ESTD. 2000

INDIAN JOURNAL OF POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES

(An International Refereed and Peer-reviewed Biannual Journal Published in June and December)

Vol. 24.1 (June 2024)

ISSN 0974 - 7370

June - 2024



POSTGRADUATE & RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
NEWMAN COLLEGE
THODUPUZHA, KERALA, INDIA

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Vol. 24 No. 1 (June 2024) ISSN 0974-7370

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Decoding the Concept of Justice in Agrarian Crisis Narratives: Social and/or Species Justice

Suzana Alex

Distress in the agricultural sector reflects an ongoing non-inclusive development process in the country. When farmers are continuously caught in the loop of volatile market conditions as well as uncertain climatic conditions, distress intensifies and deepens into a crisis affecting their everyday lives. The country has been facing an agrarian crisis that is "structural and institutional in nature" (Radhakrishna, 21) for the past few decades. With the rise in debt and consequent farmer suicides, the crisis reached its peak in the 2000s.

Soon, the phrase 'agrarian crisis' expanded its scope to cover other crises that were arising within the rural landscape. The broader spectrum of agrarian crises became linked with the nuances of food crises as well as ecological crises. In addition, the climate crisis, which has had negative impacts on agriculture, further resulted in a biodiversity crisis that has severe consequences for the existence of multiple species on the planet. This interconnectedness between crises and the overlapping areas of concern has yet to be explored in relation to the concept of justice. The human -wildlife interaction is one such area of concern which demands justice that is distributive. One could claim that present-day crisis-ridden agrarian places crave social justice that is inclusive of humans as well as the animals under consideration.

In this crisis-affected agrarian landscape, conflict of any form is unfortunate. Human-wildlife conflict is a recent buzzword that is intensifying the crisis and irritating policymakers. Hill states, "The term 'human-wildlife conflict' is commonly used in the conservation literature to denote negative interactions between people and wildlife, that is, where wildlife damage property, including crops, or threaten the safety of livestock or even people. In an agrarian space already distressed by socioeconomic instabilities, such "negative interactions" will create adverse effects.

It is not only human–wildlife conflict that adds to the distress, but also the conflicts that arise between agrarian communities and wildlife conservationists. As all human–wildlife interactions raise questions about ethics of justice, farmers and lawmakers are mostly caught in a catch–22 situation when a conflict arises. The discussions on human rights and animal conservation gains prominence in this context, so does the call for a "collective responsibility" (Nussbaum 16) towards ensuring interspecies justice.

The term *social justice* has several definitions based on the context in which it is applied. The United Nations world day for social justice 2020 regards social justice as "....an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations… We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability."

Recently, discussions on species justice have aimed to provide protection to non-human animals and other species against discriminatory laws as well as the destructive capability of human beings. It is "justice as concerned with living creatures having intrinsic value and the rights, obligations, and duties owed to them as a result"(Simmons 342).

Furthermore, green criminology examines this perspective in relation to environmental crimes and injustices faced by non-human animals, ecosystems, and the biosphere. They note that there is 'speciesism' inherent in the laws that are supposed to protect animal rights (Simmons 329,331). Therefore, according to green criminology, "Species justice points out the parallel between… forms of discrimination or "naturalisation" and the speciesism present in rationalisations of our treatment of other forms of life" (Simmons 339).

Any discussion of justice in the modern world begins with Rawls' idea of justice, presented in his seminal work, A *Theory of Justice*. However, his concept of justice contradicts the concept of species justice in an interesting manner. For instance, Rawls' opinion that "the capacity for moral personality is a sufficient condition for being entitled to equal justice" (465) draws a fine line between social justice and species justice, which scholars in animal studies are trying to eliminate. Even though it is a fact that non-human animals are unable to think or act morally, the concept of justice that Rawls shares does not seem to be inclusive of these differences. While Rawls agrees that ethics of justice is built on equality and fairness, he invariably believes that human animals are different from their non-human counterparts. His theory upholds equality but not difference. His theoretical stand neither propagates the idea that one species is superior to the other in a speciesist way, nor is it utilitarian enough to uphold animal welfare.

It is in this context that the capability approach to justice by Amartya Sen and Martha C. Nussbaum comes handy. Capability Approach to justice upholds the ethics of justice in a way that is both species specific as well as diverse. As Nussbaum notes, "...CA is about giving striving creatures a chance to flourish…This emphasis on flourishing and on a wide

plurality of key opportunities is what makes it so suitable as a basis for a theory of animal justice, as well as human justice" (81). Her version of CA deviates from Sen's approach to find similarity with Christine Korsgaard's Kantian theory which suggests that, "All over the world, human beings—like the other animals—are striving to live, and live well, to attain lives worthy of their innate human dignity. Each is an individual, and each should be considered as an end, none as only a means to the ends of others" (Nussbaum 81).

A narrative and content analysis of recent media narratives selected from *the People's Archives of Rural India (PARI)* will shed light on people living in human–wildlife conflict-stricken zones. Undoubtedly, an interdisciplinary approach is necessary to analyse these narratives. Nussbaum's capabilities approach can be used to decode the concept of justice applicable in Indian agrarian landscapes facing such conflicts.

These narratives, selected from PARIs, discuss human–wildlife conflicts caused by factors such as forest encroachment, poaching, climate change, and species invasion. Such conflicts that are both man-made as well as natural must be controlled so that the basic rights of both the species are protected.

Martha C. Nussbaum notes that the conflicts between human beings and animals over space and resources are quite common yet uneasy and messy. For this purpose, Nussbaum recommends using the Hegelian approach to tragedy, which initially focuses on facing the moral gravity of the situation. For this purpose, Nussbaum recommends using the Hegelian approach to tragedy which initially focuses on facing the moral gravity of the situation. She writes,

Let us consider four areas of moral unease: medical experimentation, meat-eating, questions raised by the hunting practices of threatened traditional cultures, and larger and more general conflicts over space and resources. In each case, we ask Hegel's question: What changes in society and law would "sublate" or cancel the dilemma—if indeed it is truly tragic? (177).

While going through *PARI's* stories from rural India, many reports written by journalists Jaideep Hardikar, Priti David and Aparna Karthikeyan addressing the human- wildlife conflict draws one's attention. These landscapes covered in these reports represent agrarian spaces that have borne the brunt of the last three decades of agrarian crisis. The proximity of these spaces to forest landscapes makes them spaces of fear and conflict. How can the Hegelian

way of resolving tragic situations help in advocating justice in such spaces of conflict and crisis? Can social justice and species justice be accommodated under the scope of capability theory of justice?

Jaideep Hardikar's narratives titled "Chandrapur's cultivators: farming in fear" and "In Kholdoda: a night watch on a machan" discusses the life of farmers living in the Chandrapur district of Maharashtra where the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) is located. While the TATR benefits from tiger conservation, farms bordering the reserve are known for frequent visits and attacks by wild animals, which creates fear and frustration among the local populace. For these people, who are already facing the wrath of climate change as well as market fluctuations, low compensation for crop damage and cattle death has added to their woes. Here, farmers are giving up on winter crops/rabi in fear of wild animals ("Chandrapu's Cultivators"). In Kholdoda, which also falls in the Chandrapur district, farmers work the entire day only to keep vigil during the night against animal raids on their farms. As Hardikar writes,

Accidents, falls, nasty confrontation with wild animals, sleep deprivation resulting in mental health problems, and general illnesses – this is the new normal for farmers in Kholdoda, and the larger region of Vidarbha, compounding the problems of a beleaguered peasantry…(" In Kholdoda")

While the government has attempted tiger translocation as a mitigation measure in Chandrapur, the farmers at Mangi village are resorting to sound alarms with the help of loudspeakers and gadgets that produce animal sounds. Hardikar narrates about this in "Farm Alarms: Sounds of Desperation". Mandi village which is a corridor between TATR and Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary,

…is predominantly a cotton and soybean-growing belt in Yavatmal, known for the high incidence of farmer suicides and engulfed by a raging agrarian crisis for over two decades. The lack of access to formal credit, growing indebtedness, rain-fed farming, price volatilities, declining incomes, and rising production costs are serious concerns. The intrusion of menacing wild animals is likened by the farmers to "unwelcome pests." ("Farm Alarms")

Published 5 years apart, Hardikar's stories titled "'Where will the Tiger's go?' "and. It is a new kind of drought," which also discusses similar conflicts. These stories which are set in Maharashtra's agrarian space of Vidarbha and Yavatmal regions lie in the fringes of major

tiger reserves such as Tadoba Andhari, Bor etc… As Hardikar notes in "It's a new kind of a drought."

The situation is particularly alarming in eastern Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, which comprises 11 districts, including Chandrapur. Vidarbha is home to some of India's last remaining protected forests, which are teeming with tigers and other wild animal populations. The region also suffers from a high degree of indebtedness and farmer suicides among rural households.

Nussbaum clearly states that such conflicts are "…very basic: on the one side, the capability of animals to live their entire form of life, involving numerous capabilities on the list; on the other, the needs of impoverished humans for capabilities to lead healthy lives" (189). She calls for a scientific analysis of such conflicts that will help in deciding which side is more important.

In such scenarios concerning rural health or poverty, complex Hegelian solutions are necessary, according to Nussbaum (190). As she recommends, it is important to conduct a scientific analysis of the conflicts before attempting to find these Hegelian solutions.

Priti David's narrative "In Kuno, Cheetahs in, Adivasis out" brings statements from conservationists as well as wildlife experts to prove that unscientific interventions have created newer definitions to human- animal conflict. In the backdrop of the success of Project Tiger, the National Tiger Conservation Authority in collaboration with the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department decided to initiate Project Cheetah in Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary in 2022 to reintroduce cheetahs in India from Namibia and South Africa. As of now, within the first year of their relocation to India, six adult tigers have died (Koshy). Priti David's article, which was published a year before the release of animals in the sanctuary, examines the problems of displacement and ecological risk involved in executing the project. She also brings into the narrative the detailed study by Prof. Asmita Kabra, a conservation specialist who finds the move by the government as "'.... (an) exclusionary approach to conservation – that humans and animals cannot live together – is assumed, not demonstrated'"(David). In Kunao, despite considerable protests from indigenous people and scientists, the government is "bringing in a non-native, vulnerable species into an alien environment – and removing native and particularly vulnerable scheduled tribe communities to make space for them. It gives new meaning to the term 'human-animal conflict'. (David)

The native people who are victims of animal conservation in this case are the Sahariya Adivasis of Bagcha village in Madhya Pradesh's Sheopur district, who are being displaced to introduce a new species, such as African cheetahs–" a move fraught with livelihood loss and ecological risk"(David). The Sahariyas, who are pained by the memory of the neighbouring villagers who were displaced in 1999 to make way for lions from Gujarat, are not planning to give in to the authorities.

Clearly, the conflict here is not exactly between humans and wild animals but between adivasis and the forest department. This story is a distinct example of unnecessary human intervention in wildlife, resulting in the violation of all principles of justice. The "tragic dilemma" in this case is created by the pressure of animal conservation, which has put species justice as well as social justice on one hand and the urgency to protect endangered animals on the other.

While the above narratives discuss the conflict between humans and carnivorous animals, the article by Aparna Kartikeyan titled "In Tamil Nadu: Ragi- A jumbo love story" is about herbivorous elephant herds. Narratives of elephant raids are common on agricultural lands near forest areas in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka. Karthikeyan's story is about the ragi farmers of Krishnagiri district of Tamil Nadu. These farmers live near the Melagiri Reserve Forest, which is part of the Cauvery North Wildlife Sanctuary. Although it is true that elephants are causing a problem in the area, people are adapting to the situation by changing their agricultural practices, such as shifting to hybrid varieties that require less time to grow fully. They have also devised new mitigation strategies, such as the Melagiri Elephant Fence, which does not pose much danger to the animals. Elephants are venturing out of the forest because the majority of the elephant corridors have been destroyed by human settlements. In addition, most of the forest landscape is occupied by plant species, such as *Lantana camara,* which is causing elephants to look for food elsewhere (Karthikeyan). With low compensation for crops, "the elephant conflict has an economic cost, an environmental/ecological cost, and also a psychological one" (Karthikeyan).

By applying Nussbaum's capability list for humans to the above scenarios, decisions could be made on the "complex" Hegelian solutions that can practically resolve the conflicts. The capability list for humans as well as animals is similar, which includes, being able to live full life; maintain bodily health; maintain bodily integrity (against violence and assault of all sorts); being able to use senses, imagination, and thought; being able to form attachment and emotions; being able to plan; affiliation (being able to form attachments); being able live in relation to

other species, being able to live in presence of other species(play); control over one's environment (political and material) (Nussbaum 88-89). The tiger and elephant reserves in the above scenarios deny humans as well as animals several capabilities in the list. In the case of the vulnerable human population in the above scenarios who are already affected by a different type of crisis, find their capabilities challenged while ensuring social as well as species justice.

Moreover, the Hegelian approach to these scenarios demands the identification of plural ends that humans and wild animals struggle to achieve. This undoubtedly includes the ability to live a full life in control over one's environment and to be able to move freely. These capabilities are in conflict with each other in human–animal interactions, as represented in the above scenarios. While human life is threatened by wildlife encounters as well as financial stress (as in the case of the People of Vidarbha and Yavatmal), vulnerable animals find it hard to coexist (as with the tigers of Tadoba and elephants of Melagiri). Meanwhile, there are humans who control forest spaces for material gains and lose political control that could help them manage crisis situations (for example, the adivasis). In many cases, the weight of loss is more in the case of animals whose life is controlled by human beings so much so that it affects their capability to move freely. Therefore, the conflicts emerging out of human–wildlife conflict in such scenarios can be read as conflicts in ensuring social and/or species justice. One can decipher by looking at the above analysis that although the narratives are written with the thought of promoting social justice, they also question human ability to deliver justice to other species based on its capabilities.

Such an analysis also points out a major drawback of Nussbaum 's approach: its scope is limited to what she claims are sentient and striving creatures …. These are the ones for whom my theory deems entitled to just treatment. The CA is a minimal theory of justice that can serve as an ideal "virtual constitution" to guide our diverse efforts in local, national, and international lawmaking. (118)

Therefore, in the conflict between humans and wildlife, and in order to deliver sustainable solutions to the problem, there is an urgent need to look at the issue from a multi-species point of view. As Nussbaum notes,

I hold that all creatures count equally. But I also insist that the dilemma is falsely posed: most of the current threats to human life from poverty and disease come from the absence of

effective governmental institutions, not from "natural" limits to the earth's capacities. We can and should envisage and work for a multispecies world in which all have opportunities to flourish. We should, I think, go even further, insisting that an ethical attunement to the lives of animals and a sense of wonder at their complexity and dignity is part of our humanity, without which human life itself is impoverished. (191)

Coming back to Hegelian solutions, the above analysis shows that a different sort of justice is necessary to enable human and wild animals to maintain their capability. So, what type of justice could be guaranteed in this multispecies world of opportunities? Is there a concept of justice that can act as a solution to the question of social and/or species justice? Maybe.

Trans-species social justice, which focuses on the "consideration of interests of all animals (including humans) in order to achieve institutional conditions free from oppression and domination" (Matsuoka and Sorenson 70), could be an answer. This is similar to what species justice propagates. While species justice focuses on the victimisation of animals from a crime perspective, trans-species social justice focuses on activism and social work. In addition, it calls on social justice activists to fight against systemic oppression and institutional violence against animals. Advocated by proponents of Critical Animal Studies, this perspective of justice recommends that social justice must include animal justice, which can fight speciesist prejudices (Matsuoka and Sorenson 64,73).

The above narratives demonstrate an urgent need to resolve the so-called "tragic dilemmas" that arise while trying to resolve or mitigate human–wildlife conflicts. Such dilemmas question the ethics of justice involved in offering rights to humans as well as non-human animals. While many concepts of justice deny equal justice to animals in the name of moral entitlements or lack of moral status, the capability approach to justice works on the principle of providing equal opportunities to flourish. Farmers in crisis and conflict-affected agrarian spaces find their simple lives becoming complicated in the midst of such dilemmas. In the clash between calls for social justice and/or species justice, which rarely find common ground, approaches based on capabilities need to be introduced to resolve any contradictions in offering justice. In the analysis of the conflict using the Hegelian approach recommended by Nussbaum, one can identify some capabilities on the list being denied during the conflict. This includes the capability to live a full life in control over one's environment and the freedom to move freely. Nussbaum's suggestion to create a multi-species world that ensures equal opportunities and justice requires

a solution that can incorporate the ideas of CA along with the principles of social justice and species justice. This solution could be trans-species social justice, a recent approach to animal justice and activism that has immense possibilities for creating a multi species world.

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Re-visiting the "Water-myth": Exploring the Lives of Indigenous Community in Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green*

Benoy Kurian Myalmparambil

Thejimol George

Myths serve as profound narratives that delve into reality not as lifeless abstractions, but as vibrant realities and lived experiences. Intricately intertwined with the collective consciousness of a community, Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green* skilfully captures the harmonious coexistence between man and nature within the idyllic life of an indigenous community woven into its socio-ecological fabric. The unfolding narrative is set in Aathi, an untouched, pristine land nestled on Valanthakad Island in Kerala's Ernakulam district. It is portrayed as a locale with a distinctive regional topography and a tapestry of rich mythical tales embodying its local culture, but where the encroachment of modernity marked the onset of the village's decline. *Gift in Green* articulated the evolution of the indigenous community and of the land in Aathi, the Green bangle mangroves that encircled Aathi, and the water-myth that acted as the lifeblood of the Eco space. The congenial relationship between nature and man was lost with the introduction of industrialisation and commercialisation, and the Edenic village turned into a dump yard of toxic pollutants. The struggles of the people, especially of the women community, in reviving the lost cultural and ecological glory need to be addressed through literature because they are not mere retelling of legends and folktales related to ecological consciousness, rather they are ventures to destigmatise their Indigenous identity from the Euro-centric values, from the dominance of patriarchy, and from the 'civilising' missions of mainstream India. Drawing from the principles articulated by Karren J. Warren, Susan Griffin, and Meenakshi Mukherjee, the novel becomes a testament to the resilience and resistance of a community striving to maintain the delicate balance between human existence and the natural world. The present paper focuses on how Sarah Joseph discoursed the present environmental degradation through her mythopoeic fiction and how it can offer local solutions to global problems like climate crisis and ecological imbalance, through conservation and preservation of natural resources. Insisting on a water covenant, the author seems to be a latter-day Hagar who stands against anyone or anything that compromises the purity and inviolability of water.

> "Myth…is an alternative form of science…an alternative form of investigation… a story so perceptive of reality that it might be rediscovered, like any law of nature, in almost any culture at any time." (Bringhurst 64)

Myths are essentially tales that have been in circulation since the advent of human societies, or perhaps even prior to the consolidation of human society into social orders. Having considered its seminal role in unravelling the nuances of human behaviour, both the individual consciousness and collective consciousness of a community, it can be taken for granted by the modern sciences as a way to analyse humanity in general. Even an individual finds the meaning of his existence in correlation with the framework of a larger social and cosmic story. Therefore, myths and folklore are essential elements of social, cultural, and literary experiences. Folklore, with its wide variety of songs, tales, or performances, can articulate culture, heritage, customs, rituals, mores, and modes of behaviour. Meenakshi Mukherjee pointed out in *Twice Born Fiction* that the conscious use of myths, either to reconstruct or redefine contemporary realities, is a modern literary trend. Numerous writers from India have immensely used this strategy to interrogate and investigate human predicaments. In contemporary times, when the social ethos is re-evaluated using tools such as the re-reading of myths, a new meaning is attained through new interpretations. Myth-narratives can embody reality, wrap up contemporary problems of society, present contemporary history in a newer way, and shatter the old cultural hegemony to define new meanings and narratives. The kaleidoscopic range of these narratives equips the silenced, marginalised, and ignored indigenous communities to emerge with new voices. New writings from the Indian subcontinent often address social, political, or environmental issues using the inexhaustible lore of myths, parables, and legends.

The confluence of mythology and literature has become a common trend in Indian writing in English. Its methodology works out in different parameters, such as recreating myths or mythical characters from a new perspective or creating myths to define the new predicaments of human life. There has been the emergence of a new trend of re-writing, re-creating, re-telling, remembering, re-introducing, re-visiting, and re-imagining the myths within the paraphernalia of contemporary realities. The contemporariness of myths has been widely discussed by literary theorists and academicians. The resurgence of mythopoeic fiction reveals that myths are still relevant and related to contemporary life in the period of globalisation. The present study urges to find out how mythopoeic fiction, *Gift in Green* authored by Sarah

Joseph, addresses the contemporary realities of environmental degradation and gender conflicts through the lens of eco-feminism.

Sara Joseph is one of the most prominent contemporary women writers from Kerala who carved out a space in global literature with her evocative moving stories. Often recognised as an amazing storyteller with meticulous observations of the world around her, she has acted as a spokesperson for the voiceless and an agile environmental activist who has filled her stories with life and its subtle nuances. Her collection of short stories, Paapathara, is considered a milestone in feminist writing in Malayalam. Her works are essentially liberalistic, and moreover, they convey the trials and tribulations of various oppressed groups. She is the founder of 'Manushi', an organisation of thinking women. She is now seen more as a public intellectual who voices the concerns of women who are silenced by hegemonic forces. She is resolute in her opposition to all structures and institutions that formalise power, be that of the family or the church.

The fictional world of Sarah Joseph is a panorama in which she portrays women and nature in their discriminative and self-conscious phases. Her stories offer a blueprint for a woman's specific reactions to the power relations operative in society. In her stories, such as "Inside Every Woman Writer, " there are epiphanies of womanhood. There is a complex yet fantastic symbolism for each story, which makes it radiantly different from other women's writing. In addition, she raised a strong voice against all kinds of exploitation that nature has been undergoing. The stories of Sarah Joseph have a splash of magic realism that at one time illuminates the reader and, on the other hand, transforms the inner landscape of the reader.

Simultaneously published in English and Malayalam, *Gift in Green* is an unconventional yet mystical novel about the relationship between land and its inhabitants. Settled in the unravished and untainted village of Aathi, the novel exposes a pristine world full of natural beauty and purity. Sarah Joseph described the village as, "in Aathi, the air was light, the water pristine and the wind pure" (61). It was somewhat like a lagoon, it lies-cool and serene- in the womb of an inviolate purity. It acted as a counter space against all kinds of material and political invasions and exploitations. The village resembled an exceptionally beautiful island called Valanthakkadu in the Ernakulam district of Kerala. Approximately fifty families who are wholly dependent on fishing, picking mussels, and farming Pokkali rice constitute the inhabitants of this island. They were happy about this lot, and this same ideology of complacency and contentment could be seen in Aathi and among its inhabitants. *Gift in Green* evokes a symbiotic

relationship that exists between the land and its people. However, with the homecoming of Kumaran, who once left his homeland and abandoned water life, the destiny of the village changed drastically. He introduced modernity and urbanisation to turn the village into a developed city, marking the doomsday (anthyam in Malayalam) for Aathi(meaning beginning in English). He introduced modern measures such as new bridges, a new golden temple in the place of the shrine of the Thampuran, and all possible means to market the resources of the land. Materialist and commercial interventions caused conflict among the inhabitants. Komban Joy, Prakashan and Ambu took the sides of Kumaran and characters like the storyteller Noor Muhammad, the poet Markose, Dinakaran, Ponmani, Karthiyaniand Kunjimathu defended the land from all kinds of exploitations. The plot revolves around the decay, death, and phoenix-like regeneration of Aathi along with its people. *Gift in Green* tells the tale of the resilience of the village Aathi, the protagonist of the novel, in strong ecological and mythopoeic terms. In Sarah Joseph's intricately woven novel, the luminous spotlight gracefully illuminates the idiosyncratic practices and eco-friendly ethos of Aathi, unfurling a rich tapestry interwoven with rituals, traditions, and lifestyles that are endemic to its people. Through this nuanced narrative, the author deftly opens up expansive realms of possibility wherein life practices are deeply rooted in the symbiotic principles of mutual love, care, and an unwavering reverence for the sanctity of Mother Earth. Her adept articulation of the foundational tenets of ecofeminism finds eloquent expression through the resonant voices of "the women of Aathi," serving as conduits to unveil not merely the egregious transgressions committed against nature but also those inflicted upon women. With the introduction of commercial culture, Kumaran tried to break the harmony and biodiversity of the land. When the covenant between the water and the life of the people breaks down, nature emerges as a fiery power in the form of a flood and it revived everything "naturally." Ecocriticism rejects anthropocentrism and androcentrism and instead advocates an integrated sustainable culture which holds the cosmos as a whole. Its biopolitics stands for a wholesome way of life- there is no discontinuity between human beings and nature and all life forms should be treated equally. That's what *Gift in Green* communes with the world.

The description and myth of the land Aathi with its people, who firmly believed that "if there is water, we can survive" (Joseph 45), is inextricably connected with water life. As our earlier civilisations originated on riverbanks, Aathi too had its origin amidst water. Life seemed to them to be like a deep, bottomless lagoon. It encircled them as an unending, ever-renewing fountain spring of life. People began their life there, a land untouched by human hands and

utterly unknown to others. In the sludge and soil, they toiled to grow paddy and cultivated pokkali rice, mitigating their hunger and that of future generations. As women are the reservoirs of stories all around, in Aathi, women continued to narrate the history and myth of Aathi to their children:

That was generations ago. Water! Wherever they looked, water was all they found. Swimming and walking, they reached this place. The trees here knew no taboo or untouchability. The birds parroted no religious bigotry. The trees, the birds, the fish, the earth, the water, all beckoned them. Their history made the children love the fish. They felt themselves to be one with the trees, the birds, the water, and the land (44).

