



The Portal of Becoming: Digital Individuation in Patricia Lockwood's *No One is Talking About This*

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Abstract

In contemporary times, the digital world has become an important site for the formation and fragmentation of identity. The increasing indulgence of human beings in digital environments complicates the process of individuation and identity formation. This paper explores the process of individuation through the lens of Jungian psychology, applied to Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This*. Using Jung's conceptualisation of persona, shadow, and the self, James Hillman's concept of "soul-making," and Sherry Turkle's sociological insights into technology and human connection, the analysis examines the role of digital environments in mediating personal and collective identity. Lockwood's narrative shows the tensions of digital immersion, alienation, and psychic integration, illustrating the challenges and potentials of individuation in the age of networked culture. The paper highlights the dialectic between fragmentation and wholeness, performance and authenticity, virtuality and embodiment, offering a nuanced understanding of digital identity through archetypal and psychological frameworks. This interdisciplinary approach reveals how digital culture reshapes psychic life, creating new challenges and pathways toward authentic selfhood and psychic wholeness.

Keywords: Digital Identity, Individuation, Persona, Shadow, Virtuality.

Introduction

Due to the emergence and expansion of digital culture in the twenty-first century, not only has the way people identify and understand themselves completely changed, but the way they present themselves and understand their psychic processes has also altered. This digital world

Article History: Received: 10 June 2026. Revised: 20 June 2026. Accepted: 10 August 2026. First published: 31st August, 2026.

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Published by: Adrija Press, India.

Citation: Raja, Dinesh V & Dr. V. Srividhya. (2026). The Portal of Becoming: Digital Individuation in Patricia Lockwood's *No One is Talking About This*. *Newliteraria Journal* 9:1, 106-114.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.48189/nl.2026.v09i1.011>

has become an important part of every person's psychic world, as it is now the digital environment that determines how people present themselves to others and how they approach the depths of their own psyche. The digital realm has become an important aspect of the psychic life these days. It now has the power to shape an individual's perception about various things, influence how people form memories, what people desire and also, how they understand themselves. In a way, the digital world has altered the way human beings interact with themselves and with other people.

Social media platforms not only reflect the identity of people but also bring a lot of attention to them, which leads an individual to continuously change and adapt to what is being liked. As a result, these platforms become instrumental in forming an identity that relies on the approval of others, is based on pretension and hence, is very unstable. Under such conditions, identity is not formed just by being present or by introspection; instead, it is formed based on the presence of an individual on the internet, the reach of their social media account, and how others perceive the individual. Under such circumstances, individuation, defined by Carl Jung as a process of becoming psychologically whole, is no longer only a private inward journey. It now unfolds within the networks of visibility, performance, and collective affect where the boundaries between inner life and public expression are increasingly blurred. In today's world, the psyche of an individual is shaped not just by the unconscious contents but also by the algorithmic rhythms, opinions of others, and the pressure of constant exposure. As a result, the struggle for psychic integration takes place amid fragmentation, distraction and the demand for unending self-presentation.

Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This* (2021) portrays life amidst these circumstances. The novel situates its unnamed protagonist inside the "portal," a digital realm where identity is fluid, fragmentary, and socially constructed. The portal operates simultaneously as an environment, a habit, and a psychic structure, shaping how the narrator thinks, feels, and perceives reality. It narrates the interplay of self and world in a landscape dominated by digital portals, primarily social media, which shape, fragment, and sometimes heal modern identity. Lockwood's text is therefore not merely about online life or internet culture. It is about the transformation of subjectivity under conditions of constant mediation, and about what becomes of consciousness, depth, and selfhood when the psyche is formed in dialogue with the digital collective.

In order to investigate the psychological effects of digital immersion, this study implements a qualitative, interpretive textual analysis of Patricia Lockwood's *No One Is Talking About This*. The novel's narrative structure, stylistic fragmentation, and shifts in tone are read as expressions of psychic processes rather than as purely formal or aesthetic choices. Jung's concept of individuation serves as the primary analytical lens through which the psychological development of the protagonist is examined, translating her virtual experiences into a broader commentary on modern psychic health.

