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INDIAN JOURNAL OF POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES

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

Vol. 25.1 (June 2025)

ISSN 0974 - 7370

December - 2024

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

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Vol. 25.1 No. 1 (June 2025) ISSN 0974-7370

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CONTENTS

Chlorophyll and Chains: Reading the Idea of 'My Woman' Han Kang's The Fruit of My Woman

Amrit & Dr. Lois Jose ***4***

She Steps into the Light: Post-Blackness, Intersectionality, and Challenging of Cultural Taboos in Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb"

Kiran Maria Jose & Dr. Anju K.N. ***11***

Subversion, Play and the Undoing of Religious Authority: The Homo Sacer in *Cain*

Dr. Jerin B. Sebastian ***20***

Between Reality and Representation: Reading Benyamin's *Yellow Lights of Death* as Historiographic Metafiction

Subin Varghese ***27***

The Futuristic Realism of the Magical: Postcolonial Possibilities

Dr. Deepa R. ***36***

Voice from the Wilderness: Nanjiyamma, the Inheritor of the Unsung Artistry of Yore

Dr. Susan Mathew & Ashly Thomas ***44***

Fictional Cartography: Dialogic Chronotopes in Andre Aciman's Fiction

Jerin Jose ***51***

Medical Humanities in the Global South: Incorporating Perspectives from Disability Studies

Joan Maria E.I. ***59***

AI-Assisted Language Learning Strategy (AI-ALLS): Learning English in the Kerala Context

Dr. Karthika S.B. & Dr. Maria Lisa Mathew ***70***

ALinguisticandCulturalAnalysisofBollywoodSongsasSocial Discourse (1950–2020)

Azmat Mushtaq ***79***

Animals as 'Non-Humans': A Posthumanist Study of Karen Hesse's *The Music of Dolphins*

Kavitha Kaladharan & Dr. Jayalekshmi B. ***93***

Indian Culture and Femininity as Depicted in Indira Goswami's novel *The Man From Chinnamasta*

Dr. B. Sajeetha & Leena Stanley ***101***

Ecofeminist Perspectives on Gender Performativity in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

Dr. Rose Mary Philip ***107***

Eugenics and Genetic Selection: A Bioethical and Legal Perspective on Designer Babies

Dr. Minu Mary Mathew & C.S. Prabha ***117***

Beyond Adaptation: Transmedia Storytelling, World-Building, and Participatory Culture in the Digital Age

Dr. Revathy Menon **130**

Liminal Voyages: Reimagining Colonial Power in Amitav Ghosh's SeaofPoppies

Rinu Rijisha K.P. ***144***

Use of Digital Devices inTeaching English as a Second Language For underprivileged students in Higher Secondary Schools Challenges and Possibilities

Dr. Abdul Latheef V. & Shabnam Sherin P. ***151***

Body, Nature and Survival: The Corporeal Transgressions in Body-Horror Cinema

Shimi Shajan A. ***157***

Oceanic Ethics and the Human Condition: A Blue Humanities Reading of *Moby-Dick*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*and *The Old Man and the Sea*

Dr. Sonia Sebastian & Lt Anu Jose ***166***

Essence of Emotion: A Theoretical Exploration into the *Rasanubhava*

Sreelekshmi S. **176**

The Role of School Libraries in English Language Teaching: Evidence fromKerala Schools

Vinesh V. ***184***

Virtual Reality and Popular Culture: A Thematic Study of Bulaong's *Escapist Dream*

Dr. Samiha Tabasum ***196***

Chlorophyll and Chains: Reading the Idea of 'My Woman' Han Kang's The Fruit of My Woman

Amrit & Dr. Lois Jose

Abstract

Plant theory refers to a growing body of interdisciplinary thought that uses plants as models to challenge anthropocentric perspectives and reimagine the ways of being, knowing, and relating. As a philosophical lens, it explores how humans can relate to plants in terms of non-violence, interconnectedness, and an alternative way of being that challenges anthropocentric norms. Plant theory extends ecocriticism by focusing on the relationship between humans and plants, emphasizing their ecological and cultural roles. The paper analyzes the story The Fruit of My Woman by Han Kang through the lens of Plant Theory to investigate the transformation of a woman from the human world to a plant. It analyses the themes of violence and resistance, and criticizes the stringent patriarchal structures. The Study majorly explores how violence is operated at different levels in the formation of 'woman' in a human world.

Key Words: Plant theory, Violence, Resistance, Feminism.

Introduction

"When spring came, would my wife sprout again? Would her flowers bloom red? I just didn't know." (Kang), the reader is left in an odd state of uncertainty, at the end of Han Kang's short story."

The Fruit of My Woman is a short story by the 2024 Nobel prize winner, a South Korean author Han Kang. She was born in Gwangju in 1970. Since the age of ten, she grew up in Suyuri, Seoul after her family moved there. She studied Korean literature at Yonsei University. Han Kang's body of work spans poetry, short stories, and novels. In her oeuvre, she confronts historical traumas and invisible sets of rules and, in each of her works, exposes the fragility of human life. She has a unique awareness of the connections between body and soul, the living and the dead, and in her poetic and experimental style has become an innovator in contemporary prose. Kang is the first South Korean person and the first Asian woman to win the Nobel Prize in literature. Her publications include a short story collection, *Fruits of My Woman* (2000), *Fire Salamander* (2012); novels such as *Black Deer* (1998), *Your*

Cold Hands (2002), *The Vegetarian* (2007), *Breath Fighting* (2010), and *Greek Lessons* (2011), *Human Acts* (2014), *The White Book* (2016), *I Do Not Bid Farewell* (2021). *A Poem Collection, I put the Evening in the Drawer* was published in 2013.

The Fruit of My Woman is a problematic short story that explores the themes of transformation, violence, marital dissatisfaction, and emotional neglect by discussing the story of a dysfunctional married couple. It was written in 1997 and was translated into English by Deborah Smith. The narrative centers around an unnamed married couple experiencing a profound disconnect which ultimately leads to the transformation of the wife into a potted plant. Violence, her transformation, and its effects on identity, agency, and social relationships are the main themes of the narrative.

The story begins with the wife's attempt to seek the attention of her husband towards unexplained bruises on her body. Initially dismissive of her condition, he later encourages her to seek medical advice as it is not possible for him to take her to a doctor by himself. The visit to the doctor yields no answers. As the blue-green bruises worsen with time, the wife undergoes a surreal transformation into a plant, reflecting her deep-seated unhappiness and desire for freedom from their mundane life, where she was feeling suffocated.

The husband's perspective dominates most of the story, showcasing his obliviousness to his wife's needs. He views their relationship through a lens of traditional expectations, failing to recognize her emotional turmoil, her desires. As she transforms, the story switches to her inner monologue, exposing her desire to flee and the realisation of her unmet expectations. She is like his property to him, and he has taken care of her in accordance with his own needs, disregarding her desires. As she is his woman and he will take care of her as he wants.

The climax occurs when the husband returns from a business trip to find his wife in a state of stagnation on their balcony. After discovering her new form, he begins to care for her, nurturing her as one would tend to a plant. This change appears to represent a reversal of roles; he is now required to give the care she had previously given him, but he once more falls short of doing so because he is acting on his own perception of what is required rather than understanding what is truly required. The story concludes with him planting her seeds and with the question will she sprout again?

The paper analyzes the story through the lenses of Plant Theory and Feminism to investigate symbolism of the transformation, the theme of violence and resistance, and to critique patriarchal structures.

Methodology

The present paper employs Plant Theory as its framework of interpretation, as it resists the conventional anthropocentric conceptualization of literature and investigates the active role of plants in human existence. It is an emerging corpus of interdisciplinary study, employing plants as models to subvert anthropocentric views and reimagine ways of being, knowing, and relating with plant life. Plant studies discusses many things such as "the location of plants in human systems of meaning, including their cultural existence, their discursive construction in scholarly and popular conceptions, and their philosophical significance" (Stark 180)

Hypothesis

The study attempts to explore how violence is operated at different levels in the formation of 'woman' in a human world by analysing Han Kang's *The Fruit of My Woman* through the analytical lens of plant theory.

Analysis

Violence is usually defined as 'The use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy" (Bufacchi). However, as Sumana Roy explains in *How I Become a Tree*, violence can also take different forms. It affects people profoundly and is present in a subtle and passive form. She explores the concept of violence in *How I Became a Tree* in nuanced and figurative ways, frequently drawing a comparison between human aggression and the alleged tenderness and tenacity of trees.One of the main points of Plant Theory is how violence exists in the human world and manifests itself in the shape of relationships, news, clothing, human time, the materialistic world, and subconscious control, as discussed by Sumana Roy in her work. The same elements can also be identified in the short story *The Fruit of My Woman*. To start with, in the title the female protagonist is referred to as "My Woman" (Kang) and throughout the story she is alluded to as "My wife" (Kang) by the narrator, where she is lacking her individuality and identity. In addition, she is underrepresented because the majority of the story is told from his (her husband's) perspective. This is the first form of violence that can be recognised from the short story.

As Sumana Roy discusses the concept of tree time and human time and explains the violent nature of human time.Here in Han Kang's work, it is visible that the husband is bound by human time and she is also expected to follow the same, in a way she is victim to the violence. He is connected to the outside world more than he is to his wife. His habit of reading newspapers on a regular basis, sticking to his job schedule and its requirements, his choice of flat, etc, highlights the same. Whereas, when she mentions her bruises, it became the cause of disturbance in his otherwise normal day. "'Would you take a look at this? I don't know why these bruises haven't faded.'I registered my wife's words as a mere disturbance in the fabric of silence rather than processing their meaning. I glanced up at her absent-mindedly" (Kang). He just wants it to be so called normal without any change in the schedule or routine. He is living a mechanical life and wants his wife to do the same. The appearance of the bruises came as an uncontrollable element in his otherwise well organised and controlled life. As he also in a way maintains control on his wife, who is unable to do anything she wants. Again, signifying the presence of violence in subtle form.

According to Sumana Roy, clothing is another kind of violence that exists in society. The wife's desire to take off her clothes without worrying about being noticed and scrutinized, emphasizes how clothing was, in fact, oppressive and suffocating for her; she felt relieved and liberated after taking them off. "'Why is this happening to me? I keep wanting to go outside, and as soon as I do . . . as soon as I see the sunlight, in fact, I get the urge to take my clothes off. It's as though my body wants them off." (Kang). She actually broke free from this as she mentions "The day before yesterday, I went out onto the balcony with nothing on and stood next to the washer-dryer. Not knowing if anyone could see me . . . and not even trying to hide myself . . . I mean, like I was some crazy woman!'" (Kang) and at the end she finally liberated herself by removing her clothes for the last time as she transformed into a tree. Here the contrasting image can be observed as in the starting of the short story, she felt uncomfortable and she also had fear of being seen, when her husband wanted her to remove her clothes so that he can see the bruises, but towards the end she was not bothered if anybody sees her naked. It was an act of resistance against the violence of human world.

As a traditional male, he also subscribes to the traditional gender role idea, which holds that his wife should be the one to care for and understand her husband, while he ignores her needs and wants., He is so connected to the outer world that her voice bothered him when he was reading Sunday's newspaper. His failure to notice the bruises on the body of the only

person he lives with demonstrates the patriarchal scenario in which it is expected of the wife to care for her husband and explains a lot about the lack of connection. Fixed gender roles and ignorance is another way that violence manifests itself.

The violence became subtler as she changed into the plant, giving the impression that women were being cared for while, in reality, they were being controlled and exploited. "He's been extremely kind. He bought a huge flowerpot and planted me in it. On Sundays, he spends all morning sitting on the balcony threshold catching aphids" (Kang). Although it seemed like a reversal of roles has happened,when he brought her the pot, changed the soil and also tried to bring mineral water for her, but her life was confined to a space where she felt suffocated and her growth was restricted to the pot's boundaries, as she also talks about the pain she felt in her roots. "I'm scared, Mother. My limbs have to fall out. This flowerpot is too cramped, its walls too hard. Shooting pains at the tips of my roots. Mother, I will die before winter comes." (Kang) Her inability to break free from the suffocating space in the absence of her husband also highlights the further influence patriarchal society has over her, it is the silent form violence which is controlling and stopping her from achieving the freedom she always desired.

Husband's mere acts of care are often praised in the patriarchal society, the same is noticed in the short story even after her complete transformation into the plant, when he brings a pot, mineral water and changes the soil, it seems as if now he is fulfilling his duty of taking care of his wife, but in this case as well, he doesn't understand his wife and he did what he thought was necessary rather than what she actually needed. He planted her in a pot, which describes the control he wants to maintain over his wife, the pain it is causing her, and his lack of care because the other plants couldn't survive on the same balcony, so, how will she. He also didn't understand how much her wife longed for an open environment, fresh air, clean, natural rain free of toxins, and everything else, but he chose to keep her in the balcony instead of planting her in a natural space. These acts represent the continuance of control at place of reversal of roles as observed by the analysis of the story.

Conclusion

The research paper explains how different types of violence as discussed by plant theory is prevalent in the society and It examines the idea of 'My woman' with the help of the plant theory and the short story. The wife, after quitting her job, somehow also lost her

independence along with that. Her wish to not be like her mother, who lived and died at the same place, became the story of her life too. The violence present in different forms restricted and controlled her life before as well as after her transformation into a tree. The act of transformation for libration was not literally achieved by her and she fails to actually break through the violence and transcend the boundaries.

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She Steps into the Light: Post-Blackness, Intersectionality, and Challenging of Cultural Taboos in Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb"

Kiran Maria Jose & Dr. Anju K.N.

Abstract

Amanda Gorman is an American poet and activist born in 1998. Her work focuses on issues such as oppression, race, feminism and marginalisation."The Hill We Climb"is the poem she read at the presidential inauguration of Joe Biden in Washington DC on 20 January 2021. This paper examines the poem through the lenses of Post-Blackness, intersectionality and the ways in which it challenges the cultural taboos assigned to her and her race by the white majority over the years. Post-Blackness is a shift from exhaustive blackness to expansive blackness. It is moving beyond the monolithic conceptions of black identity. According to Toure, "it means that one is rooted in but not restricted by blackness" (Toure16). He says that "to experience the full possibilities of blackness, you must break free of the strictures sometimes placed on Blackness from outside the African American Culture and also from within it". (Toure 4) This is what Gorman does when she sings 'When day comes we step out of the shade aflame and unafraid' (Gorman 20). Intersectionality is a term coined by KimberleCrenshaw. Explicitly rejecting the argument that gender, class and race are separate categories of oppression, Crenshaw proposed that the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class. She intended to address the fact that the experiences and struggles of colour fell between the cracks of both feminist and anti-racist discourse. Here Gorman presents herself as the daughter of a single mother, black woman and a successor of slaves. Thus the poem is a celebration of Post-Blackness, a demonstration of intersectionality of injustices placed on black women and an evoking of the American mind against all differences and divisions, discriminations and taboos direct or indirect, 'to seek, to strive and not to yield'.

*Key Words: P*According to Brandy E. Underwood, all the three black female inaugural poets in the American history - Maya Angelou, Elizabeth Alexander, and Amanda Gorman—filled their inaugural poems with an Afrofuturist vision of hope characterized by utopian images of environmental sustainability, racial uplift, global peace, and Black Girl Magic. The term

"Black Girl Magic"is coined by CaShawn Thompson in 2013 to celebrate the beauty and successes of Black women and girls despite intersectional power dynamics. The poems discussed are Angelou's "On the Pulse of Morning" written for President William Jefferson Clinton in 1993, Alexander's "Praise Song for the Day" written for President Barack Obama in 2009 and Gorman's "The Hill We Climb" recited at President Joe Biden's inauguration in 2021. Notably, Amanda Gorman is the youngest poet ever to read at a U.S. presidential inauguration. Underwood's analysis explores Gorman's inaugural poem as a celebration of Post-Blackness, a demonstration of intersectionality regarding injustices, and a call to the American mind to begin the long walk toward unity (Underwood 88–105).

Amanda S.C. Gorman, the American poet and activist was born on March 1998 in Los Angeles,California,and was raised by her single mother, JoanWicks, a 6th grade English teacher in Watts, with her two siblings. She studied Sociology from Harvard University. Gorman was chosen as the first Youth Poet Laureate of United States in 2017.After becoming the inaugural poet in 2021 she has featured in the covers of *Time* magazine and*Vogue.* Gorman is the founder and executive director of 'One Pen One Page', an organization providing free creative writing programmes for undeserved youth. Her important books include *The One for Whom Food is not Enough, The Hill We Climb,Change Sings: A Children's Anthem* and*Call Us What We Carry.*

"The Hill We Climb" is a free verse poem in 18 stanzas. The poet's message is shaped by the use of rhyme and rhythm, elements that become just as significant as the content itself. Anaphora, enjambment, and personification are some of the literary devices used in the poem. Gorman's tone in this piece of work is upbeat and high-spirited, but realistic rather than naïve. It is also determined, and inclusive.

From the very look of the poet and from the very outset of the poem, we can understand that it is a celebration of Post-Blackness. Toure,the main theorist of Post-Blackness, writes in his book *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness? What It Means to be Black Now* that Post-Blackness is a situation in which one is rooted in but not restricted by one's blackness. It is a movement from exhaustive to expansive blackness. It is the end of the reign of a narrow single notion of blackness. One must move beyond the narrow and monolithic conception of black identity. "To experience the full possibilities of Blackness, you must break free of the strictures sometimes placed on blackness from outside the African American Culture and also from

within it"(Toure4).Toure presents blackness as something that people have to transcend or get beyond(75).

Dr Michael Eric Dyson is one of the 105 "luminaries" he interviews as part of his writing the book.Dr Dyson says "the beautiful diversity of Blackness is the most remarkable feature of a Blackness we continue to try to quarantine" (Toure5). Baker Jr and Simmons write in their introduction to the book *The Trouble with Postblackness*thatPost-Blacknessis interested in the ways in which contemporary African Americans understand and enact their blackness and their Americanness(Baker and Simmons 56) This is exactly what Gorman does through her presentation of herself at the inaugural ceremony and her poem. Her yellow coat and fire-red hairband were really conspicuous. It can be considered as her own way to assert her own identity as a black woman and a poet. She also wore a ring with a caged bird as a tribute to Maya Angelou's novel

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. Through her strong words she expresses her quintessential blackness or rather Post-Blackness.

