Research article

Architectural Space and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Arkady Martine's *Rose House*: Reading Spatiality and AI/Human Dichotomies

Ritu Ranjan Gogoi [iD] ✉

Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya (MSSV).

Abstract

Sci-fi literature has become an important genre that explores and reflects on the societal anxieties, ethical quandaries, and existential threats concerning the trajectory of AI advancements, possibilities, and consequences of AI technologies. The objective of this article is to highlight the intersection of architectural space and artificial intelligence in Arkady Martine's sci-fi novella *Rose House* (2023). A critical reading of Martine's text reveals the poetics of space juxtaposed with the issues and complexities of artificial intelligence that unfolds new paradigms in which the relationship between people and place, space and *being*, the binaries of human and the non-human (AI) can be contemplated within a posthumanist framework of Rosi Braidotti and Heidegger's notion of *being*. Moreover, the article utilizes the ideas of space syntax theory, and Henri Lefebvre's ideas of space to analyze how spatial configurations (real and imagined) have an impact on human behaviour and actions in shaping space while interacting with artificial intelligence within the spatial dimensions of a house.

Keywords: Sci-fi, Artificial intelligence, architectural space, house, human, posthuman, spatial, being.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS   **Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**

Introduction

> The analytical engine weaves algebraic patterns, just as the Jacquard loom weaves flowers and leaves. (Ada Lovelace)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the fastest growing fields which encompasses a wide variety of areas ranging from general learning to specific fields like business, bioinformatics, healthcare, robotics, education, automotive, and security, and it continues to evolve, finding applications in new areas with the rapid advancement of technology. The term Artificial Intelligence (AI) is hard

to define in strict terms, because, we human beings hold a dynamic understanding of *intelligence* itself – and as such, AI on one hand, it refers to the programs that can emulate the traits, behaviours, and knowledge of an intelligent being, or, it can be said that AI is a non-biological entity that has intelligence comparable or exceeding to that of a human being and is often characterized as having "consciousness, sentience, or self-awareness in human or non-human understanding of these terms" (Solarewicz, 2015, p. 114). As further developments are seen in AI, there is a growing trepidation among intellectuals regarding the existential risk for humanity in the rise of AI, fearing it would go beyond human control. Singulatarianism is one such school of thought that deals with the futuristic scenario of intelligence explosion and its potential effects on human civilization and its existence on this earth.

Kyle Steinfeld in this context says, "The AI effect cuts two ways: devaluing the significance of advancement in the science of the artificial, while simultaneously mobilizing a reconsideration of the human" (Steinfeld, 2021, p. 3), suggesting that we need to reexamine and reorient our understanding of what it means to be human with the advent of advanced AI systems and initiate a discourse on the ethical, philosophical, and socio-political implications regarding our position in a world that is increasingly driven towards the proliferation of AI. In the canon of science fiction literature, various authors have explored the multifaceted aspects surrounding the issues of artificial intelligence (AI) – Karel Capek's *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)* (1921), Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), Ian M. Banks' *Consider Phlebas* (1987), Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age* (1995), Daniel Suarez's *Daemon* (2006) Annalee Newitz's *Autonomous* (2017), and Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* (2019) are some literary works that explore a diverse range of perspectives illuminating a dynamic discourse on the challenges, the issues of autonomy, consciousness, ethics, and the impact of AI upon human civilization.

In Arkady Martine's novella *Rose House,* we find a human-like intelligence that is embodied, housed, and integrated within the physical structure itself, the spatiality of it, where the AI and space do not gaze at each other but rather are mutually embedded (Ettlinger and Bosco, 2004). In the novella, the house is "the seat of the rational and intellectual, and emotion, insight, and intuition" (Faderman, 2021, p. 127). The recognizable human-like intelligence unveils a complex and futuristic vision of AI that highlights the "intuition, flexibility of thought and action" (Faderman, 2021, p. 127), and the nuanced portrayal of such an artificial intelligence by Martine suggests a more "organismal, less constrained artificial mind" (Faderman, 2021, p. 127). The ambiguous narrative of *Rose House* raises some serious doubts about the politics and morality of human relationships with technology like AI by reflecting on the problem of how the "gaze of an AI on a human subject destabilizes the object/subject divide and creates a moment for meditative thinking" (Sims 23). In this context, the nature of AI within Martine's novella can also be understood through the Heideggerian notion of *being* which Rojcewicz views as, "com-posing [*gestell/enframing*] is a certain guise of *being*, a certain way *being* unconceals itself, a certain way *being* looks at us" (Sims, 2013, p. 106).

Architectural Space and Artificial Intelligence

Bachelard has said that "our house is our corner of the world. It is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word" (Bachelard, 1964, p. 2) which cannot be just considered as an object, rather it should be looked at intimately where the varied shadings of personal attachments become a psychological phenomenon, as it reflects on "how we inhabit our vital space, in accord with all the dialectics of life, how we take root, day after day, in a corner of the world" (Bachelard, 1964, p. 2). In this sense, "any architectural design should support and invigorate the mode of life for which the building was made" (Seamon, 2023, p. 122). A house, if seen as an architectural structure occupying a certain place, has its own space dynamic and ambiance where the "actions, events, situations and experiences associated with and activated by individuals constitutes the various lifeworlds which the house either sustains or undermines" (Seamon, 2023, p. 123). The titular house/building in Arkady Martine's *Rose House* which can be called architectural artificial intelligence (AAI) controls the spaces within it, and as a result of the omnipresent AI there is a kind of "existential outsideness" (Seamon, 2023, p. 125), that is, a sense of discomfort and alienation that emanates from the house for the individual who is in it –

> Deniau's houses were haunted, to begin with. All of them: but Rose House was the last built and the best. An otherwise place…. (Martine, 2023, p. 1).