To prevent the psychological reading from becoming isolated from cultural realities, the paper integrates two complementary frameworks: James Hillman's notion of soul-making to evaluate the narrative's depiction of breakdown and grief, and Sherry Turkle's sociological work on digital culture to clarify how the narrator's psychological symptoms reflect widespread cultural anxieties regarding curated identity and algorithmic isolation. Hillman's emphasis on metaphor and pathology provides the theoretical tools to interpret emotional devastation not as a stagnant trauma, but as a psychologically generative event necessary for deep selfhood, while Turkle's insights on networked intimacy and emotional displacement ground the text within current sociological trends. Together, these frameworks allow the study to move between individual psychology and collective digital conditions.

The paper treats the digital “portal” as a symbolic and archetypal space rather than a literal technological object. The portal is examined as an externalised manifestation of the collective unconscious, an environment that forces a highly visible confrontation between the adaptive persona and the repressed shadow. By maintaining a strict focus on how narrative form, language shifts, and physical embodiment intersect, this methodology establishes a comprehensive framework for analysing how networked culture reshapes the path toward authentic selfhood.

The novel *No One Is Talking About This* is divided into two parts. The shift in its structure is not just a casual transition in the story; it represents a sharp, intense mental break. It follows an unnamed protagonist deeply immersed in the world of social media, whose existence is shaped and sustained by the fractured, fast-paced culture of the internet, until a family crisis dramatically alters her orientation towards reality. In the first half of the novel, the readers are thrown into the incessant noise, humour, outrage, and chaos of the “portal,” a digital space where attention is intentionally shattered and experience is reduced merely to content. The narrator processes reality through compressed, highly ironic shorthand, a defensive mechanism for a psyche that has become used to consume rapid stimuli while evading genuine emotional weight. The second half of the novel is shaped by a family crisis. Everything changes with the birth and subsequent death of the protagonist’s niece from Proteus syndrome. This physical crisis shatters the portal’s anxious rhythm of online scrolling into the slow, agonising friction of hospice care, waiting rooms, and mourning and the narrator is confronted with immediate, bodily suffering, and realises that she can no longer convert experience into mere content. Time slows down, attention narrows, and the body reasserts itself as a site of vulnerability and meaning. The protagonist is no longer able to use jokes or deep, abstract thinking to hide from her real feelings. Lockwood does not offer a naïve rejection of the internet. Instead, she uses tragedy to reveal the structural limits of virtual life. Grief demands a physical presence that a screen simply cannot simulate.

The movement from digital saturation to intimate loss becomes the central axis of the novel’s psychological argument. This transition exposes the raw friction between the curated online persona and the deeper, disowned shadow self. At first, the novel appears to be a satire of online culture, but it gradually reveals itself to be a deeper story on consciousness, love, and the limits of virtual life. The family crisis not only interrupts the digital narrative, but it also exposes what the “portal” cannot hold or repair. As the protagonist shifts from the virtual noise of the “portal” to the intimate reality of grief and caregiving, the novel demonstrates that a significant, real-world experience can pierce through digital disconnection, compelling a renewed encounter with finiteness, dependence, and emotional depth. In doing so, Lockwood offers not a rejection of digital life but a reorientation of value, suggesting that love and suffering remain irreducibly embodied and that individuation, in the contemporary moment, is forged through the uneasy coexistence of online abstraction and lived, relational presence.

The protagonist’s experience illustrates the persistent tension between the constructed online persona and the deeper, often rejected unconscious self, a dynamic that lies at the centre of Jungian psychology. Within the digital realm of the “portal,” identity is shaped through visibility, repetition, and performance, encouraging the formation of a highly adaptive persona adjusted to collective expectations. Lockwood’s narrator undergoes a distinctly modern individuation, one marked not by gradual introspection but by rupture and crisis. This process unfolds as a painful movement from psychic fragmentation within the online “portal,” through an unavoidable confrontation with the shadow in the form of grief, loss, and helplessness, toward a fragile reintegration of body, psyche, and world. Individuation here is neither linear nor triumphant; it is hesitant, incomplete, and continuously threatened by relapse into distraction. The novel demonstrates that while digital culture fractures identity by dispersing

attention and emotional investment, it also exposes the collective unconscious in new and intensified forms. The “portal” becomes a site where archetypal patterns circulate openly through memes, outrage, humour, and collective mourning, revealing shared psychic material that was once more privately encountered. In this sense, individuation is no longer a solitary inward pilgrimage but a psychological task that must be negotiated within networks of constant mediation and shared affect. The challenge is not withdrawal from the digital world but the cultivation of depth and consciousness within it. Lockwood’s work ultimately suggests that wholeness in the twenty-first century is possible only when the visible persona of the screen and the hidden shadow of feeling are brought into sustained dialogue. In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1933), Jung’s assertion that “He alone is modern who is fully conscious of the present” (p. 227) resonates powerfully with the conditions of digital culture. The statement emphasises the presence of consciousness as the true marker of modernity, an idea that gains particular urgency in an environment defined by distraction, speed, and attentional scarcity. To be modern, in Lockwood’s world, is not merely to participate in the portal but to remain awake within it, capable of reflection, feeling, and responsibility amid the relentless pull of the screen.