We will not be turned round or interrupted by intimidation because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation, become the future.

Our blunders become their burdens.(Gorman 10)

Post-Blackness is indeed a rejection of the burden of representation. Gorman's generation of African Americans doesnot intend to burden the next generation with a list of do's and don'ts for blacks. Shewrites; "When day comes, we step out of the shade aflame and afraid."(Gorman 20)

The poem can also be analysed through the lens of intersectionality.Jennifer Yeboah Donkor Appiah has attempted to evaluate the poem likewise in her Undergraduate Dissertation "Solidarity, the Renewal of the American Dream and an Intersectional Approach to Amanda Gorman's *The Hill We Climb*,Universidad Zaragoza,Faculty of Arts,2020-2021."

Rooted in Black feminism and Critical Race Theory, intersectionality is a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytic tool. In the 1989 landmark essay "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the term to address the marginalization of Black women within not only antidiscrimination law but also in feminist and

antiracist theory and politics. Two years later, in 1991 Crenshaw further elaborated the framework in "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." There, she employed intersectionality to highlight the ways in which social movement organization and advocacy around violence against women elided the vulnerabilities of women of colour, particularly those from immigrant and socially disadvantaged communities.

Intersectionality has now become something of a buzzword in contemporary feminist theory. Originally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, "intersectionality" was intended to address the fact that the experiences and struggles of women of colour fell between the cracks of both feminist and anti-racist discourse. Crenshaw argued that theorists need to take both gender and race on board and show how they interact to shape the multiple dimensions of black women's experiences. "Intersectionality" provided a short-hand term for a more comprehensive and complex perspective on identity—one which would consider the ways in which individuals are invariably multiply positioned through differences in gender, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national belonging and more. When Gorman sings:

We, the successors of a country and a time

Where a skinny Black girl,

Descended from slaves and raised by a single mother,

Can dream of becoming president,

Only to find herself reciting for one.(Gorman 4)

In these lines, the author uses devices such as the alliteration of the consonant "s" to achieve thematic cohesion and to emphasize the poetic speaker's identity. The reference in this fragment to both the past and the future implies the challenges that the poet has surmounted to reach her current position, speaking to the country at the stairs of the Capitol Building, and her personal experience in navigating the racial divisions that flood the United States. "In establishing a link with her own past, Gorman differentiates her work from traditional narrative, and rather than forgetting the past and starting anew, she remembers her racial roots."(Appiah7)

Here, we find the intersection of various disadvantageous positions as a descendent of slaves, a black woman, and one from a poor background. She directly refers to herself and her multiple identities. She has told to media on other occasions too her intention for run for President ship in 2036.

Before her performance, Gorman told *CBS This Morning* co-host Anthony Mason: "One of the preparations that I do always whenever I perform is I say a mantra to myself, which is 'I'm the daughter of black writers. We're descended from freedom fighters who broke through chains and changed the world. They call me. And that is the way in which I prepare myself for the duty that needs to get done."*(CBS This Morning*)

She has not denied the struggles her race had been going through. She acknowledges them as the result of intersection of the weakness of her race,sex and family background. Yet she is brave enough to dream of a beautiful future.

She sings

That even as we grieved, we grew.

That even as we hurt, we hoped.

That even as we tired, we tried.

That we'll forever we tried together victorious. (Gorman 12)

Another aspect of Gorman's Inaugural poem is that she has used it as a tool to challenge the cultural taboos placed on her race and on herself by the white majority. During the week before the inauguration, she told *The Washington Post* book critic Ron Charles, "My hope is that my poem will represent a moment of unity for our country" and "with my words, I'll be able to speak to a new chapter and era for our nation."(*The Washington Post*)

Despite her well-known optimistic approach to the future of the US, Gorman does not miss the chance to criticize American capitalism as a system built on the back of the slave economy (Inikori 169). However, the country's darkest periods are not an obstacle for her positive outlook; in fact, they are the source for her optimism: it is her community, as a descendant of slaves, that has propelled her to this prominent position at the presidential inauguration. Gorman emphasises the idea that African Americans have come a long way in terms of race, and she is proof that their quest for equal rights, which has come close to being achieved, was not in vain. The poetic speaker's references to Black resilience and pride, as well as the deeply rooted racism that the United States is still grappling with, serve as an example of how the country as a whole might learn to address its flaws. Thus, she uses herself as a symbol to convey that America remains a place of opportunity and hope, where the seemingly impossible can become a reality. She discusses the turbulences spanning the

colonisation of the Americans, war of Independence,slavery,segregation,the various wars of the twentieth century and the War on Terror. Gorman declares that the 'dawn is ours' implying that victory is secured by just forces.

We are striving to forge our union with a purpose.

To compose a country committed to all cultures, colours, characters and conditions of man. (Gorman 16)

She also mentions the January 6 storming (2021) of the US Capitol as 'a force that would shatter our nation, rather than share it'. The poet emphasizes on the need to eschew weapons and work together for a secure future.

Gorman has used the first person plural noun 'we' many times in the poem. To Brandy E Underwood "it privileges collectivity over individuality" (Underwood102).

The alliteration and rhyme in "the norms and notions of what 'just is' / Isn't always justice" (7-8) alludes to Martin Luther King's quote "True peace in not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice" (Burch et al.), which has resonated in the Black Lives Matter protests. Gorman's line also evokes the movement's popular slogan "no justice, no peace" (Burch et al). This great awakening made Americans realise, as Gorman puts it, that "quiet isn't always peace" (6). Therefore, the poet encourages all citizens to find their voice and speak up, because silence does not contribute to justice nor peace. Through the perceptible wordplay of "just is" and "justice", the poetic speaker implies that, while both concepts are similar, they have entirely separate meanings. That is, just because something is within the law does not make it right, in the same way that the conventions and conceptions of their predecessors that were considered fair, cannot be applied to nowadays multicultural America. This might suggest that the U.S. requires a new start by establishing new norms and notions of justice that are appropriate to the newly reborn America of the 21st century. In other words, in the contrast between what is fair and what is legal, Gorman makes clear her refusal to accept society as it is and instead her will to improve it.

Thus when she says "We will not march back to what was/We will move to what shall be" her message is clear; she as the representative of the young generation of America wants to re write the history of the country defying all cultural and racial taboos.

Conclusion

Hence, the inaugural poem of Amanda Gorman "The Hill We Climb" demonstrates the traits of Post-Blackness, which is a neo and diverse expression of blackness, a declaration that the narrow single notion of blackness has died; an acknowledgement of the trials she had been through as a woman of colour and a daughter of a single mother which signals intersectionality, and a clarion call to challenge and fight against all the historical atrocities against her race and sex down the years. Thus she firmly affirms that there is no going back to the past discriminations or the present indirect racism. The only road before her is the one ahead that leads to democracy, unity,hope and equality.

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Subversion, Play and the Undoing of Religious Authority: The Homo Sacer in *Cain*

Dr. Jerin B. Sebastian

Abstract

Our understanding of how literature sheds light on socio-political issues and contests established beliefs regarding religion has been sought to be enhanced through this study. Saramago's narratives frequently portray the consequences of unrestrained authority, the dangers of blind subservience, and the erosion of individual autonomy with the advent of repressive systems. Saramago in his novel Cainpublished in 2009delineates the biblical narrative from an unprecedented perspective, from the point of view of the first murderer, Cain. He depicts an anthropomorphic God whose oversight and follies significantly influence his decisions.Cain fills up the blanks in the theological discourse from a humanitarian perspective. The constant state of fleeing and the necessity to avert his death highlight the continuous process of negotiating with sovereign power.

Homo Sacer is a concept introduced by Giorgio Agamben in his book Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life. This term is a legal concept identified by Agamben within archaic Roman law. Agamben focuses on how certain individuals or groups can be marginalised and stripped of legal rights, effectively into becoming bare life, which is outside the legal and political framework. This idea has been influential in discussions about government power, human rights, and the treatment of marginalised populations in contemporary society. This study examines the characters in the novel who exemplify the predicament of homo sacer in Agamben's political philosophy.

Introduction

Cain is the final novel published by Jose Saramago just one year before his demise in 2010. Saramago is known for his unique narrative style who disregards conventional rules of punctuation except for commas and periods. The lowercased God is depicted as irrational and impetuous and unpredictable. These deliberate stylistic choices can be perceived as a critique or a defiance of conventional religious notions of power and authority. On the other hand, Saramago continues to baffle the readers by capitalising the initial letter of the proper

nouns in some instances with no obvious reasons. Thus, except for quotations from the text, the analysis will conform to the standard conventions of typography.

Analysis

Saramago throughout his novel *Cain*engages in a creative subversion of conventional biblical narratives and employs satire to imbue them with modern and frequently irreverent dimensions. Cain, the eponymous character, maintains a constant relationship with the sovereign authority, God, who expelled him and subjected him to the absolute possibility of death. The narrator ridicules and condemns God for his follies and lack of judgement that resulted in the original sin. God could have been more cautious about the severe consequences of the consumption of the fruit of knowledge by the first parents and could have avoided planting the tree of knowledge in the middle of the Garden of Eden or should have taken sufficient precautions to safeguard the tree within a barbed wire. He insists that nobody else should equal the sovereign status he relishes when he forbids Adam and Eve from consuming the fruit.The narrator undermines divine sovereignty by condemning God for his negligence.

The narrator's censure suggests that God's verdict carries significant repercussions, subjecting humanity to an enduring condition of exemption. The act of forbidding the consumption of the fruit and the consequent exile from Eden might be seen as reminiscent of Agamben's notion of homo sacer, an individual who exists outside the legal protection of society. Following their transgression, Adam and Eve assume the status of homo sacer, rendering them liable to punishment and banishment. The narrator's critique suggests that by establishing laws, God places individuals in a position of vulnerability and exclusion. According to Agamben, the sovereign is the individual who has the authority to determine the occurrence of a state of exception. Agamben says in *State of Exception*: "The state of exception appears as a threshold of indeterminacy between democracy and absolutism" (3).

Agamben says: "Life that cannot be sacrificed and yet may be killed is sacred life" (*Homo Sacer* 82). This suggests that the death of homo sacer can be qualified neither as sacrifice nor as homicide. He is simultaneously included and excluded from both the religious and legal spheres. According to Agamben, homo sacer experiences a double exclusion. He is first excluded from human law, as the legal framework fails to safeguard his life and prevent him from being killed. Simultaneously, he is excluded from divine law, as he cannot be presented as a sacrifice to the gods; he is considered unworthy of being offered to the divine.

Thus, Agamben makes it clear that homo sacer has the same structural position as the sovereign. Sovereign is at a zone of indistinction within the law and outside the law, the state of exception. Homo sacer is in between sacrifice and homicide. Homo sacer is literally translated as sacred man. But Agamben never conceived of homo sacer in any reverential sense. Rather he used the term to suggest the exact opposite, a life devoid of any significance, whether religious or political. He underscores the enigmatic and exceptional quality of their existence and this paradoxical status prompts inquiries into the demarcation between life and death, inclusion and exclusion, and the power dynamics that permit the existence of such a state of exception.

With the expulsion from the garden of Eden, the first parents have been deprived of their privileged status and reduced to homines sacri.Eve is perplexed about the veracity of God's decisions and questions the intention and motive behind his decision to banish them from the garden: "… we should demand that he explain himself, and the first thing he should tell us is why he did what he did and to what purpose" (*Cain* 13).

Cain resists the dictates of a sovereign God and he is being questioned about his inclination to frequently put his creatures to test. God justifies his action by emphasising his sovereign self. Cain stresses his individuality and freedom and ridicules the sovereign for his reluctance and indifference exhibited in avoiding the murder of Abel. When he is accused of having committed sedition, he replies that if he were God he would pray: "Blessed are those who choose sedition because theirs is the kingdom of the earth" (*Cain* 24) in a parodic inversion of the Beatitudes. Cain accuses the lord of having colluded with the murder by showing indifference and apathy.

Stunned and dumbfounded by the inordinate nature of the covenant between the Lord and a reprobate, Cain questions its feasibility. The lord does not spare Cain from punishment but rather declares him as a homo sacer, protected from killing, yet subject to his relentless censure. The lord makes a black mark of condemnation on Cain's forehead, giving him limitless life on earth which permits him to witness human history and directly experience several prominent biblical events and meet several characters. Thus, Cain has been punished with a "deathless life" as an indictment of the sacrilegious murder of his younger brother Abel. Cain becomes what Agamben calls the "living dead man":

Once zoe is politicized by declarations of rights, the distinctions and thresholds that make it possible to isolate a sacred life must be newly defined. And when natural life is wholly included in the polis- and this much has, by now, already happened- these thresholds pass, as we will see, beyond the dark boundaries separating life from death in order to identify a new living dead man, a new sacred man. (*Homo Sacer* 109)

The motif of homo sacer is introduced through Abraham's intention to sacrifice Isaac, as Isaac is confronted with the potentiality of being executed without facing any repercussions. The notion of bare life, as formulated by Agamben, is exemplified in Isaac's precarious state, as he is reduced to a simple state of biological survival, subject to the whims of sovereign authority: "Like the fence of the camp, the interval between death sentence and execution delimits an extratemporal and extraterritorial threshold in which the human body is separated from its normal political status and abandoned, in a state of exception, to the most extreme misfortunes" (*Homo Sacer* 131)

The conventional notion of God's omniscience and kindness is called into question when Cain intervenes to save Isaac, disrupting the divine plan and adding the element of absurdity. A metafictional element is introduced through the narrator's direct interaction with the reader, which involves a discussion of the personal dictionary and a subjective evaluation of Abraham. Saramago employs satire and parody as a means to critique biblical narratives. The audacious depiction of Abraham as a "son of a bitch" with a "forked tongue" confronts conventional theological viewpoints. Irony is added by the lighthearted and exaggerated language, which highlights the postmodern dismantling of conventional wisdom. The subversion of customary moral standards occurs through the reversal of roles, as Cain saves Isaac from filicide. The tale challenges the traditional comprehension of morality, distinguishing between right and wrong, and good and evil. Saramago's reimagining of the biblical narrative incorporates intertextuality and parody. By twisting the familiar story, he challenges readers to look at religious texts with new perspectives and challenge the conventional wisdom.

The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were punished and their cities were burned to ashes for they were accused of many vicious deeds including homosexuality and adultery. But the same God disregarded the incestuous deeds of Lot and his daughters for he was more concerned about the numbers than the severity of the crimes perpetrated. Cain considers God the "God of war" for he sees no other reason behind His existence. The pact that has been made between God and His men contains only two articles, says the narrator: "you

scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" (*Cain* 91).The narrator says that God seldom makes his presence known nowadays unlike in the past and prefers to remain concealed behind the clouds as he is terribly ashamed of having murdered the innocent children in Sodom. Cain contemptuously challenges the non sequiturs of an authoritarian God who does not have the slightest prick of conscience in punishing and destroying Sodom and Gomorrah despite the large number of innocent lives being lost in the carnage.

Saramago employs metafictional techniques by allowing the narrator to publicly critique God and unveil the concealed fabrications behind religious narratives. The narrator exhibits self-awareness, providing commentary on the profound influence of the timeless truth shown by God on subsequent historical occurrences, including riots, persecutions, and witch-hunts. This self-reflexivity undermines the concept of a linear and objective narrative. Scientific truths are revealed by God, with a particular emphasis on the Earth's movement. This subversion undermines established religious beliefs and presents a more logical and scientific viewpoint, emphasising the conflict between faith and rationality.

The character of Cain becomes a vessel for existential exploration. As he grapples with God's arbitrary decisions and the consequences of his actions, he embodies the existential struggle of an individual navigating a world shaped by divine interventions. He prompts us to reflect on the complexities of free will and personal responsibility.The rationale behind God's decision to induce suffering to Job and subsequently rewarding him can be interpreted as a manifestation of a divine state of exception. The suffering and subsequent compensation experienced by Job exemplify a situation in which divine justice acts beyond the conventional norms, highlighting God's capricious exercise of authority. Cain fulfils the role of a dissenting voice that questions the arbitrary judgements of the sovereign and raises moral concerns regarding the justice of divine judgement.

Throughout the novel Saramago presents two perspectives; a religious one and a secular one. While God, His angels and His chosen ones exemplify the religious ways of implementing divine justice, Cain repudiates them and raises his genuine doubts regarding them. Cain sees various events from a humanitarian perspective without getting swayed by the views upheld by the majority. For instance, the sacrifice of Isaac is viewed upon by Cain from a humanitarian perspective, thereby repudiating the ecclesiastical explanations which justify the strange ways of God's justice. Cain is a perfect embodiment of the predicament of homo sacer who is in a state of perpetual flight to avoid his death. Agamben says:

[H]is entire existence is reduced to a bare life stripped of every right by virtue of the fact that anyone can kill him without committing homicide; he can save himself only in perpetual flight or a foreign land. And yet he is in a continuous relationship with the power that banished him precisely insofar as he is at every instant exposed to an unconditioned threat of death. He is pure zoe, but his zoe is as such caught in the sovereign ban and must reckon with it at every moment, finding the best way to elude or deceive it. In this sense, no life, as exiles and bandits know well, is more "political" than his. (*Homo Sacer* 150)

Conclusion

Cain foresees being relegated to a state of permanent quarantine, oblivion, and a realm of forgotten events. God is presented in this work as a projection of man, embodying everything that he is, good and bad. The notion of homo sacer, as formulated by Agamben, pertains to the fate of Cain, the sacred or accursed individual who can suffer impunity for his actions. The constant state of fleeing and the necessity of discovering methods to avert or deceive the threat of death highlight the continuous process of negotiating with sovereign power.