Aathi's entire existence revolved around water; it constituted the essence of life from birth to death. The inhabitants embraced a lifestyle centred on water, finding sustenance through the symbiotic relationship between land and water. The presence of water could be seen both as a character and a context in the novel. It is deployed as both a character, a temporal narrative feature usually associated with individuality and subjectivity, and a context, a spatial feature usually associated with the setting of the novel. Moreover, it is interconnected with the actions and thoughts of the characters in the novel. As many of the contemporary women writers tend to see nature as an active subject which interferes in the narrative rather than as a spatial setting of the novel. Many novelists including Annie Dillard, Linda Hasselstrom, Alice Walker, Ursula Le Guin and Leslie Silko are developing what can be called "postmodern pastorals" – a post-human geological construction of human relationships with nature that envisages man/nature relationships as conversations between the two knowing subjects. Reconstituting nature as not a passive subject but as an active subject has revolutionised the discourses in the field of ecocriticism. Most ecofeminist writers have deployed emancipatory strategies to define the correlation between man and nature. It is a radical postmodern theoretical framework that deconstructs the constructed notions of patriarchal philosophy. They have developed an ecofeminist environmental ethic within which the revision of nature is taking place. Sarah Joseph accentuated one of the emancipator strategies of re-mything nature as an embodied, speaking subject, in her fictional panorama. Water is presented as a suffocating entity, confronted with various kinds of invasions, encroachments, developmental projects, environmental degradations, and so on. In the water-land of Aathi, Kumaran was building bridges and massive structures. He trapped the flowing free waters of Aathi in the bridges and embankments. Kumaran was a stranger to the resistance of water. The moment she found

herself trapped in the enclosures, she would resist and struggle to break out, wiping out everything and not being appeased until she was free.

Even the water in *the Gift in Green* is analogous to Kunjimathu, the greatest defender, who can hear the wails of water beneath the granite embankments, "from beneath the granite embankment. It was high tide. As if embattled, the water was in upheaval. Unable to find a way forward, the water was thrashing about with its very soul, flailing, roiling, running here and there (196). Water is the biggest issue leading to the crisis in the novel. This nonlinear narrative conveys the water of Aathi from purity to putrefaction. A book that inspired the author was Dr. Marasu Emoto's *The Hidden Messages in Water*. His expertise in interpreting the amazing messages that water holds to those who read them has always enchanted the author. In *Gift in Green*, Kunjimathu becomes one with water as she can understand that "water knows everything and forgets nothing" (21).

Sarah Joseph again goes on to show the importance of water and how it can cure mental aids. To this end, she introduces a young girl, Kayal, and her mother, who are from the metropolis. Kayal had lost her way there and now only says 'po-po' to everyone she meets. One can only imagine the terrors she went through to suffer such nightmares. Water is introduced as a healing power that will cure her malady. Let Kayal know the water. "Not know in the usual sense of the term. We must know the water as the lotus knows it" (61). A description on the primeval purity of Aathi cannot be completed without a narration on the Green bangle- the mangrove forest in Aathi, as

It encircled Aathi, an enchanting world in itself, its waters cool and serene. Sitting in that rare world of impregnable silence, immune to the noise of men and machines, Noor Muhammad would listen intently to the subtle voices of the cosmos and enjoy their variety and the soothing sweetness of their harmony. Watching the sallow leaves fall noiselessly on the water, then float towards and accumulate at the bank, he would weave the tapestry of his life interpretations. He would listen to the blossoming of flowers, watch the moss dance, glow-worms emerge from their hideouts, and read the trails of tiny worms. His mind would clear, his lungs full with new vitality, and his stomach with heavenly happiness. 'Rejoice, O my heart', he would tell himself (25).

To be with nature was the primary source of rejoicing for the people. From this description, it is clear that Aathi was a pristine idyllic place and an abode of a peaceful community

that nourished and protected all forms of life, celebrating its diversity. This was viewed in the peaceful coexistence of different animal species. The land of Aathi formed the natural habitats for different animal species and plants. Kumaran breaks the green bangle, the virgin forest by burning it simply for his personal life. His actions brought havoc upon the land, changing the integrity of the society that had previously moulded their lives in preserving the natural resources, where they started selling their lands to him. He had become a corporate landlord, an aspect that gave him a chance to exploit the naturally existing resources for economic gains.

Aathi is a land of stories and storytellers, and these mythical tales form the warp and weft of the land. The storytellers were nomads who came to Aathi to tell stories and create myths to sustain their lives. They came year after year and told stories related to the people of Aathi in some way. The people of Aathi believed the words of the storyteller as the voice of their Thampuran. "The storyteller identified dates for our daughter's weddings. He showed us where to dig wells. We received him as Thampuran's voice" (16). The storyteller would start his story, and the people would listen to it with great reverence. All the stories were related to the spiritual celebration of water. The narrative unfolds as a spiritual homage to water, drawing inspiration from sacred texts such as the Bible, Koran, Zen stories, and the melodies of Sufi music. In Aathi, the significance of water transcended the material realm, permeating the spiritual core of its culture. Oaths were sworn in the name of water, and every story at night began with the reverent words," Jalam Sakshi!'. For Aathi's inhabitants, water was not just a vital resource but it was their very breath. "Innumerable canals, water drains, ponds, water springs, wells, paddy fields brimming with water, and slushy marshes crisscrossed the place—the network of Aathi's nerves" (33-34). The landscape itself mirrored the intricate network of nerves, intertwining with water features such as canals and ponds, illustrating the pervasive influence of water on Aathi's physical and spiritual fabric. As Aathi's decay started its story nights were the first to decline. Aathi was in turmoil. Earlier, Thampuran's courtyard would reverberate with festive laughter and enjoyment: "But not anymore. Like the Aathi sky choked by clouds, the minds of every person was submerged in sadness. Thampuran's courtyard where they would have gathered as a people, had vanished" (182). The absence of the storyteller marked the completion of the decline of story nights. However, the people refused to surrender entirely to the erosion of their traditions. Determined to preserve their cultural legacy, a young man named Dinakaran stepped up to become the new storyteller. The community rallied together, doing everything in their power to ensure the continuation of this cherished tradition.

Aathi boasts a distinctive feature in the form of its Thampuran, the divine figure considered the creator of Aathi. Reverence for Thampuran was paramount, symbolised by the lighting of a lamp in his modest shrine. In contrast to the simplicity of everything in Aathi, Thampuran's shrine was described as delicate yet simple: "A roof over the place where he died and was buried. It has four walls. Darkness dwells within" (48). The people of Aathi, driven by their deep reverence, prayed to Thampuran and dutifully followed and worshipped him. Despite their devotion, they refrained from constructing extravagant temples or shrines for Thampuran, unlike the city dwellers. Kumaran, however, stood out from the Aathi community due to the urban influence that had shaped him. After a hiatus of thirty-six years, he returned to pay homage to Thampuran, surprising everyone with his actions: "He prostrated himself before Thampuran and lay stiff and straight like a stick, his arms stretched forward and palms pressed together in a frenzy of devotion" (51). Clearly, urban life had transformed Kumaran. Upon encountering Thampuran, Kumaran resolved to elevate the shrine from its humble simplicity to a lavish golden cage. The desire for renovation was swiftly fulfilled, leaving the people of Aathi astonished as a spectacular sight unfolded before their eyes: "a roof of gold, a gold lamp in the golden hut" (51).

The healing power of nature is sung by Markose the poet:

Morning breeze, water beds,

Birds and trees,

Dazzling dewdrops…

Pour a drop of this peace

Into the burning mind

Of that ravaged child. (Joseph, 2011, p.61)

The vigour of water was exquisitely portrayed when Kunjimathu listened to the screams of the water under the granite embankment. She could listen to the suffocation of water and its frustrations. The most powerful character that Sarah Joseph delineates in the novel is water itself. Its serenity, chillness, beauty, power, and fury were all present. When men brought a discordance with nature, their dark future is revealed through the prophetic vision of Kunjimathu, and it would be like this:

Visions flashed one after the other before Kunjimathu's eyes.

Paddy fields, parched.

Trees, dry and withered.

The earth, cracked.

Wells, dried up.

Cattle tormented by thirst.

Birds, perishing.

Children, howling in hunger…

Desert storms raging with a vengeance.

The burning sandit brought along, covering the land,

Red-hot rocks.

Thorny bushes.

Scorching heat.

Freezing cold.

A woman who wandered about, aflamed within, and without in the wilderness. Kunjimathu (Joseph, 196-197).

Here, Kunjimathu and nature became one, a single entity. Nature could be seen as an active, embodying subject here. The mutual conversations between Kunjimathu and water kindled fire among the women, and how the women of Aathi took firm decisions to defend and protect their own land was the most engrossing scene of the novel. How the women built a bund to save water is clearly pictured here. "The band of mothers"(334) clubbed together in unison and decided to protect nature by any means without even consulting the male folks, whose minds were smouldering with grief over the plight of their land and their children.

Susan Griffin in her book *Woman and Nature: the Roaring Inside Her* developed the idea that women are innately closer to the natural world. In the prologue to the book, she wrote: "He says that woman speaks with nature. That she hears voices from under the earth. That wind blows in her ears and trees whisper to her. That the dead sing through her mouth and the cries of the infants are dear to her. But for him the dialogue is over. He says he is not

part of the world, that he was set on this world as a stranger. He sets himself apart from woman and nature" (1).

The cultural significance of storytelling nights and exclusive rituals in Aaathi society cannot be overstated. These traditions were deeply ingrained in the fabric of their culture and played a crucial role in reaffirming the sovereignty and sanctity of water life. In the novel, seven stories have been narrated, each highlighting the vital role of water in sustaining human life throughout the ages. What sets these narratives apart is the unique way in which they have been recreated and reinterpreted within the alchemy of Aathi. The author skilfully employs analogies found in nature to establish a connection between the inner human landscape and the topography of the island. Using natural imagery, the novel vividly illustrates the premise of societal decay. The power and symbolism of water are consistently portrayed, serving as a metaphor for destructive forces that threaten the community. The surge of the flood at the end of the novel effectively conveys nature's ability to purify itself, offering a glimmer of hope amidst chaos.

The novel's exploration of the decay of society is not limited to the physical realm but also delves into the decay of cultural values and traditions. Through the lens of ecofeminism, the author critiques patriarchal systems that prioritise progress at the expense of the environment. The battle between culture and nature is presented as a recurring theme, with the community torn between preserving their cultural heritage and succumbing to the pressures of modernisation. Throughout the novel, the detrimental effects of mindless progress and the ongoing battle between culture and nature are evident. The author masterfully paints a picture of the intense agony experienced by the community and explores men's audacity toward nature. This perspective allows for a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between gender, culture, and the environment. Glen Love, in his essay, "Revaluing Nature Toward an Ecological Criticism" states that "nature oriented literature offers a needed corrective to our narrowly anthropocentric view of life, nature writing shows regard for the non-human and privileges "eco-consciousness" over "ego consciousness"(205). In the contemporary literary landscape, *Gift in Green* stands as a compelling example of literature that challenges readers to reconsider their relationship with the environment and advocates for a more sustainable and empathetic approach toward nature. Its enduring relevance reinforces the significance of ecocriticism in shaping and informing discussions on environmental issues in literature and society at large.

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Integrating Mobile Phones to Enhance Students' Vocabulary Retention in ELF Classroom

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During Libya's period of international isolation from 1998 to 2008, the teaching of French and English was outlawed under a Gaddafi-obliged strategy to 'eliminate foreign impact'. This indicates that there is an inadequate foundation for teaching languages in Libya and consequently a strong need to reinforce domestic foreign-language learning. O. Blackstad in his study has affirmed that, this caused a major dent in the level of English language learning amidst the population of the country. Consequently, English foreign language (EFL) learners in Libya now face the obstacle of lacking exposure to English. For the majority of them, English classes are the sole period in which they practice English. Therefore, vocabulary enhancement and learning the different aspects of English are usually the responsibility of learners outside the classroom because of the limitation of class time.

"Experiments are conducted," states Blackstad, "to be able to predict phenomena. Typically, an experiment is constructed to explain some form of causation. Experimental research is important to society–it helps us improve our everyday lives" (Experimental Research). Therefore, a quasi-experimental study with one experimental group (EG) and one control group (CG) was compared in this study to investigate whether integrating mobile phones in EFL classrooms will have a relevant effect on students' vocabulary retention ability and to examine the effect of learners' perceptual modality on how they retain information. With this in mind, the control group was trained using strategies other than integrating mobile phones in the EFL classroom (paper-based), whereas the experimental group was trained using mobile phone features in the EFL classroom, integrating SMS and a mobile phone software designed by the researchers. The researchers employed a pre-test, two questionnaires, and two KET post-tests to examine both groups in the initial stage and after the end of the experiment. One of these two post-tests (KET) was for the SMS phase, and the other was for the mobile software phase.

The dependent variable was students' accomplishments in retaining words, and the independent variables were the use of two mobile phone features (short message service and mobile application) and the paper-based technique, in which all the words were written on

paper, and the CGG referred to them when they wanted to retain words. The experiment continued for six weeks. The researchers did not use any electronic devices other than mobile phones, and alerted the experimental group to ensure that their mobile phones were constantly charged.

Moreover, the students were asked to complete a questionnaire survey to collect data about their learning styles (perceptual modality), which might play a dominant role in helping the students retain new vocabulary by utilising the traditional paper-based way or by integrating mobile phone features in the EFL classroom. At the end of the experiment, the Vocabulary Retention Software (VRS) questionnaire was used to explore the experience of the experimental group after using the mobile software VRS.

This research design aimed to employ the best methods to collect data and completely cover the area of the study. A Pretest-Post test Control group design was used in this study. The (PPCGD) differs from the randomised Post-Test-Only Control group design in the application of the pre-test. In this design, two groups of subjects were managed, with both groups being weighed or examined twice. However, in this study, the design was used thrice as the researchers implemented two tools for measuring two mobile phone SMS and VRS. Judgmental sampling was applied to form the groups by selecting students whose mobile phones supported VRS and assigning them as the experimental group (EG), whereas the rest were assigned as the control group (CG). Observations or measurements were gathered at the same time for both groups. The table of this design is as follows:

Table 1

Research Design

Group	pre-test	independent variable	post-test (1)	independent variable	post-test (2)
Experimental group - using a mobile phone in retaining new vocabulary	M	O	X	O	X	O
Control group – using traditional method in retaining new Vocabulary	M	O	C	O	C	O

M= selection based on certain variables. **O**= tests used in the study. **X**=mobile phone features. **C**= paper-based

Participants

The study was conducted at the University of Derna, which is located in the downtown of the fifth largest city in Libya, Derna. This specific public university, founded in 2020, was chosen to conduct this study because language learners' study at this university. Forty EFL students from the university participated in the study. All the students were first-year freshmen in the English Department of the university. The students had common features, such as having Arabic as their mother tongue, English as a foreign language, and being Libyan in origin. The age of the students ranged from 18 to19. The students were chosen from the university based on their performance in the university entrance examination. Unfortunately, the mobile software worked only with Android operating systems. Within the class members having the same characteristics, students' whose mobile phones supported vocabulary software programs were chosen. Among the student groups, 20 students whose mobile phones supported the vocabulary learning program were assigned to the experimental group (EG), whereas the other 20 students whose mobile phones did not support the vocabulary learning program were considered as the control group (CG). The students were given the instructions and words by the researchers in meetings that were previously organised with the Dean of the faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Data Collection Instruments

To investigate the research questions, four data collection materials were employed in this study.

The pretest was taken from *Test Your Vocabulary, Elementary Level* by Watcyn Jones. The aim of this test was to determine the students' current level of vocabulary knowledge before the implementation of the study and to ensure that all participants were at the same level of proficiency before the study commenced. Hence, the test consisted of 30 fill-in-the-gap items, in which the students were asked to write down the synonyms of the given adjectives and verbs from a box provided.

Second, the instrument used in this research study was the Perceptual Modality Preference Survey (PMPS) advanced via C. E. Cherry in 1981 as part of his doctoral thesis work. Cherry's 1981 questionnaire was adopted in this study to gauge the ability to recall paired information in seven perceptual modalities: interactive, visual, haptic, kinaesthetic, print,

aural, and olfactory. The PMPS, 42 item questionnaire, is a must option. With this intention, any perceptual style element is contrasted with each of the other learning styles twice and in reverse sequence. The students answer to every question with one of the following options: Always, Usually, Seldom, or Never. The answers are scored with a positive score (accepting statement) or a negative score (refusing statement). This method solves any incompatible answers. The scores are organized from, high to low, to generate a most favoured modality to a minimally favoured one. To obtain the highest division among components and avoid allocating unnecessary value to any one element, Cherry affirmed that both style elements in any question should get a score value. All modalities are scored 12 times, six in the initial placement and six in the secondary placement. When the modality is in the initial placement the scoring system is as follows: Always = + 4, Usually = +2, Seldom = -2, and Never = - 4. When the modality is located in the secondary placement, the scoring system is as follows: Always = - 2, Usually = - 1, Seldom = + 1, and Never = + 2. The score range is from + 36 to – 36. Upon fulfilment of the survey, the scores are calculated and arranged in rank order to show the students' most favoured learning style to their least favoured learning style. Due to the researchers' direct contact with Dr. Cherry, a translated Arabic PMPS survey was sent with other attached documents to help measure the different perceptual modalities of the students.

Subsequently, the researchers employed two KET post-tests, one after the first 60 words and the other after the remaining 60 words, to determine if there was any statistically significant difference between the two groups and to identify which technique was more useful for vocabulary retention among the experimental and control groups. KET exams are authorised and prestigious tests legalised by the University of Cambridge and recognised worldwide (International House Aberdeen 2016). KET is a test for evaluating people who can use every day written and spoken English at an elementary level. The tests comprised three parts, each containing approximately six questions. The students were asked to choose the correct answer among match, fill in the gaps, and write down words.

A software application was also used by the researcher for the experimental group to help them remember words. This software enabled the students to retain (GSL) Bauman's general service list wherever and whenever they wanted to for three weeks. Vocabulary Retention Software (VRS) is the name of the software application, which is available on the Android store. After the students in the experimental group downloaded VRS into their mobile phones, the researcher inserted the 60 words into the program to begin the experiment.

A questionnaire designed by the researchers and written in English was translated into Arabic to collect data and investigate the experimental group's opinions regarding the use of VRS for vocabulary retention. The VRS questionnaire was translated into Arabic because the learners' level of English would not be sufficient to respond to and comprehend the items in English. First, a draft of the questionnaire was prepared. Then the questionnaire was given to the supervisor, items were modified, and developed. Following the first draft, the final version of the questionnaire was prepared. The Arabic version was checked and back-translated into English by two lecturers at the university. A comparison of the two English versions revealed that they were similar; therefore, no alterations were made to the translated questionnaire. The questionnaire, comprising 19 close-ended and two open-ended items, had two separate parts: the first part contained 15 statements about using VRS, as mentioned above, where participants responded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, while the second part contained five items about the advantages and disadvantages of VRS. The final item in the questionnaire asked students to rate VRS out of five stars.

A questionnaire was used in conjunction with interviews to measure students' opinions regarding the use of VRS for educational purposes. Qualitative data can be collected in various ways, such as through telephone interviews, utilising online media, and face-to-face interviews. For this study, face-to-face interviews were chosen for qualitative data collection. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative technique of analysis that involves a predefined series of open questions with the chance for the interviewee to add further responses. Semi-structured questions were used in this study to enable participants to talk freely within the scope of the question. Four questions were asked in the interview, which lasted for 1.5 hours. In this regard, the experimental EG semi-structured interview was conducted by six students from the EG to reveal further information concerning the use of VRS for vocabulary recalling in and out of the classroom and to learn about the benefits and challenges of VRS as a language learning tool in EFL learning. The interviews mainly concentrated on four areas: the place and time of using VRS, the perceived positive impacts of using it, and the advantages and disadvantages of using VRS. The interview was conducted in Arabic and translated into English by the researchers because the EG was not able to fully express their experience in English. Details of the interview questions are also discussed in the findings and discussion sections.

Data Collection Procedure

The main procedure for this study consisted of seven phases that occurred in the university's language lecture rooms during the first week of November for six weeks. Before the commencement, all ethical approvals were obtained to ensure the privacy and safety of all participants in accordance with academic norms and guidance.

Phase I: In this phase, all the details and objectives of the experiment were fully explained after receiving written consent from the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Before any instruction and grouping, a questionnaire (PMPS) consisting of a five-point Likert scale was administered to the students to measure their most preferred style of learning and to determine whether there was any impact on learners' ways of vocabulary retention.

Phase II: (Test Your Vocabulary TYV) Pretest. After dividing the students into two groups, the researchers used TYV to ensure that all the participants were at the same level of proficiency and to eliminate the threats of external validity and check their knowledge of the vocabulary items.

Phase III: Acquiring new vocabulary items (1). One hundred and twenty words were chosen for this study to examine the students' ability to retain these words. These words were selected from Bauman's General Service List (GSL), which consists of 2284 words. These words are the most frequent words in the English language that every student at this level should know in order to improve their level. On average, the GSL represents 82% of words used in English. As the words were not organised in alphabetical order, one word in every 20 words was randomly selected from the list for use in the study.

During the first three weeks, 60 words on sheets of paper were provided to the control group through face-to-face distribution at the end of the lecture, whereas the experimental group received the same 60 words via SMS. The members of both groups determined on their own the number of words to learn each day. Fortunately, bulk messages could be delivered to a group of a maximum of 32 people at one time, which was sufficient to accommodate the experimental group. For the experimental group, mobile phone numbers were first collected from the participants with their consent. Based on the participants' preferred times of message delivery gathered prior to the start of this experiment, an SMS message consisting of ten vocabulary items was regularly sent out six times a week. Such message delivery lasted 21 days from November 2 to 23, 2016.

Phase IV: Testing Phase (1). After the third phase (i.e. learning phase), the researchers gave the experimental and control groups the first post-test (KET 1) for the first 60 words they learned in the three weeks' time, to enable the researchers to see if there was a change between the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG) in terms of vocabulary retention ability using SMS mobile features.

Phase V: Acquiring new vocabulary items (2). During the last three weeks, the researchers provided the last 60 words to the experimental groups using the same method used previously for the control group (sheet of paper), whereas the experimental groups received the vocabulary in their downloaded mobile researcher-designed software (VRS). The installation of VRS, its different parts, and how to use it are all described and overviewed. A push notification (Kindly check today's words) was sent by the researchers at regular intervals. The experimental group agreed to send these push notifications at the same period of time used in the SMS phase. In contrast, students in the control group were not allowed to use VRS on their mobile phones during the period that ended on December 14.

Phase VI: Testing phase (2). The researchers tested the other 60 words to determine if there was any difference. By the end of the experiment, the researchers were able to determine if there was any significant difference between the two groups and which technique was more useful for vocabulary retention among the study participants.

Phase VII: EG opinions on VRS: A VRS questionnaire designed by the researchers was administered to the EG members only after the second post-test. The questionnaire was used to examine their experience upon the use of VRS to recall vocabulary and to find out if any problem was encountered during using it in phase V. The interview and questionnaire helped the researchers explore the effectiveness of VRS in retaining vocabulary in EFL learning. The interview and the questionnaire helped the researchers to explore the effectiveness of the VRS for retaining vocabulary in EFL learning.

Reliability and Validity

Validity indicates the usefulness of the test used in the study. Reliability pertains to the degree to which the instrument or test generates equivalent outcomes on frequent events. To measure the reliability and validity of the PMPS questionnaire in the Libyan culture and environment, some steps were carried out. To begin with, validity was executed to determine and evaluate the cultural appropriateness of the questionnaires, so they were handed to three

professionals who were lectures majoring in English Language Translation and Literature at the University. They affirmed that the items were suitable and beneficial for the goal of the study.

Additionally, PMPS reliability was measured in Harvey's (2002) work, and the seven perceptual modalities showed acceptable rates for achieving reliability. Nominally recommended satisfactory acceptable rates were between .60 and .80. Carmines and Zeller suggested that reliability scores over .80 are adequate to accomplish reliability. Harvey's measurements were interactive (.68), visual (.68), haptic (.69), and aural (71), all of which manifested acceptable reliability (.68<á<.80). The remaining three modalities, olfactory (.84), print (.85), and kinaesthetic (.86), obtained very high (á>.80), proving the internal consistency of the PMPS (see Table 2).

Table 2

Reliability Results (Harvey, 2002)

Modality	Aural	Haptic	Interactive	Kinesthetic	Olfactory	Print	Visual
(á)	.71	.69	.68	.86	.84	.85	.68

Note (á) = Cronbach Coefficient Alpha

To check the reliability and validity of the VRS questionnaire in the Libyan context, several steps were taken. First, validity was conducted by the researcher, with a view to finding out and determining the appropriateness of the questionnaire. The supervisor stated that the items were beneficial and suitable for the aim of the study. In addition, a pilot study was conducted to measure the reliability of the VRS questionnaire. The participants in the pilot study consisted of 15 second-year students from the University of Derna. The reason for conducting a pilot study was to determine whether the participants would face any difficulties comprehending the items. The respondents in the pilot study did not experience any problems or ambiguity in understanding the items in Arabic during the completion of the questionnaire. They all confirmed that the statements were comprehensible and suitable for use in the study. Comparatively, to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure reliability. Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire was calculated as .764. Therefore, the VRS questionnaire was reliable for administering to the EG to fulfil the aim of the study (see Table 3). Brown stated that "Cronbach alpha is used to estimate the ratio of variance that is systematic in a set of test scores. For example, if the Cronbach's alpha for a set of

scores turns out to be .90, you can interpret that the test is 90% reliable and 10% is unreliable" (17). In the case of the current study, Cronbach's alpha scores indicated that the results were reliable.