Patricia Lockwood’s *No One Is Talking About This* begins with the sentence, “She opened the portal” (p. 3). Through this opening, Lockwood reveals not just a social phenomenon but a transformation in psychic structure. In this deceptively simple act, a character and a generation cross a psychic threshold, entering a mode of being shaped by speed, exposure, and continuous circulation. The gesture signals a passage from a world structured by linear attention and embodied presence to one organised by interruption, immediacy, and collective response. The portal thus marks not only entry into digital space but entry into a new psychic economy. It is not merely a website or a platform; it is a symbolic space that reorganises perception, language, and identity. The “portal” functions as a metaphor for the overwhelming, elastic world of social media, a new field of collective consciousness where ideas, jokes, anxieties, and emotions circulate with dizzying velocity and minimal reflection. This circulation creates a sense of belonging even as it erodes stable forms of selfhood, encouraging identification with trends, moods, and shared performances. Lockwood writes of “the portal” as a space where “whole subcultures sprang up on boards where people met to talk about their candida overgrowth” and where the protagonist observes that everything is “subtly modified” by collective expectations (p. 27). The subtlety is crucial. The modification is not coercive in any overt or authoritarian sense; rather, it operates through norms, rewards, and exclusions that gradually reshape behaviour and self-conception. Approval, visibility, and recognition become powerful psychological incentives, guiding what can be said, felt, or shown. Over time, the self learns to anticipate the gaze of the collective, internalising its rhythms and values. In this way, the “portal” comes to resemble a psychic environment rather than an external tool. It conditions attention, emotional expression, and even moral response, making the individual increasingly porous to collective affect. Lockwood’s opening sentence thus establishes the central tension of the novel: how consciousness survives, adapts, or fractures when the psyche is continuously opened to a shared digital field. The act of opening the portal is therefore not neutral or innocent; it is the beginning of a long negotiation between individuality and collectivity, depth and surface, interior life and public performance.

In Lockwood’s “portal,” the self is a performance, a curated digital mask shaped by feedback loops and community norms. Her narrator, a semi-famous figure whose online fame stems from the viral question “Can a dog be twins?” (p. 13), becomes the voice of a culture that has lost its centre. This absurd origin of fame underscores the instability of value within digital culture. Recognition is detached from depth, continuity, or ethical substance. The narrator continually negotiates a digital reality described as “the vivid scroll of the board dedicated to the discussion of candida overgrowth, which didn’t even exist,” revealing how virtual environments come to seem more real than “the people who filtered past you at your job” (pp. 28–29). As individuals turn to the “portal” seeking solace, validation, and connection,

their identities are shaped by “what began as the most elastic and snappable verbal play soon emerged in jargon, and then in doctrine, and then in dogma” (p. 28). This progression mirrors the psychic solidification of the persona. What begins as play hardens into identity. The “subtly modified” behaviours of users, shaped “against humiliations, chastisements, censures” (p. 28), point to the way online personae adapt to digital audiences. Jung’s concept of the persona, the social mask, is particularly illuminating here. The persona adapts to the collective culture but often at the expense of authentic self-expression and it becomes pathological when mistaken for the whole self. In the portal, persona is not simply worn; it is continuously optimised. Authentic self-expression is subordinated to visibility, approval, and coherence with the collective mood. As a result, the unconscious is increasingly repressed, emerging only in moments of breakdown. To further understand the social and emotional texture of these digital selves, Turkle’s observations are instructive. Sherry Turkle, in her sociological reflections in *Alone Together* (2011), offers context for these psychic phenomena. She notes that: “From the very beginning, networked technologies designed to share practical information were taken up as technologies of relationship... people created avatars—more or less richly rendered virtual selves—and lived out parallel lives” (pp. 157–158). Lockwood’s narrator inhabits precisely such a parallel existence. Turkle’s sociological diagnosis fits perfectly here: the portal makes users hyper-visible yet psychologically hollow. Ironically, this digital space does not destroy the collective unconscious; it externalises it. The portal functions as a chaotic modern colosseum where archetypal energies circulate nakedly. The novel’s depiction of the intrusive thoughts, emotional breakdowns, and psychic instability that punctuate the digital experience evokes Jung’s shadow, the repressed and unacknowledged dimension of the psyche. This shadow lurks beneath the performative online self, emerging through moments of disruption and crisis. The protagonist’s psychological tension is echoed in the fragmentation that occurs when “...the inner man wants something which the visible man does not want, and we are at war with ourselves” (Jung, 1933, p. 233). This war reflects the struggle for authentic integration in an environment that prioritises surface and performance over depth and continuity. The persona adapts to the collective culture but often at the expense of authentic self-expression. At the centre of Jung’s psychology is the concept of individuation, the process by which a person integrates the unconscious contents and becomes a unified self. Yet, individuation presupposes conflict between the persona and the shadow, the ego and the unconscious. Lockwood’s novel dramatises this conflict not within an isolated psyche but within culture itself. The “portal” externalises the collective unconscious.