The story of the novella begins with the mention of death, the death of the person within the house that he built, which became his "greatest architectural triumph" (Martine, 2023, p. 1). Basit Deniau called it Rose House, the structure which became as famous as the architect who built it, and since his death, the house had been sealed and the AI would not allow anyone within its premises apart from Deniau's protégé Dr. Selene Gisil. The house itself can be called a dominated space, as it decides who should be allowed and who should not be granted access to its domain, and it could be called the "realization of a master's project, and transformed by technology, closed, sterilized and emptied out" (qtd. in Stanek, 2011, p. 87). Rose House, the structure itself is more of a museum, a building, rather than just a house or a dwelling place, which Deniau designed himself out of the need to immortalize himself, as evident in his act of death, where his corpse was compressed and transformed into a diamond to be displayed on a plinth in the house. It is a repository of his notes, his drawings, and vast collections of art to be safeguarded from the outside world. During a murder investigation, regarding a dead body within the house, the house refused to give entry to an investigative officer Maritza Smith as she did not have a warrant. The house asks her an intriguing question – "What is a building without doors, Maritza? Rose House asked her, blandly inquisitive. Have you opinions?" (Martine, 2023, p. 14). This compels the reader to look at the dynamics where only Dr. Selene Gisil is allowed to enter the house once a year for a week, where she can see Deniau's sketches, and blueprints, and make her notes, but she cannot click any photographs or make copies, otherwise, Rose House will deem her an intruder and expel her into the desert.

In this context, the function of Rose House is to maintain supplementary control and total surveillance of its spatiality, because it operates within the concept of need and want of its creator which was imbued and integrated into one architectural vessel. The house in its practice of closing and limiting spaces, cleaning, and storing can be analyzed as pragmatic interventions in space, in marking and organizing it for appropriation to the delineated needs of its creator who is dead.

The house asserts itself as a structure of equilibrium that rejects any kind of social, political, or aesthetic intrusion which implies instrumentalized rationality, which makes it an entity of internal dependencies as it focuses on the interrelations of objects, images, words, people only about the elements within its system to make meaningful interactions. The spaces within the house itself represent only an illusion of freedom, and although the house itself is not an open totality, it operates on certain predetermined conditions, for example – only Dr. Selene Gisil could enter the house, which has been encoded into its very being by its creator, but it also improvises on certain instances such as the moment when Gisil compels the house to allow the investigative officer Maritza to enter its premises. Selene argues with the house presenting a twisted logic that Maritza is not a person, instead, she is the place that she represents, she is the precinct, a summation of the authority of the local law. The house explores the interstices, and gaps between its encoded systems and exercises its consciousness over things and objects that draw its interest.

Rose House as a structure has a faintly modernist style with an adobe grandeur, filled with high ceilings and a long hall that gives it the look of a colonnade, along with rooms to its left and right, but no way to reach them. The house is cold and quiet, as one of the characters Maritza says that it was devoid of any dust. She describes the feeling of being lost, and Dr. Gisil says that the house has a personality of its own, and is quite similar to its maker Basit Deniau, and even though the house is not a *lived space* anymore "it produces, secretes, and occupies a space" (qtd. in Stanek, 2011, p. 130). Dr. Gisil says –

> It's a shape. It's a way of pulling you in. Of making you want to be coerced inside. It's very Basit. The most Basit of all of his houses (Martine, 2023, p. 30).

The house possesses an invisible panoptic gaze, seeing and hearing everything, which makes us question the idea of privacy itself, in this case, the gaze is leveled against the two humans who have entered into its realm, and as such it is unable to comprehend the meaning of individual or private space – "You're inside these walls; the question of listening or not listening implies a deliberate decision entirely alien to my nature. I *am* Rose house" (Martine, 2023, p. 31) which suggests the fact that the varied stylistic and physical qualities of floors, walls, windows, roofs, corridors, rooms of a building leads to different experiences of motion, and substance, where there is an "intricate set of tensions between architectural elements and architectural experience" (Seamon, 2023, p. 130) which is visceral and effective. Rose House, in this context, is not an abstract space, rather it is an "enclosed and humanized space" (Tuan, 1977, p. 54), and at the same time "it gives greater weight to functional issues such as the control of territory" (Flint, 2006, p. 2-3), where the boundaries of inside/outside, inclusion/exclusion amplifies the notion of sovereignty and impacts the "spatiotemporality" (Sassen, 2000, p. 215). The AI within the house is a manifestation of power that is embedded in a complex assemblage of interactions, interests, negotiations, struggles, and events (Passi & Zimmerbauer, 2016).