Table 3

Reliability of the Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.746	.732	15

Data Analysis

In the data analysis, students received two points for each correct answer. The test scores ranged from 0 to 30. These independent pre- and post-tests (t-tests) were used in the quantitative analysis to determine the difference in performance between the two groups. The t-test was calculated using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) for consistency of reliability. Whereas, the second method of data analysis concerned inferential statistics, i.e., to examine the preference of the students in terms of their learning styles preferences. Thus, a t-test was used to obtain the required results. The standard $p<0.05$ was used for the analysis of the questionnaire. The questionnaire and post-tests were useful in determining whether integrating mobile techniques can improve vocabulary retention in the experimental group compared to the control group and whether perceptual modality can have a dominant effect on the ways in which students recall vocabulary.

After the collection of the VRS questionnaire, the data were quantitatively analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The responses of the participants in the second questionnaire and the interview in the experimental group were computed to determine the means and standard deviations of the items to determine whether the use of VRS was effective for educational purposes, particularly vocabulary retention.

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The Conflict between the White and the Black in Chinua Achebe and Lorraine Hansberry: A Comparative Reading

T. T. Thomas

Chinua Achebe, the famous Nigerian writer is mainly known for his *African Trilogy* which consists of *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964). Achebe's main concern in these novels is the reinterpretation of Nigerian history from colonialism until the first military coup. Achebe has established an excellent example of a modern African novel that depicts various cultural tensions and conflicts arising out of a clash between tradition and modernity. In fact, the modern African novel is a genre developed as a discourse occupied with modes of resisting Western cultural hegemony in determining African states of consciousness. Consequently, Achebe's writings represent his abiding concerns in literature and the arts, as well as his interest in wider social issues.

In 1959, just one year before the publication of *No Longer at Ease* Lorraine Hansberry made history as the first African American woman to have a show produced on Broadway, *A Raisin in the Sun.* As a playwright, feminist, and racial justice activist, Hansberry never shied away from difficult topics during her short and extraordinary life. Hansberry is the first African American and the youngest woman to win the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, and she is best known for her play *A Raisin in the Sun*. The play is mainly a reaction to the racial injustice meted out to her and her family when they moved into an all-white neighbourhood. "Hansberry's writings anticipate the women's liberation movement that came to the forefront in America shortly after her death. She wrote a play that celebrated feminism before it had a name" (Wiener 11). In this popular drama, Hansberry examines the fate of dreams that have not been accomplished and the feelings of disillusionment and hopelessness that result from failed goals. Hansberry's drama is about African-American ethos. She brings to the fore the quintessential issues that highlight the exclusiveness of the Black American community and articulates the suppressed voice of Black women by "speaking" to them.

Written by two Black writers of different continents, the novel and the play have many similarities. Although Achebe's focus is on the corruption practiced by the new generation educated Nigerians, the question of racial segregation and the white man's contempt for the Black people are also central to the depiction of the story. Similarly, the major theme in the American drama is a challenge raised by Black people against white people. The efforts to

stand up and live one's own life are crushed, and Black people are treated as totally unsuitable for being a part of the environment reserved for racial propagandists. Thus, a critical comparative reading of both fiction and the play is quite rewarding.

Chinua Achebe's novel *No Longer at Ease* is set in the period of Nigeria's transition from colonial rule to independence, so that, there is a deliberate attempt to define the problems confronting the characters who find themselves trapped between two sets of conflicting demands. Achebe's idea is an awareness of moral and spiritual concerns and the plight of modern society. In this novel, he takes on the role of a social critic and explores the consequences of the breakdown of traditional societies. Western civilisation to Achebe is a destructive force that is causing the alienation of educated Africans.

No Longer at Ease tells the story of Obi Okonkwo, a young man attracted by the offerings of British civilisation, who seeks to live up to an image created by his position, falls into debt and is convicted for accepting bribery. When he returns with a foreign education, Obi Okonkwo becomes disillusioned as it fails to conform to the picture he had visualised. Today's Nigeria is puzzling and confusing. "He had not thought places like this stood side by side with the cars, electric lights, and brightly dressed girls"(*Achebe* 12). Achebe demonstrates that in such a situation, a Western-educated Nigerian is ill at ease in the society to which he once belonged. Significantly, the title of the novel refers to the protagonist's disenchantment. In a sense, the failure of the hero is "also the failure of the Western-educated elite to relate their education to Nigerian life" (Amur 221). The inability to grasp the meaning of life and find solutions for its problems adds to the bewilderment of the main character. His perplexity clearly brings out the enormity of his predicament.

Hansberry's A *Raisin in the Sun* presaged the revolution in black and women's consciousness and the revolutionary ferment in America. The play directly addresses issues such as the value systems of the black family, concepts of African American beauty and identity, class and generational conflicts, and outspoken feminism. Her drama is not a picturization of the black struggle for justice and equality, but rather an attempt to show that there is the same humanity underneath colour differences. As Robert Nemiroff remarked in the introduction to the 1986 edition of the play:

Some people were ecstatic to find that 'it didn't really to have to be about Negroes at all!' It was, rather, a walking, talking, living demonstration of our mythic conviction that,

underneath, all Americans, *color-ain't-got-nothing-to-do-with-it,* are pretty much alike. People are just people, whoever they are; and all they want is a chance to be like other people. (*A Raisin in the Sun 9)*

The play is a sad commentary on America, just like Achebe's novel remains a depiction of the aftereffects of colonialism on Nigeria, and Nemiroff's words are pertinent to the point: "It is indeed a sad commentary, but the question also assumed something more: that it is the topicality of the play's immediate events- ie., the persistence of white opposition to unrestricted housing and the ugly manifestations of racism in its myriad forms- that keeps it alive" (13). At the deepest level, it is not a specific situation but the human condition, human aspiration, and human relationships – the persistence of dreams, of the bonds and conflicts between men and women, parents and children, old ways and new, and the endless struggle against human expression, whatever the forms it may take, and for individual fulfilment, recognition, and liberation – that are at the heart of this play.

In *No Longer at Ease,* Achebe also depicts the dreams sustained by the protagonist. Obi Okonkwo dreamed of a Nigeria a fertile land for equality and corruption free state: "But the Nigeria he returned to was in many ways different from the picture he had carried in his mind during those four years. There were many things he could no longer recognise, and others–like the slums of Lagos – which he was seeing for the first time" (*Achebe, No Longer at Ease* 10). Achebe convincingly depicts the protagonist's bewilderment at the changes that have occurred in Nigerian society.

The novel can be read as a paradigm of a man caught between the irreconcilable values of different ways of life. Although he has freed himself from the pull of traditionalism, the protagonist fails to achieve complete freedom because he is now in the clutches of decadent, modern Lagos. It is evident in the words of the President of Umuofia: "Lagos is a bad place for a young man. If you follow its sweetness, you will perish" (65). Thus, Achebe captures the contradictory situation in which the educated African finds himself: he is an independent man, whose will is subject to communal pressure. In *A Raisin in the Summer,* a character similarly points out the predicament of the educated African American:

JOHNSON. Oh- I ain't criticizing her none. It's just-you know how some of our young people gets when they get a little education. . . . 'Course I can understand how she must be proud and everything- being the only one in the family to make something of herself.

I know just being a chauffeur ain't never satisfied Brother none. He shouldn't feel like that, though. Ain't nothing wrong with being a chauffeur (2.2).

Similarities exist between the two works in terms of man–woman relationships. The ladies in the Younger household in the play complain that Mr. Walter, the man of the house, should be civil to them. Finding that it provokes the man and he starts to go out, the mother's comment is very apt:

> MAMA. It's dangerous son... When a man goes outside his home for peace, (1.2).

Walter believes that women, in general, suspect their husbands. He emphatically asks:

> WALTER. Why do women always think there is a woman somewhere when a man gets restless? (1.2).

Obi Okonkwo, in spite of his earnest love with the *osu* girl, fails to get married. His decision to marry Clara was against the sentiments of his parents. Ultimately, however, he failed: "Clara looked in his direction once and immediately took her eyes away. Obi wanted to rush out of his car and shout: 'Stop! Let's us go and get married now, ' but he couldn't and didn't" (*No Longer* 118).

Racial segregation is a serious topic in almost all writings by black writers. The history of black literature is built upon the conflict between the white and black. The works analysed also create situations of conflict in which the white expresses contempt and the black struggles for equality. Despite the change in outlook and the development that has taken place, the white men continued to be prejudiced against the Africans. It is explicit in the remark:" They are all corrupt,' repeated Mr. Green. I am all for equality and all that. I, for one, would hate to live in South Africa. But equality will not alter the facts," (3). Viewed from this perspective, traditional Africans are seen as victims of cultural unease and disintegration. On his return, the people's expectancy can be discerned in the respect shown to him; however, the happiness is short-lived as they fail to reconcile with Obi's nontraditional views. In this context, it is apt to quote Eustace Palmer. The Nigerians, Palmer says, "fail to realise that by educating Obi they gave him the opportunity to acquire ideals which were bound to be more liberal than theirs" (*An Introduction* 65).

The white community's decision to move to a residential area populated entirely by whites is intolerable to the white. Lindner, the white agent in the drama, tries his best to

persuade the black family to avoid the calamity of intermingling with the fairer-colored group. He presents the dilemma of the white in a very 'justifying' way:

> LINDNER. They are not rich and fancy people; they are just hard-working, honest people who do not have much, but those little homes and a dream of the kind of community in which they want to raise their children. Now, I do not say that we are perfect and that there is much that is wrong with some of the things they want. But you have to admit that a man, right or wrong, has the right to want to have the neighbourhood in which he lives in a certain kind of way. . . . for the happiness of all concerned, our Negro families are happier when they live in their *own* communities (*Raisin* 3.3).

White characters in the novel also maintain a similar contempt for Black people. According to the British officer, Mr. Green, "the African is corrupt through and through" (*No Longer* 2). On another occasion, Mr. Green vehemently expresses his contempt:

> He turned to Obi and said: 'You know, Okonkwo, I have lived in your country for fifteen years and yet I cannot begin to understand the mentality of the so-called educated Nigerian. . . . I think Government is making a terrible mistake in making it so easy for people like that to have so-called university education (93).

One of the main concerns in this novel is corruption in African society. From the beginning, the protagonist is confronted with the issue of bribery. Everything is a result of the new culture that the Nigerians have embraced. It is a matter of great concern to Achebe that the urbanised Nigerians, who have been exposed to new cultures, will return and question the traditional beliefs of their ancestors. In colonised Nigeria, the perspective has been utterly different, as evident in the narrative: "His mind was, as it were, on higher things. He spent the few days with his 'countryman', Joseph Okeke, a clerk in the survey department" (11).

Obi begins to yield to the temptations brought about by his job. Men offer him money to get their names on the list and girls offer them themselves. "Please Mr. Okonkwo you must help me. I'll do whatever you ask" (118). Before long, he was caught with marked currency and faced imprisonment and disgrace. The reader is well aware that Obi is doomed to break down because of the strains of the demands; here arises that he cannot stand anymore. "Obi tried to do what everyone does without finding how it was done" (5). People believe that one gets used to these things, but for Obi, every incident seems worse than before. Mr. Green's remark is very relevant: "We have brought him Western education, but what use is it to him?"

(3). Achebe skilfully portrays Obi's dilemma, which is representative of the lives of young Nigerians. Obi is destroyed by doing what everyone does: running away from a scandalous affair, living above his income, and taking bribes. The general mentality of modern black people focuses on economic growth and not on cultural empowerment. The protagonist in *A Raisin in the Sun* also comes to this realisation. Money has become indispensable to the lives of black people in Africa and America. The characters in the play are frequently confronted with the question of making money rather than observing principles. While Mama stands for higher things, her son openly declares that today's life means making money.

WALTER. Mama – sometimes when I'm downtown and I pass them cool, quiet-looking restaurants where them white boys are sitting back and talking 'bout things . . . sitting there turning deals worth millions of dollars . . . sometimes I see guys don't look much older than me –

MAMA. Son – how come you talk so much 'bout money?

WALTER. Because it is life, Mama!

MAMA. Oh- So now it's life. Money is life. Once upon a time freedom used to be life – now it's money. I guess the world really do change . . .

WALTER. No – it was always money, Mama. We just didn't know about it. (1.2)

No Longer at Ease focuses on a central clash between two major points: traditional and modern values. Having been exposed to other cultures, the protagonist begins to question the necessity of upholding his traditions, which places him in a dilemma and leads to confrontation with his community. The dilemma in agreeing with tradition is explicit during the prayer conducted with Obi's parents:

> Obi did not attend the evening prayers. He heard his father's voice as if from a great distance, continuing for a long time. Whenever it appeared to have finished, his voice would rise again. Eventually, Obi heard several voices saying the Lord's Prayer. However, everything sounded far away, as voices and the cries of insects sound to a man in a fever (*No Longer* 109).

"Focusing on this clash," says Ravenscroft, "Achebe switches to an urban setting to present the life of an educated Nigerian in the late 1950s" (118).

Obi's individualism alienates him, and he is destroyed by the pressures of the traditional world, represented by Umuofia and the Western world. On his return, there are notable changes; the senior service post and privileges that had so far been reserved for the white man are now enjoyed by the Nigerians. Lorraine Hansberry has also depicted a similar situation. According to Hansberry, the change in the power system from coloniser to colonised will not make things better, as the young and progressive character asks:

> BENEATHA. 'What about all the crooks and thieves and just plain idiots who will come into power and steal and plunder the same as before-only now they will be black and do it in the name of the new Independence?' (*Raisin* 3.1).

The conflict between traditional Umofian society and the British-educated Obi is evident throughout the novel. Obi was sent for higher education with the support of the society and asked to pursue legal education there. "They wanted him to read law so that when he returned, he would handle all their land cases against their neighbours" (*No Longer* 6). Obi disappointed them by reading English instead, for they expected him to use his newly acquired influence as a senior civil servant on their behalf. Acting against the society is seen as the first clash and it demonstrates Obi's defiance of the expectations of fellow countrymen. The assertion of his individuality is in contrast to the subject position expected of him by the elders (Pandurang 33). Achebe states: "We may be talking as if individualism was invented in the West – in fact, individualism must be as old as human society – from whatever time human beings began to move about in groups . . . ." (Pandurang 33).

One of the most important aspects of Obi's life was that he was educated in England. "The colonised man is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (Lindfors 127). White men are, in fact, unhappy with the cultural and educated growth of Black people. In Hansberry's drama, the leading character also narrates a similar experience:

> MAMA. . . . MAMA:... Lord, ever since I was a little girl, I always remember people saying, 'Lena – Lena Eggleston, you aim too high all the time. You needs to slow down and see life a little more like it is. Just slow down some'. That's what they always used to say down home – 'Lord, that Lena Eggleston is a high-minded thing. She'll get her due one day!' (3. 1).

The conflict between parents and educated and practical young black people is a common feature in the literary writings of Africans and Afro-Americans. The mother in *A Raisin in the Sun* feels ashamed of her son's materialism:

> MAMA. If you a son of mine, tell her! . . . You . . . you are a disgrace to your father's memory. Somebody get me my hat! (1.2.).

Regarding marriage, Obi's choice is highly unimaginable and intolerable to his mother. This is evident in her reaction:

> '*Osu* is like leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg of you, my son, not to bring mark of shame and of leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and your children's children unto the third and fourth generations will curse your memory. It is not for myself I speak; my days are few. You will bring sorrow on your head and on the heads of your children. Who will marry your daughters? Whose daughters your sons marry? Think of that my son. We are Christians, but we cannot marry our own daughters'. (*No Longer* 107).

With Achebe, the issue is the clash between the old and the ne, and its effect on the intellectual elite. "Today things have changed a lot, but it would be foolish to pretend that we have fully recovered from the traumatic effects of our first confrontation with Europe" (78). In *A Raisin in the Sun*, the confrontation with the coloniser is at its peak. The play is a powerful indictment of American racism and segregation and, at the same time, a jubilant exaltation of the resurrected black.

In the final analysis, it appears that Achebe's novel and Hansberry's drama are interesting and inspiring parallel studies for the inquisitive reader. While Achebe depicts the story of the downfall of a black hero resulting from colonial enterprise, Hansberry focuses on the emergence of black people in opposition to white people. Both writers have taken then opportunity to look at the world from a stand point that recognised the interconnectedness of race, sex, and class.

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Ecocritical Ripplets in the *Moby Dick*

Roshna P.B.

Moby Dick is a precious gem in American literature. It is rich in symbolism and metaphors. The names of the characters have Biblical resonances, and the epilogue begins with a quotation from the Book of Job: "and I only am escaped alone to tell thee." The novel's extraordinary oddness comprises an encyclopaedia of whaling lore, a Biblical meditation on the value of life, and a study of humankind's relationship with others, as well as nature. The adventures that take place in the novel are so well known that they have entered the American consciousness.

"Call me Ishmael" (Melville 1) is the most recognisable opening line in all fiction. On a cold, gloomy night in December, he arrives at the Spouter-Inn and agrees to share a bed with a stranger. Both men are alarmed when the bunkmate, a heavily tattooed Polynesian harpooner named Queequeg, returns late and discovers Ishmael beneath the covers. However, the two quickly become close friends and choose to set sail from the famed port of Nantucket together. Ishmael recounts their last voyage on the ship *Pequod* (named after the doomed Pequot tribe of New England Native Americans who succumbed to the white colonisers' weapons or diseases) out of New Bedford, Massachusetts. Captain Ahab is obsessed with the pursuit of a particular whale, the white whale Moby Dick. On that level, the work is an intense, superbly authentic narrative of New England whaling.

Tension mounts on the ship until the whale is sighted and several other vessels enter the chase. For three days, the crew pursues the great whale, which repeatedly turns onto the *Pequod's* boats. Moby Dick finally wins out in the end and perishes the ships, including the *Pequod*. Captain Ahab is last seen accidentally pinned to the whale, caught in the harpoon line, and then dragged down under the sea to his death. Only Ishmael survives, clinging to Queequeg's coffin.

Moby Dick is one of Western culture's pre-eminent texts and refers directly to the natural world. It reveals some of the attitudes of Western society at the time of its production. It is a narrative about the antebellum American whale fishery, which has become a classic of American literature. Melville created a powerful and lasting novel by skilfully using ancient and contemporary mythologies, a Shakespearean understanding of the human condition, and by weaving his narrative into the historical, religious, and social matrix of a particularly important period in the larger narrative of America. Notwithstanding the efforts of some notable thinkers,

Western culture in the early to mid-1800s, especially in America, was one in which the industrialisation of the cities and cultivation and exploitation of the country were wholeheartedly embraced by most of the population and the government. Melville takes a flensing knife to his America and lays it open for the reader to examine.

Moby Dick presents to us the author's perspective and reflections on the human attitudes to the natural world. The novel also seriously ponders the narrative over the casual acceptance of the American Nationalistic project (a utilitarian acceptance) by his fellow citizens who believe that whales need to be killed to cater to the need of its oil for American industry. In his work, the novelist, by deciphering the clash between whales and the Pequod, makes a thorough, intensive, and unique probe into the relationship between man and nature.

The novel mainly focuses on the emerging idea of mastering nature through industrial technology. Ahab embodies contemporary American hope that technology would empower and free man. Ahab's quest becomes an allegory while simultaneously posing a question about industrial capitalism in its newfound confidence. Melville opens up the fact that man and nature are inter-connected and can never be set apart. To live on earth, one cannot help but adapt themselves to the ecosphere by respecting nature. By layering paradoxes and ambiguities, he accentuates that harmonious coexistence with nature is the only way to survive on earth.

Although Ishmael suggests the importance of whaling to Western economies, he also criticises the need for industrialisation and capitalism, their rapacity, and frivolity. After the pathetic death of a crippled whale, he remarks: "He must die the death and be murdered, in order to light the gay bridals and other merry- making of men, and also to illuminate the solemn churches that preach unconditional inoffensiveness by all to all" (Melville 301). This is a blatant indictment of both capitalist and religious hypocrisy. He espouses an environmentally friendly doctrine: "not ignoring what is good, I am quick to perceive a horror, and could still be social with it- would they let me- since it is but well to be on friendly terms with all the inmates of the place one lodges in" (Melville 16).

Ishmael's attitude toward whales oscillates between objectification and sympathy. During the chase, the first whale is described as: "a gigantic Sperm whale... rolling in the water like the capsized hull of a frigate, his broad, glossy back, of an Ethiopian hue, glistening in the sun's rays like a mirror"; "like a portly burgher smoking his pipe"; "the great fish"; and a "monster" with a tale like a tower (Melville 242). Thus, at the first operation, Ishmael reiterates the age-

old metaphors of the whales as the other and the foe. However, at the same time, we see the same Ishmael sympathising with those dying creatures. The red blood flowing out melts his heart, and his words indicate pity for the animal's situation.

An undeliberate sympathy arises in the hearts of readers as these depictions of whale killing conjure up images of pain, fear, and desperation. Ecocriticism mourns these bloody operations that wreck other species on Earth. The mushroom growth of industries and factories is directly proportional to the disintegration of the ecological balance. With the aid of newly invented instruments and mechanical apparatuses, humans claim superiority over nature and natural elements. The journey of the *Pequod* to the unfathomable depths of the sea to extract whale oil is nothing but an offshoot of man's unquenched desire for expansion. Ecocritics generally believe that nature provides enough for man's needs, but not for his greed. In *Moby Dick*, a general belief arises in America that killing whales in numbers is an immediate need for economic and cultural expansion. Man's self-assumed superiority disturbs the entire ecological rhythm.

Chapter 87, "The Grand Armada," is crucial in presenting Ishmael's attitude toward the whales. At first, he resorts to a battle metaphor, describing them as "forming in close ranks and battalions, so that their spouts all looked like flashing lines of stacked bayonets" (*MD* 322). And he observes that the whole time these whales are swimming away from conflict. They become "gallied" (Melville 322) and perplexed by the hunters.

Their behaviour, as unwise as it is, is understandable, prompting Ishmael to make one of the Eco critical definite statements of the book: "for there is no folly of the beasts of the earth which is not infinitely outdone by the madness of men" (Melville 322). Crucial to an understanding that animals are worthy of consideration is the recognition that humans are also animals. The understanding that there is no hierarchy, but only an artificial separation, is vital to ecocritical thought. This kind of deep ecological roots can be found in many parts of the novel.

The hierarchical distinction between man and the fish is dismantled at many junctures in the novel. In many places, there are depictions of the sameness between Ahab and the whale. In chapter 30, "The Pipe," Ahab smokes to windward all the while, with such nervous sniffs, as if" like a dying whale"(Melville 114). The striking similarity between Ahab and Moby Dick is brought forth in the later chapters. The physical feature that Ahab and the Moby Dick share

is deep furrowed brows. The portrayal of the furrowed brows of Moby Dick occurs many times, especially in the final chapter, Moby Dick's knitted forehead appearing menacing. The recurring accentuation on the furrowed brows of Captain Ahab allows the reader to consider both man and whale animals. In chapter 113, "The Forge," Ahab asks Perth the blacksmith to smooth out his forehead, but Perth tells him that a wrinkled brow is something which he cannot evens out. Here, Ahab's attempts are to distinguish himself from the white whale so that he can transgress the animal hierarchy to proclaim the human superiority. Although he wants to separate himself from the animal kingdom to which he actually belongs, Ahab is aware that he too is a beast like the whale. The reason why his forehead is unsmooth that his wrinkled brows though seen in flesh, actually "has worked down into the bone of my skull-that is all wrinkle!" (Melville 403).

When Ahab confronts Moby Dick, the two wrinkled brow faces one another; the human animal faces the whale animal. From an ecocritical perspective, it is evident that there exists no chasm between humans and animals. Men deliberately aggrandise the pseudo-division to conquer nature. In Moby Dick, the frequency of resemblance between Ahab and Moby Dick projects this ecocritical equality of species. Whether a man or a whale, every species on earth has the right to survive.

Ecocritics have consistently voiced criticisms against anthropocentricism. The assumption that nature exists for the sake of humankind is something that Melville attempted to criticise through his novel. The man who accentuates his centrality in the universe is epitomised through the character of Captain Ahab. He represents a dilapidated society that views its triumph over nature as something venerable. Ahab, in his insane resolution to annihilate the source of nature, Moby Dick, is God-like. "He is a grand, ungodly, god-like man" (Melville 76) with a convoluted disposition. He is ungodly in the sense that he refuses to subject himself to any supreme power of nature. He does not respect or even acknowledge the superiority of natural forces beyond himself. Melville's use of the phrase "god-like" is cunningly befitting for Captain Ahab, as he wants to be the god or supreme power over nature and checks it according to his desire. Although he was once punished for attacking the great sperm whale, his lust for autonomy stimulated him to further slaughter the natural force.

The monomaniac captain pursues Moby Dick in such a fervent manner that even the other whales occasionally pop up as his stock of vengeance. His loathing for Moby Dick spreads toward other creatures as well. For him, the entire nature becomes an enemy. Although

his determination to gain upper hand over nature by defeating the whale remains as a pipedream, the path that he chooses is bloody and gruesome. The destiny that nature has for him in its stock is terrible, but justifiable. Irrespective of the array of deterrents that nature has provided, they are contemptuously neglected. The catastrophe that awaits Ahab and his crew is symbolically the precarious future that awaits all of humankind. The man who challenges nature to achieve his ends is destined to tread through the valley of utter perils. The Captain who shouts, "who's over me?" (Melville 144) at the moment of the initial announcement of his vengeance, is finally engulfed by the unreckonable sea. He would "strike the sun if it insulted me" (Melville 144). Ahab wants to take on the structure of nature, rather, the captain never desires his powers belittled in comparison with the natural ideal.

The doubloon that Ahab nails to the mast is highly symbolic in an ecocritical sense. Ancient *Peqoud* can be read as the microcosm of human society. "Here is the ship's navel, the doubloon here, and they are all on fire to unscrew it" (Melville 363). Ahab calls the gold coin the centre of the *Peqoud*; likewise, money becomes the nucleus of human life. Through the proclamation of a doubloon reward for the one who first beholds Moby Dick, the representative of natural forces, Ahab places a price on nature. In ecocritical thought, it can be read as a man's belief that nature is a commodity to be purchased with money. However, none of Ahab's hankerings materialised; rather, his lust for retribution against nature takes his life.