In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Jung’s claim that “the psyche is not always and everywhere to be found on the inner side,” but also “on the outside in whole races or periods of history” (p. 231) finds direct expression in Lockwood’s depiction of digital life. The external digital world shapes psychic content as much as inner experience. This externalisation exposes archetypal energies in digital culture. Memes, outrage cycles, and public shaming operate as archetypal patterns. The trickster appears in absurd humour and memes, the devouring mother in moral outrage, the shadow in public shaming and cruelty. The narrator stands at the intersection of these forces, participating and observing simultaneously. The narrator admits that online she sounds like everyone else: “Gradually it had become the place where we sounded like each other” (Lockwood, 2021, p. 72). Individuality erodes not through repression but through saturation. Meaning ceases to endure; even tragedy dissolves into content. Turkle’s *Alone Together* helps clarify the emotional consequences of this existence. She argues that technology has become “the architect of our intimacies” (p. 1). We connect constantly but rarely converse; we perform selves instead of living them. Connection becomes constant, but depth becomes rare. The portal encourages response rather than reflection, alignment rather than integration. Lockwood’s narrator exemplifies this tethered condition. She scrolls through images of a world where empathy and appetite occupy the same feed.

In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Jung's recognition that "much of the evil in the world is due to the fact that man in general is hopelessly unconscious..." sheds light on the risks of unintegrated digital selves, which can perpetuate psychic and social harm. Yet, with "increasing insight we can combat this evil at its source in ourselves," an optimism for individuation remains (p. 237). This psychic struggle is mirrored by Turkle's analysis in *Alone Together* (2011) of the emotional distance in mediated connections, where "...avatars—more or less richly rendered virtual selves—and lived out parallel lives" (p. 158), highlight the evolving and unstable nature of digital identity. Jung also observes that "Our age is apparently bent on discovering what exists in the psyche outside of consciousness," a quest visible in the relentless scrolling and searching of digital portals (p. 240). This ongoing searching propels Lockwood's protagonist toward a moment of self-reflection and crisis. Jung emphasizes the process of individuation as one of conscious integration amid tensions: "No psychic value can disappear without being replaced by another of equivalent intensity" (p. 242). The protagonist's existential questioning of "What is a human being?" in the novel reveals her trajectory toward psychic wholeness.