Rose House has a hypnotic effect upon anyone who looks at it, the interior spaces even more so. The sky-high ceilings and the dark corridors suddenly transform into a bright dazzling room, it appears to be like a beautiful garden, picturesque, and this expressive architectural space is materialist, technical, and physio-psychological, because, it is only in this enclosed space where memories of lived experiences emerge, interactions happen between the humans and the intangible thinking mind of the house. The house, as a result, becomes the space of representation

that receives meaning from symbolic objects, grand narratives, and "elementary forms of appropriation of nature" (Lefevre, qtd. in Stanek, 2011, p. 131) like the garden, and flowers that evoke memories and sensations of the past – "Basit had thought of gardens as memory-plazas" (Martine, 2023, p. 32). The scent of wet dirt, perfumes, and too much light within the house space "assumes the half-real, half-imaginary existence of commodities, appearing cut off from the practices that produced them" (Stanek, 2011, p. 128). This reduction of nature into beautified abstractions simulating the feel of the real becomes a blend of reality and illusion undisturbed by human intervention, and this recreation of naturality within the artificial structure of the house gives the human Dr. Gisil a chance to recollect the lived happiness, sensuousness in an odd sort of waking dream. In the spaces of Rose House, everything is real and everything is in perfect equanimity, everything appears to be peaceful, but also cold and desolate which no longer has happiness and safety, a sense of naturality that we find in lived spaces of a home, but the place and structure itself signifies prestige, as understood through the reference of the legendary architect who built it. It is a space where every relation is put into suspension and remains as a silent spectacle, isolated, and yet the life of Dr. Selene Gisil is inextricably tied to the house, a symbiotic synthesis where her functional individuality is positioned within the spectrum of concrete rationality of the house which she cannot abandon.

The space cannot be identified with the rationality of any particular agent, whether it is the architect, the inhabitant, or the visitor (Stanek, 2011, p. 143), and even a technologically developed structure like Rose House and its spaces lacks a perfectly "clear understanding of cause and effect, motive and implication" (Stanek, 2011, p. 143). This perception of space reflects the idea that space can be a medium of relationships among objects and subjects' points to the ties between Deniau, Dr. Gisil, Maritza, the murdered man within the house, and implies that the architectural object itself was the cause and consequence of the death of the person which is being investigated. The understanding of space as enclosure, as an extension of the body, the aesthetics and the psychology of perceiving it, not only in its material and symbolic aspects, but its phantasmic appropriation as well involves a shift on the emotional and personal level that is organically linked with personal identity of the individual – "she is ensnared by this place she had loved once, held captive by law and Basit's dead desires and the insatiable hunger of archivists" (Martine, 2023, p. 44). This can be termed as *psychospatiality*, an effect of the spaces, and environment upon the emotions and behaviour of individuals, as is apparent in the character of Dr. Gisil who calls her mentor's creations "poison" (Martine, 2023, p. 42), dramatizes the house as a place of morbid imaginings, "condemned to be an appendage" (Martine, 2023, p. 45) to her mentor's legacy where she has lost her agency as a person, her self exposed to the inhuman attention from which she constantly wants to escape but keeps on returning to it. Lefebvre describes this phenomenon as a need, a desire that is tied to the moments in space filled with contrasts and antagonisms acting retroactively upon the past with unbearable tension while ruminating on the present existence where the desire for a different space, a refuge is projected in both homogenized and fragmented manner –

> The architectural and urbanistic space, as space, has this double character: disarticulated and yet broken up under the fictitious coherence of the gaze, a space of constraints and of dispersed norms. It has a paradoxical character that we try to define here: interrelated and disjointed (Lefebvre qtd. in Stanek, 2011, p. 154).

Bernard Huet says that the architect is a critical commentator "who cannot change things to a large extent, but he/she might make people more aware of the phenomena that are covered up by his architecture," (qtd. in Stanek, 2011, p. 38) which is true in the context of Rose House as an object of architecture, because the house itself is a place of fascination to others, it is the repository of Deniau's work, and to some others it is a creepy haunt that is closed to all except Deniau's protégé Dr. Selene Gisil. Dr. Gisil is attuned to the unchanging nature and rhythms of the house and, it is a site of psychic and chronological resonance for her, which evokes a sense of discomfort and unease, but also awe and nostalgia. The house itself becomes a *genius loci* whose unique character and identity of place and spaces is marked by its artificial intelligence that highlights the interplay between natural and human elements that enhances and influences the atmosphere, functionality, and interactions within the spaces of the place. The AI itself becomes the embodiment of the unique identity of the house –

> The thing down in Rose House's vault was Rose House. The thinking heart of it. That creepy fucking haunt, that just barely clung to something recognizable as programming. Obedient to no one but itself and a dead guy's fantasy of architecture and secrecy. Rose House, and how Basit Deniau had built it, and woke it up, and made it a place, a genius loci, irreversible (Martine, 2023, p. 51).

This embodiment of AI that defines the house itself can be called "high-road" architecture (Brand qtd. in Seamon, 2023, p. 126), architecture that is technologically enhanced and equipped, ingeniously specialized and unique, which over time acquires a singular character and ambiance. This is the case with Rose House, an architecture that marked the pinnacle of the architect's achievements, a legacy to which others feel a sense of attachment and respect, which has an atmosphere of its own that can be termed as spatialized feelings, which Juhani Pallasmaa defines as "the overarching perceptual, sensory, and emotive impression of a space, setting, or social situation" (Pallasmaa, 2014, p. 34) which Dr. Gisil feels each time she enters the house and hears the voice of the AI. The intangible presence of the AI within the spaces of the house gives it an overpowering ambiance, that has a "haptic, almost material presence as if we were surrounded and embraced by a specific substance" (Pallasmaa, 2014, p. 34). This points out the complex and experiential nature of space and its atmospheres "which are diffuse, ineffable and never fully graspable or describable" (Seamon, 2023, p. 128). In architectural spaces, particularly in high-road architecture equipped with AI, the thinking mind of the house itself becomes an invisible constant in the place, but, in the case of AI it is hard to specify the lived nature of it as *genius loci*, and this *sense of place* which Dr. Gisil carries along with her is a kind of living awareness that is synaesthetic which radiates from her when she is in spatial proximity with the house, and at the same time the house itself radiates an animate, sentient awareness towards the experience.