The *Pequod* is a floating America. Melville utilises the 'machine' metaphor in American literature, a metaphor that highlights the conflict between emerging technologies and natural ideals. Melville's narrator fuses into a single, compelling image, the inward and outwards implications of man's assault upon nature. These images of technology are common throughout the book, from the textile mill inside the whale skeleton to the metaphors of Ahab as a train sweeping through the landscape: "the path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, where on my soul is grooved to run. Over unsounded gorges, through the rifled hearts of mountains, under torrents' beds, unerringly I rush. Naught's an obstacle, naught's an angle to the iron way!" (Melville 147).

Towards the end of the novel, we see Ahab longing for home symbolised by greenness: "By the green land; by the bright heart- stone! This is the magic glass, man; I see my wife and child in thine eye" (Melville 444). In the final lowering, Ahab looks back at his ship. The sprouting of green mosses in the cracks of the ship in one of the final scenes of the novel is a

signal of the ultimate revelation to Ahab. He admits that there was even a single spot of green, or, a ray of thought about nature in his heart-core. But at the last moments of life, an epiphany comes to Ahab that nature will surpass all the onslaughts of humanity, and man cannot reach the scale of nature. Although men perish, it will last. Even if Ahab, the monomaniac, challenges and sets about battling against nature, his final moments unravel before him the potentiality of natural forces. It is only in his punishment phase that Ahab realises the strength that nature possesses. "Then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (Melville 469). Even if humans are eradicated, nature is reborn.

Anthropocentricism is portrayed through another character, Starbuck. When Ahab approaches nature with the aim of wreaking his vengeance, Starbuck views it economically. This character represents the parameters of the mid-19th-century attitude toward animal suffering. He refutes Ahab's passionate pursuit only because it cannot earn him any commercial objective. He clearly knows that "I'm in here in this critical ocean to kill whales for my living, and not to be killed by them for theirs" (Melville 103–104). He believes that economic concerns prevail over everything else. Starbuck's ethical notion goes against that of Ahab. He interprets the man-nature relationship from an economic perspective. For him, the sperm whale was nothing but a mere commodity, and for Ahab, it was his sworn enemy. Starbuck protests Ahab's selfishness only because Moby Dick can hardly earn him anything. "But I came here to hunt whales not my commanders' vengeance, how many barrels will the vengeance yield thee even if though get test it, Captain Ahab? It will not fetch thee much in our Nantucket market" (Melville 143).

His sensibility is cemented on anthropocentricism. For him, Moby Dick is nothing more than a brute beast. According to Harold Bloom, to Starbuck, the existence of nature only lies in its economical values, in the wealth it brings to man. In an episode in which other mates and harpooners of the *Pequod* are mesmerised by the innocent actions of small whales, we see Starbuck's vicious face. While Queequeg pats the calves, Starbuck indulges himself in throwing harpoons at the whales. Materialistic concerns have over-reigned him, and he sends a contemptuous note toward nature and its creatures. Nature is nothing but a source of benefits for man's sake. Although he does not perceive nature as his foe as his captain does, he craves the pinnacles of success in his whale hunting and oil extracting. However, nature again triumphs over man's greed, and Starbuck falls into the depthless caves of the sea.

Ecological concerns in the novel are well portrayed through the narrator, Ishmael. Unlike Ahab's vengeful monomania and Starbuck's profit pursuit, Ishmael seeks a venue for self-exploration in the sea. It is pure curiosity that attracts Ishmael toward Moby Dick. Although he emerges as an objective, unprejudiced narrator toward the whale at the outset, the impressions of Ahab and Starbuck fall on him. Together with other lured crew members, he thinks Ahab's quenchless feud is his and takes an oath of violence against the representative of nature. Starbuck's economic reflections are also agreeable at the beginning. However, Ahab's hatred and Starbuck's contempt toward Moby Dick are insufficient to satisfy his curiosity about the great whale. He plunges himself into a quest of his own through the study of whales, especially the white whale. The whales are anthropomorphised in his thoughts, and a sense of sympathy and respect for them wells up.

Ishmael equates the whales with human beings at many junctures. More than that, he holds them in high regard. He seeks the sublimity and dignity inherent in Moby Dick. He is spellbound by the first panoramic view of the whale and cannot help proclaiming that he sees "the rare virtue of a strong individual vitality, and the rare virtue of thick walls, and rare virtue of interior spaciousness. Oh man! Admire and model thyself after the whale!" (Melville 261).

He is neither the malice of the universe as Ahab perceives it, nor the "dumb brute" (Melville 144) as Starbuck addresses. For him, Moby Dick, or the nature that he symbolises, is something divine. In addition to the anthropomorphic vocabularies about the swimming whale, Ishmael produces parallel comparisons with Moby Dick and gods such as Jupiter and Europa. The anthropomorphising and deification of Moby Dick clearly reinforce the sublimity and strength of natural forces.

In the very beginning of the novel, Ishmael asks, "Are the green fields gone?" (Melville 13). From an ecocritical perspective, the question itself is posed against the entire humankind. Return to nature is the slogan of ecocriticism or green studies. Commentators on ecocritical texts have always remarked on their concerns regarding the dismantled biosphere balance and loss of forests and greenery. The ecocritical question raised by Ishmael brings many current environmental issues to light, such as deforestation in the name of industrialisation.

According to James Mcintosh, "he (Ishmael) even grows wiser in course" (Mcintosh 49). Although he is unable to change the destiny of the Pequod from the position of a lowly common sailor, he remains open-minded as a positive reflector on things. He flees himself

from the clutches of Ahab and Starbuck to create his own ethics toward the whale. The ethics that he forms are neither of revenge nor of exploitation. He uplifts the value of the whale from the abysmall valley of contempt to the pinnacle of sympathy. The narrator becomes the lonely survivor of the annihilated Pequod because he extends the love or ethical concern between human beings to the whale. The extension of Ishmael's ethical notion epitomises the blueprint of human nature relationship. The final epilogue unravels the harmonious picture between man and nature and underlines what Ishmael's ethical extension can achieve.

I floated on a soft and dirge-like main. The unharming sharks glided by as if with padlocks on their mouths, and the savage sea-hawks sailed with sheathed beaks. On the second day, a sail drew near, nearer, and picked me up at last. It was the devious-cruising Rachel, that in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan. (Melville 470)

The man who venerates nature and reflects on the existential rights of creatures is rescued by nature from the catastrophe. Although he floats in the sea for days, cannibalistic sharks and savage birds seldom attack him until his rescue. The ecocritical perspective of the harmonious coexistence between all species on earth is materialised through this final scene. Nature respects the man who showers her with veneration. She rewards him with another life for his nature-oriented existence. The epilogue states that if nature and its creatures are left unthreatened, they hardly turn against men. Human–nature coexistence is the key to survival on earth.

Melville uses both the sea and the white whale as comprehensive symbols, and their meanings overlap. For some critics sea stands for universe and Moby Dick as the nature within the universe. Without much burning disputes, critics declare that the great white whale stands for the Nature. Tyrus Hillway states that the whale "represents the elemental forces of nature" (Hillway 81). Daniel Hoffman is of the belief that, "for Ishmael, Moby Dick is Nature, concentrated, in a single unfeatured visage" (Hoffman 250).

Melville uses the whale to represent all nature. He asserts that "the whale immortal in his species, however perishable in his individuality" (Melville 384). Here the novelist project his concept of eternity and wholesomeness of the nature. We see Ishmael citing an example the elephant which has "been hunted for thousands of years" (Melville 384) in the East, where it still survives "in great numbers" (Melville 384), and affirms from this evidence that "much more may the great outlast all hunting, since he has pastures to expatiate in, which is precisely twice as large as all Asia, both Americas, Europe and Africa, New Holland, and all the isles of

the sea combined" (Melville 384). Gigantic whales and elephants are brought together to substantiate the imperishability and rejuvenating properties of nature. Like the whale in novel, the nature is also immortal.

The novelist confers upon nature the supreme position of a god, who is omnipotent and unconquerable. By shaking the very foundations of anthropocentricism, Melville brings the lime light on nature- centred existence. Nature itself is impregnable, as is Moby Dick's great white hump. Ecocriticism renders nature supreme over man, one of the many components of the ecological system. Rather than delineating man who rebels against nature with heroic proportions, Melville here degrades him to a position of nought or cipher in the face of natural forces. By mythifying the whale, the novel denies the possibility of its extinction and extends nature's scope of existence toward eternity. In Melville's wilderness romance, the oceans do not change; they remain inexhaustible and eternal. The vulnerability of biodiversity is portrayed through the series of whale hunts, and the author himself wants nature to win over man and exist perpetually. "Let Ahab beware of Ahab" (Melville 394) says Starbuck in his meeting with the Captain at the cabin. Here, Melville warns man to be aware of himself in his hazardous odyssey to conquer nature.

However, it should be noted that Melville did not foresee such a pathetic defeat of wild nature on earth in the coming years. He was disinclined to reckon the explosive power inherent in man's growing numbers and rampant technology. Some critics believe that the eternity of nature embodied in the white whale is more of a wish than a prophecy. However, his fascination with nature should be admitted. Man's assault on nature with the aid of industrial apparatuses has been vehemently criticised. The objects of magnitude he chooses–the ocean and the whales–draw man small and puny in comparison. Without any ambiguity, Melville proves himself to be a staunch advocate of bio-centred living.

Ahab's ravenous urge for vengeance and Starbuck's economic principles lead them to overstep the bounds of nature and sever the entwined threads of the ecological web. In his engulfing bloodlust for the white whale, Ahab chooses a path of no return. The *Pequod*, in a way, materialised Starbuck, who also meets the same destiny that awaits Ahab. In essence, those characters who contemptuously approached nature are left to suffer the consequences. However, Ishmael, the mouthpiece of Melville, emerges as the sole survivor from the watery grave to proselytise the consequences of irreverent hubris. Ishmael is the only character in the novel who contemplates the harmonious coexistence of man and nature. The virtual chasm

that has been aggrandised between man and nature is strived to be cemented by the reflections of the narrator. To cut to the chase, one can hear strong echoes of ecocriticism in Melville's *Moby Dick*.

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Costume as Canvas: Method Dressing as a Strategic Lens for Film Promotion

Karishma Suresh

Fashion and film are profoundly interconnected, owing to the significance of costumes in films and the popularity of celebrity fashion. Major film festivals often serve as a stage for the celebration of fashion. This intricate entanglement of fashion and film has been further enriched by the emergence of method dressing. Method dressing denotes when an actor dresses in accordance with the themes of the film they promote. This attire can be a homage to the character portrayed or reflect the overarching theme of the film. Method dressing can act as a peephole to glimpse films, inducing curiosity to attract audiences, akin to the role that movie posters played in earlier decades. This paper analyses how clothing has been used–and is being used by celebrities–as a strategic marketing tool to promote films through the lens of fashion. Method dressing interlinks the actor's personality with the character's personality to weave specific messages. These messages constructed from the language of visual culture and physical garments are what this paper seeks to examine.

Introduction

For over a century, the film industry has played a significant role in shaping and endorsing fashion. Scholars have extensively studied the intersection of cinema and couture, emphasising the important role of films in the production, promotion, and representation of fashion, as well as their impact on consumer behaviour (Lunden). This paper presents a fresh perspective by examining 'method dressing' as a strategic approach in film promotion. Initially originating in Hollywood and gaining traction after the pandemic, method dressing represents a unique practice in which fashion acts beyond being a mere accessory but as an active medium for film promotion and the creation of a subculture. This paper investigates how method dressing has impacted the dynamic relationship between fashion and film, covering the period from 2016 to 2024, with a primary focus on Hollywood and its broader implications.

Method Dressing: Blurring the line Between Fashion and Film

Method dressing is an emerging and ongoing approach that intertwines fashion and film. It is a statement delivered by the actors during promotional events and various public outings, appearing in garments that resemble the film characters or theme in general. In short,

method dressing is an extension of film, bringing life to off-screen dialogues through the medium of fashion. Although the name method dressing shares similarities with method acting, which denotes an immersive dive into the character played, method dressing is more of a performance art to extend the cinematic universe (Jayaram). The garments facilitate the creation of a new visual language that audiences can watch and enjoy.

According to *Vogue*, method dressing had its first appearance when the actor Geena Davis wore a baseball inspired dress for the premiere of the movie *A League of Their Own* in 1992 (Spellings). Although it was a singular event in the 1990s, method dressing became noticeable in the second half of the 2010s when actors seamlessly incorporated their on-screen looks into press tours and events. This includes Blake Lively spotting suits during her press tour of *A Simple Favour* in 2018, Beyonce in a yellow Cong Tri gown representing the theme of cult classic film *The Lion King*, and Angelina Jolie in a custom-made black gown channelling her on-screen alter-ego for the movie premiere *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* in 2019. Although these dresses indicated the films they promoted, actors had been subtle in interlinking their personal fashion styles to the films. It hinted in the direction of colours or a type of dress the character was usually seen in. However, this changed post-pandemic when actors strongly implied the film in their dressing, integrating themes, accessories, and shifting from a single event at a premiere to all through the promotional event. Individual style took a back seat, and fashion became the face of the film. Margot Robbie stepped out in pink ensemble, turning herself into the titular character, for every promotional event of the film *Barbie*. The looks were inspired by Barbie dolls, including 'Solo in the Spotlight' from 1960, 'Day to Night' from 1985, and 'Enchanted Evening' from 1990 (Davis). These extended with the promotional reign of the films *Dune: Part Two* and *Challengers,* where the lead actor Zendaya appeared in apocalyptic and tennis-inspired outfits, respectively. In the same vein, many films in Hollywood follow the theme-dressing to engage a conversation around movies. The performative act of dressing in accordance with films is a new-age phenomenon that is akin to the role that movie posters played in earlier decades. Its discourse with the marketing spectrum will be discussed in the next section.

Method Dressing: A Strategic Tool in Film Promotion

Worldbuilding is a critical practice employed by storytellers to engage audiences and sustain their interest throughout a narrative. Among various storytelling mediums, visual narratives, particularly films, possess a distinct advantage in crafting an immersive language

that captivates viewers. In recent years, innovative marketing strategies have emerged, with method dressing serving as a powerful tool for worldbuilding in film promotions. This approach not only enhances the visual appeal of marketing campaigns but also creates a dynamic dialogue surrounding film releases. By integrating fashion into the promotional narrative, filmmakers effectively keep audiences riveted, encourage conversations, and heighten anticipation for upcoming films.

Method dressing has emerged as a creative medium that empowers content creators and social media influencers to produce engaging material centred around fashion choices that reference specific characters or themes. This practice allows for a detailed exploration of iconic outfits worn by actors during interviews, premieres, and public appearances, thereby stimulating online discussions about both fashion and the films themselves. The visual impact of these images, coupled with their repetitive nature, reinforces the film's promotional message and piques audience curiosity.

In the contemporary social media landscape, short reels, vlogs, video essays, and images are widely circulated, showcasing actors who breathe life into their fictional roles outside the confines of film sets. This phenomenon actively draws audiences into the cinematic universe, encouraging them to participate in conversations and engage with the narrative on a deeper level. As actress Janhvi Kapoor articulates, method dressing "helps maintain focus on the upcoming project as the central topic of discussion" (Diwan). This strategy not only enhances the visibility of films but also fosters a sense of community among fans, who are invited to share in the excitement of the characters and stories they love.

The financial success of films that have embraced method dressing in their promotional strategies is undeniable. Greta Gerwig's *Barbie*, which featured Margot Robbie's iconic Barbie-inspired looks throughout the press tour, grossed a staggering $1.4 billion worldwide, making it one of the highest-grossing films of 2023 (Stevens). Similarly, Denis Villeneuve's *Dune: Part Two*, which saw Zendaya and Law Roach's creative method dressing on the red carpet, enjoyed much larger collections compared to its predecessor, suggesting a far wider appeal among audiences. Interestingly, one of the earliest examples of method dressing, *A League of Their Own*, starring Geena Davis in a baseball-stitched dress, was also a financial success, earning $130 million worldwide in 1992 (Stevens). The increase in the number of cinema-goers for films that have embraced method dressing implies the development of a subculture that is drawn to the intersection of fashion and storytelling on the red carpet.

Method Dressing: Creation of A New Aesthetic Trend and Subculture

The sustenance of interest is the key feature employed by designers and filmmakers to encourage the newly emergent phenomenon of method dressing. Conversations about the film are kept afloat through the multiple appearances of actors in live-action characters. The series of appearances are then categorised into a new trend in itself, eventually creating a subgenre of fashion in film. These mini-trends, such as barbiecore, mermaidcore, and royaltycore (Vining), encourage audiences to dress as the characters or in accordance with the film's theme, resulting in a collective fashion spectacle when audiences dress in outfits representative of the films while going to the theatre.

These fashion trends serve as avenues for audiences to channel different characters, experiment with contemporary styles, and explore fashion beyond their usual real-life choices (Vining). To cater to this growing interest, content creators are producing blog posts and vlogs that advise and suggest ways to dress according to the latest trends. Method dressing, a term used to describe the practice of dressing in character costumes, not only indicates the style trend in film promotion and fashion but also extends to the audience's celebration of the film before and after its release.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of method dressing showcases a symbiotic relationship between fashion and film. It not only captivates viewers but also nurtures a subculture that embraces individuality and artistic expression, blurring the boundaries between on-screen narratives and real-life experiences, as more people adopt this trend. As method dressing evolves, it firmly establishes itself as a prominent element within red-carpet culture and film promotion, enriching the audience's emotional connection to the stories being told and adding to the long line of film fashion.

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The Illusion of Liberation in *KGF*: A Gramscian Analysis

Aargitha R. Nair

KGF, directed by Prashanth Neel, is an Indian film that tells the story of Rocky, an ambitious young man who rises from the streets of Bombay to the gold mines of Kolar, seeking power and wealth. According to Priyanka Sundar, the film "features a young boy learning the significance of power and how gold, when combined with greed, can play a critical role in survival." His mother, highlighting this perilous path, implores him to promise, "I don't know how you will live, but when you die, you should be the most powerful and richest man." The film is set against the backdrop of the Kolar Gold Fields, where miners toil under brutal conditions. The narrative presents Rocky as a saviour through his violent actions, which are legitimised by the rescue operations, even though his true intention is personal and materialistic—his desire to conquer the world. The film portrays Rocky as a hero; however, a deeper analysis through Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony reveals that the miners' perceived freedom is an illusion. Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which emphasises the cultural and ideological means by which the ruling class maintains power, provides a critical framework for understanding how *KGF* portrays the illusion of liberation and the continued exploitation of the miners.

Sunayana Suresh describes *KGF* as "a truly pan-Indian film" due to its broad appeal and significance. The standout elements, as seen, are meticulous editing and striking visuals. The film's setting in the late 1970s, a period marked by economic upheaval and rising gold prices, frames mine owners' exploitation of labourers and their accumulation of wealth. Amidst this turmoil, gold prices soared, allowing mine owners to prosper. Their insatiable greed led to the enslavement of labourers in the minefields, resulting in widespread poverty and hunger. *KGF*, the largest minefield in the country, serves as a backdrop for Yash's portrayal of the lives of those who lived and perished there.

KGF vividly portrays the stark social hierarchies and power dynamics at play. The mine owners, who hold economic power, exploit the labourers, leading to widespread poverty and hunger. This reflects the real-world dynamics in which those in power often exploit the vulnerable to maintain and enhance their status. The film's protagonist, played by Yash, embodies the struggle against these oppressive forces, using violence as a means to challenge and disrupt the established order.

Ultimately, although the protagonist may achieve personal power and wealth, the broader system of exploitation and inequality remains largely intact. This serves as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by individuals seeking to challenge deeply rooted socioeconomic structures. It also highlights the idea that true transformation requires more than replacing one set of powerful individuals with another; it necessitates a fundamental change in the underlying values and structures that govern society.

The miners in *KGF* are depicted as living and working under harsh and inhumane conditions. They are exploited by the villains, who control the mines and profit from the miners' labour. This direct exploitation reflects the capitalist system, in which the ruling class benefits at the expense of the working class. The miners have little to no agency, and their lives are characterised by suffering and oppression. Their daily existence is a stark reminder of their subjugation, with their labour being the primary source of wealth for their oppressors.

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist philosopher, developed the concept of cultural hegemony to explain how the ruling class maintains power not only through coercion but also by creating and perpetuating cultural norms and ideologies that are accepted by the subordinate classes. Hegemony involves the consent of the oppressed, who adopt the values and beliefs of the ruling class. This study applies Gramsci's theory to analyse the dynamics in *KGF*, focusing on how the film illustrates the miners' continued subjugation under the guise of liberation.

One of the central hegemonic structures in *KGF* is the portrayal of Rocky as a saviour. His rise to power is marked by numerous acts of violence and defiance against the oppressive villains. These actions are celebrated by the miners, who view Rocky as their liberator. This hero worship is a key aspect of the hegemonic discourse that sustains the illusion of freedom. The miners view Rocky as their redeemer, and his violent actions are legitimised as necessary steps toward their liberation. However, this belief blinds them to the fact that their conditions remain largely unchanged.

Gramsci's concept of "intellectual and moral leadership" is evident in how Rocky's charisma shapes miners' perceptions and beliefs. Rocky's speeches and actions are designed to inspire loyalty and trust among miners. This charismatic leadership creates a sense of dependency on Rocky, making it difficult for miners to see beyond his persona and recognise their continued exploitation.

The film portrays media and communication as powerful tools for propagating the ideas of freedom and progress. Rocky and his allies use these tools to shape the miners' perceptions, reinforcing the narrative of Rocky as a liberator. For instance, the dissemination of news about Rocky's victories and acts of defiance creates a mythos around his character, further entrenching his image as a hero.

Gramsci's idea of "cultural hegemony" is reflected in how miners' reality is shaped by the dominant narrative of freedom and progress. The media serves to perpetuate the myth of Rocky's benevolence, ensuring that miners do not challenge the new status quo. This control of information is crucial in maintaining the illusion of liberation, as it prevents miners from questioning the true nature of their conditions.

The film employs various cultural symbols and narratives to reinforce the miners' belief in their freedom. Rocky's defiance against the villains, his bold proclamations of liberation, and his acts of violence are presented as symbols of heroism. These symbols construct a narrative that the miners eagerly embrace, blinding them to their ongoing subjugation. He relentlessly shoots, punches, and leaves his adversaries bloodied, highlighting his philosophy: "Who threw the first punch is not important, but who fell first is."

Rocky's violent actions are legitimised through the narrative of rescue operations. His use of force was depicted as necessary and justified to achieve liberation. This legitimisation of violence serves to maintain the illusion of freedom, as it presents Rocky's actions as morally and ethically correct. Miners see Rocky's violence as a means to an end, failing to recognise that it perpetuates their exploitation under a new guise.

The film also uses narratives that portray miners' labour as voluntary and positive. By depicting miners' continued work in the mines as a choice, the film reinforces the idea that they are now free and empowered. This voluntary servitude is a key aspect of Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, in which the oppressed consent to their own exploitation through the acceptance of ruling-class ideologies.

Rocky's confrontations with villains are crucial in building the narrative of Rocky as a liberator. Each confrontation is depicted as a step toward freeing the miners, reinforcing the idea that Rocky's actions are justified and necessary. These scenarios create a clear dichotomy between Rocky and the villains, making it easier for the miners to view him as their saviour.

The miners' celebrations following Rocky's victories are symbolic of their acceptance of the new status quo. These celebrations reinforce the narrative that Rocky has liberated them, even though their material conditions remain the same. The collective jubilation serves to mask the continuity of exploitation, leading the miners to believe that they are free.

Rocky's declaration of wanting to conquer the world highlights his true intentions. These statements, however, are often overshadowed by his actions, which are framed as heroic. This juxtaposition reveals the duality of Rocky's character: while he projects the image of a liberator, his ultimate goal is personal power and wealth. This ambition aligns with the interests of the ruling class, as it perpetuates the capitalist system of exploitation.

Both the villains and Rocky benefit from the capitalist system that exploits miners. While the villains' exploitation is overt and brutal, Rocky's control is more insidious and masked by a veneer of benevolence and heroism. This duality illustrates how different faces of hegemony operate to maintain the same system of oppression.

The film portrays media and communication within the narrative as tools for propagating ideas of freedom and progress. These tools help mask the continued exploitation of miners. By controlling the narrative, Rocky and his allies are able to maintain their power and influence, reinforcing miners' belief in their supposed liberation.

An analysis of *KGF* through Gramsci's theory of hegemony reveals that the miners' perceived liberation is an illusion. Despite Rocky's apparent heroism and promises of freedom, the miners' conditions remain largely unchanged. Both the villains and Rocky benefit from the capitalist system that exploits the miners, although Rocky's control is masked by hegemonic discourses that create an illusion of freedom.

This analysis of *the KGF* has broader implications for understanding contemporary issues of power, control, and freedom. This highlights the ways in which hegemonic discourse can mask exploitation and maintain the status quo. The film serves as a powerful illustration of Gramsci's ideas and encourages viewers to question the narratives and symbols that shape their understanding of freedom and liberation.

In conclusion, a psychoanalytical perspective reveals that the workers in *KGF* may exhibit signs of Stockholm syndrome. This psychological phenomenon occurs when victims of prolonged oppression or captivity develop a bond or sympathetic feelings toward their oppressors. Within the harsh and exploitative environment of the Kolar Gold Fields, the

labourers, subjected to relentless brutality and dehumanisation, might begin to internalise their subjugation and, paradoxically, develop a sense of loyalty or emotional connection to their captors. This complex dynamic serves as a coping mechanism, in which the workers, in their quest for survival amidst extreme adversity, find themselves empathetically aligned with the very forces that enslave them. By portraying this nuanced psychological state, the film underscores the profound and often paradoxical impact of prolonged oppression on the human psyche, further enriching its exploration of power and exploitation.

