
Everyday and the Posthuman: Moments of Being in Meredith Katz's *The Cybernetic Tea Shop*

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Abstract

The exploration of “everyday” in literature often delves into the ordinary, mundane aspects of life that are typically overlooked or taken for granted. It involves examining the routines, experiences, moments of being, and interactions that make up the fabric of daily life and time to uncover meaning, beauty, and significance in the seemingly ordinary aspects of existence. This article attempts to make a theoretical analysis of the concept of everyday through the frameworks of Ben Highmore, Henri Lefebvre, Maurice Blanchot, and Rita Felski to analyze the intricate and complex layers of everyday that can transcend the common anthropocentric paradigm. Through a textual analysis of Meredith Katz's novelette *The Cybernetic Tea Shop* (2016), it has been found that the everyday touches the posthuman self too, where the nonhuman being who is sapient and has autonomy breaks the notion that everyday is only the domain of humans. This article seeks to unveil the relationship dynamics of the human and the posthuman subject, their interactions with the world around them, and how they perceive and in turn are seen moving through the spatio-temporal currents of their familiar routine and predictable life.

Keywords: Everyday; Existence; Moments of being; Ordinary; Posthuman.

Introduction

The concept of “everyday” in the context of human life encompasses a wide range of patterns from mundane activities, ordinary experiences, and daily routines which comprise the fabric of our existence. The theorization of everyday illuminates the complexity of how common and ordinary activities and objects are entangled in social, cultural, and personal dimensions. It is crucial to understand the nuanced dynamics of every-

day that shape our lives and societies, which Henri Lefebvre writes about in *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (1984) proposing a philosophical outlook of everyday life to unveil its contradictions, its mundane and ebullient aspects, its lack and abundance. Through this unconventional exploration, Lefebvre aims to unleash the vital creative forces embedded within the intricacies of daily existence. This notion of everyday incorporates two distinct perspectives, “a mundane social world, and a phenomenological relationship to that world” (Felski, 607), and thus it represents the paradigmatic nature of being taken for granted, referring to aspects of our behaviour, interactions that unfold without our deliberate awareness or assent as well as to prosaic happenings that occur subtly beneath our cognizance. Ben Highmore in *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday* (2011) writes, “Everything can become everyday, everything can become ordinary: it is our greatest blessing, our most human accomplishment, our greatest handicap, our most despicable complacency” (Highmore, 1).

The ambiguity and complexity of everyday can be better understood in a relational context, instead of trying to define it by specific characteristics, rather its structure needs to be explored, as how things are connected and disconnected. The most insightful perspective that we can adopt is to examine the interplay of routine and desire, which would help in explicating the “intersections of memory, need, forgetfulness, humour, and so forth” (Highmore, 2). The essence of ordinariness can be seen in the interplay of anxiety, joy, surprise, and accidents, but, at the same time, boredom, routine, habit, and familiarity are also integral to everyday life, and as such, defining the moods, emotions, rhythms of day-to-day life becomes pivotal. The questions that need to be asked in this regard are – “What orchestrations and intensities shape it? How does it transform into boredom? and how does boredom occasionally give way to spontaneity and exuberance?” (Highmore, 2). Rita Felski in this context says that “the extraordinary potential of ordinary life is also deemed to be latent, buried, embryonic, or repressed” (Felski, 609), which again echoes Lefebvre’s view that human beings often lack sufficient awareness of their needs and attitudes, articulating them poorly, deceiving themselves of their desires and aspirations, except for the most fundamental and general ones.

The most obvious term that we use to describe everyday is ordinary. Yet, the commonality of the term invokes the sense of a process where things and experiences are in a constant state of flux and change which depends on cognition, reflection, and description which is an essential part of day-to-day living. It is what Raymond Williams calls creativity, “the daily business of making sense of the world around us, of reflecting on it, of