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Between Reality and Representation: Reading Benyamin's *Yellow Lights of Death* as Historiographic Metafiction

Subin Varghese

Abstract

The division between history and literature has been questioned in the postmodern historiography and literature. The historicity of literature and the fictionality of history is taken up by many historians and postmodern thinkers like Greenblatt, Heyden White, Linda Hutcheon, Foucault and many others. This paper tries to read the novel Yellow Lights of Death by Benyamin as an example of historiographic metafiction. By merging facts and fiction in the novel Benyamin blurs the gap between history and literature. He uses both historical narratives along with literary narrative to achieve this. This paper employs Hayden Whitte's concept of metahistory alongside Linda Hutcheon's theory of Historiographic metafiction to explore how postmodern texts blur the boundary between historical facts and fictional narrative.

Key Words: Fact, Fiction. Metahistory, Historiographic metafiction, Postmodern narrative

The mingling of facts, fiction and myth has been the recent trend in postmodern novels in Malayalam literature, especially in the works of T. D. Ramakrisnan, Subhash Chandran and Benyamin. The post modern historical novel questions the clear-cut division between history and fiction, since, as pointed out by Greenblatt and Gallagher in *Practicing New Historicism*, history has become more literary and literature more historicized as a result of the postmodern condition. The self-reflexivity of the postmodern texts challenges the rationale of the historical texts, especially its claim to represent reality outside of the text. The postmodernist historical novels try to incorporate history into fiction to subvert historical 'facts' and problematize the relation between history, fiction and mythology.Postmodernism refutes both the fixity of language and text and the assumed connection between language and reality, turns into "a denial of the fixity of the past, of the reality of the past apart from what the historian chooses to make of it, and thus of any objective truth about the past" (Himmelfarb 72). The postmodernist view of history argues against conventional history writing and its claims to present historical events truthfully.

Hayden White being the leading postmodernist philosopher of historyargues that historical facts cannot be represented objectively because they cannot exist independently of the historian. Historian has a pivotal role in determining factor in giving significance to certain historical events and inserting only these events into historical accounts while ignoring others, sometimes for ideological reasons.Hayden White elaborates on this new concept of history, mainly in his*Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe,* by founding his arguments on the theories of Barthes, Foucault, Derrida and Genette. According to White, the aim of *Metahistory*is to find answers to questions concerning the epistemological status of historical explanations and the possible forms of historical representation. For White, narrative form is "the only possible form of representation in the writing of history" (White 9). He proposes in *Metahistory*a theory of narrative that draws parallelisms between history and literature. He argues that traditional historiography uses the narrative form in which historians convey the knowledge of the past and he analyzes the "deep structure of the historical imagination, claiming that all history contains a deep verbal structure and that a formal theory is needed to analyze the deep structure" (White 9).

In "Historical Text as Literary Artifact", White highlights the idea that history writing consists of the process of "emplotment" in which chronicles turn into stories. To him, it is a necessary operation since "histories gain part of their explanatory effect by their success in making stories out of mere chronicles" (White 223). It is generally believed that chronicle facts make no sense at all on their own, for the historical record is thought to be "fragmentary and always incomplete" (White 223); that is why the historian is obliged to make a plausible story out of facts through "the encodation of facts contained in the chronicle as components of specific kinds of plot structures" (White 223). White explains how these elements bring history writing to the level of literary composition by indicating that

the events are made into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motific repetition, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies, and the like – in short, all of the techniques that we would normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play. (White 223)

Linda Hucheon takes the argument further and dwells deep into the self reflexivity of postmodern works which shows the falsity of the 'objectivity' of the historical past.The term 'historiographic metafiction' was coined by Linda Hutcheon in her essay *"*Beginning to Theorize the Postmodern" in 1987 and then further developed in her seminal study *A Poetics of*

Postmodernism to describe "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (Hutcheon 113). Linda Hutcheon in her *Poetics of Postmodernism* labels postmodern historical novels as "historiographic metafictions" since they thematize the theory of contemporary historiography and problematize the distinction between history and fiction. She explains her reason for such a label thus: "[historiographic metafiction] puts into question, at the same time as it exploits, the grounding of historical knowledge in the past real. This is why I have been calling this historiographic metafiction" (Hutcheon 92). Linda Hutcheon's definition puts stress especially on postmodernist historical novels' "intense self-consciousness about the way in which all this is done" (Hutcheon 113). Her definition is governed by the paradox created by the intermingling of metafictional self-reflexivity and historical reality in novels, "novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages"(Hutcheon113). A postmodernist theory of history, as it has been stated previously, helps us understand that history invents stories about past events and it foregrounds certain events while suppressing others for ideological reasons. Accordingly, in the analysis of postmodern historical novels, the metafictive elements, intertextuality, self-reflexivity, non-linear narrative, and parodic intention foreground this process. Historiographic metafictions attempt to use historical material within the parodic self-reflexivity of metafiction which aims at undermining realism.

Historiographic metafiction is not only concerned with the question of the truth-value of objective historical representation but with the issue of who controls history. Therefore, in historiographic metafictions, the idea that historical "facts" are constructed ideologically is particularly emphasized. Hutcheon says: "All past 'events' are potential historical 'facts,' but the ones that become facts are those that are chosen to be narrated. […] This distinction between brute event and meaning-granted fact is one with which postmodern fiction seems obsessed" (Hutcheon 75). Thus, one of the attempts of historiographic metafiction is to focus on past events and historical personages which history chooses not to include. The excluded events are foregrounded, their stories are retold and alternative histories are composed in historiographic metafictions. As a result, a multiplicity of histories is achieved since historiographic metafictions write alternative versions to the already accepted one.

Historical novels in the postmodern era have been discussed under different labels by various critics; nonetheless, Hutcheon's 'historiographic metafiction' is regarded as an all-

encompassing term. In addition to singling out the mixing of historical figures and fiction and the rewriting of alternative versions, Hutcheon's term also helps treat a text as a subversive tool by foregrounding its metafictionality.

Benyamin's novel *Yellow Lights of Death*can be seen as a postmodernist historical novel in line with the form historical fictions have taken with the advent of postmodernism. This novel can be read as subversive text that problematize the boundary between history and fiction, and question the monology and claim to objectivity of historical representation. In the novel Benyamin employs the techniques of historiographic metafiction which enable different voices to be heard by opening the dominant discourse of history to multivocality. This postmodern novel is analyzed with respect to their use of different voices and alternative histories, through the writers' emphasis on how history is a human construct.

In*Yellow Lights of Death*, Benyamin focuses on three major characters and their interconnected stories in this novel, every character has their own stories to tell. He uses the technique of 'frame narrative' to tell the stories of Andrapper, Senthil, and Melvin. Benyamin and his friends enter into Christy Andrapper's life story and meet the fictional characters created inside that story. Hence, Benyamin and his friends' story becomes the frame story in which Christy's life story and his novel 'Book of Forefathers' appear. As a first-person narrator and as a character, Benyamin investigates the mysteries behind these three stories. But he does not reveal everything to the reader. Therefore, questions like who killed Senthil, what happened to Christy, who killed Melvin, etc. remains a mystery in the novel.

The friendship group of Benyamin and his friends Anil, E A Salim, Nibu, Sudhi, Biju and Saju called 'Vyazhakkoottam' ('Thursday group')meet every Thursday to discuss formal and informal topics and shares their experience, stories, and opinions with each other. These discussions help Benyamin to improve his creative skills. These friends also read, interpret and share opinions about Christy's life story that is sent to Benyamin and finally they all decide to investigate Christy's story. The first chapter of the novel titled 'Udayamperoor' describes the visit of Benyamin and his friends to ValyedathVeedu at Udayamperoor which they got to know from Andraper's life story. "We didn't have to ask for directions at Udayamperoor. The descriptions in Andrapper's books were detailed and accurate" (Benyamin 3). Most of the events that take place, most of the places mentioned, and most of the people that the original narrator meets are already the characters in Andrapper's unfinished novel. Hence, the

original narrator lives in the real-life experienced by the second narrator Andrapper in his novel.

The introduction of Benyamin both as the narrator and as a character in the novel blurs the gap between reality and fiction, thereby providing the idea that both reality and fiction are made up of multiple interconnected stories. For example, when Benyamin and friends go to meet Mel Joe at the ValyedathuVeedu, he asks:

"'How do you know him?' Mel Joe asked as he sat down. 'What is between himand you two?' 'The novel that he was writing -The Book of Forefathers- is with Benyamin. It has all the details of his life. He has elaborately described the roads he had taken and the places he had visited'" (Benyamin 9).

The ValyedathuVeedu also has a mysterious history older than many centuries. Christy gets new images and hidden meanings about Melvin and her family when he listens to Jijo's stories about Udayamperoor church and 'Mariam Seva.' Jijo says that the Valyedathu family is one of the four families that do 'Mariam Seva' in Kerala. 'Mariam Seva' is a secret ritual that takes place at the ValyedathuVeedu to ward off enemies and evil forces. It needs a lot of patience and prolonged efforts to please Mariam. The prayers and chants are written in the ancient Pali script. The locals in that region believe that Mariam is the daughter of King Thoma. Though PaliathAchan betrayed her and her husband, she stuck to her beliefs till her death. She had magical powers, and became a saint. It is believed that Mariam is the deity at ThaikkattuPalli, a chapel at Udayamperoor. It is very difficult to please Thaikkattamma. For that, a girl from the Valyedathu family has to be offered. Christy knows from Joji that Melvin is the girl who was offered to Thaikkattamma. This persuades him to enquire more about them. He feels Melvin's brother Meljo, sister, their parents and priest conceal many things from him. Christy could not find it out completely, but Benyamin and friends in their second attempt unravel those mysteries. These events transform this novel into a multilayered literary work.

Mariam Church also has multiple stories to tell. Mariam Church is a church in Diego, it is famous among the married women of Diego. They believe that their husbands' achievements are the result of their prayers. According to their myth, Mariam was the daughter of King Thoma in Kerala. She loved and married a Hindu prince. But their minister named PaliathAchan cheated them and abandoned them from their land. Mariam was sent to Bodom and her

husband to Ceylon. But surprisingly they united again in the sea. It is believed that Mariam Church was built during her time in Bodom. A pastor, whom Christy meets at Udayamperoor, argues that Mariam Church in Diego was originally a church of African slaves, but some people wisely blended Mariam's history with that African church. This reveals how history is being reconstructed for certain interests. Those who have the power to rule and influence the people not only have the power to create history, but to rewrite it as well. But wherever there is such distribution of power there will be battles to overthrow such tyranny. That is why Foucault says "Where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault 95). Senthil who lives in CherarPeruntheruvu secretly works for 'UthiyanCheralThamizharKazhakam'; Meljo and other members of the ValyedathuVeedu who preserve the unknown history of Christianity; and Andrapper family who live in memories are all in such resistance and are waiting for their dynasty to return to power.

The use of original history and its digression and the blending of fiction in the novel are seen through out the novel making it an instance of historiographic metafiction. Benyamin mostly uses three main sources for the writing of his novel which he acknowledges at the end of his noel. The whole story revolves around three main characters and their history, namely Christy Andreper and his family history, murder mystery of Senthil and information about terrorist outfits in DegoGartia and Melvin and her Valiyedathu family history and Nasrani documents. Thus Benyamin makes an acknowledgement of the sources which he has borrowed in writing the novel:

> "Courtesy, love, thanks to—
>
> Friends in reality and fiction: Anil Vengode, E.A. Salim, Sudhi Mashu, Nibu, Biju and Nattapranthan, aka Saju.
>
> The friend who gave me the dope on Mariam Seva.
>
> The essay titled 'I, the Joan of Arc' (Bhashaposhini, December 2005) by V.K. Sriraman, which had details about the Andrapper family history.
>
> The websites that had a wealth of information about terrorist outfits; and the annual report of the Union Home Ministry.
>
> The many Nasrani documents.
>
> The residents of Udayamperoor. All those who love my words.

And to you, of course!" (Benyamin 437)

Benyamin was also keen to add two documents to make his novel more realistic and truly historical. First he gives an affidavit sent by Rajan Babu which he got from the Public Security. This document gives the proof that there is a family called Andreper living in Diego Garcia and the main character Christy Andreper is not a fictional character but real one. And it also affirms the history of Andreper family in Diego Garcia.

Affidavit

(RAJANBABU SENT THIS with the note: 'I got it from the Public Security.')

I have come to know from the Public Security department that a book has been published in Kerala titled The Diaries of Christy Andrapper. Christy Andrapper is my son. There is no evidence that it was actually written by my son. My family and I strongly suspect that the stories have been manufactured to malign the Andrapper family and Diego Garcia. In fact, this book has been published without the knowledge of and permission from any of us. Benyamin, in whose name it has been compiled, is not related to or acquainted with anyone in the Andrapper family. We have not given him the rights to publish such a book.

If such a book has brought disgrace to our Diego Garcia, its government or its sovereignty, as the mother of the author, I tender my sincere apology to this land.

I don't believe this country or its government has any hand in the disappearance of my son. The Andrapper family believes that he might have voluntarily migrated abroad, or committed suicide. I hereby certify that he was clinically depressed since his childhood, and was unstable and liable to episodes of mania like his grandfather. I am writing this in sound mind, by my own hand and not under the influence of anything or anyone.

Jai Diego Garcia!

Sincerely,

Janet Maria Andrapper" (Benyamin 434)

The second document which Benyamin uses in his novel is a piece of news published in one of the leading Newspapers of Kerala, *MalayalaManoarama*. According to this news Andreper family is great planter of Diego Garcia and holds a multinational company named

after Andrepper and Co. This news also gives more credibility to the history of Andrepper family and its migration to Diego Garcia as planters.

"MALAYALA MANORAMA 13 SEPTEMBER 2010

Major plantation companies in India and abroad are all set to invest in African countries. It is feared that the effects of climate change in countries such as India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia, and the dearth of labourers would result in huge losses to the sector in the coming years. This has been attributed as a reason for the companies' latest move. Ghana, Ethiopia and Cameroon are the top three choices. Other than big firms such as Harrison Malayalam, Tata, Kannan Devan, Unilever and Manjusri Plantations, some individuals and Almaya forums of some Christian groups are also investors. These companies will set up estates of tea, rubber, sugar cane, cotton, coffee and coconut. Andrapper and Co., the multinational company known for its investments in the plantation sector, has already bought thousands of acres of land in Ethiopia and begun developing estates. Other companies will follow.

Meanwhile, in a press conference, Andrapper and Co. denied reports that the influx of plantation companies to Africa would be a threat to them. 'We have an edge over the others because of our experience in setting up plantations in various countries and during different periods in history. The entry of other players in the sector is not a threat to us,' Jeffrey Andrapper, the spokesperson of Andrapper and Co., told journalists in Addis Ababa. He added that the company had withdrawn all their investments in Diego Garcia and that their new headquarters would be Gore in Ethiopia." (Benyamin 435)

The use of historical documents along with the fictional writing in the novel makes the novel a critique of the claims of historiography towards objectivity and the claims to truth. The reference to historical documents like the *MalayalaManorama* news, Affidavit from Janet Maria Andrapper, VKSriraman'sessay titled 'I,the Joan of Arc' published in Bhashaposhini, December 2005, Nasrani Documents…etc and oral narratives from the people of Udayamperoor makes the novel a mixture of facts and fiction. The employment of real life figures along with fictional characters also merges the gap between reality and fiction embodying the work as an instance of wrtingmetahistory and historiographic metafiction.Benyamin thus merges the gap between fact and fiction and makes the novel a postmodern rendering of the genre historiographic metafiction.

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The Futuristic Realism of the Magical: Postcolonial Possibilities

Dr. Deepa R.

Abstract

Postcolonial Theory gained relevance in the theoretical scenario of the twentieth centuryas it tried to give an identity to the colonized nations with a repressed history. But the reality represented by the postcolonial nations couldn't fully uncover the neo-colonial incursions. Magic realism which gained momentum in Latin America in the first half of the twentieth century is mainly employed the postcolonial writers as a narrative technique to unravel the hidden reality. The paper tries to examine how realism is effectively depicted through the narrative technique of Magic Realism in Postcolonial theory through a historical analysis of the journey of realism through centuries.

Key-words: Postcolonialism, Magic Realism, Neo-colonialism

What makes art distinct from other ideological objects is the basic issue discussed in the definition of art. The contention that idea precedes matter is the fundamental principle of idealism. The concept of absolute truth or truth completes in itself dominated the idealist thought. Idealist interpretation of art substituted form with idea, and content with matter and asserted that form preceded content. The idealist school of aesthetics found sufficient logic in the convincing analogy of the carpenter and the table generated by Plato; the form of the table pre-exists in the mind of the carpenter as compulsion for making the table. So, a work of art is the form that is materialized; content is the material with which the form is made. As per the idealist thought, form that is pure, determines the merit of art and content is only subordinate to it.

Aristotle in his *Poetics* estimated that the nature of content determined the merit of drama though the arrangement of incidents or plot is the soul of drama. At the same time he perceived art as a system interacting with the audience. The merit of art is measured by the cathartic effect it generates upon the audience and a catharsis is possible only if the content is serious. The quality of content determines the merit but, if form that is the execution of the content fails, a catharsis is not possible.

What makes art was the question discussed all through the post- renaissance period. The Classicist- Neo-classicist schools proposed forms and formalities for literary art, yet they

insisted that the content should be heroic, tales of monarchs or feudal lords. The Romantic Movement upset the classicist norms of formalism. It rejected the formalist prescriptions and legislations and liberated poetic talent to a space of freedom, where emotions and thoughts were synthesized by the faculty of imagination. What makes poetry was again the pertinent question and Wordsworth toed the line of Aristotle that the improbable or supernatural may be avoided at the content level, but Coleridge argued that the improbable or the supernatural also may find proper place inart. Wordsworth proposed a theory of content, which later laid the foundation for the art of Realism, the gist of which is that the monarchs and the feudal lords may be banished from the ideal space of art to make place for the illiterate rustic and his language. The poet can have themes from contemporary life and need not look for great actions in the past. Later realism expanded Wordsworth's contentions to larger dimensions and varieties.