The bond or sympathy that the oppressed workers develop toward their oppressors in KGF can be seen as a manifestation of cultural hegemony. The workers' acceptance of their plight and their emotional alignment with the mine owners' interests are indicative of how deeply hegemonic culture has influenced them. This internalisation of the ruling class's values and norms makes it challenging for the workers to conceive of an alternative social order. They come to see their exploitation as an inevitable part of life, thus perpetuating the cycle of oppression and reinforcing the hegemonic power structure.

In this context, the Stockholm syndrome experienced by the workers serves as a psychological mechanism that underpins and reinforces cultural hegemony. Their emotional attachment to the mine owners, despite the harsh conditions, highlights how the dominant ideology penetrates the consciousness of the oppressed, making them complicit in their own subjugation.

Thus, *KGF* not only provides a compelling narrative about power and greed but also serves as a critical commentary on the mechanisms of cultural hegemony and its profound impact on the psyche of the oppressed. By intertwining these two concepts, the film underscores the complexity of socioeconomic exploitation and the enduring challenge of achieving true liberation from oppressive systems.

Further research could explore similar themes in other films and media and examine how hegemonic discourses operate to maintain systems of power and control. Additionally, a comparative analysis of different cultural contexts could provide a deeper understanding of how these dynamics play out in various societies.

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Fleeing Heteronormativity: A Diasporic Reading of Queer Immigrants in Nisha Gantara's *Chutney Popcorn*

Ajmi Nazeer & A. Y. Eldhose

Queer is a contentious term that encloses defiance, celebration, and refusal within its remit. An observation of "home" through the analytical lens of diaspora allows for a reconsideration of the traditionally hierarchical relationship between the nation and diaspora. Gayatri Gopinath's concept of queer diaspora highlights the binary positions between nation and diaspora, heterosexuality and homosexuality, original and copy. Nisha Gantara's *Chutney Popcorn* (1999), is made out of her realisation that television is a powerful medium to shift culture through telling stories. The movie treats delicate topics with wit, sensitivity, and humour. It deals with diversifying and suggesting the contextual multiplicity of queer subjects and challenges mainstream hegemonic understandings of queer as white, male, or local.

This study discusses how South Asian domestic life and ritual practices influence homosocial relations in a diasporic framework. Lesbian and gay studies have become integral to the intellectual and political landscape of the diaspora in our globalised world. Gantara's portrayal of the characters Reena and Sarita explicitly provide a journey beyond 'heteronormality'. The queer diaspora always exists on the cusp of two distinct cultures; they long for their homeland and simultaneously struggle to assimilate into the new culture. These individuals, standing on the brink of two distinct cultures, strive to retain their native culture and identity, even if they present themselves as queer and modern in every aspect.

The concept of sexuality, closeted within the rubrics of gender roles, morals, norms, and historical and cultural contexts of sex, has recently been subjected to a discursive ideology. For a long time, literary works and discourses from around the world have identified sexuality as existing only in the form of man-woman relationships and have positioned every culture or community that operated on heterosexual privilege to discipline sexuality by marginalising individuals, groups, or practices that deviate from their standards. This suppression and regulation of sexuality has demanded a radical overhaul of the existing sexual norms. In this instance, the idea of 'queer' emerged as an 'ant-normative signifier' to point to the instabilities of the existing sexual categories. Queering as a process of reversing 'heterosexuality-as-norm" now refers to the possible acceptance of the queer community around the world. However, different nations, especially "Third World" countries, with conventional cultural practices,

religions, morals, and values, have posed a number of challenges to gay-lesbians who have dreamt of the privilege of coming out in their homeland. To escape the conflicts between tradition and modernity, masses of Asian/Black-homophiles have resorted to migrating to urban spaces, which has created a group of people referred to as the queer diaspora. Although every person belonging to the queer diaspora community does not qualify as a 'sexile', a term, according to Manolo Guzman, that refers to "the exile of those who had have to leave their nation of origin on account of their sexual orientation" (qtd. in Martínez-San- Miguel 813), they share similar experiences and struggles in the host country.

It is a common conception that leaving one's native, traditional, and morally restrictive place for an urban, liberal space will save one from the potential troubles and stress associated with one's non-normative sexual orientation. However, this is not always the case. While immigrants face several challenges as foreigners in a host country, queer immigrants face obstacles specific to their status as sexual minorities because of homophobia and transphobia in the new place as well as in their own immigrant communities. Other troubles, such as racism, language barriers, economic disparities, and culture shock, add to their struggles. Consequently, being migrant and homosexual, they are multiply marginalised and labelled coloured queer. Thus, it is not always easy for the Third World queer community to be gay in the First World.

The framework of queer diaspora radically relocates questions of home, dwelling, and domestic space that have long concerned feminist, queer, and postcolonial scholarship. In contemporary nationalist and diasporic discourses, the marks of colonial and anti-colonial nationalist legacies of "home" as a preliminary arena within which to imagine "otherness" in racial, religious, national, and gendered terms are evident. Gayatri Gopinath turns our focus into the major concerns in enclosing queer sexuality diasporically. The concept of queer diaspora speaks to the fantasy of getting closer to the Other. An observation of home (nation) through the analytical lens of diaspora allows for a reconsideration of the traditionally hierarchical relationship between nations and diasporas.

Apart from all this, the nostalgia and longing for the distant homeland and the efforts to fit in with the new culture make this newfound gay community the possessors of a torn heart. DuBois observed that diaspora community often possesses a 'double consciousness' which makes "it problematic for that person to have one unified individuality. If forces the individual to view himself from his own point of view but also from the standpoint of another" (qtd. in Baugh). Movies such as *Chutney Popcorn and Touch of Pink testify* that this is the case

with queer diasporas too. Characters like Reena in *Chutney Popcorn* beautifully portray the struggles, both mental and physical, that queer communities have to endure to maintain a hybrid status.

Movies based on queer diaspora visualise how conditions of geographical mobility produce new experiences and understandings of sexuality and gender identity. Queer South Asian Diaspora offers a transnational analysis of the concepts of normative genders and sexualities through the lens of cross-cultural interaction. The film *Chutney Popcorn* is the first feature from 26-year-old Nisha Gantara, a Canadian-American film director, screenwriter, producer, and actress of Indian descent. Her first short film. 'Junky Punky Girls' (1997) won NYU's Tisch Fellowship and most outstanding film award from PBS. After a better realisation that men had better opportunities in the film field, she was inspired to hire female crew. *Chutney Popcorn* is a part portrait of merging cultures and part inspection of the parameters of family loyalty. With Indian traditions on one hand and 1990s New York City values on the other, the film is a perfect blend that shows one can find family somewhere between the two. Several awards were won by the film at the Berlin International Film Festival, Newport International Film Festival, Paris International Film Festival, and Madrid International Film Festival. It also received the Best Feature Film Award at Outfest of Los Angeles, San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Film Festivals, and Munich Gay and Lesbian Film Festival.

Nisha Gantara' s *Chutney Popcorn* is the first feature film to focus exclusively on a South Asian American lesbian character as she strives to negotiate a place for herself at the intersection of different communities. Reena is an Indian-American lesbian who lives in New York. She exists in the liminal space between family and relationships and is constantly reminded of her third-world roots by her conservative and domineering mother. The plot highlights the physical and emotional journeys of two sisters, Reena and Sarita, as they struggle to define themselves within and against heterosexist and patriarchal diasporic identities. The appealing title itself is a reflection of the two cultures – 'Chutney' for India and 'Popcorn' for America. The diasporic identity is hybrid and moves away from the bipolar model of the first and second space to a tripolar one which initiates the "in-between space" as per Homi K Bhabha's view. Ancient India had a considerably tolerant approach to homosexuality and transgender communities. The highly conservative 'mother' in the movie feels ashamed of her daughter Reena's same-sex relationship, which depicts the homophobia rooted deep within them.

The film opens with henna patterns adorning white bodies, which establishes henna as a significant visual theme throughout the film. Henna is an inevitable part of rituals in South Asian cultures. Reena's first appearance with her partner, Lisa, on a motorbike illuminates her choice of styling a saree with jeans. These attire choices symbolise Western and Indian values that she upholds. Sarita's heteronormative lifestyle with Mitch parallels the film's plot. Although the two sisters live with white partners, their trajectories are different and complex. Mitch's finger applying Sindoor to Sarita matches Reena's hand applying henna to Lisa. Both instances visualise different forms of union. Even the transformation of henna into erotic practices on a lesbian body occurs in the film. For instance, Reena in the movie's opening scene, while applying henna on her girlfriend Lisa's skin, asks "What is wrong with permanent?" (*Chutney Popcorn* 1:16-17). Although it seems that Reena is referring to the henna tattoo, it connotes her openness to a serious, permanent relationship with Lisa. Against the flexible American dating culture, where marriage is not always the goal, Reena appears to be retaining a part of her Indian tradition that values lasting love and commitment. Lisa's white body thus get contaminated with henna markers. The 'not-so-normal" associations of henna seem to etch diasporic practices onto queerness. The concept of diaspora is queered by Reena's lesbianism and her surrogate motherhood for Sarita and Mitch. The emotional voyage of Sarita, who questions cultural nationalist demands of the diaspora, is also queered. Sarita dismantles the beliefs and imaginations of women as primary carriers of tradition, laying the foundation for cultural continuity through biological reproduction.

Meenu, a first-generation Indian immigrant mother, asserts the values of Indian tradition as she carries "a cultural baggage and an emotional involvement that is difficult to neutralise or rationalise" (Jain 70). She believes that homosexuality is a secret to be hidden, especially within her ethnic community. She is not only resistant to accepting her daughter's sexuality but also believes in a future where she will turn straight. She is unhappy about Reena and approves Sarita's normative married life. Even though when it turns out that Sarita is infertile, and as Reena becomes the surrogate, she says, "Maybe it will finally make her want a husband" (*Chutney Popcorn* 1:10:45-47). Also, in a conversation with Sarita she comments homosexuality as a 'disability'. As Peter Barry argues in his analysis of queer theory, "degrees of concealment and openness coexist in the same lives" (145). Even Lisa is unhappy about Meenu's misconception of her as Reena's roommate. Later in the movie, Meenu mentions an article in which she read about a gene that causes homosexuality and wonders if no one in her

family was gay. Reena makes a joke about her maternal grandmother, "You always said she married late, maybe she was a lesbian? How do you know?" (*Chutney Popcorn* 1:18:11-14). And she also adds that probably she did not 'come out', because "she would have been killed in India" (*Chutney Popcorn* 1:18:05-06). Through Reena's imagination of her Indian grandmother as a lesbian, the film attempts to diasporize queerness by enlarging lesbian communities in a global imaginary. It also seeks to queer the diaspora and homeland by imagining a queer matrilineal genealogy. Thus, the Indian grandmother figure becomes a lesbian foremother to Reena, to whom the young South Asian American lesbian can trace her roots and lineage.

The motorbike manoeuvres in the film depict not only queerness but also diasporic movements. Reena's identity is formed in the interstices of the places she travels, such as New York City neighbourhoods, suburban or urban spaces, chic parlours, or 'unfashionable' ethnic grocery stores, and Hindu rituals. Even when the riders change the motorbike, it remains a symbol of queer diasporic motion. Sarita emerges as a queer melancholic character in the film. She starts to make her journey beyond the 'hetero-normal'. She begins to question gender roles and considers the possibility that motherhood is a choice for her. She also realises that becoming a mother is not essential for her to 'be a woman'. Her head covering with a dupatta in the beginning ritual scenes and later transformation into wearing a helmet symbolise a tremendous change. Furthermore, she questions heterosexual roles and prescribed behaviours. Elaine Showalter explains how body becomes an integral part of culture and "the ways in which women conceptualise their bodies and their sexual and reproductive functions are intricately linked to their cultural environment" (qtd. in Jain 16). At the end of the film, Sarita's melancholia results in a powerful questioning of the pressures that the diasporic desire for geological fulfilment exerts on women's bodies; that is, they are valued for their reproductive function and are forced to serve as channels for ethnic tradition.

The film concludes with a quasi-utopian vision. Gantara visualises a multicultural American family mould out of complicated relationships. This intends to present a progressive movement towards a resolution to Reena's fraught of belonging across geography and identities. As Shamini Shankar states, "home alternates between being a mere inhabited space with fluctuations in priorities, a constant shift in relationships and in ways of communication pointing out to the specific oneness people feel with their home" (qtd. in Jain 180). When Meenu begins to understand Reena's choices, it causes her alienation from her lesbian friends. The

inability of Reena's friends/family to recognise her yearning for belonging as an Indian and a lesbian suggests a genuinely diasporised queerness. The characters of Lisa and Janice fail to understand Reena's vexed citizenship within the queer community and the fact that her Indian and lesbian identities are intertwined. Yet, the film does not portray the everyday workings of the newly formed joint family.

Regarding queer diaspora, identity is not a fixed and stable category but rather a highly systematic, mobile, fluid, and contingent one. Judith Butler states, "Genders can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived" (142). The common conception of South Asian American identity as heterosexual and masculinist is challenged by Sarita and Reena, although their Indian mobility remains unmarked. The general portrayal of Indian mothers as transmitters of pure tradition is an evident yardstick of the heterosexual patriarchal family's authenticity in conventional narratives of diaspora. The infusion of Hindu ceremonies with queerness is conducted in an improvised manner in the film, which redefines its contours. Sarita's displacement from her assumed heteronormative trajectory occurs with her inability to reproduce. A symbolic rebirth of Sarita occurs through a queer diasporic journey, urging her to make choices about her own life. The film's climax with the black-and-white snapshots presenting an unconventional joint family depicts the possibility of a refigured family unit that extends the notion of family, not limited to the idea of a biological one, a queer family, or an ethnic community. Ultimately, Reena is placed within a newly created family, implying her belonging and the building of other kinds of networks.

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Neocolonialism, an Ultimatum Game

Antony Ignatius K.

This study explores how literary narratives across cultures depict neocolonialism as an iterated ultimatum game, in which powerful entities offer unequal deals to post-colonial nations and individuals, forcing them to choose between cooperation and resistance. Through analysis of works by authors such as Chinua Achebe, Gabriel García Márquez, and Arundhati Roy, the paper demonstrates that this dynamic is not coincidental but reflects an archetypal struggle that resonates deeply with readers. By applying game theory to literary analysis, this study reveals the systemic power imbalances that perpetuate neocolonialism and the psychological toll on characters who must navigate these unequal relationships. The conclusion suggests that this framework offers new avenues for research in post-colonial studies, highlighting literature's role in critiquing the neocolonial condition.

Introduction

Neocolonialism, the modern extension of colonial domination through economic, cultural, and political means, is a critical concept in postcolonial and literary studies. It describes how powerful nations and multinational corporations continue to exert control over less developed countries, not through direct territorial occupation, but through indirect mechanisms, such as economic dependency, cultural assimilation, and political influence. This relationship can be understood as a form of the Ultimatum Game, a key concept in game theory, in which one party (the proposer) presents an offer to another party (the responder), often an unequal one, that the responder must either accept or reject. If accepted, the proposer benefits disproportionately, while the responder is left with limited gains. If rejected, both parties suffer losses. In neocolonial contexts, powerful countries or entities present a version of this ultimatum, offering unequal economic or political deals to postcolonial nations, which must decide whether to cooperate and reap minimal benefits or resist and face economic hardship.

This study examines how the iterated Ultimatum Game manifests in literary narratives across cultures, in which characters must navigate the tensions between cooperating with neocolonial powers and resisting, facing devastating losses. The archetypal significance of this dilemma resonates deeply with readers, as it mirrors a fundamental aspect of human interaction: balancing self-interest and fairness in unequal power dynamics. By exploring key literary texts from various cultures, this study argues that the existence of neocolonial narratives in literature

is not coincidental but rather reflects a global power structure in which dominant forces perpetuate a cycle of exploitation through an unfair ultimatum. Furthermore, these narratives reveal archetypal significance, speaking to universal human experiences of inequality, choice, and agency.

The Ultimatum Game and Neocolonialism in Postcolonial Theory

At the heart of neocolonialism is the Ultimatum Game's dynamic of unequal bargaining. In neocolonial relationships, the dominant power (whether a nation or a multinational corporation) acts as the proposer, offering economic deals, cultural assimilation, or political alliances to the postcolonial nation. However, these deals are often structured in a way that favours the dominant power, leaving the postcolonial nation with minimal benefits, while the proposer reaps the majority of the rewards. This dynamic can be seen in literary texts that depict postcolonial characters and nations navigating their relationships with neocolonial powers.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon describes how newly independent nations are lured into economic agreements with former colonial powers or global capitalist systems, only to find themselves trapped in a cycle of economic dependency and exploitation. The postcolonial nation is presented with an ultimatum: either cooperate with the global economic system and remain subservient to foreign interests, or resist and face isolation and economic ruin (Fanon 52). Fanon's analysis provides a critical theoretical framework for understanding how the Ultimatum Game operates in neocolonial contexts, highlighting the unequal power dynamics that continue to perpetuate exploitation (Fanon 53).

The archetypal nature of this dilemma is evident in the ways that postcolonial nations and characters are forced to make choices between agency and survival. The responder in the Ultimatum Game, whether a nation or a character, must decide whether to accept an unfair deal that allows them to survive within the system or to reject the deal and risk destruction. This dilemma is reflected in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, where the villagers of Umuofia face the arrival of British colonial forces offering Christianity, education, and economic integration into the British Empire. Those who accept these offers are seen as traitors to their culture but gain material benefits, while those, such as Okonkwo, who resist, face economic and personal ruin (Achebe 133). The archetypal conflict between cooperation and resistance mirrors the Ultimatum Game, with the villagers forced to navigate an unfair system of power.

Cross-Cultural Representations of Neocolonialism as an Iterated Ultimatum Game

Neocolonial narratives are present across a wide range of cultural contexts, and in each instance, the characters face the same fundamental choice: cooperate with neocolonial powers for survival or resist and face the consequences. This iterated ultimatum game plays out repeatedly in post-colonial literature, where characters and nations are offered unequal deals that they must navigate.

In Ngig) wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*, the village of Ilmorog is a microcosm of postcolonial Kenya, struggling with the encroachment of global capitalism. As the village becomes integrated into the global economy, the characters must decide whether to embrace the opportunities presented by foreign investors and government officials, knowing that doing so will lead to the destruction of their traditional way of life. The neocolonial powers, acting as proposers in this Ultimatum Game, offer the villagers minimal benefits while reaping the rewards of their labour and resources (Ngig) 207). Those who resist are marginalised and impoverished, illustrating the iterated nature of this dilemma, in which each round of the game brings new pressures to conform.

Similarly, in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Saleem Sinai represents the postcolonial Indian nation grappling with its identity and place in the world following independence. Saleem's personal narrative parallels India's struggle with neocolonial forces, as the country is repeatedly offered economic deals and political alliances that promise stability and development but come at the cost of sovereignty and cultural autonomy. The novel's structure, which spans multiple generations and historical events, reflects the iterated game of neocolonialism, in which each generation must face new ultimatums from foreign powers (Rushdie 362).

These cross-cultural narratives demonstrate that the Ultimatum Game is not a localised phenomenon but a global one, present in the literature of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The archetypal significance of this dynamic lies in its universality: regardless of the cultural context, characters and nations are forced to navigate the same unequal power dynamics, reflecting a universal human experience of exploitation and resistance.

The Archetypal Significance of the Neocolonial Dilemma

The archetypal significance of the neocolonial Ultimatum Game resonates deeply with readers because it reflects fundamental human experiences of power, inequality, and choice.

At its core, the Ultimatum Game is about the tension between self-interest and fairness, a tension that plays out not only in post-colonial contexts but also in everyday human interactions. Readers can identify with the characters' struggles because they mirror their own experiences of navigating unequal power relationships, whether in personal, professional, or political contexts.

In Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette Cosway embodies this archetypal dilemma as she navigates her identity in the context of colonialism and neocolonialism. Her marriage to Rochester represents a form of cooperation with the British colonial system, offering her economic security and social stability. However, this cooperation comes at the cost of her autonomy and identity, as Rochester gradually strips her of her agency and reduces her to a passive object in his world (Rhys 72). Antoinette's struggle reflects the archetypal significance of the Ultimatum Game, in which individuals must choose between survival within an unequal system and resistance and self-destruction.

The psychological significance of this archetype is also evident in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, where the character of Milkman Dead grapples with the legacy of slavery and the economic structures that continue to oppress African Americans. Milkman's journey toward self-realisation is framed by his repeated encounters with the Ultimatum Game of neocolonialism, where he must choose between participating in the capitalist system that exploits his community or rejecting it and embracing a more authentic, but economically precarious, life. Milkman's struggle reflects the universal human dilemma of navigating systems of power and inequality (Morrison 176).

Literary Theory and the Challenge of the Neocolonial Ultimatum Game

The application of literary theory to the analysis of neocolonial narratives offers a rich ground for exploring how power dynamics are represented and critiqued through storytelling. Postcolonial theory, as articulated by scholars like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, provides key frameworks for understanding how colonial and neocolonial powers continue to shape the identities, economies, and cultures of formerly colonized nations. However, the Ultimatum Game reveals an often-overlooked aspect of these power dynamics: the ongoing cycle of exploitation through economic and cultural offers that postcolonial characters and nations are compelled to accept or reject.

Postcolonial theorists emphasise the ways in which colonial discourse creates an imbalance between the coloniser and the colonised, often framing the latter as inferior to, or dependent on, the former. In Said's concept of Orientalism, for example, the colonised is constructed as the "Other", inferior and exotic, and the coloniser as the superior force of reason and civilisation (Said 15). This binary opposition not only justifies the coloniser's dominance but also creates a long-lasting cultural legacy that continues into the neocolonial era. Similarly, Bhabha's concept of mimicry reveals how colonised subjects are often forced to imitate the coloniser's ways to gain favour or survive within the system, all while being denied full participation in the colonial or neocolonial power structure (Bhabha 85).

The Ultimatum Game adds a new dimension to this analysis by focusing on the economic and psychological aspects of neocolonialism. In this framework, the postcolonial subject is not only forced to mimic or internalise the coloniser's culture but is also compelled to navigate a series of economic and political offers from neocolonial powers. These offers, which are often presented as opportunities for development or modernisation, are structured in a way that disproportionately benefits the neocolonial power, leaving the postcolonial nation with minimal gains. This dynamic mirrors the asymmetry of the Ultimatum Game, in which the proposer holds all the power and offers the responder an unfair deal, forcing them to either accept unequal terms or face economic hardship.

Cross-Cultural Iterations of Neocolonial Power

As illustrated in the previous section, literary narratives around neocolonialism reveal that the Ultimatum Game is a recurring dynamic across various cultures. This is not coincidental but rather indicative of a universal archetype that emerges whenever powerful entities exert dominance over marginalised or less powerful ones. In the context of neocolonialism, iterations of this game can be seen in different cultural contexts, from African nations negotiating with former colonial powers to Latin American countries contending with economic policies imposed by global financial institutions, and Asian nations navigating the legacies of imperialism and global capitalism.

A striking example of the cross-cultural significance of the Ultimatum Game in neocolonial settings is Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In the novel, the town of Macondo initially flourishes under its own governance, but as it becomes integrated into the global economic system, it becomes subject to the exploitation of foreign banana companies,

which represent neocolonial forces in Latin America. The arrival of the banana company marks the beginning of Macondo's decline, as the townspeople must decide whether to cooperate with the company, accept the promise of economic stability at the cost of their autonomy, or resist and suffer economic hardship. The banana company's control over Macondo mirrors the proposer's role in the Ultimatum Game, offering a deal that benefits the company disproportionately while leaving the townspeople with minimal gains (García Márquez 230). Those who resist the company, such as José Arcadio Segundo, face violent repression, illustrating penalties for rejecting the neocolonial deal.

The archetypal significance of this narrative is evident in how it resonates with readers across cultures. The banana company represents not just a specific historical moment in Latin American history, but a universal pattern of exploitation in which neocolonial powers present an ultimatum: accept unequal terms of cooperation or face severe economic consequences. The tragic fate of Macondo and its people reflects the global implications of neocolonialism, in which economic and political subjugation is disguised as development and progress.

Archetypal Resonance in the Reader's Mind

The archetypal significance of neocolonial narratives lies in their ability to tap into universal human experiences of power, inequality, and agency. The Ultimatum Game, as presented in these literary works, mirrors a fundamental human dilemma: how to navigate unequal power relationships and make choices that balance self-interest with moral integrity. This resonance with the reader's mind can be understood through the lens of archetypal literary theory, particularly the work of Carl Jung and Northrop Frye. According to the Jungian archetypal theory, certain patterns and themes recur across cultures because they reflect universal aspects of the collective unconscious. The Ultimatum Game in neocolonial literature can be seen as one such archetype representing the tension between cooperation and resistance that is present in all human societies. The characters in these narratives are not merely individuals facing specific historical challenges, but embodiments of a larger human struggle for autonomy and justice in the face of unequal power dynamics. This archetypal structure allows readers to connect with characters on a deeper psychological level, as they recognise the same dilemmas in their own lives (Jung 94).

In Northrop Frye's archetypal literary theory, literature is seen as a system of recurring symbols and themes that reflect the universal concerns of humanity. Frye's analysis of tragic

heroes in literature aligns with the characters in neocolonial narratives, who often embody the tragic consequences of resisting an unfair system. Characters such as Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* or Antoinette Cosway in *Wide Sargasso Sea* are caught in the tragic archetype of the individual who refuses to compromise their identity or values, even at the cost of their own destruction. This tragic resistance is a key element of the Ultimatum Game, in which the decision to reject an unfair offer often leads to personal and economic ruin (Frye 39).

