysis of modern mechanisms of confession, where he argues that confession once seen as a liberating act has become a tool for regulating discourse and converting it into a classifiable, consumable commodity (Michel, 1978, p. 61).

In this context, encrypted writing takes on a defensive role, resisting transformation into "readable data" or the digital objectification of the self. This defensive stance is reinforced by the blogger's use of purely technical metaphors to express emotions:

- "I live like a file pinned to the desktop no one opens it."
- "My feelings are zipped every day so they don't explode."
- "Every time I want to love, a window pops up asking me to update my system first."

These expressions form what could be called a "cybernetic metaphor of emotion", where feelings are compressed, encrypted, put on hold, updated or deleted. These metaphors affirm semiotically that language itself has become part of the battle over the self. The choice of the blog's title, "As If I Were Never Born," presents itself as a manifesto against appearance; the name insists on inhabiting a state of pre-digital life, something akin to voluntary cyber-exile.

The structure of the blog's posts reflects and extends its aesthetic and philosophical stance:

Each entry is written without a topical title, timestamped only by date and hour, and composed of short, fragmented passages, separated by visual gaps, ellipses (...), or symbolic notations such as // and ::.

This establishes what can be called a narrative of intentional fragmentation, where even silence becomes part of the discourse.

In one post (dated January 15, 2024 – 2:03 AM), we read:

"I delete the last sentence every time.
I write it... then I take it back.

Because the last sentence is always the one that gives me away."

This vignette clearly expresses a calibrated fear of completion—as if textual completion equals the completion of identity, and thus traceability. Withdrawal, deletion, and fragmentation are not merely stylistic choices, but strategies of digital survival. Analyzing this discourse semiotically, one could argue that the writing here takes the shape of end-to-end encryption: A text so encrypted it cannot be easily read, nor can its reference be precisely located. It creates a semantic maze that dismantles the expected effect of direct confession. This narrative recalls what Paul Ricœur described as the "self oscillating between disclosure and concealment," where identity does not manifest in clarity, but in the trace of absence (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 116).

The more the blogger withdraws from the sentence and leaves it suspended, the more their presence is felt as a self refusing erasure, yet avoiding the

banality of confessional writing. The temporal rhythm of the blog posts is also irregular, reinforcing the sense that the writing self is not operating on audience demand or platform engagement but according to an internal rhythm that resembles episodes of appearance and disappearance. In another post, the blogger writes:

"Whenever I sense that someone is starting to understand me, I close the page and disappear for days. I do not write to be understood, but to erase the trace."

This statement reinforces the blog's core philosophy of writing not as something meant to be easily decoded, but as a resistance to automated interpretation, psychological classification, and digital exploitation. It is a form of writing closer to instinctive poetry than to organized confession, making the act of reading more like a pursuit than a consumption.

One of the most striking features of "As If I Were Never Born" is the blogger's persistent displacement of the self from the center of the text. The "I" rarely appears as a distinct voice; instead, it flickers as a hesitant linguistic trace. The explicit first-person form is replaced by vague or broken expressions such as:

- "Maybe I was there..."
- "Someone who looked like me said that."
- "I won't say who I am, because I'm not sure I am that."

This narrative style exemplifies what can be called the negation of identity as a narrative strategy, or self-recession a clever way of writing in a space that constantly demands self-disclosure through digital ID cards (account, profile, name, image). Here, the writer resists this demand and chooses a fragile, elusive linguistic position, one that escapes representation. As Jean Baudrillard observed, the digital space has produced a new mode of semantic disappearance, where everything is excessively displayed—making disappearance the most radical act (Jean, 1994, p. 21). In this context, delayed, fragmented, hesitant writing that refuses full disclosure becomes a rebellious act against a culture of overexposure. This is made clear in one blog post:

"I don't want to heal. Healing means speaking. And I don't want to speak I want to be written as a symbol, understood without being revealed."

Here, aesthetic desire meets existential need: to be written not to be known, but to remain ambiguous, protected, encrypted. Thus, encryption transforms from a digital technique into an emotional rhetoric—a shield against the commodification of the self.

From a syntactic standpoint, the blog relies on short, clipped sentences with an interrupted internal rhythm, reinforcing the effect of fragmentation and supporting the primary semiotic function of the text: to keep the reader in a state of constant lack, a deliberate semantic void. The writer repeatedly uses non-linguistic symbols to achieve this effect:

... // ... ? ... ! ... // ...

This use of space and symbols resembles what is known in information design as white noise areas of deliberate emptiness used to disrupt visual control.

Similarly, here they are used to block instant reception, forcing the reader into compulsory delay. The result is a text resistant to fast consumption, one that demands a reader who does not merely read but hesitates, questions, and delays understanding.

Examining the lexical fields employed in the blog, we notice a marked frequency of terms borrowed from technical and cybernetic environments. This reflects a new linguistic awareness one that goes beyond traditional emotional expression to deploy a network of digital metaphors, producing what might be called “cyber poetics.” Frequent examples include:

- “My feelings are like temporary files deleted after the session ends.”
- “My heart’s been hacked since my last update.”
- “My memory runs on cloud storage but has no password.”
- “Every time I connect, I commit a new identity leak.”

This language doesn’t merely refresh the poetic lexicon it generates a new conception of the self: A self no longer a pure inner essence, but a complex network of relations, delays, anxiety, data, and uncertainty.

In this way, the writing shifts from emotional confession to a deeper level of conscious emotional obfuscation. From this perspective, the blog emerges as a symbolic performance within a surveillance system. What the self writes is not just a feeling it’s a negotiation with the machine: with audience expectations, algorithms, browser logs, and the unknown.

This is captured in one post:

“Every time I write, I imagine the face of the person who will report me. That’s why I place encrypted codes in every sentence... So even if I’m exposed, I still own the true decryption key.”