The Victorian Age made observations with respect to the object of art. The post-renaissance literary view- to instruct and to delight- is revived during this period. A moralist school and a school of pure aesthetics emerge during this period attesting difference of opinion with respect to the content and the form. Content with moral motivation was the principle propagated by Matthew Arnold as he attributed a great role to the art and literature, in the progress of mankind, in the journey from animality to humanity. The movement, Aestheticism launched by Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde with the episteme, art for art's sake, argued that artist is non-committal to any social or moral ideology, for art as a thing of beauty that achieves supreme power of joy in its purest form, untainted by the pressures of content.

The twentieth century modernism upset the theory of socially committed realism as well as the discipline of the form set by the school of aestheticism. The content was motivated by the ideological perceptions of the Absurd and Nihilism and the fragmentation of form associated with the sensibility of chaos and violence of fantasy evolved out of the philosophy of the absurd. The concept of the non-committal artist sailing with the waves of anarchist extravaganza was later disciplined to the level of a craftsman of the text with the emergence of the New Criticism.

The theorists of the New Criticism as well as the School of Formalism fixed the focus of literary analysis with the intra-textual linguistic devices and insisted that nothing extraneous to the text is relevant in the study of literature. Even T.S. Eliot, despite his practice of inter-textuality which draws semantic and historical contexts from the myth, stated that a poem shall

primarily be treated as poetry and not another thing subordinating his well-wrought concepts of tradition and historical sense, to the intra-textual analysis fore-grounded by the school of New Criticism. Formalists described "literariness" as linguistic quality constructed by the literary artist and defined literature as sum of literary devices earlier before John Crowe Ransom professed the autonomy of the work existing for itself reviving the art for art's sake theory in neo-formalistic idiom (Abrams 114).

In the Structuralist-Poststructuralist phase, themes and terms extraneous to strict literariness, drawn from the premises of social living were brought forth as discourse material. The term discourse was structural but it acted as ideological organ or conveyed ideological motivation. Structuralism and poststructuralism stood text oriented, but no text is viewed as complete in itself as the same work of literature would generate different texts. So, Derrida argued that a piece of literary writing is a deconstruction of some pre-existed writing and in every reading, the text is deconstructed, the meaning of the text is deferred. The question of priority with respect to form and content becomes irrelevant in this context. The relevance of form is almost ignored when the concept of the authorial craft falls meritless and the form that preexists in the mind of the author is not mattered as the reader generates text out of the literary work and the author dies with every different reading of the text.

The relevance of ideology in the making of art was effectively argued by the school of Socialist Realism; it was an approach that laid emphasis upon the content. The projection of ideology as content was revived by the school of Social Feminism and later by the French-U.S. school of feminism. The prioritizing of the content is almost established with the poststructuralist feminist phase. The emergence of the New Historicism proposed the relevance of the ideological environment external to the literary work, in judging the merit of the literary work, thus rejecting the intratextual formalist analysis. It approved the principle of intertextuality not in the sense that a literary work may generate different texts out of its readings, but insisting that the merit of a literary work may be estimated by reading it against the relevant nonliterary works of the same period also. The approach is synchronic as it does not account the diachronic possibilities.

The ideological content, won general acceptance as the primary concern in the work of art in 1990s. With the theory phase, literary criticism was dominated by socio-linguistic discourses that explored the human sciences of all kinds that emerged from the lived experience of humans from the primitive to the modern times. Postcolonialism and Magic Realism assumes

significance in this context as they demand a reading of the text on the ground of politics that covers life from the primitive to modern times.

A work in the category of Magic Realism is inseparable from its political environment and a reading of the text extricating it from the politics is not possible or in a sense it played a significant role in politicizing the reading of the literary text. Similarly Postcolonialism registered colonial politics as its agenda which eventually made political reading of the text inevitable. Postcolonialism and Magic Realism are conjoined by the construct of politics that encompasses the space and time of the human living from the archaic to the contemporary, from the savage to the civilized.

An outline of the development of the idealist and materialist perspectives in art and literature is given with a view to measure the tremendous change that occurs in the poststructuralist phase that lead to the prioritization of content in the direction of political reading of the works of art. The structuralist as well as the poststructuralist perceptions was basically idealist with leanings towards form. The theorists in command of the Theory Phase produced a version of formalism with linguistic and psychological gadgets, with artifices of dogmatic obscurity and philosophical conceits; but the content interacting with the great crises in contemporary politics, came out breaking all the barriers of mystification insisting plain political reading of the texts.

The Marxist schools of criticism estimated the merits of work under the impression of working-class ideology and anti-imperialist outlook. A working-class perspective in literature was initiated by Wordsworth in his "Preface" as he felt that the language and theme of the working-class ideal for poetry. Later, Realism and Socialist realism developed the working-class perspective in literature and the Marxist Schools of criticism related literatureto the concepts of class antagonism, production, exploitation of labor and anti- colonialism. At the same time all through the historical phases of literary criticism, the non-Marxist schools stood reluctant to admit the political reading of the literary text, but Feminism with its gender politics, and Postcolonialism with its anti-colonial agenda, found the political reading of the text inevitable. Magic Realism a potential reaction against the post-Cold War neo-colonial incursions that destabilized the political sanity of the postcolonial nations, insisted the political reading of the text.

The primordial instances of Magic Realism were notified in painting in 1920s but it matured as an accountable movement in literature with the Latin American Boom after 1960s. The magical side of life is a deep character element with the Lain American people. To a certain extent it is part of the Latin American reality. Realism proposes a rational descriptive detailing of objective reality, as observed at the external level. Magic Realism enriches realistic way of seeing with the element of magic that is typical of the Amerindian character. Christopher Caudwell analyses the reality hidden beneath the magic in the second chapter in *Illusion and Reality*:

Man's emotions are also in him. They therefore seem under his control. They therefore seem to be the means whereby he can dominate reality – through the emotional essence of things. He, the individual, can dominate reality by his will. By evoking – through charms, ceremonies and sympathetic magic – the emotions proper to the achieved act, he believes the act accomplished. It seems to him that he can control outer reality returning into himself. So indeed, he can, but only if this thought is scientific thought and, acting as a guide to action, returns out again to grapple with reality. (Caudwell*Marxits Internet Archive*)

Magic is the means to dominate reality that threatens existence. By evoking emotions by charms or ceremonies, an individual can dominate reality. So, it is the process of arousing the will that would dominate the undesirable reality; when emotions proper or emotions needed to achieve the domination are aroused by charms, one believes the act of domination over reality is achieved. So, it is not the negation of reality but positive change in reality. The urge to dominate reality is quite natural. Caudwell continues:

In proportion as man, by the development of economics, discovers more and more of the nature of reality, magic sets itself bolder and more elaborate tasks and more and more is corrected by experience. It proposes to man phantastic possibilities, which man realizes. But he does not realize them by magic. Without the absurd ambitions of shaman and the impossible hopes of the alchemist the modern chemistry which fulfills them could not be. (Caudwell*Marxits Internet Archive*)

What magic perceives is not realized at the moment of perception but later in an economy further developed it will be realized as part of nature, as science. For example flight of humans in the air was an instance of phantasy in the early ages but in the present developed economy it is realized as science. The artist in the adverse circumstances portrays real desires to surpass

the reality and for that purpose he/she stirs the power of emotions that would dominate reality. The objectives desired in the magic are not realized not at the moment of the magic but later in future. In that sense, Magic Realism is futurist realism. It is an attempt to redefine reality as per the people's will. In the post-Cold War period the people's will of the Latin American nations were repressed by the military rule and the indirect interventions of the U.S. colonialism. Latin American writers describe the modus of colonial rule and hegemony in their novels and the magical side of the narration liberates an effective remedial power that overrides the agony of repression.

Aristotle when making the distinction between the tragic art and the epic states that in the epic there can be the action improbable, actions that violate what is probable by the law of nature. But he does not entertain it inthe serious art of drama. At the same time, he proposes that the impulse of imitation is natural with the humans. The objective of imitation is to improve the given state of existence, to achieve the desired state of existence. Wordsworth and Coleridge also raise a debate over the rationality of displaying the improbable in the work of art. In Magic Realism the improbable is set almost at the allegorical level merging with the level reality.

Magic Realism as experienced in the novels of Postcolonial writers casts a rebellion against the neo-colonial repressor. It joints postcolonialism in the point that it is anti-colonial but make a sensible critique of the Postcolonial precepts in the horrible day light of the neo-colonialism. Magic Realism gained momentum as an influential movement even before Frantz Fanon and Edward Said came out with their theories of the Postcolonialism. The metaphysics of the Postcolonialism canvassing Derrida and Lacan into its fold is a later development. The concepts of ethnocentrism and ethnic identity issued added strength to Fanon but how far such observations focusing ethnicity would help in a decolonizing political battle is a debated issue.

Postcolonialism is a movement that takes colonialism as the major issue of the present world population and it creates discourses based upon the theory of the rule and the hegemony proposed by Antonio Gramsci. Postcolonialism is hegemony centered and it ignores the game of the neo- colonial rule with all its repressive cruelty, foregrounding the evils of the hegemonic values of the colonizers of the past. The Postcolonial theorists create interpretations varied with respect to the definition of the term Post colonialism, but all would agree that it deals with the hegemony of the colonizer of the past that subsists in the former colonies even after the

colonizer left the scene dismantling the installations of the rule. The nations free from the colonial installations of the rule are still possessed by the values introduced by the European nations that colonized almost all nations in the non-European continents. How to liberate the decolonized population from the Eurocentric cultural hegemony is the political issue that perturbs the Postcolonial theorists.Retrieve the pre-colonial identity of the colonized people, is one resolution suggested by the postcolonialists.

What is the relevance of the fable of the evils transmigrating from hegemonic evils of a colonizer, who left the station centuries back, is a pertinent question that may baffle the theorists of the Postcolonialism. Reclamation of the primitive past and the reconstruction of the ethnic identity are the resolution measures proposed by the theorists of the Euro hegemony. A return to the primitive past is an improbable impossibility, even if you make it possible by the breath of imagination, the primitive past you stepin is a space of darkness and nothingness, and the rest is unpredictable. The resolution methods proposed by the theorists such as the return to native past and retrieval of ethnic identity can't be fruitful in the present era.

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Voice from the Wilderness: Nanjiyamma, the Inheritor of the Unsung Artistry of Yore

Dr. Susan Mathew & Ashly Thomas

Abstract

Music has long served as both an artistic expression and a cultural archive of communities. In India, the tribal musical tradition—marked by its rhythm, orality, and ecological intimacy—has often been marginalized in mainstream discourse. Nanjiyamma, an Irula folk artist from Kerala and winner of the 2022 National Film Award for Best Female Playback Singer, embodies the resilience of this overlooked tradition. Her achievement signifies more than individual recognition: it redefines gender roles, asserts linguistic and cultural identity, and challenges the aesthetic hierarchies that privilege "classical" over "folk." By examining her life and artistry, this paper argues that Nanjiyamma's voice functions simultaneously as personal testimony, collective memory, and political resistance. Her songs demonstrate how indigenous women's creativity can reframe ecofeminist concerns, preserve endangered languages, and destabilize mainstream notions of art and identity.

*Key words**:** aboriginal culture, redefining canon, folk music, language, ecofeminism, identity politics*

Introduction

The artistic traditions of India's tribal communities are rich in rhythm, oral transmission, and ecological consciousness. Yet they remain marginalized within mainstream aesthetic canons, which often treat folk music as the cultural "other." Against this backdrop, the recognition of Nanjiyamma-a woman from the Irula tribe of Attappady, Kerala, who won the 2022 National Award for Best Female Playback Singer for the song "KalakkathaSandanaMeram"—marks a significant cultural moment. Her rise to national prominence unsettles established hierarchies of art, gender, and identity, compelling us to reconsider how "authenticity" and "purity" in music are defined.

This paper argues that Nanjiyamma's artistry is more than an individual accomplishment. Instaed,it is a cultural and political act that challenges exclusionary practices in India's artistic canon. Her music operates at multiple levels—personal, gendered, communal, ecological,

and political—transforming individual expression into collective resistance. The controversies surrounding her award, particularly criticisms from the proponents of "pure" music, "reveal the deep-seated prejudices against oral, Indigenous traditions" (Mrudula Devi). At the same time, her compositions underscore the intersection of art and activism, where song becomes both a preservation of Irula heritage and "a voice of protest against displacement, marginalization, and ecological destruction" (Jinoy). In situating Nanjiyamma within broader discourses on ecofeminism, identity politics, and cultural memory, this study highlights how her work redefines the possibilities of folk art in contemporary India.

Individual Agency and Artistic Identity

At the personal level, Nanjiyamma's journey reflects the resilience of an indigenous artist who carved a space within a cultural landscape that has historically marginalized tribal voices. Born into the Irula community of Attappady, she inherited a lineage of singers and dancers whose oral traditions carry the community's collective memory. Without access to formal musical training, she internalized rhythm and lyrics, composing songs from memory and experience. This unmediated form of artistry challenges the privileging of classical training over oral inheritance, positioning her music as both authentic and deeply rooted in the cadence of nature.

Her rise to national fame-culminating in the National Award—was not accidental but the outcome of decades of perseverance within a society that often sidelines indigenous talent. Despite systemic discrimination and land dispossession, she has transformed song into an instrument of resistance. "I am a fighter and I will continue to fight for my land. Everything I do is part of that fight for my people. Even my songs," she has said, foregrounding the inseparability of art and activism (Jinoy). That dual identity situates her in a tradition of cultural resistance in which performance is never merely entertainment but testimony.

Gender and Ecofeminist Perspectives

Nanjiyamma's voice acquires additional significance through gender and ecofeminist lenses. Tribal women in India often experience double marginalization—excluded by patriarchal mainstream structures and, at times, subject to internal gendered hierarchies. Nanjiyamma's emergence as a nationally celebrated singer disrupts these dynamics by moving a woman's indigenous voice from the private to the public sphere. Her visibility is a feminist intervention:

"an assertion that women's creative labor in oral cultures belongs within the national archive of art" (Mrudula Devi).

Her work also resonates with the spirit of *écritureféminine*, the writing (or in this case singing) of embodied experience. Hélène Cixous's call "to inscribe the body and lived realities into language" illuminates how Nanjiyamma's performance registers the texture of everyday tribal life, ecological memory, and women's labor (Cixous 2). This is particularly evident in pieces that frame women's roles, kinship, and care as inseparable from the land. In this sense, her songs enact an ecofeminist ethic: they present women not as passive figures in nature but as knowledge bearers and custodians of ecological balance.

Collective Memory and Cultural Resistance

Nanjiyamma's music is also an archive of collective memory. Irula songs emerge from communal rhythms of labour, ritual, and storytelling; they are co-authored by the village, the fields, the forest. Bringing these songs to national platforms unsettles narratives that privilege elite, print-coded, or "classical" forms as the sole measure of musical value. The political force of her work thus lies in its ability to carry community into public space—without severing the songs from their social life.

Critically, this transformation of "local song" into "national recognition" exposed fault lines in cultural discourse. As commentators noted, the debates about "purity" following her award "revealed a bias against folk timbre, vernacular language, and oral transmission" (Karthika). Rather than internalize these hierarchies, Nanjiyamma's career shows how folk forms can recenter the canon: "they are not margins seeking entry, but traditions insisting on an equal share of the stage" (Narayanan).

Songs as Oral Archive: Examples and Context

The contours of this cultural politics come into sharper focus when we attend to specific songs and what they remember."KalakkathaSandanaMeram," the song that brought her national acclaim through the film *AyyappanumKoshiyum*, moves between work, worship, and wonder. It evokes the task of gathering blossoms sandalwood and Indian beech—an activity that is simultaneously subsistence and spirituality, and then juxtaposes that intimacy with the natural world against the alien spectacle of a passing aircraft (Nanjiyamma "KalakkathaSandanaMeram*").* The dissonance is quiet but telling: a folk itinerary of flowers

meets a machine of modernity. The song registers this encounter without surrendering its own tempo, asserting that Irula lifeways can frame modernity on their terms.

"Daivamakale" turns to the intimate ethics of kinship. Sung in a mother's voice, it laments a daughter's departure after success, tenderly framing aspiration alongside responsibility and belonging (Nanjiyamma, "Daivamakale"). The lyric's emotional economy is characteristic of oral forms that stage domestic feeling as communal instruction: a mother's grief instructs the village in care and continuity. With "Veli Vela" composed for the film *Vava*, Nanjiyamma and composer S. Ilahi sketch pastoral rhythms-sheep rearing, collective labour, and the seasonal cadence of care for animals (Nanjiyamma and Ilahi "Veli Vela"). The song's imagery of herding and watchfulness is not nostalgic; it is an ethic of attention that mirrors the community's environmental knowledge.

In "Athukkethentha" recorded for *Chekkan*, the cradle-song idiom becomes a vehicle for cultural pedagogy. The soothing refrain folds guidance into affection, representing how Irula lullabies transmit values alongside melody (Nanjiyamma "Athukkethentha"). Another *Chekkan* number, "KolussaKattuPoocha," plays with the quick movements and curiosity of a cat to dramatize everyday wit and resilience—how observation becomes song, and song becomes shared vocabulary (Nanjiyamma "KolussaKattuPoocha"). Finally, "Thillelo Le lele lo" from the film *Mmmmm*, advances practical ecological literacy in a deceptively simple form. Its refrain sequences instructions for dealing with different kinds of thorns encountered on the walk to work. The piece reads as an embodied field guide: a musical method for moving through a thorny world without domination (Nanjiyamma"Thillelo Le lele lo"). The song's insistence on technique—on how to step, handle, pass—turns folk melody into a manual for ethical cohabitation.

Taken together, these pieces illustrate how Irula song archives labour, kinship, ecological tactics, and collective identity. They also show how the public circulation of these works—via film soundtracks and online platforms—can preserve but also transform oral heritage, a double movement that demands ethical listening and citation.