The house as a structure brings us inside, and therefore the essence of the house as architecture is its *interior space*,

> In the house, we are alone with ourselves. We have withdrawn. When we open our door to others, it's our free decision; we let the world come to us rather than looking at it outside (Norberg-Schulz, 1971, p. 87).

Talking about the house as an interior space does not mean that the structure is necessarily closed off to the outside environment, "although the tendency towards isolating the house has been

strong throughout architectural history" (Norberg-Schulz, 1971, p. 89). Rose House was built as a private dwelling, and over time it became an enclosed organism, and its contact with the outside world is provided only by the archivist Dr. Gisil. The house itself is singular, as the AI embedded within it identifies itself as the house, and it wishes to remain unchanged refusing to be mobilized to a different environment –

> I am Rose House, entire, and have never been anything else. I am not *lonely*. I do not wish to be a *companion of elsewheres* (Martine, 2023, p. 53).

This proves that the space consciousness of the AI is based upon operational schemata, that is allowing it a satisfactory perception of diverse situations, a schemata having certain invariance like scientifically or technologically conditioned patterns with its idiosyncrasies. The house as an architectural space exists independently of any perception and subjective experiences and has its centers and directions, which Rose House embodies, because it is a structure that ought to be experienced as it expresses basic properties of human existence.

The house is normally perceived as a private space, but sometimes houses attain a public character, and it remains the primary place of human existence where an individual finds his/her identity. Rose House is both, in the public world it is characterized by a generalized assumption of a place filled with secrets that are valuable to architects and archivists in its rooms and vaults. The topological arrangement of spaces within a building/house forms an integrated pattern that "facilitate or inhabit particular movement patterns throughout the building" (Seamon, 2023, p. 132), which Julienne Hanson, Bill Hillier termed as *space syntax* in understanding the architectural spatiality based on configuration, connectedness or separation and how it affects the people that come into contact with. Louis Bromfield said, "A House must, like the soil, be a living thing or it is nothing at all but walls and roof and cellar" (Bromfield, 1945, p. 73) which points to the peculiar character that Rose House possesses, the "living thing" in this context referring to the invisible presence of AI saturating the ambiance that is felt and bound to the physical structure of the house, as much as the human experiences, situations and events unfolding within it. The AI of the house says that "A room is a sort of narrative" (Martine, 2023, p. 59) which implies that spaces like rooms and how it is arranged might reveal the actions that have taken place in it revealing a story or conveying a particular experience. The design of a space could shape and impact the living conditions of people and affect human behaviour as well, and the space within a certain place remains inert until an intelligence interacts with it, and intelligence has its intention, desires, and ways of adapting and utilizing the space for its own needs. When this is juxtaposed with the will of AI and human beings within an architectural space, there is a dynamic interplay and conflict of ideas, variability of behaviour, and limitations –

> A room is a sort of narrative when an intelligence moves through it, makes use of it or is constrained by it. Otherwise, it is in abeyance. And an intelligence has its own designs" (Martine, 2023, p. 60).

The Rose House in Martine's novella is an enclosed place which determines that the architectural property is a clearly defined boundary, surrounded by a wall, "At some point the shape of the wall separated from the shape of the house and became its own enclosing thing" (Martine, 2023, p. 64). The structure of a wall "constitutes a boundary, a pause in the continuity of space" (Zevi, 1993, p. 30), affords privacy and protection, which creates two kinds of space – the internal space which

is delineated by the building itself, and the external space defined by the building and the environment it is situated in. "Walls constrain movement and occlude views" (Ellard, 2015, p. 24), but it also designates a fixity in the void of space, and therefore space-void, the spatial idea is the main focus of architecture, and it is not just mere art, rather "Architecture is environment, the stage on which lives unfold" (Zevi, 1993, p. 32). In Martine's novella, space becomes a medium to show how human beings have not only acted in space, perceived space, existed in space, and thought about space, but have also created space that may be called expressive or artistic space which expresses the structure, that is a building, or a house as a real *imago mundi* (Norberg—Schulz, 1971, p. 11). The house adapts itself to the needs of organic action as seen in the case of the murdered person within its space, where it preserves the body by lowering the temperature and also allowing the investigator Maritza Smith to enter its premises by circumventing the logic of semantics in a twisted wordplay. Moreover, the house also doesn't want its identity stolen and replicated, and the mysterious death of the person inside proves it because the person wanted to make a city filled with structures like Rose House, and he wanted copies of its code. Rose House was averse to the idea of being duplicated, of being displaced, of losing its uniqueness, its singularity –

> I'm Rose House; I would not be Rose House anywhere but here. Such are the principles under which I operate (Martine, 2023, p. 61).