This sentence clearly shows that encryption in this form of writing is not merely art it is an existential defense structure. The writer does not speak from a position of control but from one of perpetual suspicion, and the text becomes the only space where meaning can be planted inside intentional camouflage, evading oppressive reading. Here, this stance intersects with Edward Said’s theory of exile as a site of writing, where writing becomes a temporary space of anxious belonging, a method of evasion rather than confrontation (Wadie, 2000, p. 173).

In this case, the digital blog represents a kind of “cyber exile”, allowing the self to exist on the margins, without being either mythologized or silenced. This kind of writing assumes a particular kind of reader: A reader who does not seek truth, but understands that truth is only ever spoken in disguise; that every sentence, every erasure, every metaphor is a code that may be decrypted but never fully trusted. In the blog’s final pages,

we witness the evolution of the self's discourse: encryption shifts from being a defense mechanism to becoming an ontological style of expression. Encryption is no longer merely a method of disappearance it transforms into an aesthetic structure that reconstructs language, emotion, and meaning. In one of the closing entries, we read:

"I want to write a text no one understands... but everyone feels. A text to be read with closed eyes... and that hurts without revealing. A text like a virus unseen, but infecting memory."

This intensive text forms an inner poetic declaration that defines the function of encrypted writing:

- to escape fast comprehension,
- to create an internal trace that resists analysis,
- to reside in the gray zone between absence and presence.

From a semiotic-interpretive standpoint, the blog establishes a mode of symbolic writing that can be described as "poetic non-confession," where the self is constructed not by declaration but by fragmentation. Language transforms from a communicative tool into a complex rhetorical mask one that protects more than it reveals. This writing also employs contemporary digital concepts like optical illusion, artificial intelligence, graphical interface not as decorative metaphors, but to reconfigure the self as a volatile digital interface: hackable, closable, uncentered, unstable. The blogger implicitly acknowledges that language has lost its original innocence and has become a minefield requiring deception and encryption. As he writes:

"Every truthful sentence... might kill me. So I wrap truth in a small lie, like a poison pill inside a digital apple."

Here we see a profound tension between the desire to reveal and the fear of exploitation. The result is texts that retain their internal warmth, yet are wrapped in calculated rhetorical coldness, like encrypted messages addressed to an ideal reader who understands them without unmasking them. Thus the blog begins and ends as it began: no name, no signature, no promotion, no face. The self that wrote the text remains, as intended, in a blurry zone only proving its existence when it disappears. "As If I Were Never Born" represents writing that rebels against the false transparency of digital platforms, reinventing confession within a symbolic structure that fuses linguistic encryption with cyber-fear. This is writing that does *not* complete meaning rather, it opens it to the invisible. It presents an alternative model: writing as aesthetic disappearance.

6. Conclusion:

In the contemporary context, the relationship between literature and cybersecurity reflects a major cultural and epistemological shift. Literary writing is no longer merely an emotional or aesthetic expression it has become a complex act where the desire to communicate intersects with the

need for protection, and personal expression encounters unseen control by platforms, algorithms, and social gaze.

This analysis has shown how the digital literary text today, especially in its digital form, is produced not in a vacuum but under a multi-layered surveillance system, forcing the writing self to rebuild its language, identity, and meaning in a manner that is elusive, hidden, and encrypted. By examining the architecture of encryption in several Arabic blogs, we've identified a new narrative pattern based on absence rather than presence, fragmentation over flow, and hesitation instead of disclosure. The "I" no longer appears as a coherent center but as a distorted linguistic trace, adept at hiding behind cyber metaphors and broken structures. This self no longer desires full understanding it seeks to preserve a part that remains outside the reach of algorithms, analysis, consumption, and definitive interpretation. Encryption, in this context, is no longer just a digital technique it becomes a poetic rhetoric, a narrative aesthetic, and a symbolic discourse expressing the fragility of human existence in a world where algorithms restrain language itself. Writing today no longer seeks to say something clearly it produces shadows of meaning, white spaces, deliberate voids that protect the writer from the trap of overexposure. Here, ambiguity becomes a form of truth, fragmentation a kind of defense, and hesitation an existential rhetoric. This perspective contributes to a rethinking of literature not only as expressive form but as a symbolic tool of resistance against the technological appropriation of the self. It proposes expanding literary criticism to incorporate concepts from cybersecurity and artificial intelligence, in order to understand how language, metaphor, and emotion are formed inside a digitally surveilled environment. As long as contemporary digital writing is produced in a space where the self is watched even in its moments of weakness and breaking, every text written today inevitably carries a cyber dimension, even if it seems emotional or poetic. Therefore, the study of these texts should not be confined to traditional methodologies; it must embrace new tools symbolic encryption, self-representation, aesthetics of concealment not as merely technical strategies but as existential necessities. We arrive, then, at a central conviction: the convergence of literature and cybersecurity is no longer a theoretical option it has become essential for understanding the conditions of writing today, and for comprehending the writing self itself a self that appears only by disappearing, reveals only by hiding, is read only by deliberately masking its trace because language itself is no longer safe, and survival in the digital age requires moving through an encrypted sentence, within a text that forgets itself so it can't be captured.

References:

1. Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.
2. Hayles, N. K. (2008). *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*. Notre Dame, Indiana, USA: University of Notre Dame Press.
3. Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, North Carolina, USA: Duke University Press.
4. Jean, B. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press. (Original work published 1981).
5. Michel, F. (1978). *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction* (R. Hurley, Trans, Original work published 1976 as *La volonté de savoir*). New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
6. Ricoeur, P. (1992). *Oneself as Another*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press.
7. Shoshana, Z. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: PublicAffairs.
8. Wadie, S. E. (2000). *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.