Language, Orality, and Irula Aesthetics

Language is central to the cultural force of Nanjiyamma's work. Irula belongs to the Southern Dravidian family and is closely related to Tamil; historically, "it has often been written in the Tamil script while retaining its own phonological distinctiveness" (Zvelebil 18). In contexts

where minoritized languages face extinction under dominant tongues, every performed lyric becomes an act of linguistic conservation. The choice to sing in Irula is therefore never merely aesthetic: it affirms a living language and the knowledge systems it carries.

Orality here is not a deficit to be corrected by literacy or training; it is a robust mode of composition, memory, and dissemination. As Nijeesh Narayanan observes about folk traditions in Kerala, "agrarian life and local ecologies have long shaped musical imagination and concept, lending the songs both immediacy and durability" (Narayanan). Nanjiyamma's practice exemplifies this: work rhythms, forest sounds, and communal gatherings furnish the metre and imagery of the songs, which in turn circulate as repositories of common sense and collective ethics.

Socio-political Underpinnings

To read Nanjiyamma's music only as aesthetic pleasure would be to miss its political force. Her public presence has framed urgent questions about land rights, displacement, and the continued marginalization of tribal communities in development narratives. Reporting on her activism, J. P. Jinoy emphasizes that "she fights for her community's land even as she sings, and that she has witnessed ruthless encroachments despite holding legal documents" (Jinoy). This is not celebrity philanthropy after the fact; it is an artist articulating sovereignty in the first person.

The national debate that followed her award—especially anxieties about "purity"—revealed how canons enforce social hierarchies. As V. K. Karthika notes, "the recognition of an Irula singer unsettled entrenched structures that had long kept tribal cultures at the periphery" (Karthika). S. Mrudula Devi similarly argues that "the award honours a marginalized community and challenges the hegemony of elite cultures to define—and delimit—what counts as art" (Mrudula Devi). In this light, honouring Nanjiyamma is not exceptionalism; it is a corrective that helps re-scale criteria so they register the full range of Indian musical modernities.

Conclusion: Toward a Democratic Canon

Nanjiyamma's achievement is not a serendipitous rise from obscurity but the culmination of a life steeped in indigenous knowledge systems, communal memory, and artistic labour. Her career offers a blueprint for democratizing the canon: re-centering oral traditions, foregrounding minoritized languages, and valuing ecological and ethical knowledge as aesthetic knowledge. Her songs—whether celebrating pastoral life, archiving maternal grief, mapping

thorny paths, or juxtaposing flowers with aircraft—perform a critique of development that erases communities even as it claims progress. They also enact a "feminist insistence on embodied knowledge and a linguistic insistence" on Irula's presence in the nation's soundscape (Cixous 875). In celebrating Nanjiyamma, we are called to celebrate an entire repertoire of community, memory, and method. The task ahead is not simply to applaud from the mainstream but to move the stage itself—so that tribal voices do not need to be exceptional to be audible, and so that the measure of art expands to include the many ways of knowing that have always been sung.

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Fictional Cartography: Dialogic Chronotopes in Andre Aciman's Fiction

Jerin Jose

Abstract

This study explores the concept of space/place in contemporary literature, and literary criticism, specifically in Andre Aciman'snovel, Call Me By Your Name. Spatial theory in literature expands the traditional focus on character, plot, and theme to include the spatial dimensions of literary works. Literature is deeply entwined in relationships with place, and space is more than just a setting, as it frequently depends on distinctive localities, regions, landscapes, or other relevant geographical aspects for its meaning and efficacy. The study analyzes the spatial settings of the novel and their interactions with the characters, examining the relationship between space and identity. The study also examines the historical evolution of spatial thinking in literature, from Renaissance to Modernism, Structuralism, and Poststructuralism. Aciman uses the effects of place and time in the novel to demonstrate how the characters are impacted by both temporality and spatiality, inviting readers to engage with the physical, social, and psychological spaces of the work and how they dialogue with the emotions and instincts of the characters. The writer exploreshow space serves as a formative agent of identity for the characters, with the setting being connected to Italian Arcadia and E. M. Forster's Greenwood concept. The study suggests how spatial discourses in Aciman's work challenge readers to think more deeply about the complex relationships between literature, space, and human experience.

Keywords: Spatial theories in literary studies - postmodernity - time-space compression - Structuralism and Post structuralism - spatiality and temporality in setting - Italian Arcadia - E.M. Foster's Greenwood concept - identity - subjective and experiential space - memories - physical/social/psychological spaces.

Fictional Cartography: Dialogic Chronotopes in Andre Aciman's Fiction

Space/Place in critical study has been recognized as a conceptual category that informs, derivates and modifies human experience. The focus on how the text is engaged in the interaction between the characters, the spaces they occupy, and their sociocultural positioning as well as their historicity and the corresponding politics has paved way to the spatial turn in contemporary

literary criticism. Spatial theory in literature is a critical approach that explores how the physical, social, and psychological spaces depicted in literary texts create the meaning and interpretation of the works. It invites readers to deliberate on how these spaces inform our own experiences of the world. In this way, spatial theory expands the traditional focus on character, plot, and theme to include the spatial dimensions of literaryworks.

The word 'spatial' which refers to the position, area, and size of objects, is derived from the Latin word spatium. Unlike 'space' in geography, which refers to the physical world outside of the atmosphere of the Earth, "space" is considered in humanities and social sciences in relation to its social, geographic, and psychological context. The era we are living in has been called "the epoch of space" by Michel Foucault. Frederic Jameson proposed "cognitive mapping" to cope withthe changes

in postmodern society based on the research of geographers David Harvey, EdwardW. Soja, Derek Gregory and Nigel Thrift. There have been a number of critical theorists and historians who have used terms like "cognitive space", "narrative space", "historical space", and "ritual space", such as Michel Foucault, Gaston Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre, Paul Carter, Richard Rorty,Martin Heidegger, and Edward Said.

These concepts of space are discussed in works including Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927), Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* (1964), Georges Perec's*Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (1974), Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974), Edward Said's *Literature and Society* (1978), Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975) and HomiK. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994). These works are regarded as the foundation of spatial criticism. Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher, discusses the relationship between 'world, thing, space, time, language, and artwork' in his lecture "Building Dwelling Thinking". He states in his lecture that "Man's relation to locations, and through locales to space, inherits his abode" and links the word 'space' to its etymology, spatium and stadium. "Dwelling is the only connection between humansand space". *The Poetics of Space* by Bachelard is another Important work of spatial critique. Withhis conceptualization of space in relation to human emotions in literature, he attempted to examine the ontologyofspace.

Based on the findings of the social sciences, space is a social construct. Originally, the concept of space was a physical container for objects but later developed into a social construct reliant on social dynamics and power discourses. 'Space' and spatial reasoning are being

viewed in a new light. As the idea of spatiality was recognized and introduced into humanities studies, it entered the literary scene. The study of spatial theory in literature is closely linked to the broader field of cultural geography, which explores how humans perceive, experience, and make sense of the world around them. It also intersects with postmodernism and the deconstruction of fixed, binary categories such as center/periphery, inside/outside, and self/other.

According to Foucault, from the obsession with historical events in the nineteenth century, where temporal elements alone were been considered an element in literature, the theories that followed started using spatiality. "The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtapositions, the epoch of near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed" (Foucault "*Of Other Spaces*"). The postmodern conditionresulted in the word 'space' later being described as 'palimpsest'. That is, space does not mean homogenous spaces, and it has many different layers. Space as a palimpsest refers to the hyperspace that has derivative spaces. People became aware of space and later identified layers of consecutive spaces. Space is a hyperspace that produces derivative spaces, with many layers of spaces coexisting.

Many post-structuralist works of literature focus on structuralist and post-structuralist concepts of spatiality, while structuralist works view space as already constructed or designed within social frameworks. In other words, people thought about space and modernism differently after the Renaissance, and structuralism and post-structuralism introduced new perspectives on space. A closer look at personal experiences, consciousness, and power discourses reveals the importance of space over place. The fundamental spatial or geographical questions of mobile populations and border- crossing have also opened up new areas for transnational perspectives, as can be seen in recent iterations of hemispheric perspectives, in addition to developing new categories for understanding previously homogeneous literature and cultures (such as diaspora studies, mestiza cultures, or the Black Atlantic).

The spatial theory draws on a range of interdisciplinary fields, including geography, architecture, urban planning, and psychology. It posits that the spaces depicted in literature are not neutral or passive, but are active agents that influence the actions and behaviors of the characters and shape the narrative structure. Recent scholarship discourses on how spatial elements such as setting, geography, and architecture can be used to convey meaning and

create a sense of atmosphere in a text. For example, a claustrophobic space such as a cramped apartment or a prisoncell can create a sense of confinement and restriction that shapes the character's emotions and behaviors. Similarly, a vast, open space such as a desert or a sea can create a sense of freedom and possibility that influences the character's motivations and aspirations. Another example, is in works of Gothic literature, dark and foreboding settings are often used to create a sense of suspenseand horror.

Theemergingtrendsincriticalstudiesand theoriesrelatespacetoissuesofidentity,power,and social justice. The critical inquiry examines how spaces can be used to reinforce or challengedominant social norms and power structures. For example, feminist scholars have explored the ways in which women's bodies are spatially regulated and controlled in patriarchal societies, while postcolonial scholars have deciphered the role of space in the colonial and postcolonial experience.

Literary works frequently depend on distinctive localities, regions, landscapes, or other relevant geographical aspects for their meaning and efficacy. This study analyzes the spatial settings ofAndreAciman'snovel,*CallMeByYourName*andtheirinteractionswiththecharactersin thenovel. Here the space acts as a formative agent of the character, as the 'place' is an experiential space and examines the relationship between space and identity. In the novel space supports and forms individuals' identity as a queerguy.

Call Me By Your Name subtleties the romantic tale of Elio and Oliver, two young fellows who spend a late summer together on the Italian Riviera and foster a bond that shapes their perspective on adoration until the end of their lives. Elio is a gifted 17-year-old who enjoys summers on the Italian Riviera with his family. Oliver is a splendid and attractive 24-year-old post- doctoral researcher from Americawhospendsalatespringduringthe1980satElio'sestate.Elio'sfolksselectOlivertolivewith them for quite a long time as a feature of a yearly partnership that they propose to youthful researchers,determinedtoassistthemwithchanginganoriginalcopyfordistributionandhelping Elio's dad—who is himself an intellectual— with his desk work. *Call Me By Your Name* is a story about fanatical love, the progression of time, and life-characterizingrecollections.

Aciman says that it is the place that was fixed even before the characters. "*Call Me By Your Name* started with a house, a pine alley, a place in Liguria where I wanted to situate that town of "B" that I could never decide where it was." ("André Aciman Reveals the Origins of

Call Me By Your Name and *Find Me*" 00:00:14) He doesn't like the idea of picking out a particular spot to keep the ambiguity. It is the reason why he gives the name of a place as B, instead of using the real name of a place. He discovered two places, Bogilasco and Bobdigera, which he wanted to revisit in Italy. The town B is where his characters could be themselves:

I needed something that was lush all around, perfume tactile sunset everything hadto be very sort of sensual and so I wanted to place it in Italy but I couldn't decide so without being able to decide whether it was Bogilasco or Bobdigera, I decided to call it B, and I wasn't trying to be obscure I was just undecided. ("Italy as a Muse:A Conversation with Novelist Andre Aciman")

Elio's feelings toward Oliver as a young boy are influenced by the place he is in, and this is detailed through the beautiful lyrical prose by Aciman. Greek mythology has been brought into the narrative of the novel. The setting, style, and characters are all related to ancient Greece and the idea of Greek homosexuality. The setting of the novel is a beach house in Italy. Quoting Aciman's words in TIFF 2018, "some point I woke up one morning we were supposed to be in Italy we were not going to go to Italy I wanted to be in a house in Italy I just began writing about a house in Italy and about a garden and a pine alley because all nice houses in Italy have pine alleys" ("André Aciman on Call Me By Your Name | TIFF 2018"00:08:57).

Thus writing about the countryside associate the work with the concept of Arcadia. In literature, the term Arcadia associates with man's harmony with nature and the ability to contain its splendour. According to Greek mythology, Arcadia was located in the Peloponnese and was considered to be a wilderness in which the god Pan resided, along with dryads, nymphs, and other spirits. It was believed that it was a utopic place, where inhuman creatures dwelled. ("Arcadia"). The setting was used by Virgil in his pastoral poems and later authors like Bocaccio and Edmund Spenser used this in their works. This concept of Arcadia can also be reciprocated with E M Foster's concept of Greenwood which he has written and rewritten for almost 12 years. The concept elaborates as it provides a safe and happy place for the protagonists togrow.

In*CallMeByYourName*,ElioandOliverarein asmallvillagewhichallowsthemto existwith nature and interact freely. This village and the beach house can be an example of Italian Arcadia or Greenwood.It'sinterestingtoobservethatthename'Arcadia' is

simplyoneofseveralGreektermsthat appear all through the novel. The characters are influenced by the place they are in, and this affects their development. This is evident in the character development of Elio. Acimansays, "Well, when it started, it wasn't even a character. It started with a house. It was a house inn Italy and I was going to go to that house in Italy and I was fantasizing about the house" ("Conversation with Author André Aciman" 00:10:04). Aciman uses the place as a metaphor. It isevident in how the main character, Elio, uses the place he is in to figure out his sexuality and find a solution to his internal struggles. The readers can observe that space holds an evident role throughout the novel as the relationship grows. "I think that Italy for me is really a metaphor for the body - for pleasure, for desire, for all those wonderful things that basically make life worth living. And for love." ("Conversation with Author André Aciman"00:45:12)

Elio and Oliver seek refuge in a place that will make them safe. The summer house, the bedroom, the swimming pool, heaven, Piazzetta, and Monet's Berm are all the places that help them to be free. It is about perpetual happiness where there is endless happiness, like that of endless summer. The whole novel, set in a beach house in the summer where everything is bright and cheerful, helps the characters to achieve this in their lives. Elio is content in that location and is exploring his own identity through the lens of place. He gets courage and is finally able to confesshis feelings to Oliver. Both characters coexist with nature. They go cycling down hills, exploringwar memorials, swimming, tanning, or lying in heaven. These natural elements that occur recurrently throughout the novel, helped Elio to confess. Aciman portrays the idea of Greenwoodas the freedom for homosexuality that was explored while being in theclosets.

The novel presents 'place' as an entity remembered through the memories of Elio, as he returns to Italy. Elio connects his feelings to the places in passages like,Or perhaps it started on the beach. Or at the tennis court. Or during our first walk together on his very first day when I was asked to show him the house and its surrounding area and, one thing leading to the other, managed to take himpastthe veryoldforged-ironmetalgateasfarbackastheendlessemptylot inthehinterlandtoward the abandoned train tracks that used to connect B. to N.(6)

Elio tries to figure out what made him feel the way he feels about Oliver. His feelings and the place he is in are interwoven. Elio observes that their relationship grows with the place and the things they did. (...) it started after his first week, when I was thrilled to see he still remembered who I was, that he didn't ignore me, and that, therefore, I could allow myself the

luxury of passing him on my way to the garden and not having to pretend I was unaware of him. We jogged early on the first morning—all the way up to B. and back. Early the next morning we swam. Then, the day after, we jogged again… I liked it when our feet were aligned, left with left, and struck the ground at the same time, leaving footprints on the shore that I wished to return to and, in secret, placemy foot where his had left itsmark.

(10-11) ….. In my memory of our past ten days together, I can recall an early-morning swim, our leisurely breakfasts, the ride into town, work in the garden, lunches, naps in the afternoon, additional work in the afternoon, perhaps a game of tennis, after-dinners in the piazzetta, and every nightthe kind of passionate intimacy that defies the passage of time. (158)

Oliver takes a piece of the place along with him at the end of his stay as a semester guest to study under the professor, Elio's father blesses him. He had taken a framed, antique postcard of Monet's berm dating back to 1905 or so. Or of our previous American summer residents had fished it out in a fleemarket in Paris two years ago and had mailed it to me as a souvenir. The picture would remind Oliver of the morning when I first spoke out. Or of the day when we rode by the berm pretending not to notice it. Or of that day we'd decided to picnic thereand had vowed not to touch each other, the better to enjoy lying in bed together the same afternoon. I wanted him to have the picture before his eyes for all time, his whole life, in front of his desk, of his bed, everywhere. Nail it everywhere you go,I thought. (220)

These excerpts are testimonials of their relationship, which is undoubtedly related to the place. Aciman used the effects of place and time in the novel to demonstrate how the characters are impacted by both temporality and spatiality. Even if we are unaware of it, we are constantly bound to the environment we are in. Fredric Jameson observes, "Our daily life, our cultural languages, are dominatedbycategoriesofspaceratherthanbycategoriesoftime".Itwastheplaceand the thingsthere that made Elio and Oliver discover themselves. Aciman invites readers to engage with the physical, social, and psychological spaces of the work and how they dialogue withthe emotions and instincts of the characters. The reader is strained for musings on how the space informs our own experiences of the world. Thus, spatial discourses in Aciman's work challenge us to think more deeply about the complex relationships between literature, space, and humanexperience.

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Medical Humanities in the Global South: Incorporating Perspectives from Disability Studies

Joan Maria E. I.

Abstract

Disability, whether present from birth, acquired through accidents or other causes, or resulting from aging, is a reality faced by many countries around the globe, including India, and will continue to be a growing concern in the future. This raises important questions about the relevance and role of medical humanities in addressing the needs of persons with disabilities, particularly where medical interventions alone are insufficient to improve their quality of living. Medical humanities, an interdisciplinary field that bridges medicine and the humanities, has evolved differently in the Global North and South due to distinct historical, cultural and socio-political contexts.

The World Report on Disability by the World Health Organisation and the World Bank in 2011 estimates that eighty percent of the world's one billion disabled people live in the Global South, with women and rural communities disproportionately affected by poverty. While international policies such as the CRPD aim to address disability, they often reflect Global North perspectives, sidelining Southern disabled populations. Medical humanities, combined with critical disability studies, offer a vital interdisciplinary approach to center these lived experiences, providing solutions that prioritise the needs of marginalised communities.