The psychological impact of these archetypes is also reflected in the way readers respond to the moral dilemmas faced by the characters. In Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, for example, readers are drawn into the emotional complexity of Milkman Dead's journey toward self-realization. As Milkman navigates the choices between cooperating with the capitalist system that exploits his community or resisting it in search of a more authentic identity, readers experience the same moral tensions and struggles (Morrison 102).

Through the lens of archetypal and postcolonial theory, the narratives analysed in this paper show that the Ultimatum Game framework, with its iterated choices and consequences, is a powerful means of critiquing the neocolonial condition and understanding its resonant impact on readers.

Iterated Choices and the Cycle of Neocolonialism

One of the defining features of neocolonial literature is the iterated nature of the choices faced by characters and nations. Unlike classical colonial narratives, where the power dynamic is often presented as a single event—such as the colonisation of a country or the subjugation of a people—neocolonial narratives emphasise the ongoing, cyclical nature of power and exploitation. This dynamic can be best understood through the framework of the Ultimatum Game, in which each new iteration presents a fresh choice between cooperating with an unjust system and resisting, often with no clear path to liberation.

In Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the protagonist, a railway worker in post-independence Ghana, struggles to navigate the corrupt and decaying system that has replaced British colonial rule. He is constantly presented with choices to either accept bribes and participate in the corrupt system (cooperate) or maintain his integrity and face economic hardship (resist). Each of these choices represents a round in the iterated Ultimatum Game, where the rewards for cooperation are immediate (financial gain, social standing) but ultimately hollow, while the costs of resistance are severe and isolating. The protagonist's

repeated rejection of corruption positions him as a figure of moral resistance; yet, the novel leaves him isolated and disillusioned, suggesting the difficulty of escaping the neocolonial cycle (Armah 47).

Similarly, Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka* offers a personal account of his imprisonment during the Nigerian Civil War, highlighting the iterative process of resistance to neocolonial forces. Soyinka's refusal to cooperate with the military government's corruption and foreign alliances places him in direct opposition to neocolonial powers, leading to his imprisonment. Throughout his imprisonment, Soyinka is repeatedly offered chances to cooperate in exchange for freedom or reduced punishment; however, he chooses to resist, despite the personal cost. His narrative reflects the ongoing struggle against neocolonialism, in which each choice to resist brings greater suffering but also greater clarity about the nature of power and oppression (Soyinka 63).

Neocolonialism and the Global Economic System

The Ultimatum Game in neocolonial literature is not limited to interpersonal or local dynamics but is deeply connected to the global economic system. In many neocolonial narratives, the characters' choices are shaped by the broader forces of global capitalism, in which powerful nations and multinational corporations act as proposers in the Ultimatum Game, offering economic deals that promise development and prosperity but ultimately serve to maintain control over less powerful nations.

In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Indian characters are subject to the pressures of global capitalism and the legacy of British colonialism. The family business, operating within a global market dominated by Western powers, struggles to survive in a system where the rules are rigged against them. The family's choices—to cooperate with neocolonial forces to maintain their business or to resist and face economic ruin—reflect the broader Ultimatum Game faced by postcolonial nations in the global economy (Roy 118). The characters' repeated encounters with foreign investors and the global market illustrate how the iterated game of neocolonialism is played out on a global scale, where each choice further entrenches their dependency on external forces.

Similarly, V. S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* portrays the experience of a postcolonial African nation grappling with the legacy of colonialism and the pressures of global capitalism. Foreign investors and government officials act as the proposers in the Ultimatum Game, offering

development projects that promise to modernise the country but ultimately serve to exploit its resources and maintain foreign control. Salim, like the other characters in the novel, is trapped in a system where the only options are to cooperate with neocolonial forces or to resist at great personal and economic cost (Naipaul 203). Salim, like the other characters in the novel, is trapped in a system where the only options are cooperation with the neocolonial forces or resistance at great personal and economic cost (Naipaul 203).

These narratives reflect the structural inequalities of the global economic system, in which postcolonial nations are continually offered deals that seem beneficial on the surface but are designed to perpetuate their economic dependency. The iterated ultimatum game in these narratives illustrates how each new round of economic negotiation entrenches the power imbalance, leaving little room for genuine autonomy or self-determination.

The Psychological Impact of the Neocolonial Dilemma

The psychological toll of navigating neocolonial Ultimatum Games is a recurring theme in neocolonial literature. Characters faced with the repeated choice between cooperation and resistance often experience a profound sense of disillusionment and alienation, as they come to realise that their attempts to resist the system ultimately leave them isolated and powerless.

In Jean-Paul Sartre's *Dirty Hands*, the protagonist, Hugo, a young intellectual in a communist party, is sent to assassinate a fellow party member accused of collaborating with the fascists during World War II. As Hugo grapples with the moral implications of his mission, he realises that the political game played by the party leadership mirrors the Ultimatum Game of neocolonialism, in which cooperation with external forces brings short-term benefits but long-term corruption and moral compromise. Hugo's internal struggle reflects the psychological burden of navigating the complex power dynamics of neocolonialism, in which each choice leaves him more compromised and alienated (Sartre 112).

The emotional and psychological consequences of resisting the neocolonial system are also evident in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*, in which the protagonist, Elizabeth, experiences a mental breakdown as she tries to reconcile her desire for personal and political autonomy with the overwhelming forces of neocolonial control. Elizabeth's repeated attempts to resist the neocolonial powers in her community lead to her mental collapse, as she becomes increasingly aware of the futility of her resistance in the face of systemic oppression. The novel's portrayal of Elizabeth's psychological deterioration reflects the trauma of resisting an

entrenched system that offers no viable alternatives, in which each choice in the iterated Ultimatum Game brings her closer to destruction (Head 88).

The Unexplored Potential of Neocolonial Narratives as Archetypal Critique

The use of the Ultimatum Game as a framework for understanding neocolonial narratives opens an unexplored direction of research that offers new insights into how literature reflects and critiques the global power dynamics of neocolonialism. By framing the choices faced by postcolonial characters and nations as part of an iterated Ultimatum Game, we can better understand the systemic nature of neocolonial exploitation, in which each new offer from the dominant power reinforces existing inequalities.

Furthermore, the archetypal significance of the neocolonial Ultimatum Game resonates with readers on a deeper psychological level, reflecting the universal human experience of navigating unequal power relationships. The characters in these narratives are not merely representatives of specific post-colonial nations but embodiments of a larger human struggle for autonomy, justice, and dignity in the face of overwhelming power.

Despite the richness of these narratives, the potential of the Ultimatum Game as a framework for analysing neocolonial literature remains largely unexplored. By applying game theory to literary analysis, we can uncover new layers of meaning in these texts, revealing how the repeated choices faced by post-colonial characters reflect the ongoing struggle for self-determination in a world dominated by global economic and political forces. This approach offers a new avenue for research in post-colonial studies, one that highlights the intersection of literature, economics, and psychology in the critique of neocolonialism.

Conclusion

The iterated Ultimatum Game provides a valuable framework for understanding systemic power dynamics in neocolonial literature, in which characters and nations are continually offered unequal deals that perpetuate their exploitation. Across cultures, literary narratives reflect the universal human experience of navigating unequal power relationships, tapping into the archetypal significance of the choices between cooperation and resistance. By exploring these narratives through the lens of game theory, we gain new insights into the psychological and emotional toll of neocolonialism, as well as the broader global economic forces that shape these choices.

This study demonstrates that the Ultimatum Game is not merely a metaphor for neocolonialism but a structural reality that plays out in literature across cultures and historical contexts. The characters in these narratives, whether they are struggling with the legacy of colonialism in Africa, Asia, or Latin America, face the same fundamental choices, reflecting the global nature of neocolonialism. The archetypal resonance of these narratives makes them powerful critiques of the global power dynamics that continue to shape the world today. Future research in this direction could further explore the intersection of game theory, literature, and postcolonial studies, offering new insights into the neocolonial condition.

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The Pandemic Paradox: Biopolitics, Social Inequities, and the Racialised Other

Hridya Joly

The COVID-19 pandemic, public health measures, and their social implications have emphasised the paradoxical dynamics of state power and its biopolitical dimensions. Drawing upon Michel Foucault's notion of biopower, this paper posits that pandemic management blurred the lines between inclusion and exclusion, care and neglect, and governance and disposability. This paper argues that this form of biopolitical governance, construed by differential vulnerability, further intensified social inequalities, particularly those victimised by racial othering. An examination of the measures undertaken—from lockdowns to quarantine and related discourses–shows that these actions were experienced by some vulnerable populations, such as the economically vulnerable, migrants, and minorities, as acts that marginalise and make them dispensable in society. Therefore, this paper aims to uncover the politics of life in the pandemic as the broader dynamics of biopower, racism, and social exclusion—the political decisions that deeply intertwine global health crises with the perpetuation of social inequality.

Introduction

Michel Foucault termed biopower as the "basic biological features of the human species that become the object of a political strategy" (qtd. in Swatie and Mehra 2). He finds biopower manifested in the human being as an individual body as well as manifested in an entire species or population. When translated into actual modes of implementation, biopower becomes biopolitics, that is, measures through which the state maintains control over the physical bodies of the population (Kalpokas). Biopolitics describes the management of populations through statistical, population-level regulations. We are no longer governed as political subjects of law, but also as living beings who, collectively, form a global mass–a "population"–with a natality rate, a mortality rate, a morbidity rate, an average life expectancy, and so on (Lorenzini 41). Since Foucault's conceptualisation, 'biopolitics' has come to describe the diverse ways in which health, illness, bodies, and human development have become contested political territories (Ioakimidis 17). This study explores the applicability of biopolitics that problematises certain discourses around the politics of life during the pandemic.

Pandemic and the Politics of Life: A Review

Biopolitics delineates how biological life becomes both the subject and object of state action and state policy. This paradigm offers an analytical framework to understand the complex political dilemmas that have emerged from state action (or inaction) in the context of the pandemic (Ioakimidis 17). It illustrates how human biology and life itself have become focal points of political governance and areas of profound contestation. Biopolitical theory explains "the role of the state in implementing policies and regulations wherein bodies (individual and the body politic) are monitored, governed, and, in some cases, deemed disposable" (Nayar 2).

As manifested by the enforcement of lockdowns, quarantine, self-isolation measures, face-masking, social distancing, border closures, and targeted calls based on age or medical conditions, the boundaries between the human body as the object of regulation and political power have become blurred (Kalpokas). The pandemic highlighted the role of the state's sovereignty, as well as the 'management' and 'disposing', through the organisation of social order and other control measures that were assumed to protect individual and social vulnerabilities from the threat of exposure to contamination (Nayar 3). This exercise of regulatory power is what Foucault has termed biopower over decades, defining it in *The Will to Knowledge* as "a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimise, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (Kalpokas).

Different tangents of thought in Foucault are relevant to discourses on pandemics. First, the logic of contagion on the subject operates at two levels: as an individual body in need of a clinical gaze and the crowd subjected to control measures. The suffering individual body is considered not only to undergo contamination but also to pose a risk to passing on the illness to other bodies. The threat caused by the perception of risk and danger to other bodies from a contaminated body is examined through a clinical gaze. However, this gaze is applied differently and unequally across various segments of the population, with certain segments deemed riskier than others (Swatie and Mehra 3).

This happens because biopolitics is always a politics of differential vulnerability. According to Foucault, the differential exposure of human beings to health and social risks is a salient feature of biopolitical governance (Lorenzini 43). This differential vulnerability operates within

the framework of Foucauldian racism. In the last lecture of *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault argued that racism is "a way of introducing a break into the domain of life taken over by power: the break between what must live and what must die" (qtd. in Lorenzini 43). For Foucault, racism is the force of discrimination between social groups. Racism fragments the biological continuum and provides 'the condition of acceptability' — though we all are living beings with more or less the same biological needs— to create hierarchies between different social groups and to marginalise some to the point of exclusion, exposing them to the risk of mortality (Lorenzini 43). In this context, racism is not biologically determined but rather a tool used by the biopolitical state to determine which social groups must live and which must be left to die (Swatie and Mehra 6).

Consequently, the second tangent of analysis concerns racism and the logic of disposability within the biopolitical state. The state becomes racist as it deems certain sections of the population unworthy of life. This biopolitical governmentality on racism, the notion that certain sections of the population are disposable, manifests through economic policies and governmental neglect of citizen welfare (Swatie and Mehra 3). The 'racialised others' include economically disadvantaged citizens, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and minority populations" (Ristić and Marinković 3). These groups are not explicitly excluded from the citizenry; rather, they are marginalised and excluded from state-provided services, sanitation, healthcare, and public spaces (Swatie and Mehra 4). Here, biopower shows the sovereign power at work, highlighting that the country had become a 'state of exception', and that emergency measures were inevitable (Swatie and Mehra 4). Aspects of class, economic disparities, and social inequalities are reflected in the techniques of management and mitigation of the disease.

Despite its biological nature, the pandemic "strongly impacts the socio-cultural dimension" (qtd. in Ristić and Marinković 2). During pandemics, a virus potentially impacts certain groups more than others because of differences in living conditions and material circumstances (Ristić and Marinković 2). For example, "Black Americans and other historically disadvantaged groups experienced infection and death rates that were disproportionately high" (qtd. in Ristić and Marinković 2). Additionally, the pandemic fuelled social exclusion, stigmatisation, and othering. For instance, rhetoric such as the 'Chinese virus' or the 'Kung Flu' contributed to an atmosphere of anti-Chinese and anti-Asian sentiment, attitudes, and even attacks (Ristić and Marinković 2). Researchers have raised the concern that pandemics

"exacerbated social inequalities and further marginalised already marginalised groups" (qtd. in Ristić and Marinković 2). In this way, racial othering establishes a sharp binary opposition between 'us' and all others that can threaten health and security (Ristić and Marinković 3). The biopolitics of race creates a gap between those worthy of life and those devalued by the state and held as scapegoats during global health crises (Swatie and Mehra 6).

Evidence suggests that natural disasters and pandemics are neither predictable nor apolitical, as they do not affect all members of society equally (Ioakimidis 19). They account for the rise of new vulnerabilities among populations and the exacerbation of older vulnerabilities in terms of employment instability, forced isolation, and strained social relations (Nayar 2). The policies enacted during the crisis reveal the devastating impact of the pandemic, exposing state apathy and neglect. Vulnerable and disposable sections of society were not considered as the subjects of the biopolitical motto 'of making live' but 'of letting die' (Swatie and Mehra 8). These machinations of the state, in being a deliberate absence, by actively avoiding state policies that may provide relief and welfare, were the hallmarks of a biopolitical state (Swatie and Mehra 8).

Conclusion

Thus, even as we faced a health crisis, some lives were more at risk. This is because vulnerabilities vary across the edges and the apex of the social order. Regardless of shared precarity, divisive politics and narratives were rampant in the news, each intended to polarise people. Even amidst a pandemic that respects no boundaries, it is continually pinned to varied identities of race, religion, class, geography, and gender. Many deep-rooted social prejudices resurfaced from the powerful to laymen, leading to international feuds, racist comments, and communal threats. The pandemic has thus reinstated the complex interplay between public health measures, state power, and social inequities. This paper analysed how the state practices intended to save human life ended up sharpening the divisions based on race and class through a biopolitical lens. The pandemic did not merely expose these inequities but actively strengthened them through the differential treatment of populations in which certain groups were rendered more vulnerable and disposable. The racialised discourse and differential application of public health measures underscore the biopolitical reality: not all lives are equally valued by the state. The uneven distribution of resources and care shows that biopolitics works to manage populations and delineate whose life is worth protecting. This shows that pandemics are not apolitical natural disasters but deeply politicised affairs of life and death. One critical reflection

that the lessons from this pandemic must entail is how biopolitical strategies can be reimagined so that all lives are valued equally, including those of the most vulnerable.

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Text as an Assemblage: Deleuzo-Guattarian Approach to Intertextuality in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World*

Neenumol Sebastian

The evolution of the conception of text reflects the dynamic nature of culture, history, art, literature, and language. From being considered as a creative piece of written material with a prime aesthetic purpose, the text has long journeyed into convoluted realms of authorial and readerly experiences. There has always been an attempt to deploy the narrative possibilities of text to organise experience and reality; however, text as an entity has gone beyond the conception of stability and fixity. A text characterised by fluidity, with its proliferation of connections, can be considered a Deleuzian–Guattarian assemblage.

An assemblage is any number of things or parts of things gathered into a single context. It resists fixity and hierarchy, with its tendency to cut across boundaries and traverse new territories. An example of assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari give is, that of a book:

> A book is an assemblage of this kind, and as such, is unattributable. It is a multiplicity– but we do not yet know what the multiple entails when it is no longer attributed, that is, after it has been elevated to the status of a substantive… As an assemblage, a book has only itself in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it…Literature is an assemblage ... It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come. (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand* 4 -5)

The book, then, is not a collection of systematically arranged codes with limited possibilities of reading and rereading. It functions as an assemblage that establishes connections with other assemblages and enters uncharted territories. It is not "a set of predetermined parts … that are then put together in order or into an already-conceived structure…" (Wise 91). An assemblage has a unique formation and functioning. An assemblage brings together widely heterogeneous elements and resists any kind of definition or categorisation.

Bharati Mukherjee's novel *The Holder of the World* is an assemblage in its navigation along diverse territories of art, history, culture, religion and time. In addition to the traditional elements of a text, such as theme, character, and setting, the narrative, perspective time, and numerous other aspects of the novel reinforce its status as an assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari opine thus:

> an author is great because they cannot prevent themselves from tracing flows and causing them to circulate; … the moment when language is no longer defined by what it says, even less by what makes it a signifying thing, but what it causes it to move, to flow, and to explode–desire. For literature is like schizophrenia: a process and not a goal, a production and not an expression. (*Anti-Oedipus* 158-9)

The particular style in which Mukherjee unravels the tale effects the metamorphosis. Colombat states that for Deleuze, "style is characterised, first, by a series of processes that each writer has to invent in order to trigger the metamorphosis between words and pure blocs of sensations" (210).

The narrator, Beigh Masters, an asset hunter and programmer, lives with her partner, Venn Iyr. Beigh Masters comes to know of a rare diamond, "The Emperor's Tear". Her research on the gem leads her to an ancestral connection with Hannah Easton, a seventeenth-century New England woman. Hannah's widowed mother leaves her at the doorstep of a neighbour and elopes with her Nipmuc lover. Her Puritan foster parents raise her in Salem. She moves to England with her husband, Gabriel Legge, an English sailor. Later, they move to India when her husband joins the East India Company. Gabriel Legge becomes a pirate, leaving Hannah desolate in an unfamiliar territory. She decides to move to London with the help of her servant, Bhagmati, but her boat is caught up in a flood and reaches the court of Raja Jadhav Singh, King of Devgad, and becomes his mistress. The king is wounded in the war with Aurangazeb, and Hannah, with her knowledge of herbs, saves his life. Hannah pleads with Aurangzeb to cease war and the Emperor gifts her with a rare diamond for her bravery. After Jadav Singh's death in war, Hannah returns to Salem with her daughter Pearl and lives with her mother and her Nipmuc children.

The opening line of the text sparks thoughts regarding the unusual crisscrossing that characterizes the whole of the text: "I live in three time zones simultaneously,... (Mukherjee 5). (Mukherjee 5). (Mukherjee 5). (Mukherjee 5). (Mukherjee 5). (Mukherjee 5). I mean the past, the present and the future…Nothing is ever lost, but continents and centuries sometimes get in the way." (Mukherjee 5). Interestingly enough, Venn is working on an assemblage, "a program X-2989", a database containing all the information in the world. Venn's grid is an assemblage - it holds "all the world's newspapers, weather patterns, telephone directories, satellite passes, every arrest, every television show, political debate, airline schedule …" (Mukherjee 5-6). He envisages time-travel where a person punches in answers to many

personal questions and the programme will create a version of him or her. The program is an assemblage with nodes hooked to one another, characterised by fluidity and unceasing reformation. The programme is an assemblage with nodes hooked to one another, characterised by fluidity and unceasing reformation.

Art creates affects or intense experiences, and art forms such as painting can trigger unpremeditated confluences. An interesting fact to note is that a painting of an English woman in an Indian landscape inspired Bharati Mukherjee to write the novel. In the novel, Beigh goes to the museum and finds a rare diamond "The Emperor's Tear" which hides within itself the untold story of Hannah Easton who is variously known as Salem Bibi and Precious-as-Pearl. Surprisingly, Beigh comes across a set of Mughal paintings depicting the opulent Indian life of Salem Bibi. The painting named "The Apocalypse" is an assemblage including Salem Bibi, her wounded lover, the Mughal conqueror Aurangzeb, ruined forts, villages, forests, trees, beasts, yogis, infants, thieves, horsemen, foot soldiers, archers, lance bearers, spies, scouts, mullahs, clowns, poets, painters, bookkeepers, booty haulers, eunuchs, courtesans, singers, dancers, jugglers, wrestlers, cooks, palanquin bearers, tent pitchers and storytellers. Beigh remarked on the abundance of this assemblage:

It is a feast for the eyes, and I must steady myself, take a breath, and extend my palms on the museum floor. You can study it for a lifetime and find something new each time you look. It is like an Indian dessert: things fried that should not be, hot that should be cold, and sweet that should be tart. And art that knows no limit, no perspective and vanishing point, no limit to extravagance, or to detail, that temperamentally cannot exclude, a miniature art forever expanding. (Mukherjee 18-19)

In *The Holder of the World*, Mukherjee invokes certain renowned literary texts. The assemblage of the texts is best illustrated with the variant evocation of canonical texts. The novel uses lines from Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" as epigraphs for its four parts; these lines, taken out of their context, enter into fresh relations within this text. If Keats' Grecian Urn symbolised fixity and permanence, the novel's protagonist, Hannah, is a nomad for whom life is characterised by mobility because she "breaks every shell" (Goswami 19). The first part of the novel uses the following lines: "Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness/ Thou foster child of silence and slow time" (qtd. in Mukherjee 3). The novel's Hannah is a foster child, but quietness and silence are not her traits. The second part begins as part of her research on Hannah. The epigraph for the second part, which starts with Beigh's trip to the see the ruins of Fort St.

Sebastian in Madras, is: "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/ Are sweeter; therefore soft pipes, play on" (qtd. in Mukherjee 93). Mukherjee uses these lines as prelude to Hannah's movement to India. The third part which describes Hannah's passionate affair with Raja Jadav Singh uses the epigraph: "Who are these coming to the sacrifice? To what green altar, O mysterious priest …" (qtd. in Mukherjee 209). The fourth part describes the return of Hannah and her daughter to America and Beigh's discovery of the diamond, "Emperor's Tear". The epigraph for this part reads thus: "Thou, silent form, doth teases us out of thought/ As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!" (qtd. in Mukherjee 275). The tombstone of Bhagmati, renamed as Hester Hedges by Hannah is the "silent form" which holds the secret about the precious diamond.

Other allusions in the text like Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlett Letter* and Thomas Pynchon's *V.* point to the movement of assemblages across texts and contexts. Like Hester Prynne, the brilliant heroine of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlett Letter*, Hannah's life in America, England and India is full of daring adventures. Hester is the name of Hannah's childhood friend and the posthumous title of Bhagmati. Thomas Pynchon's *V.* has a female character *V.* who appears in several roles in several places and times. Beigh remarks about Hannah: "If Thomas Pynchon, perhaps one of the descendants of her failed suitor, had not already written V., I would call her a V., a woman who was everywhere, the encoder of a secret history" (Mukherjee 60).

When *The Holder of the World* attaches itself to the epic *Ramayana* to form a curious assemblage, a new Sita, a nomad who breaks the fetters of repressive structures, surfaces. Bhagmati recites the epic *Ramayana* to Hannah, who visualises her as an explorer who steps out of the protective atmosphere of the court to try out "new surroundings and whatever they will bring" and chooses a life "free of court customs and taboos" (Mukherjee 174). Hannah feels that Sita left Rama because movement from familiar to unfamiliar made her an independent, dynamic woman far from being the submissive, idealised wife: "Could a woman who had strayed leagues and sea channels away from the restrictive protection of the white circle, who had traveled in flying chariots, resisted the heady courtship of a ten-headed demon, discovered the potency of self-reliance, return to the passive domesticities of her very young girlhood?" (176). Thus, Sita becomes a schizo woman who ventures into alien territories like Hannah.

The Holder of the World emerges as an assemblage, shaking up grounds, cutting across borders, moving into new territories, and facilitating flows across varied terrains. It holds within itself umpteen prospects for further connection, true to Deleuzian exhortation: "No assemblage can be characterised by one flux exclusively" (Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 101). Being dynamic, it is in a continual process of bringing diverse elements together and claiming many territories.

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Reflecting the Poetic Paraphernalia: Looking into the "Mirror" of Sylvia Plath and Nanditha

Smrithy Sudarsanan V.

From the first poet-musician in Greek mythology, Orpheus, who revealed the boundless enchanting power of poetry by mesmerising the underworld with his musical verses, poetry has proven its universal healing power. More often than not, remembering Orpheus, his merit and skill stand second to the painful plight he has encountered. It is a common phenomenon that personal trauma and emotional turmoil of the poets get highlighted in their creative works, entangling the spoken and unspoken words, often judging them on their basis. The life of Sylvia Plath has been under scrutiny particularly after her divorce with Ted Hughes, whereas Nanditha's life story came to the limelight after her death. Undoubtedly, both these poets have implied their intimate sorrows in their verses. They have meticulously used poetic devices, imageries, and tropes, which are often enmeshed in the tight labyrinth of what is implied and written. This study aims to delve into the poetic paraphernalia – the mirror–that has been scrupulously utilised by both the poets in their two selected poems. The invention of the mirror by Justus von Liebig was groundbreaking in many ways. Reflection has a dangerously enticing charm, whether it be the pining away of Narcissus or the burning of mighty vessels by Archimedes. Folklores and magic make use of mirrors in many ways. In the folklore of Bloody Mary, she is believed to appear in the mirror when her name is called thrice. Catoptromancy or enoptromancy, the divination using mirrors, has been one among the forms of divination right from ancient times. However, the poem makes use of the mirror in a more day-to-day life scenario. As in the case of Nanditha and Sylvia Plath, the mirror has the profundity of unfathomable oceans, beautifully concealing the inner pangs while magnificently revealing them simultaneously.