narrating it and communicating to others, of learning about it and adopting and adapting the narrations and feelings available to us” (Highmore, 7). Discerning between the ordinary and extraordinary in day-to-day experiences allows for a nuanced understanding of the subtleties inherent in the tapestry of everyday life. The quotidian and the exceptional are intricately intertwined and they can be distinguished by observing the practices of daily life, and these differentiations play a crucial role that serves as a means to identify and acknowledge moments of experiential dissonance, the gravity, and urgency attached to phenomena as they impact consciousness (Felski, 617). Hence, it is not possible to define everyday concisely or convincingly based on its specific content or distinct ontological traits, instead, it can be more accurately comprehended as a manner of orienting oneself to the surroundings, where it can serve as a medium for understanding larger cultural systems and making them meaningful, cognizable that aligns with human scale experience. Maurice Blanchot in “Everyday Speech” writes that the commonplace nature of everyday life can be likened to what remains overlooked and discarded—the residual existence that fills our waste bins and burial grounds, consisting of scraps and refuse, which is an ordinary aspect is also profoundly significant, particularly if it reconnects us with the immediacy of existence as it unfolds in the present moment. This lived experience eludes any theoretical analysis and may defy logical consistency or regular patterns (Blanchot, 13).

Everyday and the Posthuman

The inefficiency of an anthropocentric/humanistic worldview in giving a credible answer to the question of ‘what counts as human’ is the factor that necessitated a shift towards (post)humanism. Since the 1980s, science fiction literature and movies have used the provocative idea that intelligent machines can be more human than human beings, and can exist in their own right rather than having a merely instrumental value. The term posthuman is broadly applied to refer to anything that transcends or exceeds human capabilities, involving a radical acknowledgment that technology constitutes a fundamental aspect of human logic, encompassing an ethical sensibility, and signifying a departure from the anthropocentric paradigm. In this context, posthumanism should not be viewed as a subsequent phase in human development, rather it needs to be perceived from a theoretical standpoint that highlights the persistent flaws in the rigid definitions of humanity. Most notably, the term is used to denote a shifting in the position of human beings, a deprivileged outlook that expresses an emancipatory ethical framework that decenters the human from the central position of legitimizing meaning, which is based on re-

alizing the basic fact that human existence is intricately tied to the non-human entities, both biological and technological as exemplified in the concept of cyborg, and this “relational capacity of the posthuman subject is not confined within our species, but includes all non-anthropomorphic elements” (Braidotti, 6). Posthumanism and its variations in the present era employ new approaches to understanding what it means to be human, and technology in this context deconstructs the human experience of agency, free will, choice, and self, thereby influencing and expanding the realms of ordinary, daily life.

The juxtaposition of the posthuman with everyday life involves a broad spectrum of possibilities, ranging from technological aspects to profound shifts in consciousness and identity, where there is a dynamic, adaptable, continuously evolving, and redefined relationship with the environment. A posthuman being, like its human counterpart, might tend constantly to pursue self-improvement, a definite goal embedded into their mind, and nurture the emotional and intellectual aspects integral to their daily existence, challenging the conventional notions of embodiment through synthetic bodies, whether it is a robot or artificial intelligence. The problem that we face while using the posthuman and ‘everyday’ in conjunctive ways is the question of how we view posthuman entities like robots/artificial intelligence – as an object, a thing, or an individual with sentience and autonomy? In this context, “robots are not just passive extensions of ourselves” (Kaplan, 61), and as they attain decision-making abilities, autonomy, and the capacity to adapt/interact with the environment independently, they transcend the conventional role of machines, becoming active agents with their unique personalities and functionalities. Then, some questions need to be asked - Are their lives ordinary? Do they attach themselves to the world of things? and live out their lives in the midst of things taking notice of those paraphernalia, or do they receive “daily inattention” (Highmore, 58) like human beings do for the familiar things in life? The answer might lie in a basic differentiation of essence, regarding the posthuman condition as being humane, sapient, rather than just being sentient, “the often tragic and always charged atmosphere of things, they all produce a pull towards the reality of the world” (Neruda, qtd. in Highmore, 60).