By tracing the origin and development of medical humanities in the Global South, this paper explores how various factors, including colonialism and its impacts, Eurocentric biomedical practices, socio-economic disparities, the doctor-patient relationship, the notion of cure and healing, and narrative medicine intersect with its evolution. It also examines how the pathologising, tragic and stigmatised view of disability can be changed by integrating perspectives from disability studies into medical humanities, thereby making a step forward towards an inclusive society.

Key words: colonialism, cure, disability studies, global south, medical humanities, narrative medicine.

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Cole, Carlin and Carson in *Medical Humanities: An Introduction* describe how early Johns Hopkins Medical School leaders like Billings and Osler identified limitations of scientific medicine in the 1890s. They worried that specialisation, commercialisation and reductionism were degrading medicine's status as a learned profession. Osler, educated in classics, used historical medical cases in teaching and promoted history as a moral compass for physicians. They note that Johns Hopkins established the first US medical history professorship in 1929. Medical leaders including Cushing, Welch and Flexner viewed medical history as crucial for unifying the increasingly specialised profession and maintaining humanistic values. By 1937, medical history was taught in nearly three-quarters of American medical schools, though typically by physicians without historical training who focused on classic texts and prominent male physicians.

In "Patients Are Humans Too", Keith Wailoo's examines the evolution of the field of medical humanities over six decades and emphasises its relevance in medical education and public health. The field has expanded from an effort to "humanise physicians" to a broad academic discipline that examines illness, suffering and healthcare practices. Wailoo traces this transformation through three key periods. Beginning in the 1960s-1980s within medical schools, the field expanded professionally in the 1980s-1990s through new journals, associations and teaching initiatives, before experiencing remarkable growth in undergraduate colleges during the 2000s. However, the medical humanities emerged in response to concerns that medicine had become too focused on science and technology, neglecting the human experience of illness. Wailoo observes that in the 1960s, philosopher Stephen Toulmin and physician Eric Cassell argued that ethics, literature and history were essential for medical education. They believed that medical practice should address not just disease but also the emotional and psychological needs of patients.

According to Wailoo, social movements of the 1960s and 1970s also influenced the development of the field. More women and minority students entered medical schools, demanding a curriculum that addressed social and ethical issues in healthcare. The 1980s saw the medical humanities gain wider recognition, particularly in response to the global HIV/AIDS crisis. This period reinforced the importance of personal narratives in medicine. Writers such as Larry Kramer, in *The Normal Heart* and physician Abraham Verghese, in *My Own Country*, used literature to document the struggles of AIDS patients and the stigma they faced. Also, *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi, *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer* by Siddhartha Mukherjee, *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End* by Atul Gawande, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* by Oliver Sacks, *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science* by Atul Gawande,*The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* by Anne Fadiman, *How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter* by Sherwin B. Nuland and *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* by Jean-Dominique Bauby are all influential works that have made significant contributions to the field of medical humanities. These works illustrated how literature and storytelling could humanise healthcare and influence public understanding of illness. During this time, medical schools formalised their humanities programs and professional organisations such as the American Society of Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH) were established. The introduction of narrative medicine which encourages doctors to understand patients' stories, further strengthened the role of the humanities in medical education.

The World Report on Disability by the World Health Organisation and the World Bank in 2011 estimates that eighty percent of the world's one billion disabled people live in the Global South, with women and rural communities disproportionately affected by poverty. While international policies such as the CRPD aim to address disability, they often reflect Global North perspectives, sidelining Southern disabled populations. Medical humanities, combined with critical disability studies, offer a vital interdisciplinary approach to center these lived experiences, providing solutions that prioritise the needs of marginalised communities.

By tracing the origin and development of medical humanities in the Global South, this paper explores how various factors, including colonialism and its impacts, Eurocentric biomedical practices, socio-economic disparities, the doctor-patient relationship, the notion of cure and healing, and narrative medicine intersect with its evolution. It also examines how the pathologising, tragic and stigmatised view of disability can be changed by integrating

perspectives from disability studies into medical humanities, thereby making a step forward towards an inclusive society.

While the global north often receives credit for pioneering medical humanities, healthcare fundamentally serves all people regardless of race, class, gender or ability. As an interdisciplinary field, medical humanities merits recognition in both medical and humanities disciplines. India's National Education Policy 2020 reflects this understanding by emphasising interdisciplinary approaches in higher education. However, the global south still needs to develop a comprehensive framework for medical humanities that addresses its specific challenges. Patient experiences vary significantly across regions, shaped by unique cultural and sociopolitical contexts, a diversity particularly relevant when incorporating disability studies perspectives.

Though the medical humanities emerged as a formal discipline in the Global North during the late twentieth century, in the Global South, the integration of medical humanities into medical education has been more recent and varied across regions. As part of this integration, some medical schools in Southeast Asia began incorporating humanities teaching in the early twenty first century, recognising the value of cultural competence and ethical sensitivity in medical practice. In Africa, the development of medical and health humanities (MHH) has been influenced by funding from organisations such as the National Research Foundation and the Mellon Foundation. These initiatives have aimed to contextualise medical education within the rich cultural and historical landscapes of African societies, addressing the unique health challenges faced by these communities.

Colonial histories have profoundly affected health systems in the Global South. The establishment of the Colonial Medical Service in British Africa was primarily designed to protect colonial interests rather than address indigenous health needs. The legacy of colonialism has profoundly impacted healthcare systems in the Global South. Colonial powers often imposed Eurocentric biomedical models, marginalising indigenous healing practices and knowledge systems. This imposition led to a hierarchical healthcare structure that undervalued local traditions. Also, this marginalisation has led to a narrow understanding of health and illness, excluding culturally relevant perspectives. Efforts to decolonise the medical curriculum emphasises epistemic pluralism and recognises diverse ways of knowing and healing.

"Thamarassery taluk hospital turns away woman in labour pain; baby dies after 4 months in ventilator" reported by Manorama on April 16, 2024, reveals a disturbing healthcare incident

in Kerala, India. A family is pursuing legal action against Thamarassery Taluk Government Hospital following their newborn's death after four months on ventilator support. According to the family's account, when the mother arrived with the baby's legs already protruding during labour, no gynecologist was present at the facility. Nurses reportedly tied her cervix with cloth, pushed the baby back inside, and redirected her to another hospital forty-fiveminutes away. This intervention allegedly caused restricted blood circulation resulting in brain damage that ultimately led to the infant's death. Despite filing complaints with various authorities, the family claims they received no adequate response. This case highlights significant concerns about healthcare delivery for socioeconomically marginalised populations in the Global South, emphasising the critical need for medical humanities education that promotes empathy and ethical practice among healthcare workers serving vulnerable communities.

The doctor-patient relationship in the Global South is shaped by cultural norms and historical contexts. According to Cole, Carlin and Carson in their work *Medical Humanities: An Introduction*, the doctor-patient relationship has historically been influenced by factors such as social class, race and gender of both doctors and patients. They add, throughout medical history, from ancient times to the present, these relationships have also been shaped by religious influences, competition in healthcare markets, and advances in science and technology.Narrative medicine, which emphasises the importance of patients' stories in clinical practice, offers a methodology to enhance this relationship. By valuing patients' narratives, healthcare providers can develop empathy and improve communication, thereby improving the quality of life of the patients. The concepts of cure and healing are culturally constructed and vary across societies. In many Global South contexts, healing encompasses not only the physical but also the emotional, social and spiritual dimensions of well-being. Decolonising ideas of healing in medical education involves recognising and integrating these holistic perspectives, moving beyond purely biomedical approaches.

In *Decolonizing International Health: India and Southeast Asia*, 1930–65, Sunil S. Amrith examines the development of public health in the Global South, particularly in India and Southeast Asia, during and after colonial rule. He explores how international health policies shaped postcolonial nations and how public health was used as a tool for governance. During the colonial period, public health policies were primarily focused on protecting European settlers and ensuring economic productivity. Indigenous populations received minimal healthcare, as colonial administrations only intervened during major disease outbreaks.

However, these efforts were often limited by colonial interests and lack of investment in long-term healthcare infrastructure. He observes that the establishment of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1948 marked a turning point in global health governance. Health was then framed as a fundamental human right, and international efforts focused on eradicating diseases and improving access to healthcare. The WHO worked closely with postcolonial governments to implement large-scale health programs, such as malaria eradication and tuberculosis treatment. These programs, however, often relied on Western medical technologies without addressing the underlying social determinants of health, such as poverty and inadequate sanitation.

According to Amrith, the mid-twentieth century saw rapid advancements in medical science, leading to widespread use of antibiotics, vaccines and insecticides like DDT. These new technologies were promoted as solutions to infectious diseases, and governments in the Global South adopted them with international support. The WHO launched major disease control campaigns across India and Southeast Asia, focusing on mass vaccination and vector control. While these interventions initially led to significant reductions in mortality rates, they also exposed the weaknesses of a purely technological approach to healthcare. Many programmes failed due to logistical challenges, lack of trained personnel and resistance from local communities. However, international health policies often overlooked local conditions. While the WHO emphasized standardised approaches, such as mass vaccinations and vector control, these programmes did not always align with the realities of healthcare systems in the Global South. Many postcolonial states lacked trained personnel, medical supplies, and financial resources to sustain these programs without continuous international support. As newly independent nations sought to establish their identities, public health became a key part of their development agendas. Governments in India, Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia expanded state-run health services, often with international assistance. The WHO and UNICEF played crucial roles in funding and advising on public health policies. However, national health strategies sometimes clashed with international priorities. While governments aimed to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, international agencies pushed for targeted disease eradication programmes that did not always address broader health system deficiencies.

Reports from the League of Nations and later the WHO acknowledged that malnutrition, poor sanitation and lack of education significantly influenced disease prevalence. However, these insights were often sidelined in favour of short-term, high-impact interventions, such as

mass vaccination drives, which were easier to measure and report in global health statistics. By the 1960s, Amrith observes, international health priorities shifted from disease eradication to population control. Global institutions, influenced by concerns about overpopulation in developing countries, began promoting family planning programs. The WHO and other agencies increasingly focused on distributing contraceptives and promoting sterilisation campaigns. This transition, Amrith opines, had significant consequences for healthcare in the Global South. Resources that had previously been allocated to infectious disease control and rural healthcare were redirected to family planning initiatives. The evolution of public health policies in India and Southeast Asia reveals the tension between Western biomedical models and local socio-cultural contexts. Early international health initiatives treated disease primarily as a technical problem, ignoring the deeper social, economic and cultural determinants of health. This approach marginalised indigenous medical knowledge and traditional healing practices, reinforcing the dominance of Western medical discourse. Medical humanities, as an academic field, emerged partly in response to such limitations in biomedical science.

Elisabeth Guthrie and Rita Charon's article, "Disability and Narrative Medicine: Challenges and Opportunities", highlights the persistent healthcare inequities faced by people with disabilities. Despite international efforts, medical education remains inadequate, with many students receiving less than three hours of disability training, and some recalling none at all. The article identifies ableist biases in healthcare, where clinicians often assume that disabled people have a lower quality of life, leading to neglect and inferior care. It also discusses the hidden curriculum in medical education, which reinforces these biases and limits empathy. Guthrie and Charon propose narrative medicine as a solution, stressing the importance of listening to patient stories through reflective writing and discussion. Studies show that integrating narrative medicine helps medical students develop a deeper understanding of disability and improves patient-provider communication. Programs where disabled individuals serve as educators, such as those at Bristol Medical School, have proven effective in reshaping medical training.

Diane Price Herndl highlights the divide between medical humanities and disability studies. Medical humanities focus on physician empathy and moral awareness but often reinforce a medicalized view of disability. Disability studies, emerging from activism, challenge medical authority and emphasise social barriers over biological impairments. The two fields rarely engage, leading to limited integration. Herndl critiques how disease is seen as a biological

condition needing treatment, while disability is framed as a social issue shaped by accessibility and discrimination. She argues that strict distinctions between disease and disability can weaken disability rights or reinforce medical control. Her proposed matrix, considering time, control, discourse, goals and representation clarifies these concepts. She finds minimal cross-citation between key texts and indicates a lack of dialogue. Herndl urges collaboration to improve healthcare and disability inclusion. In the Global South, integrating disability studies into medical humanities can challenge ableism and create inclusive healthcare and policies.

Sharon Cuff, Kathleen McGoldrick, Stephanie Patterson and Elizabeth Peterson, in "The Intersection of Disability Studies and Health Science", discuss the need to integrate disability studies into health sciences. They highlight the tension between the medical and social models of disability. While traditional healthcare views disability as a defect to be fixed, disability studies emphasises social barriers. The authors argue that bridging these fields can create more inclusive healthcare professionals. They examine Stony Brook University's Disability Studies and Human Development (DS&HD) program, which teaches students to challenge ableist views through courses on disability across the lifespan, employment and community health. The programme includes case studies, discussions and internships to shift students' perspectives from seeing disabled people as passive patients to recognising them as active members of society. They argue that many students entering health sciences express a desire to "help people," often reflecting an underlying paternalistic attitude toward disability. This mindset reinforces the idea that disability is inherently negative and that medical intervention is necessary to "fix" or "normalise" disabled individuals. The integration of disability studies challenges these assumptions by shifting the focus from impairment to the broader social, political and cultural contexts in which disability exists. It encourages students to view disability not as a personal deficit but as part of human diversity that should be accommodated rather than eradicated. In their words, "People with disability are no different from those without disability in that they will inevitably require medical services at various points throughout their lives" (Cuff et al. 38).

The dominance of Western frameworks in disability studies has led to an epistemic imbalance that often marginalises the voices of persons with disabilities in the Global South. Xuan Thuy Nguyen, in "Decolonial Disability Studies", critiques the uncritical application of Western theories in Southern contexts and argues that such approaches reinforce colonial power structures. Nguyen draws from Eve Tuck's concept of "damage-centred research,"

which focuses on disability as a site of suffering rather than a space of self-determination and resistance. This approach, common in Western disability discourse, often reduces disabled individuals in the Global South to statistics about poverty, impairment and victimhood. Nguyen stresses the need for a decolonial disability studies framework, which resists the imposition of Western epistemologies and prioritises knowledge production from within the Global South. The Transforming Disability Knowledge, Research, and Activism (TDKRA) project, conducted in Vietnam, exemplifies this approach. This research initiative engaged disabled women and girls in participatory storytelling and visual art, allowing them to articulate their lived experiences and resist dominant narratives of disablement.

The understanding of disability varies significantly across global contexts. As Nguyen mentions, scholar Nilika Mehrotra (2020) critiques the application of Western disability frameworks to Indian settings and argues that 'Global North theories appear largely incompatible with ground realities of people with disability living on this continent'. Mehrotra emphasizes that disability is not a universal concept but rather one shaped by cultural, historical, religious and sociopolitical factors specific to each context. This perspective highlights the importance of developing culturally responsive approaches to disability studies that acknowledge local histories and social conditions rather than imposing Western paradigms.

According to Nguyen disability discourse originating from the Global North tends to be universalised in disability studies and assumes that experiences of persons with disabilities of oppression are similar across different geopolitical contexts. This creates a problematic knowledge hierarchy where Northern disability frameworks focusing on access, representation, citizenship and identity are privileged. Meanwhile, disability in the Global South is predominantly framed through lenses of poverty, development and inclusion, approaches that fail to acknowledge how disablement is geopolitically produced in Southern contexts. By applying Western disability frameworks to the Global South without recognizing the distinct epistemological and social realities of these regions, Western disability studies promotes epistemic injustice and reinforces unequal power dynamics between disability scholars from different global regions. He also opines that crip theory, which challenges normative able-bodiedness and able-mindedness, offers a critical lens to rethink disability in the Global South. By centering local knowledge and transnational solidarity, decolonial disability studies provides an essential methodological shift for Medical Humanities in the Global South. It calls for a

reimagining of disability beyond Western biomedical models, recognising the cultural, historical and socio-political dimensions shaping disabled lives in non-Western contexts

The mistreatment of disabled people in hospitals across the Global South exposes a serious healthcare crisis. Many face neglect, denial of treatment and even abandonment. A recent case in Pune, India, highlights this issue, where a doctor was caught dumping a disabled patient late at night. Nilesh, a patient from Madhya Pradesh, lost both legs in a bus accident. He was admitted to Sassoon General Hospital and had surgery on 27 June 2024. However, on July 22, Dr. Adi Kumar and a colleague removed him from the hospital and abandoned him under a banyan tree in heavy rain. Social worker Dadasaheb Gaikwad, who admitted Nilesh, found him missing the next day. Investigating further, he and activist Ritesh Gaikwad uncovered the scheme. Police were alerted, and Nilesh was readmitted. A complaint was filed, and activists claim this practice is routine. Medical humanities, when effectively implemented in both medical and humanities fields, can help prevent such incidents. By addressing the cultural, social, economic and political aspects specific to the Global South, we can work toward better implementation of medical humanities approaches. Every individual deserves equal empathetic care from medical practitioners, regardless of ability, race, class, caste or other identities. The integration of disability studies into medical humanities, with particular emphasis on narrative medicine, can significantly advance these goals and represent an important step toward greater inclusion in healthcare.

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AI-Assisted Language Learning Strategy (AI-ALLS): Learning English in the Kerala Context

Dr. Karthika S.B. & Dr. Maria Lisa Mathew

Abstract

The most pressing challenge for Malayalam speakers learning English is the various barriers they encounter. It's crucial to implement strategic reforms that integrate advanced technology to create an authentic and immersive learning experience. This paper explores the challenges faced by indigenous students in Kerala and proposes an AI-integrated ecosystem to enhance language acquisition. Language labs, smart classrooms, and mobile devices equip students with the confidence to engage globally. Integrating these tools adds leverage to the teaching-learning environment, making it more engaging, interactive, and dynamic. Recognizing and incorporating native linguistic structures into English learning can make it more effective and enjoyable. This paper probes the potential of an AI-Assisted Language Learning Strategy (AI: ALLS) by leveraging AI tools and customizing solutions to enhance language learning. It emphasizes integrating AI-driven simulations and real-time feedback into students' routines, interactions, and learning processes, making acquisition effective and engaging. The proposed approach can be seamlessly incorporated into classrooms, addressing challenges faced by Malayalam speakers to reduce apprehensions about learning English. As technology rapidly advances, adopting AI-driven strategies can provide solutions to overcome language barriers, fostering confidence and proficiency in communication.