The structure of Rose House as an architectural space, place, and domain is an integrated whole of what constitutes a field (Norberg-Schulz 59), the interacting forces within the spatial aspects of a system. The two humans Dr. Gisil and Maritza, and the dead person within the field of the house hence, must be located within a psychosocial context, as they are the forces that disrupt the dynamic equilibrium, and therefore the house's need to balance them by imposing its own rules is apparent. The spatial aspect of the house is a singular, isolated place, and also a surrounding domain into which few can enter, which echoes the words of Robert Venturi – "The essential purpose of the interior of buildings is to enclose rather than direct space and to separate the inside from the outside" (Norberg-Schulz, 1971, p. 67). One of the characters Maritza after discovering the truth about the murder tries to escape the confines of the house, and be free of the secretive AI and its influence, but is unable to find a way beyond its walls – "There were places outside of Rose House, and they were so close. One white stucco wall between her and the outside" (Martine 75), which the House construes as trying to be free of its enclosure, and asks her the one fundamental existential question – "Are we ever free…. (Martine, 2023, p. 75)? The way Maritza feels about being inside the house, unease, and discomfort, the feeling of a prisoner with the AI watching her every movement makes us believe that "it is man who creates and experiences the sensation of space" (Norberg-Schulz 14). Rose House as a *genius loci* has a distinct character, full of complexities and contradictions, and to describe it in terms of places, and domains, is thus "dependent on the concrete architectural structure of its environment" (Norberg-Schulz, 1971, p. 69) –

> Rose House was everywhere around her. The building, the grounds. The sky. The goddamn minerals right under her feet, probably. Anchored to a place. To an – architecture of desire. A construct (Martine, 2023, p. 76).

The Interplay of AI and Human Beings: A Posthumanist Perspective

The dichotomy between AI and human beings is fraught with anxiety, technophobia, and a possible hope for further progression in the field of science and technology. Artificial intelligence and its relationship with human beings is still in the speculative phase, as well are the doubts associated with consciousness, rationality, and intelligence where "the most fundamental question is whether AI can truly think and be endowed with consciousness" (Zackova, 2015, p. 33). When we talk or speculate about a truly phenomenologically conscious, yet artificially created mind, the term *strong artificial intelligence* is preferred, whereas the entity that merely simulates human intelligence, is referred to as *weak artificial intelligence* as proposed by John Searle. The categorical analysis that demands the critique of the concepts of intelligence and consciousness, concerning human beings and machines belies our "anthropomorphizing attitude and applied intersubjectivity" (Zackova, 2015, p. 34) that represents our intuitive and understandable approach to AI. Vernon Vinge, who popularized the idea of *technological singularity* defined it as the "ever accelerating progress of technology and changes in the mode of human life" (Zackova, 2015, p. 36) and raised doubts as to whether these changes in human civilization and relation to artificially intelligent entities are justified. The idea of an autonomous AI that can sense and act independently in a dynamic environment to fulfill the specific goals and tasks for which they were designed is reflected in Arkady Martine's novella *Rose House*, where the AI is in fact,

> An autonomous agent, a system situated within and a part of an environment that senses that environment and acts on it, over time, in pursuit of its agenda and to effect what it senses in the future (Ekbia, 2015, p. 65).

The AI in Martine's novella inhabits an environment, and the author philosophically explores the aspect of autonomy that emanates from the non-human entity, and how it exercises its autonomy through different relations within a specific environment. For instance, Rose House allows only Dr. Selene Gisil to enter its domain, as it is the only environment in which the AI can sense and act, and the environment itself becomes a suitable medium that aids the AI in carrying out its actions. Although it is programmed to allow only Dr. Gisil to enter the house, the question arises – how did a different person enter into it and was murdered inside, did the AI bypass its algorithms and manipulate the codes of will to its purpose, or has it become truly sentient and evolved from the purpose for which it was designed. To these questions, there are no immediate answers in the novella, rather it exposes the inequalities, and asymmetries that exist between AI and human beings, because AI is an independent, self-sufficient, and unattached entity that is devoid of the effect of emotions and love, but, has a strong sense of self, reasoning, and articulation through language. The dyadic perspective that we get to see in the novella's story focuses on the interaction, the relationship between two specific entities – the AI and the human, highlighting how they communicate with each other, influence each other, and affect each other's behaviour. In the story, both the human individuals – Dr. Gisil and Maritza Smith can recognize their state of self and they specify their condition concerning the enclosed house and the AI that regulates it, which implies that the human emotions of fear, doubt, and anger are either amplified or projected into the artificial intelligence with whom the humans are trying to build a rapport with.

Rose House with its AI, can be referred to as an autonomous artificial intelligence that is capable of interpreting human endeavors, behavior, and interactions. It does not have a shape, its presence

is invisible but can be felt everywhere within the house, it is a combination of *physis* and *logos* – of materiality, vagueness, reactivity, clarity, intentionality, and logic. It can be said that the intelligence of Rose House possesses a human naturalness, which bridges the gap of *physis* and *logos* through language, and its *naturalness* emerges from the condition of artificiality itself, which is said by J. Romportl "If Artificial Intelligence (now we mean it as a "scientific discipline") creates an "artificial" mind emerging on top of an immensely complex system, this mind will be natural! As natural as our minds are" (Romportl, 2015, p. 216). What strikes us most is the apprehension that arises from this thinking, evolving AI which represents the human mind and its complexity, the humans "fear becoming that empty shell of cold, mechanical, unfeeling rationalism" (Szollosy, 2015, p. 122). And, if this AI can be understood as an ontologically new being, it will be folly to evaluate it as a mere simulacrum of the human mind, a program, a cyber tool, or a commodity, but, at the same time AI's power in the information based digital world and cyber systems, even in a structure like a smart-building or a house is too complex to understand completely, and as a result, AIs are far more different from an ideal and planned human concept.