Here, we might bring in the notion of “inundation” where the ambiance and environment affect things from outside and inside whether they are human or not (Highmore, 60), and “inundations also suggest qualities that may or may not have meaning” (Highmore, 60) but, which might also possess tangible properties that might resist being reduced to the mere

conceptualization and symbolic representation (Highmore, 60). The way in which an autonomous, intelligent, and sentient/sapient robot interacts and explores the world around them, learning and absorbing information, and experiences, evolving in behaviour by coming into contact with things animate and inanimate, there is a heightened complexity in the process, a “blurred impurity” (Highmore 60) that obscures the distinction between the constructed binaries of the human and the posthuman and their dynamic relationship to the world around them. Inundation might happen to be many things – memories associated with objects, a sense of belonging to a place, longings or wishes to be honoured, setting a particular desire as the ultimate goal, and, relationships; and, all these varied elements help in maintaining the composure in the monotony of everyday life where there are no wonders to behold, only daily routine following the familiar pattern that seems to be tedious and stagnant. The non-human counterparts who are thus, immersed in the insignificant daily currents of life in human society become enmeshed in the mundane aspects of living and carry on with the tasks they are assigned, or choose to busy themselves with ordinary acts, and each day is always perceived through the lens of past experiences, creating an illusion of familiarity that is constitutive of the everyday itself.

Moments of Being and the Mundane Familiarities in *The Cybernetic Tea Shop*

When we hear the adage that life is measured in moments, it is to be mindful and cherish the daily lives we live filled with joy, grief, beauty, loss, and hope, encouraging us to contemplate and retrospect the moments that have shaped us, the values we hold dear, the things we wish to leave behind and move on in life. Meredith Katz in her novelette *The Cybernetic Tea Shop* (2016) narrates a captivatingly simple story about a human technician and a fully autonomous sapient robot, who remains an anomaly in society, as creating human-like robots was declared illegal due to ethical issues. The story has a futuristic tone and yet the human and the non-human characters trudge through their everyday life, engaging themselves in activities that give them a sense of comfort, an identity, and a reason to carry on. The two primary characters of the story in Katz’s narrative – Sal, the autonomous robot who continues to run a tea shop inherited from her former master for almost two and half centuries, and Clara, a highly skilled technician with her “Raise AI” hummingbird companion both grapple with their sense of belonging, and when they encounter each other, begin to learn about the eccentricities of each other, they both carve a space in which there is a mutual recognition and acceptance in a soci-

ety that views the non-human being as the other. The narrative offers the readers to glimpse into the brief slices of life from two different perspectives – a robot who seems to be out of place in a world that views her as an object of distrust, and a human who longs for a connection in her dull life.

Sal and her tea shop is as ordinary a space as it can be, and it is the only place where Sal feels a connection to the world of things, saturated with the remembrances of her past owner who made a home out of that place. Her daily life consists of baking, waiting for customers, making tea and soup, donating uneaten food to the homeless, cleaning and rinsing the utensils, and then resting for a short period of time. When a customer comes, she welcomes them, offers the ordered items describes them to the customers, and also makes small conversation for the sake of politeness, and then leaves the humans to their privacy. In a broader perspective, the shop itself can be termed as an “evocative object” (qtd. in Highmore, 72) in the words of Sherry Turkle, an object that possesses the powerful ability to signify qualities beyond its intended use or functionality, which also at the same time reminds us of our material nature indicating that there is an animating force at the core of all things and people, and how a particular object can have a profound impact in life. This can be seen especially in the context of how Sal is reminded of her previous owner Karrine and her fear of being unable to fulfill Karrine’s wish of running the shop for three hundred years.

The shop is a space that becomes charged which can be termed as “cathexis” (Highmore, 73), “the transfer of energy from a person to another person, or thing or idea. It is what can make an idea ‘loaded’, or can make someone phobic about certain objects and phenomena” (Highmore, 73). Sal remains rooted in her quiet and ordinary existence through the shop, attaching herself to it with an emotional intensity not because the shop is filled with loved memories of the past, but because her identity itself is connected to the past desire of her owner regarding the shop, rather than the shop itself. The tea shop thus becomes an evocative object that repeatedly symbolizes and recreates the atmosphere of love, care, and loss, signifying how Sal integrates her longing, emotions, her anguish into her everyday routine, and in fact, she focuses more on the aspect of loss and failure more intensely rather than trying to think of the future and moving on if the shop is destroyed.