Keywords:AI, Language Learning, AI-ALLS

The unrelenting advent of algorithmic automation in language learning paradigms does not merely signify an advancement in pedagogical praxis but rather enunciates a profound ontological rupture within the symbolic order of education. The apparatus of artificial intelligence (AI), as SlavojŽižek might contend, embodies the spectral inscription of the Real; the intrusion of a machinic logic into the domain of human subjectivity, thereby unsettling the conventional epistemological frameworks of language acquisition. This paper posits that AI-Assisted Language Learning Strategy (AI-ALLS) functions not simply as a technological facilitator of

linguistic competence but as an epistemic disruptor, reconstituting the symbolic coordinates of English language learning in the postcolonial context of Kerala.

The discursive space of language learning, particularly within the socio-political context of Kerala, is already saturated with the sedimented legacy of colonial power. The very act of acquiring English proficiency operates within a regime of symbolic violence, wherein the native linguistic habitus is incessantly delegitimized in favor of the hegemonic linguistic Other (English). Here, AI emerges as an uncanny third agent; a spectral figure that simultaneously facilitates and forecloses linguistic empowerment. The function of AI-ALLS, then, must be reconceptualized not merely as a pedagogical instrument but as a techno-ideological apparatus that can either reinforce or dismantle the colonial legacy of linguistic domination.

The subject's investment in English, as Žižek argues, is fundamentally libidinal; it is driven not solely by instrumental necessity but by an underlying desire for symbolic recognition. The subject, in their struggle for linguistic proficiency, seeks not merely to master English but to inhabit the social space of the dominant Other. This libidinal economy, however, is inherently fraught with contradiction; the more the learner approximates the linguistic ideal of the Other, the more acutely they experience their own symbolic dislocation. AI-ALLS, in this regard, must be reoriented as a counter-hegemonic apparatus; one that foregrounds linguistic hybridity and cultural reappropriation.

The theoretical framework of the uncanny, as developed by Freud and radically extended by Žižek, provides a fertile terrain for comprehending the implications of AI-assisted language learning. The uncanny, according to Žižek, signifies the traumatic moment when the subject encounters the Real an external force that radically destabilizes the coherence of the symbolic order. In the context of AI-ALLS, the algorithm functions as precisely this Real: a non-human, machinic intelligence that both facilitates and fractures the subject's linguistic acquisition.

The uncanny nature of AI emerges most visibly in the form of the algorithmic gaze. Traditionally, the gaze in educational praxis has been human-centered emanating from the instructor or peers; thereby sustaining the symbolic authority of the teacher. However, AI-ALLS substitutes the human gaze with an algorithmic gaze: an impersonal, non-human observer that perpetually surveils, corrects, and modulates the learner's linguistic performance. This gaze, however, is not neutral. It functions as a machinic articulation of the hegemonic linguistic code, subtly reinscribing the symbolic violence of standardized English proficiency.

Furthermore, the algorithmic gaze generates what Žižek would term "objective violence" a form of violence that is not immediately perceptible but is structurally embedded within the technological infrastructure itself. The subject, when engaging with AI-ALLS, does not simply learn a language but is interpolated into a machinic assemblage that normalizes global linguistic hierarchies. The critical task, then, is to reconceptualize AI-ALLS not as a transparent technological mediator but as a site of ideological struggle; a space wherein the learner's linguistic identity is simultaneously captured and contested.

The introduction of AI in language learning fundamentally fractures the pedagogical space, engendering a condition of symbolic dislocation. In Lacanian terms, the learner occupies a liminal space between the Imaginary (the idealized mastery of English) and the Real (the persistent failure to embody native linguistic fluency). This dialectical tension, however, is amplified by the algorithmic mediation of language learning, wherein the learner's linguistic identity is perpetually deferred, evaluated, and recalibrated through machinic logic.

Žižek's notion of the "parallax gap" the ontological discordance between two irreconcilable perspectivesbecomes crucial here. The subject simultaneously experiences AI as an enabler of linguistic competence and as an instrument of epistemic domination. The machinic capture of language learning, then, operates as a parallax phenomenon: it both empowers and alienates, enhances and estranges. This condition of symbolic dislocation necessitates a radical pedagogical intervention, one that destabilizes the normative function of AI and redirects its potential toward linguistic democratization.

The linguistic condition of Kerala enunciates a uniquely postcolonial tension wherein the mastery of English operates as both a socio-economic imperative and a site of cultural alienation. Situated within the broader framework of colonial residue, English in Kerala continues to operate as a signifier of symbolic capital, instrumental for securing global mobility and social ascendancy. Yet, this very process of acquiring English proficiency simultaneously enacts what Bourdieu terms "symbolic violence"an invisible coercive force that devalues the native linguistic habitus of Malayalam speakers.

Kerala, with a staggering literacy rate of 93.9% is one of the highest in India, presents an exemplary paradox. Despite its robust educational infrastructure, the acquisition of English remains suspended within a matrix of desire and alienation. The desire for English is not merely a linguistic aspiration but a libidinal investment in the symbolic power it represents:

global access, upward mobility, and socio-cultural validation. Yet, in attempting to embody the linguistic Other (English), learners inevitably confront an internalized cultural dislocation, whereby their native linguistic and cultural identity is subjugated.

This tension is most pronounced in the classroom. Across primary, secondary, and higher secondary educational frameworks in Kerala, the pedagogical approach toward English remains predicated on rigid prescriptive standards, where linguistic fluency is measured against native-like competence. In practice, this engenders a condition of linguistic alienation, wherein students perceive their native Malayalam vernacular as inherently deficient, perpetuating what Žižek (2006) would classify as a form of ideological fantasy; the belief that acquiring perfect English will resolve socio-economic precarity. This fantasy, however, remains perpetually deferred, leaving students ensnared in a symbolic void.

Moreover, the postcolonial legacy of English in Kerala is inextricably tied to class and caste hierarchies. In marginalized communities, particularly among Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), the promise of English as a vehicle for social mobility often intensifies cultural dissonance. Statistical data indicates that while 99.7% of Kerala's villages have access to primary education within a two-kilometer radius, dropout rates among SC and ST students in higher grades remain alarmingly high, reflecting the socio-linguistic trauma embedded in English acquisition. The mere presence of English in the classroom, then, constitutes a form of epistemic violence, whereby students from marginalized linguistic communities experience their native tongue as socially inadequate.

The introduction of AI-Assisted Language Learning Strategy (AI-ALLS) within this educational space must, therefore, be theorized as a potentially subversive intervention. AI-ALLS holds the capacity to simultaneously amplify and dismantle the symbolic hegemony of English, depending on its structural deployment. If AI tools are employed to facilitate native-language integration, cultural affirmation, and hybrid linguistic development, the pedagogical trauma of English acquisition can be mitigated. Conversely, if AI perpetuates monolithic language standards, it risks intensifying the cultural alienation already embedded within the learning environment.

Thus, the implementation of AI-ALLS in Kerala must be vigilantly attuned to the region's socio-linguistic complexities. The mere instrumentalization of AI as a language facilitator is insufficient; rather, the technological infrastructure must be re-engineered to facilitate hybrid

linguistic competence, affirm cultural legitimacy, and dismantle the colonial residues of linguistic subjugation. In this manner, AI-ALLS emerges not simply as a pedagogical tool but as a strategic locus for challenging the epistemic violence enshrined within English learning in Kerala.

The radical potential of AI-ALLS lies not in its efficiency but in its capacity to subvert linguistic hegemony. This requires a deliberate reengineering of AI algorithms to accommodate native linguistic structures, cultural semantics, and subaltern idioms; a pedagogical strategy that Žižek would term "over-identification." By excessively amplifying the internal contradictions of AI, AI-ALLS can destabilize the hegemonic discourse of English as a neutral global language.

This necessitates a profound rethinking of language pedagogy as a space of resistance. The technological infrastructure of AI-ALLS must be repurposed to amplify linguistic hybridity, enabling learners to engage with English not as a singular, monolithic code but as a fluid, culturally-situated discourse. This act of over-identification, wherein the algorithm's hegemonic function is pushed to the extreme, can produce a moment of symbolic rupture a disruption of the colonial logic embedded within language learning.

The deployment of AI-ALLS in the pedagogical space must be approached with a heightened critical consciousness, recognizing its dual capacity for both epistemic violence and emancipatory potential. This paper contends that AI-ALLS, if reconfigured as a subversive pedagogical apparatus, can dismantle the linguistic hierarchies entrenched within postcolonial education. However, this necessitates a radical reengineering of AI not merely as a tool of linguistic standardization but as an agent of cultural reclamation.

AI-ALLS must no longer function as an apolitical instrument of efficiency; it must become a site of ideological contestation, where the symbolic violence of standardized English is subverted through the deliberate over-identification with native linguistic habitus. In doing so, AI-ALLS can inaugurate a new horizon of language learning; one that does not merely produce competent speakers of English but critically conscious agents of linguistic and cultural resistance.

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A Linguistic and Cultural Analysis of Bollywood Songs as Social Discourse (1950–2020)

Azmat Mushtaq

Abstract

The study explores Bollywood lyrics from 1950 to 2020 as evolving texts of post colonial discourse. The lyrics are used are a platform to show the tension between language decolonisation and consumerism. The research is build on the critique of colonial language politics. It shows how the shift of poetic Urduto commodified Hinglish in Bollywood song lyrics showcases India's changing identity after its independence. Earlier Bollywood lyrics wererich in Urdulexicons, metaphors and nationalist themes.Theyreflectedaculturalreclamationconnected to local language traditions. However after 1990s India saw a new lyrical style in Bollywood songs due to economic liberalism and globalisation. Thisstyle included code-switching, simplified Hindi and the use of English to signal aspiration and modernity.

The study analyses a collection of well known 60 Bollywood songs over the past seven decades to present how language has changes from poetic Urdu to hybrid Hinglish. It explores how code-switching (Gumperz, 1982; Poplack, 1980), differences in language use, and word choices in lyrics reflect class aspirations, gender ideas, nationalist sentiments and identities in a global setting. The findings reveal a change from the metaphorically rich Urdu lexicons of the mid 20th century being replaced with simplifiedHindi and English giving rise to Hinglish. Earlier lyrics were centered on romantic restraint, patriotism and moral clarity. In contrast, the slangfilled, digitally optimised Hinglish lyrics of the 21st century highlight individualism, visual appeal and viral popularity. Bollywood song lyrics not only mirror social change but also help reshape postcolonial Indian identity, gender norms and language hierarchies, hence could be termed as ideological texts. Bollywood lyrics are both a symptom of colonial linguistic residue and a site where new, hybrid identities areforged, often in tension with hegemonicnarratives.

Keywords*: Bollywood lyrics; social discourse; postcolonial theory; linguistic hybridity; cultural memory; Hinglish; Indian cinema*.

Introduction

Bollywood is India's largest and the most influential film industry. It's not just a source of entertainment but also reflects the culture of India. It shapes and challenges social values of the society. The centre of its appealare its songs, which is the most consumed form of popular music in India. Bollywood songs are heard across homes, weddings, markets and mobile phones, irrespective of the region, religion and class of aperson. Bollywood lyrics present a linguistic landscape where social discourse is performed and reproduced.

The language and style of Bollywood lyrics have significantly change dover the past decades. From the poetic Urdu lexicons used in 1950s and 1960s to the colloquial Hinglish and streets lang of the 2000s and 2010s, the evolution of song lyrics reflects the changes in Indian society. These changes are not just stylistic in nature but reflect the shifts in morality, identity, gender relations, globalisation and class consciousness in the Indian society. This research investigatesthese linguistic and cultural shifts in Bollywood lyrics over seventy years from 1950 to 2020 through a sociolinguistic lens.

Research questions:

1. How have Bollywood lyrics changed linguistically from 1950-2020?
2. What patterns of code-switching (Hindi–Urdu–English) emerge in Bollywood lyrics, and what do they signify?
3. How are gender, class, and national identity constructed or challenged through lyrical discourse?
4. What are the implications of the selinguistic changes forunder standing the evolving cultural values of Indian society?

Literaturere view

Socio linguistics and language in society

Sociol inguistics, as defined by *Labov (1972)*, examines the interplay between language and society. It investigating how social structures such as class, gender, region and ethnicity influence language use.Centralto sociol inguistics is the idea that language variation is socially meaningful. In the context of India, where multi lingualism is the norm, this variation of ten appears informs like code-switching, dialectmixing and stylistic shifts across registers.

Gumperz (1982) emphasises code-switching as a communicative strategy in multilingual settings, where language alternation indexes group identity, solidarity or power. Bollywood lyrics, especially since the1990s, often switch between Hindi, Urdu, English, and Punjabi, serving as rich data for studying such practices.

Discourse Analysis and Popular Culture

Discourse analysis treats language not merely as a structure but as a form of social action. According to *Fairclough (1995*), discourse reflects and reinforces ideologies embed dedin powerr elations. In Bollywood lyrics, the discourse around gender, morality and nationhood reveals how dominant ideas are constructed and normalised.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is particularly useful in this research, as it allows exploration of how Bollywood lyrics position men and women, promote certain values (e.g., nationalism, consumerism) and reinforce or challenge social hierarchies. CDA enables us to interrogate who is speaking, who is represented and what ideologies are embedded in language.

Language Ideology and Identity

Language ideology refers to the underlying beliefs people hold about language, often linked to power and identity (*Woolard & Schieffelin*, 1994). In the Indian context, there is a long-standing tension between standardised Hindi, poetic Urdu and colloquial or English-influenced speech.

The decline of Urdu from mainstream Bollywood lyrics, replaced by Hinglish or street vernacular, reflects changing ideologies about class, modernity, and morality. Researchers like *Rizwan Ahmad (2018*) have documented the phonological decline of Urdu in film music, showing how linguistic shifts mirror social distancing from traditional, elite cultural forms.

Bollywood Songs as Cultural Discourse

Bollywood has long be enrecognised as a site where Indian identity is negotiated.Scholars like *Tejaswini Ganti (2004)* and *Rachel Dwyer (2006)* argue that Bollywood reflects India's postcolonial anxieties and aspirations. Songs, oftenthe most memorable and widely distributed part of films, encapsulate key cultural values.Older lyrics often engaged in allegorical, poetic expressions of love, loss and patriotism, while newer songs reflect individualism, materialism, and gender commodification. This shift has prompted critiques of contemporary lyrics as

"vulgar," yet they are highly popular suggesting deeper socio-cultural acceptance of evolving norms.

Code-switching and Hinglish in Bollywood

Recent research highlights the rise of Hinglish- a blend of Hindi and English as a linguistic marker of modern urban youth identity. *Androutsopoulos(2007)* notes that media code-switching reflects" stylised performances of identity," a concept highly applicable to item numbers, party songs, and even love ballads in contemporary Bollywood.

A 2020 analysis published in the International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation found that 59% of popular songs between 2015–2019 employed code-mixing, especially in upbeat or romantic numbers. This is not random, it reflects aspirational consumer culture and global youth identity.

Gender and Representation in Lyrics

Gendered language in lyrics has received growing attention. Older songs depicted women as idealised, demure and poetic muses, where as modern lyrics of ten portray them in objectified or hypersexualized roles. Scholars like *Shoma Munshi* and *Charu Gupta* have pointed out how Bollywood both mirrors and manufactures gender ideology.

Critical analysis reveal show lyrics such as "*Fevicol Se*" or "*SheilaKiJawani*" normalise male gaze and reduce female characters to objects of desire. This marks a shift from metaphorical expressions of love ("*ChaudhvinKa Chand*") to commodified, transactional portrayals.

Gapsinthe Literature While there is substantial work on Bollywood as culturaltext, relatively few studies have traced linguistic change in song lyrics diachronically—from a sociolinguistic and discourse perspective. Most work focuses on individual eras or genres, not the long-term transformation across decades. There is also limited work combining quantitative linguistic patterns (e.g., code-switching rates) with qualitative discourse analysis, which this thesis aims to do.

Methodology

This study is descriptive and exploratory in nature while focusing on select songs. Qualitative method content analysis isused as an analytical tool. Content analysis was most appropriate and feasible method to be applied.

The information is derived using secondary data,which is gathered from a variety of songs, observation techniques, news articles, journals, websites and research papers.

Corpus Selection

A total of 60 songs were selected acrosss even decades (1950s to 2020s), with approximately 8–10 songs per decade. The criteria for selection included:

- Popularity and cultural relevance (e.g. award-winning or iconic status)
- Lyrical clarity and language diversity
- Genrerepresentation (romantic, patriotic, itemnumbers, philosophical, you than thems)
- Temporal balance to compare older and newer trends

Code-Switching Analysis

Using Gumperz's (1982) and Poplack's (1980) frameworks, each song was coded for:

- Inter-sentential switching (complete lines in English)
- Intra-sentential switching (mixed with in lines)
- Lexical borrowing
- Language choice and function (classappeal, humor, emphasis)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Using Fairclough's three-dimensional model: Textualanalysis: Vocabulary, metaphor, tone Discursivepractice: Production, consumption, intertextuality Social practice: Ideology, power, identity, gender, class

CDA was used to analyse how lyrics represent

- Gender roles (e.g., romantic ideal vs. objectified female)
- Class identity (e.g., English=modernity;Hindi=middleclass)
- Nationalism (e.g., early patriotic songs vs. consumeristnationalism)

Sample Songs by Decade (Examples)

Decade-Sample Songs:

1950s-"YehDeshHaiVeerJawaanoKa","ChaudhvinKaChand" 1960s- "Pyar Hua Ikrar

Hua", "Ae Mere Watanke Logon"

1970s-"MainShayarTohNahin","MereSapnoKiRani" 1980s- "Jumma Chumma", "HawaHawai"

1990s-"CholiKePeeche","KuchKuchHotaHai"

2000s-"SheilaKiJawani","DesiGirl","BhaagDKBose" 2010s- "Galliyan", "Apna Time Aayega" PoeticEra(1950-1979)

ALinguisticandCulturalAnalysisofEarlyBollywoodLyrics

The period from the 1950s to the late 1970s marks what many referto as the "GoldenAge" of Bollywood. During these decades, song lyrics reflected a distinct blend of poetic refinement, moral idealism and nationalist sentiment, shaped by the recent experience of Indian independence and the influence of progressive Urdu-Hindi literary traditions. In this chapter, we analyse the linguistic and ideological features of selected Bollywood songs from this period to illustrate how language functioned as a tool for emotional expression, nation-building and romantic idealism.