Mirrors are frequently used as a motif by both Nandita and Sylvia Plath in their poems; however, the most stirring aspect is that both wrote a poem with almost parallel circumstances and a mirror as the protagonist. Plath's poem is named Mirror, but Nandita's is an untitled poem with the first line, "My mirror has gone mad, " often used as its title. Both poems lament the sudden and strange behaviour of their mirrors by showcasing the physical drawbacks or aging symptoms before them, which creates pangs of mental turmoil for the women who are frequent visitors before the mirror. Real mirrors could symbolise either their partners who turn a cold shoulder to them. The intrinsic thread of both poems is the transition from youthful bliss

to middle-aged wrinkles, which has an intense crease in the mentality of the women. Plath's poem speaks from the viewpoint of the mirror, whereas Nandita's poem is a pathetic sob that turns into malevolent vengeance of the lady who is perturbed by her own reflection in the mirror. More often than not, both the poets exhibit some sort of violence that got evolved from their exasperated lives.

Exploring the two women portrayed in the poems, although Plath seems to be more unwarlike to the mirror, at some instances she seems to neglect it for the best, for what it has revealed before her. Nanditha represents a more aggressive lady, particularly towards the end of the poem, who shows a turbulent outburst of her annoyance. Amazingly similar, both these poems share common concerns of confessional poetry. Extreme segregation from the outside world and self-willed solitude are trademarks of the personal lives of these poets. Thus, seclusion and the humdrum of life have become frequently employed poetic themes. Plath's poem, Mirror, " explores the mindset of the mirror, personifying it as an honest friend who was mercilessly left behind for being so truthful. The isolated state of the mirror and its monotony are conspicuous throughout the poem. The mirror always immerses itself in keen contemplation on the opposite wall. The blank wall, pink and with speckled points, alludes to the nothingness the mirror is subjected to think about. Pink is often associated with the feminine, and the speckles incorporated with it signify the blotches in the female identity, particularly concerned with the life of the lady in the poem and indirectly a connotation of the life of the poet. The mirror cordially accepts seclusion, thereby recognising the wall as a part of its own heart. Apart from the rare interventions of the "faces and darkness, " the mirror seems lonely (Plath, line 9).

Nanditha's poem also depicts the twinges of despondency. She grumbles that the mirror has thrown silent screams like oyster shells at her feet (Nanditha, 90). Throughout the poem, she stamps her loveless and pessimistic thoughts, connecting them with faded symbols of love. Her poem is an unspoken monologue of the vacuum she is subjected to, the unrequited love, the unborn child, sterile motherhood, uncharitable aging, that toughens the toughness of the shell that she has embraced in her isolation. Aging is a complex process that has the ability to make most of the human beings uneasy. The lady in Plath's poem is perplexed by the wrinkles on her face and moves toward moonlight and candles that would cast a vague image concealing her wrinkles. However, Nanditha's poem seems to portray old age in a more symbolic and philosophical manner, aided by powerful imagery. Nanditha's mirror that has

earlier shown scintillating wine glass has now began to show "weird images", quite different from the sensible ones shown before (Nanditha 90). The wine glass represents the sparkles of intoxicating youth, the mesmerising adolescent beauty that is first spotted in the mirror by the teenage girl who has now, to her own disappointment, grown into a middle-aged lady. Loveless relationships often produce the most rebellious lines.

Both poets are martyrs of unanswered love puzzles. The final lines of Plath's Mirror, "in me she drowned as a young girl" (Plath line 17), evoke the image of Ophelia, the symbolic womanhood drowned by patriarchal society. The indirect association with Ophelia is enough to give the poem the shadow of unrequited love. Nanditha's poem also has an implicit overtone of love-bereft affair. The woman in her poem bewails the "faded violets" (Nanditha 90) that are reflected in the mirror. Violets, figurative of love and innocence, have dropped and withered, alluding to the lack of essence and passion in the love she shares with her partner. Both poems concentrate on acute feelings that are ardently feminine. The most pathetic image Nanditha's mirror offered was that of a fidgeting ovum, suffocating like a fish out of water, contracting like a heart (Nanditha 90). An ovum represents the female gamete and the precursor of the foetus; the asphyxiating ovum indicates stillbirth or childlessness. Maternity is purely a choice, and Nanditha was affirmative about maternity. The pictorial trope of the contracting heart also suggests repelling love, stubbornly defiant of expansion. Nanditha adds further vivid imagery of the writhing ovum that "spit out a sperm and died" (Nanditha 90). The psychological strain during menopause, inability to conceive, and lack of carnal pleasures all have a place among the pointed edges of these lines. The woman also weeps on, "an empty red plastic bag" (Nanditha 90), which is an indirect imagery of her empty womb.

Although Plath represented the frustrations of a middle-aged woman, more preference was given to the mental strains of the mirror, who is also the narrator. The mirror is hated for being true to itself and others. Plath attempts to paint a real-life picture of the world in which the one who says the truth is always alienated. However, the feedback of both women to the mirror in these poems is what makes it distinguishable to a greater extent, although both feel agonised from what the mirror shows. Plath's lady responds with bitter tears and agitated hands. Although the final effect is frustration, Plath's lady deems the mirror to be an indispensable part of her life and returns to it despite being fully aware of what she has to endure. However, Nanditha's woman, who is more intense, hurls her mirror to the street before she collapses, thereby destroying the mirror. Nanditha's woman is more vehement in her actions and proceeds

with a passionate violence in each of her steps. Both poems end in death; Plath's poem ends in the symbolic death of the young girl, whereas Nanditha's closes with the murder of the mirror and the connotated death of the woman.

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Unveiling the Psyche of Shakuntala: A Psychoanalytic Exploration of Freedom and Independence in *'Shakuntala: The Play of Memory'*

Shabnam Sakiya P. S.

India Today remarks:

"Gokhale's Shakuntala is the female counterpart of Hesse's Siddartha, a seeker who must follow the trail of her destiny without looking back...Gokhale is drunk with the sound of words, and that itself makes for a hypnotic read...This is Shakuntala for the 21st century."

This study attempts to explore the unconscious mind from a feminist perspective. Namita Gokhale delves deep into the psychology of her characters. Feminist psychotherapists, particularly those influenced by the so-called 'British School' of psychoanalysis, have neglected Freudian theory and focused instead on the role of the mother in the psychic development of the female child. In contrast, this study focuses on Freudian psychoanalysis because Freud's formulation, by drawing attention to women's lack of a penis or phallus, places the discussion of female identity firmly within the context of a patriarchal society. Here, we discuss various perspectives on psychoanalysis, such as repressed desires, interpretation of dreams, and the death drive.

If Freud's theories focused on the relationship between authors, readers, and characters in psychoanalysing literature, Jacques Lacan was responsible for the gradual shift away from persons, that is, authors.

Readers or fictive characters are directed toward the text and the reading and writing operations. Lacan proposed in the 1950s "a linguistic interpretation of Freud" (Suprenant 206). Lacan 's most celebrated dictum, "The unconscious is structured like a language," implies that psychoanalysis as a discipline engages with the methods and concepts of modern linguistics, but from a psychoanalytical perspective (Lodge 61). Thus, Lacan viewed psychoanalysis as the intermingling of human subjects and language. Lacan also focused on topics such as the ego, transference, psychosis, death drive, repression and sexuality, as Freud had. But he argued that Freud "had understood the linguistic nature of human psychology but that he had simply lacked the Saussurean vocabulary necessary „to articulate it (Clark 452) Lacan s conception of the unconscious as structured like a language and the relationship between the symbolic order and the subject opened up a whole new way of understanding

the play of unconscious desire in the text (Homer 2) Lacan s argument lay in the fact that speech, particularly language was central to psychoanalytic practice and to any theoretical conclusions that might be extrapolated from it .Therefore, the focus of Lacanian criticism is not on the unconscious of the character or the author, but upon the text itself.

In Shakuntala: The Play of Memory, Namitha Gokhale uses the stream-of-consciousness narrative technique to explore the heroine 's psyche. Stream of consciousness is a method of narrative representation of ,,random thoughts that follow in a free flowing style .It is primarily associated with the modernist movement .A stream of consciousness is a form of leading consciousness in a narrative. In Namitha Gokhale 's Shakuntala, she employs the stream-of-consciousness narrative technique to dive deep into the psychology of Shakuntala's character.

In Shakuntala, we meet a woman who has always seen herself as aloof from her life. Her conditioning always demands that she come out of her confinement in the four walls of her household, but she has a strong urge to come out of the threshold. She confides, "I was hungry for experience. These were the things I wanted to see, to know, to do. My ignorance irked me "(Gokhale 46)

It is from here that Shakuntala, unlike her namesake, denies remaining confined to the stereotypical role. She decides to come out and explore the world of her desires. In Biblical myth, Eve was tempted to eat the fruit of knowledge, which would disobey God, and as a consequence, she became a fallen angel. Shakuntala too steps out to taste the fruit of knowledge. Having the samskara abandonment in her, this time it is she who abandons her married life. She rides off with a Greek traveller, Nearchus. However, it cost her the same fate as Eve. From the position of being a wife, she now assumes the identity of Yaduri,the fallen woman, "Yaduri …. In swearing and profane language of men. the word also signified a Yoni, a woman s private part" (Gokhale 119)

From childhood, Shakuntala faces discrimination for being female. Bitter experiences of her childhood lead Shakuntala to spend her time in loneliness. She is conscious of the discrimination against females. While her brother is given all opportunities to acquire knowledge and experience, she is denied them. Her mother tries to teach her household work and about herbs and plants. Her hatred for her mother is seen when she remembers her.

She tried to teach me something about her meager knowledge; however, I resisted her attempts with anger. It was so violent that it sometimes surprised me. I hated everything about

my mother, from her tangled hair to her shuffling gait and her cracked, dirty feet; I never wanted to become like her. (Gokhale 8)

According to Freud, dreams are manifestations of unconscious desires, repressed memories, emotions, or fears. Psychoanalysts consider dreams to be symbolic representations of these underlying psychological forces and gain insights into repressed desires or emotions by interpreting them.

In Namitha Gokhale 's novel Shakuntala: The Play of Memory, each dream with a latent meaning is a unique personal experience. Dream sequences point to inability, unsolved conflict, some urgent message in the unconscious demanding to be understood, or forgotten traumatic memories resurfacing. A dream is a visionary fantasy experienced.

Dreams are defined as the mental activity of a dreamer while asleep. Every dream has a meaning. Havelock Ellis, without dwelling on the apparent absurdity of dreams, speaks of them as "an archaic world of vast emotions and imperfect thoughts "(Frued *Interpretation* [Strachey] 92), a study that might reveal the primitive stages in the evolution of mental life. James Sully was more firmly convinced that dreams have a distinguished meaning, more sweeping and penetrating, that dreams are a means of conserving earlier successive personalities (Frued, *Interpretation* [Strachey] 93)

In Shakuntala: The Play of Memory, the dream of Shakuntala was to see an elephant and also see and experience the distant world. Her desire to see an elephant and explore the distant world reflects her urge to break away from societal constraints. She explores her own path and discovers what lies beyond the familiar boundaries of her existence. She fulfilled these dreams through her lover, Nearchus. Thus, she became a Yaduri, a fallen woman, unable to attain her life 's desire, that is, Moksha at Kashi. The devotees of Lord Shiva travel to Kashi in the hope of attaining release from the endless cycle of birth and rebirth. Once, Shakuntala expressed her desire to the priest that she wanted to see the world and travel like men. The priest tells her that men are the masters of women. The society believes that a father protects the daughter in childhood. The husband protects a woman in youth and the sons protect her in old age. Therefore, a woman is never fit for independence, and this is the way of the world. In this background, Shakuntala decides to leave her husband 's house as she feels insecure there. The arrival of Kamalini and

Shakuntala s instinctual and eternal desire "to wander with the freedom of birds and clouds" are the two motives that trigger off a transformation in the very course of her life. When Shakuntala becomes pregnant, she is advised to visit a holy temple to pray for a safe birth. There, she meets the Greek merchant, Nearchus. She elopes with him to live freely and travel the world. She throws her silver anklet, which is symbolic of her breaking free from the shackles of her home and family. She is aware that Nearchus is a Yavana, a foreigner who is considered impure by social conventions. Shakuntala dares to run away with him and she even establishes a sexual relationship with him. Her rebellion symbolises not only a defiance of patriarchal norms and constraints but also of social and religious codes and dogmas. This is the turning point in Shakuntala's life, as she gains a new identity by shedding her previous identity as Shakuntala. She believes that her craving for travel can be quenched by Nearchus. Therefore, he deserts his home for the company of a Greek horse merchant to explore the world and gain new experiences. She starts enjoying life and flying like a free bird.

Occasionally, she feels homesick; however, the means to return have ceased. On the banks of the Ganga, she feels an intense sense of homecoming.

Having left the company of Nearchus, Shakuntala reaches Kashi and listens to the sacred texts of the Puranas:

> Know then that for the born, death is certain, and for the dead, rebirth. The supreme god,
>
> Vishnu protects the universe. By his command, Brahma creates the world; by his order,
>
> Shiva destroys it. Through Vishnu 's will, all beings are reborn in various wombs, human and animal, good and evil, fit and unfit. Why, you might ask yourself, would Vishnu, the Lord of Creation, enter this ceaseless ocean of birth and rebirth? Age after age, he becomes a tortoise, a boar, a lion, and a dwarf. Why does he abandon the pleasures of Vaikuntha and forsake his heaven to dwell in a womb, hanging head downwards, trapped in a woman s waste and urine, eating and drinking the same, tormented by worms, and scorched by the digestive fire (Gokhale 183)

Why do memories persist?' she asked the priest. The priest replied:

> Our pasts live on. Each of us carries the residue of unresolved karma —the burden of debts we must repay. Sister, you cannot run away. Confront this life. Only in acceptance will you find release (Gokhale 4).

Namita Gokhale delves deep into the psychology of her characters. In the end, she vividly portrays Shakuntala 's soul leaving the body. This liberated soul narrates the last chapter of the novel. In her 'fall', she becomes liberated from her material body, which was subjected to societal images. This is symbolic of Shakuntala transcending the familial, societal, and physical barriers to realise her true self. Namita Gokhale emerges as a unique genius to reinterpret the cursed image of a ,,fallen woman as a kind of rebel in favour of women establishing their true selves. She, breaking the metaphor of ,,fallen woman, has successfully presented a narrative of challenge through this novel.

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Re-examining *Blade Runner* in the Context of Posthumanism

Geophine Georgie & Gils M. George

The central focus in the paper is the examination of the characters Raphael and Deckard in the science fiction film *Blade Runner*, directed by Ridley Scott. In particular, it explores how these characters challenge traditional stereotypes of humanity and non-humanity. Despite Raphael being a Replicant and Deckard being human, their characterisation defies conventional expectations. Notably, Raphael exhibits a greater capacity for empathy and human-like qualities than Deckard, prompting a revaluation of what it means to be truly human within the film's context. Through an analysis of their traits and interactions, this paper seeks to shed light on the complex exploration of humanity versus post-humanity in *Blade Runner*.

In *Blade Runner*, replicant Rachael's belief in her own humanity stems from implanted memories of a fabricated childhood, complicating Deckard's task of identifying her true nature after administering the Voigt-Kampff test, designed to discern humanoid robots or replicants. Ridley Scott's futuristic setting depicts replicants as artificial labourers for Earth's off-world colonies, programmed with a limited lifespan of four years for control purposes. Those who evade confinement and reach Earth face elimination by specialised law enforcement units known as Blade Runners.

Rachael thinks she is a human and does not object to taking the Voigt-Kampff test. Tyrell, the head of the corporation that manufactures replicants, sends her away and reveals to Deckard that Rachael is an experiment. Implanting false memories into replicants imbues them with emotions, facilitating easier manipulation by humans. Without confirmation from others, Rachael begins to question her own identity, mirroring the uncertainty experienced by humans. Seeking answers, she visits Deckard in his apartment and confronts him with her suspicions. "You believe I'm a replicant, don't you?" She queries him, producing an old photograph from her bag. Gesturing toward the image, she asserts, "See? It's me with my mother." Without even glancing at the photograph, Deckard proceeds to tidy up in a nonchalant manner. "Yeah? Remember when you were six, you and your brother snuck into an empty building through a basement window, intending to play doctor?" he recalls. "He showed you his, and when it was your turn, you got scared and fled. Do you recall that? Have you ever disclosed that to anyone? Your mother, Tyrell, anyone?" Deckard continues, recounting another of Rachael's implanted memories, gradually unveiling the harsh reality. Then he quite simply

goes on to explain: 'Implants. Those aren't your memories, they're somebody else's, they're Tyrell's niece'. Rachael stares at him, and tears start running from her eyes. Only then does Deckard realize how much she is hurt. 'Ok, bad joke', he says, 'I made a bad joke, you're not a replicant. Go home, ok?' The camera lens focuses on Rachael's crying eyes. Deckard is not used to dealing with such emotions. He cannot convince Rachael that he was joking and offers her a drink. As he goes into the kitchen to fetch a glass, Rachael throws the photograph on the floor and leaves.

The dawning realisation that her memories are fabricated transforms Rachael into a figure of tragedy. Stripped of her sense of self, she becomes alienated from her own body, as if left with a hollow shell. Recent studies have shown that false memories are not exclusive to androids; humans can also experience them, as illustrated on the BBC radio program 'Past Imperfect.' In it, Professor Giuliana Mazzoni revealed how implanted false memories can change people's behaviour. This further emphasises Rachael's proximity to a human being. Empathy distinguishes humans from non-humans in Dick's novel and Scott's film, and it remains a concept that concerns modern science. It is the act of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another.

In *Blade Runner*, Rachael is a humanoid. A humanoid is a term used to describe a being that resembles or has characteristics similar to those of a human. In robotics and artificial intelligence, a humanoid refers to a robot or artificial entity that has a body structure, appearance, or movement patterns resembling those of a human. Humanoids are often designed to interact with humans and perform tasks in a human-like manner. She embodies the humanoid individuals who have unlawfully fled to Earth, posing a threat to the human race simply by their presence. Deckard represents humanity as a lawful police officer who maintains order and protects society. However, it is Deckard who lacks empathy, not Rachael. He is completely indifferent to the devastating emotions Rachael is going through because of his revelation to her. Upon recognising her distress, he fails to empathise with her; instead, he appears incapable of handling the situation and thus dismisses it as a mere jest. However, even in that, he does not make an effort to sound convincing; it is quite obvious that he does not know how to deal with human emotions and Rachael's emotions are nothing less than that. He offers her a drink, a gesture that suggests that this has been his way of dealing with unpleasant thoughts and emotions, portraying in the film what Philip K. Dick originally wanted to show in his book, that is, how

Deckard is dehumanised by his work. As a result, the viewer sympathises with Rachael, the humanoid who is 'more human than human," as Tyrell's advertisement proclaims, and is ironically portrayed in this scene.

The next scene in which Deckard and Rachael appear together is when she saves his life by killing one of her own, another replicant who was about to kill him. The blade runner has just killed Zohra, one of the four replicants who escaped to Earth and whom he was originally supposed to 'retire'. Immediately after that, he is told by Bryant, his supervisor, that he is supposed to add Rachael to the list because she has been reported missing from Tyrell headquarters. For the authorities that Deckard serves and represents, discovering Rachael's identity makes her dangerous enough to be killed. Yet, her reaction is normal and expected, having grown up in a society where it is clear that replicants found on Earth are to be 'retired'. Her newly discovered self was her enemy just hours before. Once more, humans exhibit behaviour devoid of empathy by engineering a replicant with emotions akin to their own, only to abandon the "experiment" without a trace of remorse when complications arise. This underscores the ethical quandaries surrounding the manipulation of artificial beings and the disposability with which they are treated in the face of adversity. By sparing the life of her adversary, she demonstrates greater humanitarian qualities than any other character depicted in the film. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus recounts the Parable of the Good Samaritan, a narrative that exemplifies the concepts of compassion and altruism. This parable tells the story of a Samaritan, traditionally viewed as an enemy by the Jewish community, who demonstrates remarkable empathy toward a wounded man lying on the side of the road. Despite societal animosity, the Samaritan tends to the man's injuries, transports him to an inn, and covers the cost of his care. Through this narrative, Jesus emphasises the importance of extending kindness and assistance to all, regardless of social or cultural barriers. The Parable of the Good Samaritan serves as a timeless reminder of the universal value of compassion and the imperative to care for those in need, even those considered adversaries.

Rachael is out in the streets watching Deckard, who is being watched by another replicant named Leon. Deckard is attacked and disarmed by Leon, but as Leon is about to kill him, Rachael shoots Leon from behind, saving Deckard's life. The next scene finds them in Deckard's apartment. Rachael is aware that Deckard's job includes 'retiring' her. Before being able to come to terms with her identity, she has to run and hide and find a way to protect herself.

Deckard may exhibit difficulty in expressing or sharing emotions; however, it is evident that he finds no joy in his occupation. Moreover, he displays reluctance when it comes to targeting Rachael, as evidenced by his hesitation when his supervisor suggests including her. Despite his role in eliminating replicants, Rachael perceives him as a source of security, as he could have terminated her during their initial encounter in his apartment if he desired. The pivotal confrontation that delves into the existential themes raised by the film occurs when Rachael begins to question Deckard. Initially, she enquires about the files pertaining to her longevity; Deckard dismisses her query by stating that they are classified.

A liminal figure refers to an individual or character who occupies a transitional or threshold state, often existing at the boundary or margin between two distinct phases, spaces, or identities. Liminal figures are frequently associated with ambiguity, transformation, and uncertainty, as they navigate the liminal space between past and future, inside and outside, or self and other. These individuals often serve as symbolic representations of liminality itself, embodying the liminal experience and the potential for change or growth that it entails. In this film, the character Roy Batty can be seen as a liminal figure. As a replicant, he exists on the boundary between human and artificial life. Throughout the film, Roy grapples with questions of identity, mortality, and purpose, embodying the liminality inherent in his existence. Additionally, Roy's quest for extended life and his pursuit of meaning beyond his programmed purpose further emphasise his status as a liminal figure. Ultimately, Roy's character serves as a poignant exploration of the blurred lines between humanity and artificiality in the futuristic world of Blade Runner.

At this central moment in the film, two major philosophical issues are addressed: the limitations of human existence and what makes one human. It is interesting that both of these questions are brought to the surface through a replicant, partly because it makes these issues more bearable to face than if they were articulated by a human. Rachael's role as a mirror reflecting human anxieties back to both Deckard and the viewer holds significance, as it allows the viewer to vicariously experience her anxiety from a safe vantage point. This mirrors the cathartic relief that viewers of tragedy experience, as described in Aristotle's definition of tragedy. Through Rachael, viewers can confront and explore their own anxieties and fears without directly experiencing them, thus achieving a sense of emotional release and catharsis similar to that found in classical tragedy. By serving as a conduit for the viewer's emotions, Rachael adds depth and resonance to the thematic exploration of identity, humanity, and existential angst.

The main difference between Rachael and the four replicants that had escaped to Earth was that, unlike them, she was not always aware of her non-human identity. They had travelled all the way to Los Angeles to find the Tyrell Corporation and find a way to prolong their lives.

Their desire is not for humanity in its entirety, but rather for a specific aspect of it: the duration of a human life. They are stronger and more developed than humans are; they experience everything to a much greater intensity than humans, but they only have a four-year lifespan. Rachael's reaction is not to join forces with them and try to obtain the information about how to prolong their lifespan; after all, she lived with Tyrell and it would be easier for her. Instead, she embraces her fate with a sense of determinism reminiscent of the 1950s femmes fatales often found in film noir, a genre that Blade Runner skilfully emulates. This parallel underscores the film's noir atmosphere, highlighting its ability to evoke the tension and fatalism characteristic of the genre. All she desires is to stay alive for as long as she is able to and to seek Deckard's protection. Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power" suggests that all living beings possess an innate drive to exert their will and assert their dominance over their circumstances. This desire for power is not necessarily about control over others, but rather about self-affirmation and the pursuit of one's own goals and values. In existentialism, the desire to live is intertwined with themes of individual freedom, authenticity, and responsibility. Existentialist philosophers emphasise the importance of individuals creating their own meaning and purpose in life, despite the inherent absurdity and uncertainty of existence. The desire to live, therefore, becomes a driving force behind the search for meaning and the pursuit of self-actualisation. As *Blade Runner* is stylistically a neo-noir film, we expect the heroes to be doomed no matter what, as all film noir protagonists are. Even though the ending of the film is ambiguous, the characters remain outcasts from society, each for different reasons.

Rachael's desire to be loved is indirectly reflecting her wish for humanity. In Sartre's view, love is often characterised by a tension between freedom and dependency. He argues that individuals are fundamentally free and responsible for their own existence; however, in the context of romantic relationships, they may experience a desire to possess and be possessed by the other person. This desire for possession, according to Sartre, arises from a fear of freedom and the anxiety of being alone in the world.

Sartre also explores the concept of "bad faith" in the context of love. He suggests that individuals may deceive themselves into believing that they are in love to escape the existential anguish of their own freedom and responsibility. This form of self-deception, known as "bad

faith", involves denying one's own freedom and autonomy in favour of adopting a predetermined role or identity within the relationship.