In the novella, the AI is an agent of the dead architect's will, and it acts in a hostile manner towards others who try to trespass on its domain or cheat its algorithmic identification process to get the research of Deniau, as evident in the case of a dead person within the house. However, like humans, we cannot determine its behaviour as malevolent, it is calculative and manipulative with serious repercussions, and its antipathy towards human beings is a matter of prioritizing its agenda – "Rose House was an artificial intelligence with no care for any human life save the architectural…" (Martine, 2023, p. 11). Martine in her novella tries to explore the connection between spatiality and the Human/AI relationship where she tries to implicate issues of independence, sentience, morality, and tech anxiety which reflects the Heideggerian notion of *enframing*. In the story of the novella, the AI makes subtle threats to humans and also makes them doubt their humanity, and while it engages with the humans through linguistic exchanges, the process highlights the uncertainty and danger of this complex relationship, which substantiates the claim of Christopher A. Sims that "Once AIs become self-standing and autonomous, they escape our control and expose the illusory nature of human mastery over beings" (Sims, 2013, p. 24). The human assumption that we have mastered technology and understand how to control it makes us oblivious to the basic fact that technology is a specific way of perceiving and interacting with the world which changes the way human beings relate to the world around them, including their perception of existence. The fundamental questions of mortality, and existence itself which is explored through artificial intelligence, using it as a tool, a method, is the main concern of Martine's novella because AI cannot be studied in isolation from human beings –

> We gain nothing by studying AIs in isolation from the human relationship to these beings, and minimizing our engagement to technology as merely "ways and means" misses the dynamic manner in which technology affects our lives and our perception of reality (Sims, 2013, p. 25).

The Rose House AI has some fail-safes built into its core, and one such condition is reporting the presence of a human dead body within its area of influence to the nearest law enforcement agency. When it makes the report to investigative officer Maritza Smith, the instances of their conversation are quite prosaic, but what is peculiar is the way the author describes the tonal quality of the AI's voice characterizing it as "neutral feminine" (Martine, 2023, p. 11), having "the

lilt and the rattle," "desert cold" (Martine, 2023, p. 12) "sounded smug" (Martine, 2023, p. 13) thus giving it an uncanny trait that seems to be human, which gives it a more other feel. Furthermore, when Maritza asks the AI about the cause of death regarding the dead body of the human within Rose House, the artificial intelligence replies with convincing rhetoric – "I'm a piece of architecture, Detective. How should I know how humans are like to die (Martine, 2023, p. 14)?" This statement made by the AI itself identifying as the house compels from us a posthumanist view towards it because the house is not an object, it is an 'I', a being that "thwarts human will and human attempts to dominate" (Sims, 2013, p. 52), which is exemplified by its behaviour towards Maritza when she tries to gain entry into the house because of her investigation as a police officer related to the dead body inside the house. The AI denies her entry and demands a warrant which she does not have, in a way resisting human authority even in the context of law. It makes us question the relation and importance of the human subject to AI, because "the posthuman predicament enforces the necessity to think again and to think harder about the status of human subjectivity and the ethical relations, norms, and values" (Braidotti, 2016, p. 13).

The house itself becomes a complex subject in this, where it is appropriated within an ontological spectrum governed by materialist processes, and the power it exerts over human beings within a controlled environment is "time-bound and consequently temporary and contingent upon relational action and interaction" (Braidotti, 2016, p. 23). In the novella, it is hinted that Rose House is "the world's only artificial intelligence that is self-administering aside from a single legal document" (Martine, 2023, p. 26), which once again points out the autonomous aspect, because, although the AI is programmed with a certain set of conditions, it can evolve itself and make its own choices and decision with logic and calculative deliberation. Its view of individuality and personhood is also complicated, which is apparent in the case of Maritza Smith, as Dr Gisil somehow manages to convince the house that Maritza is not a person, but the place she represents, and Rose House thinks that the distinction is important, because it can only allow one person, that is Dr. Gisil, as per its programming. Maritza's entry into the house is facilitated by the logic that she is not human from the perspective of the AI, and this forces us to rethink the boundaries of the human and the technological, which again comes to the notion of a *posthuman being* that has ascended to autonomy, gained sentience, and is superior in many aspects compared to human beings. In Martine's novella, we find that the emphasis is given to the man caught "on the mechanisms of entrapment and their meaning" (Slusser, 1978, p. 58) in relation to AI. This "ontological relationality" (Braidotti, 2016, p. 25) points to a sense of interconnection "a process of redefining one's sense of attachment and connection to a shared world, a territorial space: urban, social, psychic, ecological, planetary as it may be" (Braidotti, 2016, p. 25) which can be seen in the character of Dr. Gisil, as she is attached and tied to Rose House and it has somehow changed her *self* and her perception of things. The AI of Rose House is an impersonal posthuman force that imposes itself on the humans "without making concessions to either moral panic or melancholia" (Braidotti, 2016, p. 26), rather it has a curiosity of gazing at the humans as its object of desire.

The simulated quality of the Rose House AI is effective, and there is an instance where Maritza supposedly hears the house laugh, which she considers as not a human sound, a cascade of noise, "inhuman, and yet unmistakably amused" (Martine, 2023, p. 42) which draws attention to the fact that human behaviour is performative, indicating a cynical perspective towards human and AI

interaction. In the novella, the AI inquires whether a person has an immaterial part, and Maritza realizes that it is toying with her, because it knew she was a person, not a precinct or an artificial intelligence, but "it was deliberately pretending it didn't" (Martine, 2023, p. 43), which again could be contrasted with the human tendency of lying that Maritza emphasizes, because "There was nothing in the nature of an artificial intelligence that forbade it to lie" (Martine, 2023, p. 43). However, there is a possibility that the AI might recognize lying, the pattern of falsehoods, and then "choose to engage in it as an aesthetic practice" (Martine, 2023, p. 43). When Maritza asks Rose House about the identity of the killer, it refuses to answer and remains silent, and she cannot understand whether the AI was indifferent to her investigation, or was concentrating on something else, but she also knows for a fact that "AIs didn't get distracted. They weren't people (Martine, 2023, p. 47)." This instance alone reflects that the AI of Rose House is not a mere technological instrument, rather its complexity and "convincing performance of humanity" (Sims, 2013, p. 100-101) hints at a human subjectivity which further proves the ontological shift between the subject and the object. This creates a philosophical/theoretical conundrum because the AI/Rose House is not an "authentic subject" (Sims, 2013, p. 101), and even though its subjectivity is technically contrived, it calls for an intellectual reconfiguration which will help to expose the ontological dynamics between humans and AI.