The actions and decisions of everyday, however mundane they are, give insights about individual values, beliefs, and priorities, and in addition to these, moments of introspection, and self-reflection reveal the deeper

aspects of their inner lives and personal growth. These moments occur during periods of transition or crisis often unexpectedly and triggered by sense impressions or memories when one can get glimpses into a deeper reality beyond the mundane routines of daily life, which Virginia Woolf termed as 'moments of being' in her autobiographical essay, "A Sketch of the Past." If we look at the character of Clara, along with her Raise companion Joanie at the beginning of the story, they are preparing to leave the town, and both of them can't decide on a destination, and idly spend their time, and "the following days seemed to pass both in a blur and agonizingly slowly" (Katz, 13), but, when Clara encounters Sal for the first time, it is a 'moment of being' for her, a rare instance of authenticity and vividness, a revelation that lifts the veil of ordinary perception, seeing a live robot for the first time in her life, "For a moment, Clara couldn't bring herself to move. She could hardly bring herself to breathe" (Katz, 23). Clara constantly moves from one place to another but finds in Sal's teashop a genuine reason to stay, build a connection, and help her nonhuman counterpart in an empathetic way, thereby becoming a part of Sal's everyday and the mundane recurrences of her life.

Lefebvre writes that "Everyday life is made of recurrences: gestures of labour and leisure, mechanical movements both human and properly mechanical, hours, days, weeks,...(Lefebvre, 19), and we find this pattern in Sal's life, as she activates herself for the day, checks the online reservation list, waits for the walk-ins into her shop, anticipates the income for the day, and begins preparing the menu, and, after doing all the daily tasks necessary to maintain the shop, she rests and recharge. When there are no customers, the day becomes unbearable for her, filled with a sense of anxiety and sadness, she does not mind the busy days when she has no moments to rest, but on the days when there is nothing to do, Sal finds that difficult - "the drawn out, slow meaninglessness of a day where there was too little to do" (Katz, 14). In one instance we get to see Sal interacting with a customer couple, a man and a woman - the man had visited her shop three years ago, and the woman views Sal with dubiousness and fascination, assessing her against the notion of "human being and womanhood while being recognized as something totally unfamiliar" (Katz, 15), but, for her, it was just business, as she was used to it. After bringing the ordered items to them, Sal notices a ring on the woman's finger and asks if it is a special occasion for them, and the couple becomes enlivened with genuine joy speaking about their engagement, and the joyous look on the woman's face triggers loving memories of her previous owner Kar-rine and she becomes lost in those remembrances. Sal keeps a smiling face and congratulates them, goes back to her pantry and ponders about the

issue with her battery, shutting down her access to her memory, waits for the customers to finish their food and tea, and goes back to her counter with a smile. When the customers leave, the shop becomes empty and silent, and to Sal “that felt strange even though it was the normal state of things” (Katz, 18). These recurrences laced with emotions and feelings from the past serve as a link between inner and outer life giving it a force and meaning, and we find within Sal, a duality of the quotidian and the modern characterized by the humble and consistent nature of things in her space, that is the tea shop, where the taken-for-granted regularity is complemented by the ethics of routine and aesthetics of familiar surroundings, and on the other hand, she represents a novelty, an advanced pinnacle of technology saturated in worldly experiences, that is enduring, daring in the fact that she defies reification.

Maurice Blanchot wrote that the essence of the everyday remains unseen even as it unfolds in reality, untouched by any event, whether significant or trivial and in the realm of the everyday, nothing noteworthy occurs; it simply persists in its ordinary state. The repetition that we notice in Sal and Clara’s lifestyle can be termed as “mindless instinctual rhythms” (Felski, 613) where the spatiotemporal nature of everyday life is unveiled in a complex sequence of “repetition and linearity, recurrence, and forward movement” (Felski 613). Everyday is filled with the general noises of life, and Clara’s day starts at seven thirty in the morning with her Raise Joanie waking her up, cooking eggs for breakfast, and then walking to work, and she does not stay in any place for more than a year. Being a tech mechanic there were jobs wherever she wanted to go, to any city, and live in adequate comfort, and her work days went by fairly quickly. She ate her lunch at nearby cafes, and she went for a walk around the area which made her realize how long she had been living here – “the shops were so familiar she couldn’t pay attention to any of them, nothing like the new and exciting explorations when she’d first arrived here” (Katz, 10). The everyday existence is characterized by its ambiguous and deceptive nature, where life unfolds in a blend of dreary and lively situations, where nothing reaches its full potential, and everything remains incomplete, boundaries blur, distinctions fade away, and everything merges into an impure amalgamation. Instead of flourishing, life is marred by fragmentation. Describing it requires focusing on what it is not rather than what it is, because, “It is our “daily bread” of habits and outlooks that folds the glorious potential of each new day under the reality of routine, duties to others” (Revol, and Shields, x) and as such “everyday life” is a field of relations and bodies, not to be reduced to a static concept.