Despite the existential challenges posed by love, Sartre does not dismiss its significance. He acknowledges that love can provide moments of genuine connection and authenticity, allowing individuals to transcend their isolation and experience a sense of unity with another person. However, Sartre also warns against the dangers of using love as a means of avoiding or denying one's own freedom and responsibility. This theory can be attributed to Rachael. She stays in Deckard's apartment, waiting for him; after he has killed the other two replicants, he returns. His door is open and he enters, calling Rachael and pointing his gun in all directions. Rachael is lying on the bed, covered under a sheet. A very anxious Deckard approaches and slowly lifts the sheet, afraid that someone might have harmed her. Rachael is sleeping and so he bends over to hear if she is breathing. Noticeably relieved, he wakes her with a kiss. He asks her if she loves him and if she trusts him. Rachael confirms, and shortly thereafter, they escape together. The pinnacle of Rachael's journey toward humanity lies in being loved and embraced by a human, and in envisioning a shared future with him. Whether Deckard is human or not becomes inconsequential to her, as she remains unaware of his true nature. In the final scene, they are driving in the countryside, a significant contrast to the bleak and dark cityscape of the rest of the film. Rachael is looking happy and as Deckard says in a voiceover: 'Tyrell had told me Rachael was special: no termination date. I didn't know how long we had been together. Who does?'. Thus, Rachael will live a human life in the sense that no human knows how long they have to live.

It is remarkable that those who tried to change their nature in a more direct and radical way (i.e. the other four replicants) all found death. Even though, in the first instance, they seem to be more eager to change their future and prolong their lives to be like humans, they do not appreciate and respect human life. The only one who does is Rachael, but she has 'grown up' as a human; she has all the memories of one. This juxtaposition between Rachael and other replicants emphasises the importance of memory and personal history in the essence of humanity.

By providing two different types of replicants, he opens the possibility of including them in human society. The four rebel replicants may embody a human fear of the machine, but in this case, they are earlier models before an improved version, such as Rachael, was created. They are a step along the technological path toward creating human replicants that cannot be

distinguished from humans, not only because of their perfect physical likeness but also because of their inner, emotional similarity. The rebel replicants have a four-year lifespan; Rachael's lifespan is unknown. Had she not found out from Deckard that she was a replicant, she would always have thought that she was a human. This has several disturbing implications for the viewer: she discovers her nature at the same time as the viewer. In this manner, she can be included by exclusion; having been identified as a different 'species' and then controlled so that she does not pose any danger,

She can be accepted only insofar as the boundaries of her identity and rights are clearly stated. This does not sound very progressive by contemporary standards; however, it was a significant step forward in the Luddite atmosphere of the 1980s.

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From Chains to Choices: A Kantian Reading of *Attack on Titan*

Mehal Elsa Shaji

The quest for freedom becomes a throat-gripping chain of moral slavery as each arc progresses in *Attack on Titan*. Eren Jaeger, who was an innocent teenager who dreamt of a world outside the walls becomes a mass murderer who kills 80% of humanity. He was so obsessed with freeing his island and its inhabitants that he was ready to commit genocide. Ironically, he set out to end racism by demolishing every other race. Eren's transformation can be analysed through Kant's lens to show how his pursuit of freedom ultimately enslaves him to his desires and leads to moral downfall.

Eren's journey can be interpreted as a struggle between moral slavery and freedom. Initially driven by a desire for revenge and liberation from the Titans, Eren's actions are often impulsive and driven by emotion. Yet, from a teenager's perspective, these are just desire for freedom after being enslaved for years. As Eren's character develops, there are moments when he reflects on his actions, questioning the morality of his choices and their consequences. This self-reflection can be seen as a step toward moral freedom, in which he begins to act not only out of anger or compulsion but also out of a sense of duty to humanity and a rational understanding of his goals.

The pivotal moment in the anime is when Eren's mother is killed, which sparks his desire for revenge. This scene takes place in the very first episode of "Attack on Titan." Eren, Mikasa, and their friend Armin witness the breach of Wall Maria by the Colossal Titan and Armored Titan. In the ensuing chaos, Eren's mother, Carla Jaeger, is trapped under the debris of their house. Despite Eren's desperate attempts to save her, a Smiling Titan devours her while Eren and Mikasa are taken to safety by Hannes. Eren's initial state is a kind of moral slavery. Eren's immediate reaction to his mother's death is driven by intense emotional pain, rage, and a burning desire for revenge against the Titans. These emotions overpower his rationality, leading him to swear vengeance on all Titans. According to Kant, actions driven by such uncontrollable emotions fall under moral slavery, as they are not guided by rational will or moral duty but by a reaction to external events.

Eren's vow to annihilate the Titans is not a decision made through careful, rational consideration but a reaction to the trauma and loss he experiences. He is essentially enslaved

by his emotions, unable to act based on his own rational, moral judgment. Eren's motivations at this point are purely retaliatory. He is motivated by a desire to inflict the same pain on the Titans that they have caused him, rather than by a rational consideration of what is morally right or just. This aligns with Kant's notion of acting out of inclination rather than duty. Following his mother's death, Eren's actions, including his rigorous training and intense drive to join the Scout Regiment, are primarily fuelled by his desire for revenge. This single-minded pursuit, though it gives him purpose, is driven by his internal anguish and hatred.

As the series progresses, Eren begins to experience moments of self-reflection. He questions the nature of his quest for revenge and the broader implications of his actions. This introspection is a critical step toward moral freedom, as he starts to consider the morality and consequences of his actions beyond his personal vendetta. In his emotional frenzy, he says, "No! Mom! You have to move! I'll carry you on my back if I have to! We have to run! Please! Move! Move!!!" (Isayama Ep 01)

The frantic repetition and exclamations reflect Eren's intense emotional state, emphasising his desperation and helplessness. Eren's inability to rationalise the situation and make a logical decision to save himself and Mikasa highlights his moral slavery at this moment. This passage serves as the catalyst for Eren's journey. It marks the beginning of his quest for revenge, driven by emotional compulsion, setting the stage for his eventual struggle toward moral freedom, which ultimately leads to moral slavery. In this scene, Eren's immediate reaction to his mother's death is a clear example of moral slavery, as described by Kant. His actions are driven by uncontrollable emotions and external events, lacking the rational will that defines moral freedom. After witnessing his mother's death, Eren is filled with rage and a desire for revenge, which is why he says, "I'll kill them all… Every last one of them. I'll destroy them with my own hands!" (Isayama Ep 05)

Eren's vow is a direct reaction to the trauma he experienced. His declaration to kill all Titans is fuelled by intense anger and a desire for vengeance, not by rational deliberation. According to Kant, actions motivated by such strong emotions fall under moral slavery because they are not guided by an autonomous, rational will. Eren's focus is solely on extermination and revenge, with no consideration for the moral implications or potential consequences of his actions. This single-minded pursuit showcases a lack of moral reasoning, as he is driven by his emotional state rather than a sense of duty or ethical reflection.

Eren's motivations were primarily emotional and retaliatory. His vow reflects a deep-seated desire to inflict pain on the Titans as a retribution for his own suffering. This reactive stance is a hallmark of moral slavery, as Eren is not acting out of rational autonomy, but out of a compulsion to avenge his mother. The determination to destroy all Titans became Eren's driving force, influencing his decisions and actions throughout the early part of the series. His training, joining the Scout Regiment, and initial encounters with Titans are all coloured by this vengeful motivation.

As the series progresses, Eren begins to experience moments of doubt and self-reflection. He starts to question whether his actions are just and whether his approach to achieving freedom is morally sound. These moments are crucial in his potential transition toward moral freedom. Eren's decisions later in the series often involve more rational deliberation, considering the broader implications of his actions and the greater good. This shift signifies a move toward acting out of rational will rather than emotional compulsion.

From the beginning, Eren Yeager demonstrates himself as a determined dreamer, eager to escape the oppressive Titan curse plaguing Paradis. In Season 1, his commitment and unwavering desire to join the Survey Corps to protect humanity by defeating the Titans is evident. Eren cherishes his relationships with Mikasa and Armin, holding tightly to the hope of venturing out into an unknown world beyond their walls. Yet, as time passes, we watch Eren's optimism slowly diminish until only determination for freedom remains.

Ever since Eren joined the Survey Corps, he had a hope that was fuelled by revenge to avenge his mother. The mysteries related to Titans and Titan Shifters were only unveiled slowly in that arc. That is when he faced betrayal. Eren learned that Reiner and Bertholdt, whom he considered comrades and friends, were actually the Armoured and Colossal Titans, responsible for devastating attacks on humanity. Reiner and Bertholdt's betrayal was a significant turning point, highlighting a clash between perceived trust and harsh reality.

Reiner and Bertholdt's actions can be seen as a struggle between their duty to their homeland (Marley) and their personal relationships with Eren and Survey Corps. Kant's idea of moral freedom suggests that truly free actions are taken according to rational moral principles rather than external pressures or internal inclinations. If Reiner and Bertholdt were acting under coercion from Marley or internalised nationalism without rational consideration, they

would be in a state of moral slavery, as they are not freely choosing their actions based on universal moral principles.

Eren's reaction to betrayal is characterised by shock, anger, and a sense of personal violation. He feels deceived by those he trusted. From a Kantian perspective, Eren's response is rooted in a sense of betrayal of moral duty and trust, which are critical to human relationships and societal bonds. Eren's commitment to protecting humanity and defeating Titans represents his exercise of moral freedom, acting out of a sense of duty rather than mere personal desire or external coercion. Reiner says , "I don't know what's right anymore. We were told this was the way to save the world, but now..." (Isayama Ep 65). To this, Eren responds, "We fight for humanity's survival! That's the only thing that matters. We're free when we choose to protect our people, not when we blindly follow orders." (Isayama Ep65)

Eren's words emphasise his view of moral freedom—acting out of duty to protect humanity, based on rational moral principles rather than coercion or deceit. Reiner's confusion and internal conflict illustrate his struggle between moral slavery, that is, following Marley's orders, and a potential desire for moral freedom, which is acting according to what he now sees as right. In Kantian terms, this dialogue-rich scene vividly portrays the tension between moral freedom and moral slavery. Reiner and Bertholdt's actions, driven by Marley's orders, exemplify moral slavery, in which their autonomy is compromised by external control. Eren's reaction underscores his commitment to moral freedom, highlighting the importance of acting according to universal moral principles and a sense of duty to humanity. This analysis deepens our understanding of their motivations and the ethical complexities within their interactions.

Another character, Kenny Ackerman delivers his reflection on everyone being a slave to something during a pivotal moment when Kenny is gravely injured after the battle against Levi and the Survey Corps. Kenny says, "Everyone I've met was all the same. Whether it was booze, women, or even God. Family, the king, dreams, children, power… They couldn't keep going unless they were drunk on something. They were all slaves to something." (Isayama Ep 44)

Kenny observes that everyone he has encountered is driven by some form of external influence or internal desire, which aligns with Kant's concept of moral slavery. According to Kant, when individuals act based on desires, inclinations, or external pressures, they are not truly free. Instead, they are in a state of moral slavery because their actions are not governed

by autonomous, rational moral principles. This scene can be analysed as foreshadowing by Hajime Isayama, hinting at Eren Jaeger 's character.

Kenny mentions various things people are "slaves" to, such as alcohol, lust, religion, family, authority, aspirations, offspring, and power. These elements represent both internal desires and external obligations that drive human behaviour. Kant would argue that when people allow these influences to dictate their actions without rational reflection, they forfeit their moral freedom. They become enslaved by their impulses or societal expectations, rather than acting according to self-imposed, universal moral laws. This is exactly what happened to the protagonist Eren Jaeger; he too became a slave to his desire for freedom.

Kenny's own life reflects this philosophy. Kenny is driven by a desire for power and a search for meaning, particularly through his association with the Reiss family and his quest for the Founding Titan's power. This pursuit can be seen as a form of moral slavery, in which his actions are dictated by an external goal rather than a rational, autonomous moral framework. This idea can be contrasted with characters like Eren, who strive for moral freedom by fighting for humanity's survival and acting on a perceived duty to protect others. However, Eren's motivations can also be scrutinised from Kenny's perspective, questioning whether his desire to eradicate the Titans is another form of slavery to a personal vendetta or ideological commitment.

Kenny's dialogue about everyone being a slave to something aligns with Kant's theory of moral slavery, illustrating how individuals often act under the influence of internal desires or external pressures rather than through rational autonomy. This perspective highlights the difficulty of achieving true moral freedom, as envisioned by Kant, and invites reflection on the motivations and actions of the characters in *Attack on the Titan.*

After reclaiming Shiganshina, the main characters go on an expedition outside the walls for the first time. The Survey Corps, along with Eren, finally reach the ocean after a long journey and battles. This moment is filled with awe and wonder as they see the vast expanse of water for the first time. Eren, unlike his friends who are enjoying the moment, stands solemnly, reflecting on what lies beyond the ocean and the future battles they must face. The Survey Corps reacts in awe by saying , "It's so big and blue!" "Is this what freedom looks like?" (Isayama Ep 59) Survey Corps members are overwhelmed with joy and a sense of achievement. They see the ocean as a symbol of freedom and the culmination of their efforts

and sacrifices. Their reaction represents a moment of moral freedom, as they are experiencing the fruits of their autonomous actions driven by their duty to explore and protect humanity. This experience aligns with Kant's idea of achieving true happiness through the fulfilment of duty and rational principles.

Meanwhile , Eren contemplates and reflects, "If we kill all our enemies over there, will we finally be free?" (Isayama Ep 59). Eren's somber demeanour and question reflect his understanding that their struggle is far from over. He realises that true freedom is not simply a matter of reaching the ocean but of overcoming the deeper conflicts and threats that lie beyond. Eren's reflection shows his grappling with the concept of moral freedom. He questions whether their actions will lead to true autonomy and freedom or if they are simply enslaved to an ongoing cycle of violence and conflict. Kant would argue that true moral freedom involves not only achieving external goals but also acting in accordance with rational, universal moral laws that transcend personal desires and immediate outcomes.

For most of the Survey Corps, the ocean symbolises the freedom they have been striving for–a new world and possibilities beyond the walls. For Eren, it represents the next stage in their struggle, highlighting the burdens and responsibilities that come with newfound knowledge and power. The ocean serves as a metaphor for Kant's notion of moral freedom and slavery. While it symbolises the potential for freedom, it also underscores the challenges of achieving true moral autonomy in the face of external threats and internal conflicts. The true test of moral freedom lies in the choices they make moving forward—whether they will act based on rational moral principles or be driven by fear, hatred, and the desire for revenge.

In the scene in which the Survey Corps and Eren reach the ocean for the first time, Eren's transformation from a desire for freedom into a form of moral slavery becomes evident. From the beginning of the series, Eren dreams of exploring the world beyond the walls and is driven by a desire for freedom and the belief that eliminating the Titans will grant humanity true freedom. Initially, Eren's desire can be seen as an aspiration toward moral freedom, in which he seeks to act according to a rational principle: the protection and liberation of humanity from the Titans. Eren's question reveals his deepening realisation that the freedom he sought was not absolute. The existence of enemies beyond the ocean indicates that their struggle for freedom is not over, challenging his earlier belief that defeating the Titans would result in ultimate liberation.

Eren's focus shifts from the immediate threat of Titans to the larger, more complex threat posed by humanity beyond the walls. His desire to protect his people now requires continuous conflict and the destruction of these new enemies. Eren's internal conflict intensifies as he grapples with the moral implications of his actions and the perpetual cycle of violence required to achieve his version of freedom. Eren's shift in motivation, driven by an increasingly desperate need to eliminate all threats, signifies a move toward moral slavery. His actions are now dictated by fear, hatred, and the compulsion to destroy perceived enemies, rather than rational, autonomous moral principles.

The scene at the ocean reflects Eren's initial desire for freedom transforming into a form of moral slavery. Initially motivated by a rational principle of protecting humanity, Eren's fixation on defeating all enemies beyond the ocean reveals his descent into moral slavery. His actions become increasingly driven by external threats and internal compulsions rather than autonomous, rational moral principles. Through this lens, Eren's journey illustrates the complexities and challenges of achieving true moral freedom in a world fraught with conflict and uncertainty.

In the Marleyan arc, Eren Yeager can be seen as a completely different man fuelled by the desire to protect Paradis from Marley. Eren's focus shifted from liberating humanity from Titans to waging war against the world beyond the walls, perceiving them as the next existential threat. He begins to take increasingly extreme measures, culminating in the decision to activate Rumbling, a catastrophic event intended to annihilate his enemies. Eren's transformation signified a shift toward moral slavery. His actions are now driven by fear, hatred, and an obsessive need to secure absolute freedom rather than by rational, autonomous moral principles. Kant argues that true moral freedom involves making choices based on universal moral laws, not succumbing to destructive impulses and external pressures.

Eren's relationships with his friends and allies deteriorated as he became more isolated during his mission. His willingness to sacrifice innocent lives for his perceived greater good highlights his moral decline. Eren's internal conflict and guilt manifest as he struggles with the consequences of his actions, yet he feels compelled to continue on his path. Kantian ethics emphasises the importance of treating individuals as ends in themselves, not merely as means to an end. Eren's actions increasingly violated this principle, reflecting his descent into moral slavery. His fixation on a singular, destructive goal overrides his ability to act according to rational ethical principles.

Eren's decision to unleash the Rumbling, causing mass destruction and loss of life, epitomises his moral downfall. This act is driven by an absolute belief in the necessity of his actions for securing freedom, regardless of the moral cost. Eren's moral isolation is complete, as he is unable to reconcile his actions with the ethical principles he once valued. The Rumbling represents the ultimate manifestation of moral slavery. Eren's actions are entirely dictated by an external goal of annihilating perceived threats, devoid of rational moral reflection. His pursuit of freedom transforms into tyranny, highlighting the perils of abandoning autonomous, ethical decision-making. He gives his wrath bearing monologue as he starts Rumbling.

"Hear me, Subjects of Ymir. My name is Eren Jaeger. I am addressing my fellow Subjects of Ymir, speaking to you directly through the power of the Founder. All the walls on the Island of Paradis have crumbled to the ground, and the legions of Titans buried within have begun their march. My only goal is to protect the lives of the people of Paradis, the island where I was born. Right now, the nations of the world are united in their desire to exterminate my people. And it will not end with our island. They will not be satisfied until every last subject of Ymir is dead. I won't let them have their way. The Titans of the walls....will continue their march, until every trace of life beyond our shores is trampled flat. And the people of Paradis are all that remains of Humanity." (Isayama Ep74)

Eren's Rumbling speech in *Attack on Titan* is a pivotal moment in which he reveals his motivations and justifications for his actions, particularly his decision to initiate the Rumbling. Eren argues that the people of Paradis have been threatened and oppressed for too long by the world beyond the walls. He views the Rumbling–the mass activation of colossal Titans—as a necessary measure to ensure the survival and freedom of his people. This aligns with his belief that the people of Paradis deserve to live without fear or persecution.

Eren reflects on the endless cycle of hatred and violence that has plagued humanity for generations. He believes that the only way to break this cycle is by using the Rumbling to eliminate the threats from outside Paradis, thus preventing future conflicts that would endanger his people. Eren acknowledges that he bears the burden of his actions and the lives that will be lost as a result of the Rumbling. Despite this, he remains resolute in his belief that sacrificing others is justified if it means securing the future of the Paradisians. Eren rejects any compromise or negotiation with the outside world, viewing diplomacy as futile in the face of deep-seated animosity and the historical injustices suffered by Paradis.

Eren's speech also touches upon the themes of freedom and determinism. He questions whether he has ever had the freedom to choose his path or if his actions have been predetermined by his circumstances and upbringing. In Kantian terms, Eren's speech can be analysed through the lens of moral freedom and moral duty. He presents his actions as necessary for the survival and freedom of his people, which aligns with a duty he feels compelled to fulfil, even if it involves extreme measures and sacrifices. However, it can be argued that Eren's actions verge on moral slavery if driven primarily by personal revenge or the desire to protect only his own, rather than considering universal moral principles that apply to all of humanity.

We see Eren Yeager plunging into deeper despair. He is a more dangerous man, motivated by an agenda higher than himself, the Eldian race, and even humanity combined. We see a man who no longer cares for the lives he once deeply cared about. Here, we can easily understand Eren's personality becoming an aversion to the extreme violence he went through, not just physical violence, but also emotional violence he experienced through memories of previous Attack Titans. Eren's ultimate goal is to secure a future in which Paradisians can live without the constant threat of external enemies. This vision of freedom extends beyond mere survival to include the elimination of any potential threats posed by other human factions outside the walls.

Throughout the series, Eren's motivations evolve from a desire for freedom and survival for his people to more extreme measures, such as initiating the Rumbling to eliminate external threats. It can be argued that Eren's actions in pursuing the Rumbling reflect a form of moral slavery, as they are driven primarily by personal revenge, fear, and the desire to protect only his own group. Kant's universalisability test asks whether the principle underlying one's actions can be consistently applied as a universal law without contradiction. Eren's decision to sacrifice others for the sake of Paradis' survival raises ethical questions about whether this principle can be universally justified or if it leads to moral inconsistencies and compromises.

From a Kantian perspective, Eren's death can be seen as a culmination of his journey, in which he confronts the consequences of his actions. His motivations were ultimately driven by personal inclinations and external pressures rather than a commitment to universal moral principles. His death canbe analysedd asa realisationn of moralslaveryaa recognition that he may have acted in ways that compromised his moral integrity. Eren's death prompts reflection on the lasting impact of his actions and the ethical dilemmas they provoke. It challenges viewers

to consider whether his sacrifices and decisions contributed to a greater good aligned with universal moral principles or if they perpetuated cycles of violence and moral compromise.

Analysing Eren Jaeger's assassination by Mikasa Ackerman through Kant's philosophy of moral slavery involves examining the ethical dimensions of Mikasa's actions and motivations in relation to universal moral principles. Throughout "Attack on Titan," Mikasa's character is deeply connected to Eren, whom she loves deeply. Her decision to assassinate Eren arises from her desire to end his destructive path and prevent further harm, particularly considering the immense suffering caused by Eren's actions, including the Rumbling. If we delve deeper into her character, we can see that Mikasa Ackerman's character development affected Eren Jaeger. In the beginning, she was really obsessed with protecting him, but she was the one who decapitated him.

Mikasa's obsession with protecting Eren can be seen as a manifestation of both moral freedom and moral slavery. Initially, Mikasa's desire to protect Eren stems from a deep sense of duty and personal obligation. She views it as her moral imperative to protect him, driven by rational considerations of loyalty, love, and duty. This aligns with Kant's idea of moral freedom, in which actions are guided by rational principles and a sense of duty. However, as the series progresses, Mikasa's devotion to Eren also exhibits elements of moral slavery. Her actions become increasingly driven by emotional attachment and external circumstances rather than purely rational considerations. This shift is evident in her willingness to prioritise Eren over broader moral principles or consequences.

The decision to ultimately confront and potentially kill Eren raises further complexities. If Mikasa were to decide to kill Eren, it would likely be a culmination of her exercising moral freedom. This decision would stem from a rational assessment of the greater good and moral duty, possibly sacrificing personal desires for the sake of broader ethical considerations. In contrast, if Mikasa were unable to bring herself to kill Eren despite moral imperatives, it could suggest a form of moral slavery. Her inability to act against her emotional attachment and personal inclinations would demonstrate a lack of full autonomy in moral decision-making.

Mikasa Ackerman's character in Attack on Titan presents a complex interplay between Kantian concepts of moral freedom and moral slavery. Her initial motivation to protect Eren illustrates a blend of rational duty and emotional attachment, while her potential decision to confront him signifies either a realisation of moral freedom or a continued struggle with moral

slavery. The evolution of her character throughout the series reflects these philosophical tensions, highlighting the complexities of moral decision-making in the face of profound personal relationships and ethical dilemmas. The Marleyan and Eldian conflict in Attack on Titan showcases a nuanced exploration of Kantian moral concepts. Both sides navigate complex moral landscapes where decisions are shaped by duty, historical grievances, and the pursuit of freedom. Understanding these dynamics through Kant's theories highlights the ethical complexities faced by individuals and nations in contexts of conflict and oppression.

From the Marleyan perspective, their actions toward Eldians often align with a sense of duty to maintain control and security. They justify their oppression of Eldians as necessary for national defense and preservation of order, reflecting Kantian moral freedom in their adherence to what they perceive as their duty to protect their nation and people. However, Marleyans also exhibit moral slavery in their perpetuation of prejudice and discrimination against Eldians. Their treatment of Eldians as subhuman and their use of Titan powers for military conquests demonstrate a lack of moral autonomy, driven instead by historical biases and power dynamics.

Eldians within Paradis Island, led by characters such as Eren Yeager, demonstrate a pursuit of freedom and justice that aligns with Kantian moral freedom. They resist Marleyan oppression and seek to reclaim their freedom and rights, driven by a rational assessment of their moral duty to secure a future free from persecution. At times, Eldians, particularly those influenced by extremist ideologies such as Eren's rumbling plan, exhibit moral slavery. Eren's willingness to sacrifice innocent lives for the sake of Eldian survival raises ethical dilemmas, suggesting a struggle between rational moral principles and emotional attachments to his people and personal experiences of suffering.

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Printed and published by the HOD. PG Dept. of English,
Newman College, Thodupuzha East P. O.
Printed at Printech Offset Press, TDPA Ph: 227191

Red. No. KERENGO1377/11/1/99 -TC

Indian Journal of Post Colonial Literatures is an official research publication of the Postgraduate and Research Department. of English, Newman College, Thodupuzha. Ever since its inception in the year 2000, it is being published biannually in the months of June and December. It is devoted to the studies on Postcolonial Literatures and publishes original and creative works, articles, notes, reviews, and essays. It is intended to promote and augment research mindset among professionals, scholars, researchers and students. The major objective of this journal is to explore and explicate the theoretical perceptions, cultural implications and contemporary relevance of Postcolonial Literatures.