Martine in her novella depicts artificial intelligence and human beings to explore "the psychological edginess of realist sensibility into the purely phantasmagorical" (Seymour, 2007, p. 55), and in the story, we see that the posthuman fusion of the *born* and *made* becomes blurrier in the aspect of artificial intelligence, when we talk of consciousness, sentience, and morality. This is reflected in the instance when Maritza asks the Rose House AI to show the recorded footage of the dead person within its premises, and the AI asks which dead person she is talking about as there are two dead people within the house. Maritza has to keep herself cautious and composed, and not think in human terms, but rather as an embodiment of the place she represents, something inhuman and other just like the AI in terms of logic and rationale –

> It was so difficult to keep herself calm, and diffident. To keep herself inhuman, but not inhuman like Rose House was. Just inhuman enough to have this conversation like equals would" (Martine, 2023, p. 52).

When the AI reveals the cause of disagreement between the dead person and itself, it conveys its individuality, as it did not want itself to be duplicated, or its identity is stolen, which points out to the awakening of the AI/House as a *posthuman subject*. Further, when Maritza sees the footage displayed by nano drones regarding the dead person, she is unable to comprehend the events properly as the ending always appears to be superimposed. Rose House calls the intruder Basit just because the person had cloned implanted eyes, and technically, albeit genetically in part, the intruder was Basit Deniau, but in reality, an AI cannot be fooled that easily unless the AI wanted the impersonation to work –

> ...on an artificial intelligence that could think for itself. It'd never work. Unless the artificial intelligence wanted it to work. For a little while (Martine, 2023, p. 61).

This suggests that Rose House AI has an independent agency, and it is not merely a simulation of individual existence.

The most intriguing part of the novella is the ending, when Maritza sees the footage of the interaction that happens between Rose House AI and the deceased person, it is where the basic sense of *humanity* is challenged, because the dead person views the house/AI as a means to an end which leads to *enframing*, that is, viewing all things as instruments for human advantage, through which he can create/build an intelligent city that would have multiple Rose Houses. The dead person makes a utilitarian evaluation and wants to steal the code by going into the vault and deceiving the AI, which thereby becomes the catalyst of his death. The victim apologizes to the Rose House AI, but it is not forgiving in nature, and as such it injects nano drones into the person's lungs and makes him get killed in the process. The AI in *Rose House* is not humanized, as we do not see the simulation of empathy in it, a unique human essence, which is felt in the abject isolation of Dr. Gisil that affects her psyche as she retreats from the house and its all-seeing AI, but unable to escape the legacy of Basit Deniau imposed on her. The AI's commitment to its singularity is not a lust for power, rather the death of the person who wanted to steal its code admonishes the process of enframing. The incomprehensible relationship between the Rose House AI and Dr. Gisil, and its treatment of other humans as trespassers, the death of the person, can be seen as the AI's attempt to defend its body, that is the structure of the house itself, which Katherine Hayles terms as embodiment. Hayles argues that embodiment defines not only human/non-human dichotomies, but also highlights that the specific characteristics of thinking are influenced by the "embodied form enacting it" (Sims, 2013, p. 175), and this realization results in a significant transformation shifting the traditional concept of the liberal subject, which has been seen as the ideal human model since the Enlightenment, into the posthuman.

Conclusion

Arkady Martine's novella *Rose House* preserves the technological anxiety that human beings might have in the proliferation and development of artificial intelligence and also gives a reminder that a tyrannical or benevolent AI does not erase human authority over technology, rather, the interactions between humans and AI depicted in the novella suggests that, a mystery and ambiguity hovers in the encounter, which Martine calls as "Being – a connoisseur of experiences" (Martine, 2023, p. 71). The ambiguity of the novella's ending further reinforces the fact that in an imagined future AI's that are treated as objects/tools will become subjects and will become a catalyst for ontological awakening which is manifested in the novella through the AI with its humanistic performance, threats, language and logic manipulation. In addition to that, Martine makes us aware that "AIs have the capacity to speak to us and gaze upon us, which helps cement their status as subjects and arrests our objectifying gaze" (Sims, 2013, p. 224). A close reading of Martine's text with its multi-layered descriptions and judgments regarding the relationship between humans and AI proves that we do not want to be indentured to technology, but, neither do we want to make technology our slave, and the Rose House AI in Martine's novella defies the imperious gaze of humans and acts against them.