In Lockwood's world, denial becomes habit; the self disperses into posts and pixels, diffused across a continuous stream of updates that demand reaction but resist reflection. Psychic discomfort is not confronted but managed through distraction, humour, and endless circulation. The novel's fragmented structure, composed of short, disconnected paragraphs that mimic the rhythm of online scrolling, encapsulates this psychic state of information saturation and deferred emotional life. Meaning does not unfold through sustained narrative development but emerges momentarily before being displaced by the next stimulus. This stylistic choice mirrors a psychic state marked by information saturation, attention fracture, and an emotional life that is perpetually deferred rather than fully experienced. Such a mode of existence corresponds to what Hillman, in *Re-Visioning Psychology* (1975), identifies as "literalism," the reduction of experience to what appears immediately before us (p. 11). Literalism, for Hillman, signals a collapse of metaphor, a psychic flattening in which events are taken at face value and the soul's capacity to imagine, reflect, and suffer meaningfully is diminished. In this sense, Lockwood's digital world represents not merely a cultural shift but a psychological condition in which interiority has been thinned by constant exposure and immediacy. Lockwood's narrator initially inhabits precisely such a flattened psychic landscape and has lost metaphorical depth. Her experiences are consumed rapidly but not metabolised; they accumulate without being integrated into a coherent inner life. Emotion appears briefly, often in exaggerated or ironic form, only to be displaced by the next scroll. The self remains operational but unanchored, functioning through reaction rather than reflection. The loss of metaphorical depth signals a deeper loss of psychic mediation, where the unconscious can no longer speak except through disturbance. It is at this breaking point that the novel stages a crucial moment of disruption. When the protagonist's "hands began to waver in their outlines and she had to rock the crown of her head against the cool wall, back and forth, back and forth" (p. 33), the social mask collapses under the pressure of unprocessed affect. This bodily destabilisation marks the intrusion of unconscious material into a psyche shaped by abstraction and performance. The body asserts itself as a site of truth where language and digital representation fail. This moment is significant not because it resolves the crisis but because it initiates a psychic reversal. Here, metaphor begins to return, not as aesthetic ornament or literary flourish, but as psychic necessity. The wavering body, the repetitive motion, and the tactile presence of the wall function as symbolic gestures through which the psyche begins to speak again. Hillman's insistence that soul-making emerges through suffering finds narrative embodiment in this scene, where breakdown becomes the condition for depth. The collapse of literalism opens a space in which the psyche can once again imagine, feel, and begin the long work of integration.

Despite or perhaps because of the proliferation of digital personae, Lockwood's narrator finds herself inquiring, "What is a human being? What is a human being? What is a

human being?" in response to the death of "the gorilla who understood she was a person" (p. 128). The relentless questioning points to the crisis of meaning and the impulse to individuate, even as the "*shared reality* stretched and stretched, flapped at the corners like a blue felt blanket, and failed to cover everyone's feet at once" (p. 128). Yet the narrative repeatedly demonstrates how online reality induces fragmentation: "Her face had been replaced by one question mark after another question mark after another question mark, and her heart had been replaced by what happens to a bunch of seagulls when a dog comes running down the beach" (p. 96). Fragmentation becomes unbearable. The motif of fragmentation points to the loss of an integrative self. Hillman's insight that "The soul-making of pathology has its distinct flavour, salty, bitter; it "skins alive," "wounds," "bleeds," making us excruciatingly sensitive to the movements of the psyche" (p. 106) captures the necessity of this suffering. The crisis compels disengagement from the portal.

Lockwood's depiction of relationships within the portal further reveals how individuation is both catalysed and thwarted by digital conditions. The protagonist affirms, "It wasn't right, really, that she should have that when other people didn't. In fact it was: Sad! Sad! Sad! Sad!" (p. 88). Hillman's insights into alienation are relevant here, as he contends that "I and soul are alien to each other because of soul's domination by powers, daimons, and Gods" (p. 105). The proximity and distance enacted by online communities conjure a sense of collective longing, loss, and pathos. The experience of digital culture, with its multiplicities and ambiguities, both wounds and informs psychic development.

At the crisis point of the narrative, tragedy compels the protagonist to disengage from the portal's incessant stream and confront embodied suffering. In Lockwood's novel, "the question that was the pure liquid element of the portal- who am I failing to protect?- had found its stopped-clock answer," precipitating the protagonist's existential reckoning and movement toward integration (p. 120). The death of the baby plays a critical role in the protagonist's psychological journey and marks an essential turning point in her individuation process. This tragedy forces the protagonist to confront embodied suffering, loss, and the finite nature of existence beyond the performative digital masks of the portal. The digital self, accustomed to mediation, is rendered useless in the face of physical fragility and loss. Through caregiving and grief, she moves beyond the superficial fragmentation of online identity into a deeper encounter with the shadow and unconscious forces. The baby's short life thus represents more than personal tragedy; it becomes the axis of the narrator's individuation. This moment reveals the limits of virtual connection and compels her toward authentic psychic integration and soul-making. This embodied grief contrasts with the detached, fragmented digital self and catalyses an inward turn, echoing Jung's understanding that individuation requires confrontation and reconciliation with the shadow self. Individuation accelerates through grief. The narrative thus highlights that in the digital age, individuation is inseparable from recognising the embodied realities and emotional depths that digital performance often obscures. Turkle's research underscores the stakes of this transition: "We expect more from technology and less from each other" (p. 295). "We are lonely but fearful of intimacy" (p. 1). The digital individuation process, in Lockwood's narrative, oscillates between the lure of infinite connectivity- "We took the things we found in the portal as much for granted as if they had grown there, gathered them as God's own flowers" (p. 92)- and the necessity of confronting loss and finitude.