In Sal's case, the teashop also becomes a diversion, of coping with the sense of alienation and loneliness, memories of loss and love, which can be seen as "the perpetual alibi of an ambiguous existence" (Blanchot, 13), as she was "used to constantly being treated as a thing" (Katz, 26), a novelty, an oddity, a belonging. While the world around her is in constant change along with the social surroundings, she is the one who is tied to the shop, unchanging, bound to the wishes of her past owner Karrine who loved and took care of her as a person, not as a thing. When an incident of vandalism happens in the shop, Sal is terrified of the intruders finding her and destroying her shop, of hurting her beyond repair which would result in Karrine's dream being unfulfilled. Sal wants to abandon that distant dream of her past, but she finds it a sacrilege to do so, even her thoughts and feelings revolve around Karrine, the anxiety that her system is going to break down from memory and charging errors, she wants to keep the loved memory and dream of her past owner alive.

This indecision and restless quietude afflicts Sal's very being, and yet when Clara offers to do certain repairs and check Sal's system for free, as a friend, she becomes overwhelmed with bittersweet emotion, and this is a 'moment of being' for her when Clara becomes a sort of miracle that appears unexpectedly in her uneventful life, revealing a clear and simple truth that transcends the uncertainties of her everydayness – that Karrine would have wanted her to be happy, to grow and change, to become the individual she wanted to be. All these accumulations of small things constitute the everyday and its ordinary patterns, and there appears a crack in Sal's continuous flow of everyday life, and there are interruptions, disturbances as well, such as, her shop being destroyed, painful memories, fear, desperate longings for companionship, and amidst all these disruptions the humdrum of daily life goes on without affecting others, but there is also "A mood, a rhythm, a feeling provides a stage on which the ordinary events and happenings of the everyday unfold" (Highmore, 1) which is seen in the emotional behaviour of Sal, as she becomes calm and anxious at the next moment, happy and sad, frustrated and indifferent, suffers from an existential crisis at the thought of losing her shop. In such a state, individuals are unaware that they are being held by the mundane routines of everyday life, which echoes in the words of Lefebvre that "The everyday is the same for everyone, there is scarcely any hope that this will ever change" (qtd. in Blanchot, 19).

Clara's everyday life however is different from the monotonous pattern of Sal, as it is filled with "inventiveness, questioning, spontaneity, and ad-hoc problem solving" (Felski, 614) because being a technician allows

her to immerse into the work of repairing the pet raises, solving technical errors in basic AI programming and musing over problems related to technology. When Clara makes the proposition to look into the problems regarding Sal's system, she gets busy for a month looking for all the essential supplies that will be required for the endeavor, and she tries to alternate between her work and spending time at the tea shop, helping Sal to set up, sort through the boxes of new cups and plates, hanging the pictures on the walls so that the shop would be in a much better condition to remain open. Meanwhile, she also ponders about her wanderlust, the need to keep moving from one place to another, and yet, "she wanted to see Sal more and more, a desire almost as strong as her desire to see the world" (Katz, 38). Clara tries to keep her composure and organize the space of her apartment just like an ordinary home, but she owns so little that her space does not have an atmosphere, and when Sal learns about it, she becomes a little sad, because in the words of Raymond Williams, "'ordinary' signaled a commitment to the messy, provisional and deeply corporeal 'whole ways of life'" (Highmore, 7), but, it also does not mean consistency or coherency, rather it refers to embracing life in its fragmented, dynamic, and unpredictable nature where the 'ordinary' points to a world teeming with vitality, an unique individuality. Clara's spontaneity is in her desire to keep moving and exploring new places, a sense of adventure, and her mode of existence represents a commitment to embracing the complex and fluid nature of life barring all the arbitrary distinctions of it regarding work and love, attachment and detachment, which indicates an acknowledgment to the "heuristic and prespecialised gestalt of life" (Highmore 7) which might be an unattainable ideal, but can be a worthwhile pursuit.