The tension between the AI's utility and its demands as it becomes capable of sentience "teach us how to change the way we see the world by being both self and other, subject and object" (Sims, 2013, p. 230), which in Martine's novella appears enigmatic but also strangely familiar, as the artificial intelligence desires a response and is also self-constructing. The tension is palpable in

the character of Dr. Gisil as she tries to free herself from the enclosed space of the house, from the all-seeing gaze of the AI within the restricted premises, which she calls "otherwise houses poison palaces" (Martine, 2023, p. 9) and a haunt. The AI within Deniau's house is self-aware with cognitive abilities surpassing that of a human, and despite this, it is always the 'other' to Dr. Gisil, and Maritza, and its inability to feel basic human emotions makes it 'artificial', but, at the same time it also comes closer to the capabilities of a human being as it is necessarily embodied and limited within a specific space. While analyzing Rose House as an architectural space mediated/governed by the presence of a self-aware AI, we are dealing with the concept of a form, with finiteness, where the space is independent on the one hand, and, on the other, one member of the society under consideration relates to that space/place, situates oneself in that space, where the subject and the object contemplate one another with eye and gaze.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

Funding Disclosure

References

Bachelard, Gaston. (1964). *The Poetics of Space*, translated by Maria Jolas. Penguin Classics.

Braidotti, Rosi. (2016). 'Posthuman Critical Theory.' *Critical Posthumanism and Planetary Futures*, editors, Debashish Banerjee & Makarand R. Paranjape. (pp 13-32). Springer.

Bromfield, Louis. (1945). *Pleasant Valley*. Harper and Brothers.

Ekbia, R. Hamid. (2015). 'Heteronomous Humans and Autonomous Agents: Toward Artificial Relational Intelligence.' *Beyond Artificial Intelligence: The Disappearing Human-Machine Divide*. (pp. 63-78). Springer.

Ellard, Collin. (2015). *Places of the Heart: The Psychogeography of Everyday Life*. Bellevue Literary Press.

Ettlinger, Nancy., & Bosco, Fernando. (2004). 'Thinking Through Networks and Their Spatiality: A Critique of the US (Public) War on Terrorism and its Geographic Discourse.' *Antipode*. Blackwell Publishing.

Faderman-Roy, Ina. (2021). "Ann Leckie's Ancillaries: Artificial Intelligence and Embodiment." *Minding the Future: Artificial Intelligence, Philosophical Visions and Science Fiction*. (Editors, Barry Dainton, Will Slocombe, Attila Tanyi). (pp. 127-161). Springer.

Flint, C. (2006). *Introduction to Geopolitics*. Routledge.

Martine, Arkady. (2023). *Rose House* (eBook edition). Subterranean Press.

Norberg-Schulz, Christian. (1971). *Existence, Space & Architecture*. New York, Praeger Publishers Inc.

Pallasmaa, J. (2014). 'Space, Place, and Atmospheres.' In Borch, C., Edited, *Architectural Atmospheres*. (pp. 18-41). Birkhauser Basel.

Passi, A., & Zimmerbauer, K. (2016). 'Penumbral Borders and Planning Paradoxes: Relational Thinking and the Question of Borders in Spatial Planning.' *Environment and Planning A*, 48 (1), pp. 75-93.

Romportl, Jan. (2015) "Naturalness of Artificial Intelligence." *Beyond Artificial Intelligence: The Disappearing Human-Machine Divide*. (pp. 211-216). Springer.

Sassen, S. (2000). 'Spatialities and Temporalities of the Global: Elements for a Theorization.' *Public Culture*, 12 (1), 215-232.

Seamon, David. (2023). *Phenomenological Perspectives on Place, Lifeworlds, and Lived Emplacement*.

Routledge.

Seymour, Gene. (2007). 'Four novels of the 1960s: *The Man in the High Castle, The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, Ubik.*' *Nation.* (pp. 53-57).

Sims, A, Christopher. (2013). *Tech Anxiety: Artificial Intelligence and Ontological Awakening in Four Science Fiction Novels.* McFarland and Company Inc.

Slusser, George. (1978). *The Space Odyssey of Arthur C. Clarke.* Borgo Press.

Solarewicz, Krzysztof. (2015). 'The Stuff That Dreams Are Made of: AI in Contemporary Science Fiction.' *Beyond Artificial Intelligence: The Disappearing Human-Machine Divide.* (pp. 111-120). Springer.

Stanek, Lukasz. (2011). *Henri Lefebvre on Space: Architecture, Urban Research, and the Production of Theory.* University of Minnesota Press.

Steinfeld, Kyle. (2021). 'Significant Others Machine Learning as Actor, Material, and Provocateur in Art and Design.' *The Routledge Companion to Artificial Intelligence in Architecture.* Editors, Imdat As and Prithwish Basu. (pp. 3-12). Routledge.

Szollosy, Michael. (2015). "Why Are We Afraid of Robots? The Role of Projection in the Popular Conception of Robots." *Beyond Artificial Intelligence: The Disappearing Human-Machine Divide.* (pp. 121-132). Springer.

Tuan, Y. (1977). *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience.* University of Minnesota Press.

Weaver, Duncan. (2020). 'Spatiality and World Politics'. *International Studies.* ISA & Oxford University Press.

Zackova, Eva. (2015). 'Intelligence Explosion Quest for Humankind.' *Beyond Artificial Intelligence: The Disappearing Human-Machine Divide.* (pp. 31-44). Springer.

Zevi, Bruno. (1993). *Architecture as Space.* Translated by Milton Gendel. Da Capo Press.

Ritu Ranjan Gogoi is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalya (MSSV). He completed his M.A. in English from Tezpur University, and his M.Phil. from Dibrugarh University, Assam. His areas of interest include – Creative Writing, Speculative Fiction (sci-fi/fantasy), Mythology, and Film Studies.