It therefore becomes necessary to examine how one can achieve individuation, a coherent, authentic identity in the digital age. Hillman suggests, "my symptoms point to my soul as my soul points to me through them. Yet the symptoms and quirks are both me and not me—both, most intimate and shameful and a revelation of my deeps, steering my fate through character so that I cannot shrug them off" (p. 105). Lockwood's protagonist must embrace the "black void... was it anything like the portal? Possibly. Both were dimensions where only one

thing happened: you revised your understanding of reality, all the while floating in a sea of your own tears and piss” (p. 75). For Lockwood’s protagonist, this means acknowledging both the real and virtual, the self and shadow, the suffering and the joy. Grief restores depth and the body becomes the site of integration.

In the closing stages of the novel, Lockwood’s language gently gestures toward restoration: “The words Merry Christmas were now hurled like a challenge. They no longer meant newborn kings, or the dangling silver notes of a sleigh ride, or high childish hopes for snow. They meant Do you accept Herr Santa as the all-powerful leader of the new white ethnostate?” (p. 73). This ironic transformation of tradition signals the ongoing friction between collective and personal meaning, between inherited myth and individuated reality. Hillman summarizes the necessity of this movement: “Yet they are not of my intention; they are visitations, alienations, bringing home the personal/impersonal paradox of the soul: what is me is also not mine” (p. 105). In Lockwood’s narrative, individuation demands recognition of the paradoxical movements between self and other, between digital abstraction and embodied love.

Lockwood’s novel ultimately illustrates that individuation in the digital age is not a one-time event but an ongoing, complex negotiation between fractured identities and the ever-present possibility of integration. The portal, while a space of distraction and alienation, also holds potential for soulful encounter when the individual recognizes the limitations of performative selfhood and embraces the complex interplay of persona and shadow. This process demands not only psychological work but also ethical engagement, requiring attention, empathy, and vulnerability in a culture that often privileges surface and spectacle. As Lockwood’s protagonist traverses loss and recovery, the narrative reveals that digital individuation necessitates a commitment to inner depth and outward connection, an active practice of soul in a world designed for fragmentation and flux. The portal does not disappear; it is re-entered with awareness.

Conclusion

No One Is Talking About This transforms the classical journey of individuation into a contemporary myth about consciousness in the digital age, but Lockwood’s narrative also raises a disquieting question: can wholeness ever fully survive in a world designed for distraction, immediacy, and continuous performance? The portal, which at first represents dissociation, distraction, and psychic flattening, becomes the arena in which wholeness is tentatively glimpsed, yet it remains in constant tension with the forces that originally fractured the psyche. Lockwood’s protagonist endures loss, fragmentation, and meaninglessness, but ultimately moves toward psychic integration through recognition of both persona and shadow, but this reintegration is fragile, provisional, and always threatened by the pull of digital saturation. Individuation in this context is no longer a private or even fully interior process; it is a negotiation between consciousness and collective mediation, between embodied experience and virtual abstraction. The ethical and aesthetic work of becoming whole demands attention, empathy, and imagination, the very faculties that the portal incessantly undermines. Lockwood shows that grief, loss, and the encounter with corporeal reality are necessary to reclaim these faculties, yet the text also hints that these moments of clarity are fleeting. The portal’s algorithms, social rhythms, and performative norms will continually test the self, offering connection while simultaneously eroding depth.

Ultimately, the novel refuses to offer an easy resolution regarding the possibility of digital individuation. Instead, it leaves the reader with an uncomfortable paradox: while the virtual landscape exposes the archetypal depths of the collective unconscious with unprecedented speed, it simultaneously starves the individual of the quiet attention needed to

process it. It suggests that wholeness in the twenty-first century is never a permanent destination. It is a fragile, exhausting negotiation that must be clawed back, over and over, from the seductive gravity of the screen. Lockwood's work leaves the readers with a haunting realisation about modern identity. The portal does not merely obscure the soul; it actively tests its endurance, forcing a difficult question which remains unanswered: whether a truly integrated life is even achievable when our psychic infrastructure is built for fragmentation.

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