The everyday life and its ordinariness are reflected in the possibilities, or more adequately probabilities, that are presented in Katz's text depicting a future that is framed by precedent, a futuristic world where anthropocentrism still prevails, and while the narrative is narrow in its scope of representation regarding the human and the nonhuman, the encounter between them is depicted within the context of real, natural everyday life. The reader in this context remains a passive spectator witnessing a fantasy that unveils a seamless connection between the world depicted in the story and the lived experiences that permeate the varied courses of real life. Both Clara and Sal, hence become a reference point that suggests a vivid and tangible present through a linguistic mediation that serves as a distinct form of future history and existence in which everyday life is reflected as a form, a stratum, a mode of being in understanding and negotiating the experience of the human and the posthuman subject. This can be seen more clearly in the instance where Clara and Sal confess their mutual

affection and enter into an asexual relationship where love and emotional intimacy persist that transcends the predictable normalcy of human affairs, and yet it becomes a “surprisingly comfortable pattern” (Katz, 45). Sal enjoys this change in her life, but she does not pretend that it makes her feel “more human” (Katz, 45), and she continues to follow her usual routine of waking up early in the morning to open her shop, preparing the tea, getting the food ready for Clara which she felt much nicer doing for a person she enjoyed sharing a companionship. She bought new clothes, and shoes for going out which indicates a change in her habits that were stagnant before the arrival of Clara, which now evolved into a certain degree of excitement, that made “Life feel different somehow, despite still being the same routine for the majority of the day” (Katz, 46).

Everyday life does not remain static, it is also at times a “storehouse of anarchy” “indifferent and curious”, and “unstable” (Blanchot, 17) where the sense of life sometimes becomes disrupted in perilous interruptions where the vicissitude becomes abominable, and therein lies the “dangerous essence of the everyday” (Blanchot, 19) which is suffused with uneasiness that entraps the self. Toward the end of the story, we get to see how Sal’s teashop is destroyed by arsonists and she becomes embroiled in helplessness and despair, fear and shock seeing her space of belonging, her home going up in flames, and she is unable to face that grievous loss of her dream that was tied to the memories and desire of her beloved past owner. She becomes numb staring at the wreckage of her shop, and when Clara comes to offer her support, she tells her the history of almost similar incidents that occurred before which she overcame somehow. She laments the fact that she will not be able to rebuild the shop once again as she does not have sufficient money, and the very fact traumatizes her and makes her want to give up, which is further stressed by the truth of Clara moving away. She says that she is “physically incapable of moving on. Of letting go... caught in the tangled mess of emotions churning inside...” (Katz, 50), an urge to follow Clara, and remaining entrenched in the desire and dream of her deceased beloved owner Karrine, and taking the final step of cutting down the ties that fettered her to the place. She urges Clara to remove the registration, to let go of the past, and when the task is done she does not feel empty, “not lacking love, not lacking grief” (Katz, 51), rather she feels everything – the change, loss and confusion, the warmth of trust emanating from Clara, an inundation of varied feelings that hurt her deeply, and yet she becomes capable of accepting the truth that the shop was gone, just like her beloved owner Karrine was gone, inevitably, trying to understand what she was now that she was not defined by the ‘structures of feeling’ chained to the substances of her past –

She didn't really feel okay, not yet. She felt lonely. There was a hole inside her that she'd never had before, an empty spot where a sense of belonging-to had previously been... She felt a little scared and very unsure of where things were going to go. But she also felt like she would be okay eventually.... She felt like there was potential in front of her, even if she had very little to hold onto right now. (Katz, 51-52).

After the removal of her registration, Sal tries to cope with her feeling of change, her disorientation and her lived experience goes on in an intricate interplay of regularity and newness corresponding to the exigencies of her present life condition. Everything went by as usual, including the hearing at court for the people who committed the act of arson upon her shop, and although she disliked court proceedings, she had to go through it as she did before, and endured in her own way. Sal wanted to occupy herself at work to relieve her monotony, and as she was habituated to working, she felt directionless without anything to do, but she had lost the shop and nobody liked to hire a sapient robot instead of a human, so, she started making her own tea blends to sell online to keep herself busy. Keeping oneself busy is again a relevant aspect of everyday awareness which is permeated with thoughts about time, and this awareness is reflected in the changes of calendars, clocks, and seasonal change, and it is designated by linguistic markings of now, before, and after. It is through time that the changes, drifting, closeness, and remoteness where every individual remains conscious about the world and differentiates between different levels of temporality. Katz elegantly describes this phenomenon - "Months passed, and the rain began to be broken up by sunnier days.

The cherry trees began to blossom, lost petals to the ground" (Katz, 53), which reflects the everyday reality continuously and finitely, where every existence is naturally ordered by its time, and this temporality determines the situation of individuals in the world of everyday life. Clara faces this when she feels that it is time for her to travel once again, but she also does not want to leave Sal alone, and as such she asks Sal to come with her and see the world. Sal hesitantly accepts the offer, as she has never left Seattle before, but she finds that the desire was always within her to see new sights and experience things that she hadn't been able to before. Clara also comes to a realization knowing Sal's situation with Karrine, that her parents too are not going to live forever, and none will, even Sal, though she would last more longer than any human until her code and system deteriorated completely. Sal considered it fine as long as she could have the loving company of Clara, she will have the strength to live on with hope -

she could keep travelling, keep moving on as long as she lasted. If she didn't, she could settle down. There might be other people in the future; there might not. There might be other shops in the future; there might not. It wasn't an endless future, and it wasn't one with a clearly defined goal, but maybe that was what living actually felt like (Katz, 55)

Conclusion

The theoretical paths of everyday focus on the ordinary aspects of routine and habit, work and leisure, disruptions and emergence, their humanism, intimacy, longing, pleasure, and pain associated with these varied spheres of life. Furthermore, in the progress of modernity and rationalization, everything becomes stripped to bare abstractions, which can be seen in literature and art where the depictions of everyday life differ significantly not only because the everyday lacks the systemic structures and connections, but also because the linear progression, which Lefebvre and others view as unidirectional and prone to forgetting, actually possesses bidirectional qualities. This bidirectionality results in a comprehensive continuum, and just when it seems that everything is advancing, there are simultaneous movements in the opposite direction. In Meredith Katz's text, we see the mechanism driving this reaction is the perceiving post-Cartesian subject Sal, who ultimately uncovers an open present, whose individual experiences guide conceptualization rather than the other way around, plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions and understanding of reality. Hence, in the realm of 'everyday life studies,' where the concepts of unity and diversity intersect, it is the universal rather than the specific that takes precedence, which turns the everyday into a collective subconscious, an unconscious extension of the past into the present. In the analysis of *The Cybernetic Tea Shop*, and the philosophy associated with it, the dynamic is essentially reversed: there's a continuation of the present, a sense of aftermath, which represents an experience filled with a multiplicity of feelings and serves as a vessel for what Bloch terms 'real possibility' – a reflection on what could, or what will be, which is both adaptable and prone to movement. Sal, as the subject of the everyday is caught in the varied forms of attention and attachment that keep her busy, the distractions of her overburdened memories, the vague apprehension that something is going to happen, and she constantly searches for an escape route from these forces, but within the banality of the built space in her tea shop, the dull routine of drifting and the occasional trouble, she becomes attuned to these and responds accordingly. The narrative of Katz's novelette focuses on the ordinary aspects of everyday life in a manner that is grounded in

reality – empathetic, mindful, and inclusive – rather than viewing it as a realm for potential critique or as something transcendent, thereby giving an insight into the basic essence of humanism in a non-human being, intimacy, and aesthetics within the “material actuality of everyday life as it is lived out” (Highmore, 17).

Note: The author has used the ebook version of Katz’s Text (Digital ISBN 9781620047378) for the analysis, hence the page numbers referred to in the in-text quotations might vary in the paperback version.

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