Linguistic Features of the Era

Dominance of Urdu Lexicon

Many lyricists of this era—such as Sahir Ludhianvi, Shakeel Badayuni, and Kaifi Azmi—were trained in Urdu poetry (ghazals, nazms), which heavily influenced the lyrical style. Songs often used refined vocabulary, Persian Arabic loan words, and imagery from classical poetictraditions.

Example

"*Chaudhvinkachandho, yaaftaabho*

Jobhihotumkhudakikasam,lajawabho"–Chaudhvin Ka Chand (1960)

- Gloss:" Are you the full moon or the sun? What every ouare, Iswear by God, you are incomparable."
- Sociolinguistic Insight: Urdu, associated with elite sophistication, served as a prestige variety. Lyrics were perceived as emotionally rich, respectful and poetic.

Elevated Register and Classical Metaphors

This period favoured formal, metaphorical language: reference stonature, gods, celestial bodies and classical emotions (shringara, karuna, bhakti).

Example

"*Yehraatyehchandniphirkahaan Sunja dilkidaastan"– Jaal(1952)*

("This night, this moonlight may notreturn; listen to the story of the heart.")

- This emotional sophistication reflects a culture valuing restraint and ideal is minromance.

Thematic Concerns

Nationalism and Post-Independence Identity

Patriotic songs often invokedunity, sacrifice and duty to the nation. The language was formal, often Sanskritized or Urdu-rich depending on the ideological tone.

Example

"*Aemerewatanke logon*

Zaraaankhmeinbharlopaani"–Lata Mangeshkar, 1963

- The appeal is emotional and collective, encouraging tears and remembrance for warmartyrs.
- Discourse Analysis: Nation is imagine dassacred; sacrificeisg lorified. Language is emotionally persuasive and morally upright.

Idealized Gender Roles

Women inlyrics were often described as goddesses, muses or purebeings, not active subjects but objects of reverence. Men, in turn, were romantic seekers or patriotic heroes.

Example

"*Pyarhuaiqrarhuahai, Pyarsephirkyoondartahaidil"– Shree420 (1955)*

- Language of emotional intimacy and hesitation, roote dinsocietal modesty and restraint.
- Gender Discourse: Romance is mutual butre spectful. Novulgarity or physical obsession is portrayed.

Musical and Cultural Context

- Live orchestration and classicalragas influenced the structure and pacing of lyrics.
- The Nehruvian socialiste thosencouraged themesoflabor, love, justiceandunity.
- Lyricists often came from the Progressive Writers' Movement, which advocated social justice and anti-colonial nationalism through art.

Linguistic Ideology and Identity

This era associated refined Urdu-Hindi with moral authority, literary culture and national pride. Language was a marker of education and civility. The gradual reduction of Urdu in later decades may be seen not just as a linguistic change but a sociopolitical shift toward Sanskritization and mass-market appeal.

The Poetic Era of Bollywood lyrics (1950–1979) was marked by a high aesthetic and linguisticst and ard that reflected India's post colonial idealism, moralconservatism, and linguisticplurality. The use of poetic Urdu, highregister Hindi and nationalist themes constructed an identity rooted in collective emotion, purity and tradition. As wetransition into the next chapter, we will observe how these ideals begin to erode and give way to more commercialised, colloquial forms of expression in the Transitional Phase (1980–1999).

The Transitional Phase (1980–1999)

A Shift from Poetic Idealism to Popular Colloquialism

The decades between the 1980s and 1990s represent a critical transitional period in Bollywood music. The industry began shifting from the poetic and ideologically driven lyrics of the pasttomore commercially oriented, colloquial and rhythmically catchy songs. This period bridges the elegant restraint of earlier decades with the urbanised, slang-heavy, and consumer-driven culture that would dominate the 21st century.

The following analysis explore show language and themesevolved during this period in relation to larger social changes: the rise of television, the beginning of economic liberalisation, and the increasing urbanisation of Indian youth culture.

Linguistic Features of the Era

Simplification of Language

Unlike theornate Urdu-Hindi poetry of earlier years, songs in this period increasingly favoured simplified Hindi, using more conversational expressions, repetitions and catchy refrains designed for easy massconsumption.

Example

"*Jumma chumma dede"– Hum(1991)*

- Repetitive, colloquial, and phoneticallycatchy—prioritising rhythm over meaning.
- Reflects shift from lyrical depth to performative impact.

Introduction of Slang and UrbanVernacular:

Slangterms and informal expressions began appearing more frequently, appealing to the taste ofamore urban and youthful audience.

Example

"Myname isLakhan"–RamLakhan(1989)

- Use of English phrases for stylistic effect; emphasisesbravado, mischief and performativity.

Early Signs of Code-Switching

The 1990s saw the emergence of code-mixing, especially between Hindi and English, signal lingagenerational shift toward urban bilingual identity.

Example

"*Kehdoketumhomerivarna…"–Darr(1993)*

- English titles, partial lines or hooks were increasingly common even if them a jority of lyrics were still Hindi.

Thematic Trends

Riseof "ItemNumbers" and Sexual Suggestiveness:

This period introduced songs with increased emphasison sensuality, particularly female dance sequences.The lyricaltone became bolder and often flirted withinnuendoor overt sexual metaphors, as harpbreak fromthe romantic modesty of earlier decades.

Example

"*Cholikepeechekyahai?"–Khalnayak(1993)*

- This song was controversial forits lyrics, which metaphorically and literally challenged traditional modesty.
- Reflects changing gender dynamics and the commodification of the female body.

Emphasison Personality and Star Power

Songs increasingly revolved around the persona of theactor (especially "hero" figures), focusing on charisma, rebellion, and performance rather than lyrical beauty.

Example

"*Ekdoteen…"–Tezaab(1988)*

- A song driven more by the choreography and energy than poetic meaning. Sociolinguistic and Cultural Analysis

Language Ideology

The rise of casual Hindi and English signalleda shift in linguistic ideology. Urdu's association with high culture began to fade. English emerged not just as a global language, but also as a marker of class, urbanity and modernity.

- Hindi became the "default" language of mass appeal.
- English began to signify "coolness" or modern sophistication.
- Urdu receded into niche or emotionally heavy romantic songs.

Socio linguistic and Cultural Analysis

Changing Gender Representation

The portrayal of women shifted from idealized musesto objects of desire and entertainment. Female characters became more visual than verbal, their narrative roles often reduced toitemsof display. At the same time, male characters were increasingly portrayed as assertive, flirtatious, and humorous—aligning with the "larger-than life" masculine ideal that would dominate 2000s Bollywood.

Media and Market Forces

With the spread of television and cassette culture, Bollywood music entered new media circuits. Songs became products to sell films and stars, not just expressions of narrative or emotion. The commercial pressures reshaped the way lyrics were written—less metaphor, more mass impact.

- Composers like *Nadeem–Shravan* and lyricists like *Sameer* catered to middle-classsensibilities.
- Songs began to reflect not societalidealsbutmarketlogic.

The Globalised Era (2000-2020)

Language, Identity, and Consumption in Contemporary Bollywood Lyrics Theturn of the 21 stcentury witnessed a radical transformation in Bollywood lyrics, coinciding with India's economic liberalisation, digital globalisation, and the emergence of a consumer- driven urban youth culture. Language became more performative, hybridised, and reflective of global influences. This chapter analyses the linguistic and ideological shifts in Bollywood lyrics from 2000 to 2020, focusing on the dominance of Hinglish, street vernacular, and the lyrical construction of gender, class and modernity.

Linguistic Features of the Era

Hinglish and Hybrid Codes

English is no longer a prestigeoutlier—it is now integrated into the fabric of Hindilyrics. The hybrid Hinglish code marks modernity, youth identity, and cosmopolitanism.

Example

"*Ishqwalalove"–StudentoftheYear(2012)*

- "*Wala*" is a Hindi classifieradded to an English noun ("love"), creating a hybrid phrase with poetic rhythm and urban relevance.

Street Slang and Rap Culture

The rise of Indianhip-hop and the popularity of gullyrap brought multilingual street speech into mainstream Bollywood. Slang terms, profanity (censored or implied), and aggressive posturing became normalised.

Example

"*ApnaTimeAayega"–GullyBoy(2019)*

- Alinguisticrebellionu sing Mumbai Hindi, English slang, and self-assertivevernacular.
- Reflects anger, aspiration, and working-class resistance.

Lexical Trends and Pop Culture References

Lyrics began including brand names, western cultural terms and references to nightlife, alcohol, fashion, andf ast life. This signifies the commodification of language.

Example

"*Whiskeydibottle, gundiglass"-JasmineSandlas*

- Brand and lifestyle-based vocabulary replaces traditional metaphors and emotion-ladenexpressions.

Thematic Shifts

Commodification of Desire

Songs became more about pleasure, partying, sexappeal and self-image than about emotional longingorsocial values. Romantic metaphors are replaced with visual consumption cues.

Example

"*SheilakiJawani*"*–TeesMaarKhan(2010)*

- Lyrics frame the female body as a product of male desire, with overt self-objectification ("*I'mtoosexyforyou*").

Rise of Individualism and Self-Assertion

Where earlier songs spoke of collective feelings or shared patriotism, now the focusison individual identity, confidence, and lifestyle.

Example

"*I'mthebest"–PhirBhiDilHaiHindustani(2000)*

- A self-branding an them reflecting liberal capitalistideology.

Cultural and Ideological Analysis

Gender Representation

- Women are portrayed as objects of gaze and self-aware performers (e.g., "*I'mhot,Iknowit"*).
- Men are often dominant, sexual, orcomicrebels (e.g., "*BhaagDKBose*").

National Identity and Moral Ambiguity

Songs from this period reflect an urban nationalist imagination, where"India" is less about sacrifice and more about style, success, and youth.

Example

"*DesiGirl"–Dostana (2008)*

- "*Desi*" is rebranded as stylish and sexy; national pride blends with global glamour.

Media and Market Forces

This era is defined by the dominance of musicvideos, YouTube virality and branding partnerships. Lyrics are written not just for emotion or narrative, but for visual choreography, social media trends, and playlist appeal.

- Lyricists like *Amitabh Bhattacharya*, *Badshah* and *Raftaar* balance commercial viability with stylistic innovation.

Linguistic Hierarchies, Code-Switching, and Postcolonial Identity

One of the most striking linguistic transformations observed across Bollywood lyrics from 1950 to 2020 is the shifting balance between Indian languages, particularly Hindi and Urdu and English. This evolution reflects deeper postcolonial negotiations of identity, class, modernity, and cultural power. Language, in the context of Bollywood lyrics, functions not just as a medium of expression but as a social symbol that marks who speaks, how they speak, and what values are being signified.

In the early decades (1950–1979), the dominant lyrical language was Urdu-inflected Hindi, rooted in poetic traditions of ghazals, nazms, and classical metaphors. Urdu lexicon carried cultural prestige, emotional depth, and national sentiment, particularly in the wake of Indian independence. As previously discussed, lyricists like Sahir Ludhianviand Kaifi Azmi

crafted verses that reflected romantic idealism, social justice, and patriotic values. English was largely absent, symbolising its status as a colonial remnant and cultural outsider.

However, with the onset of the Transitional Phase (1980–1999) and the rise of commercial mass media, Bollywood lyrics began to exhibit simplification of vocabulary, informal Hindi, and the gradual introduction of English words and phrases. This period marked the beginning of linguistichybridisation, where English began to appear within Hindi-dominant lyrics, not just as vocabulary borrowing butas a stylisticmarker of youthfulness, confidence, or urban sophistication.

The Globalised Era (2000–2020) witnessed aradical shift. English became fully integrated into the structure of Bollywood lyrics, giving riseto Hinglish—a hybrid, code-switched mode of lyrical expression. Songs like "*Love Mera Hit Hit*", "*Sheila Ki Jawani*", or "*Ishq Wala Love*" blend languages seamlessly, creating new cultural and linguistic norms. These linguistic choices reflect more than stylistic evolution; they point to the rise of a globalised, aspirational, and class-conscious Indian identity, especially among urban youth. In this context, English signifies modernity, coolness, and social capital, while Hindi (and increasingly, Punjabi) grounds the lyrics in cultural familiarity and emotional accessibility.

From a postcolonial perspective, this shift in linguistic dominance can be read as both continuity and rupture. On one hand, the increasing presence of English in lyrics reinforces colonial language hierarchies, where the coloniser's language continues to hold symbolic power. On the other hand, the decline of Urdu, once a prestigious literary language in Indian cinema, signals aformof culturalloss andmarginalization—linked toboth communal politics and changing class ideologies. Theerasure of Urdu in contemporary main stream lyrics reflects broader post Partition anxieties and the diminishing public space for Muslim cultural expression in Indian popular media. This transformation in the linguistic hierarchy is not a neutral process but one that is deeply ideological. The increasing normalisation of English and the marginalization of Urdu reflect larger patterns of sociopolitical exclusion, language commodification, and cultural homogenisation. As Bollywood alignsit self with global market forces anda pan-urban youth aesthetic, linguistic diversity becomes streamlined to fit commercial expectations. This has led to a flattening of poetic richness and thesidelining of minority voices and regional registers that once defined the lyrical landscape of Hindi cinema. At the same time, the emergence of Hinglish as a dominant lyrical code is indicative ofpostcolonial hybridity, a space that is neither fully indigenous nor entirely Western.

Drawing from Homi Bhabha's concept of the "thirdspace," Hinglish functions as a linguistic site where multiple cultural identities are negotiated and performed. It allows for creative innovation and local adaptation, but it also reaffirms the privilege of English within the sociolinguistic economy accessible primarily to those with educational and class capital. Despite this, signs of linguistic resistance and decolonial expression have emerged, particularly in the form of street rap, regional dialects and folk revivalism. The success of songs like "*Apna Time Aayega*" from *Gully Boy (2019*) demonstrates a reclamation of vernacular agency, where working-class voices

articulate ambition, injustice, and pride through localised speech. Similarly, the inclusion of Bhojpuri, Marathi, and Punjabi phrases in contemporary songs challenges the unidirectional flow toward English and affirms the multi lingualethos of Indian society. Inthislight, Bollywood lyrics operate as acomplex site of struggle—between linguistic imperialism and vernacular empowerment, between postcolonial mimicry and cultural authenticity.

The co-existence of Hinglish hooks and vernacular rap lines illustrates India's ongoing attempt to reconcile its colonial past with its global present. Language, here, is both a product and producer of identity: shaping who is heard, how they are heard, and what ideologies are normalised or contested.

Thus, the evolution of Bollywood lyrics from Urdu poeticism to Hinglish hybridity is emblematic of a broader transformation in Indian cultural politics. It is a story of linguistic aspiration, exclusion, adaptation, and resistance. In the matrix of code-switching, linguistic hierarchy, and cultural commodification, Bollywood becomes not just a mirror of society—but a linguistic battleground where the voices of modern India are continuously negotiated.

Summary of Findings.

This research explored the linguistic and cultural evolution of Bollywood song lyrics between 1950 and 2020 through a sociolinguistic and critical discourse lens. The study revealed that:

- Bollywood lyrics have undergone a dramatic shift from poetic, idealistic, Urdu-influenced language to commercial, hybrid, Hinglish dominant expressions.
- This linguistictrans formation reflects broader social, political, and economic changes in Indian society, including urbanisation, globalisation, and the rise of consumer culture.

- Lyrics, particularly in their treatment of gender, identity, and nationalism, shifted from ideal is mand collective values to individualism, commodification, and entertainment-driven ideology.
- The rise of code-switching, especially from Hindi to English, illustrates changing language ideologies, where English signals modernity and Hindi (and sometimes Punjabi) anchors local authenticity.
- The function of lyrics has changed—from being central to the narrative and emotional core of films, to serving as marketable, viral content in the digital age.

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Animals as 'Non-Humans': A Posthumanist Study of Karen Hesse's *The Music of Dolphins*

Dr. Jayalekshmi B. & Kavitha Kaladharan

Abstract

Modern maritime fiction consistently transcends conventional human-animal boundaries and explores interspecies relationships within oceanic environments. This study examines Karen Hesse's *The Music of Dolphins* (1996) through posthumanist literary criticism, focusing on how this narrative disrupts anthropocentric hierarchies. The marine context plays a vital role in making established human-animal distinctions fluid and uncertain. The protagonist Mila's liminal position between human and dolphin worlds reflects the posthumanist critique of fixed identity categories. Her hybrid consciousness suggests possibilities for new forms of subjectivity that transcend traditional human-animal binaries. The study employs theoretical frameworks from Animal Posthumanism, Blue Cultural Studies, and Oceanic Humanities to demonstrate how maritime fiction engages with contemporary discussions regarding environmental degradation and cross-species ethical concerns. The analysis reveals both the potential for reimagining human-animal relations and the persistent challenges in escaping anthropocentric frameworks. Through close textual analysis, this research contributes to scholarly understanding of how literary texts serve as laboratories for exploring posthumanist futures while acknowledging persistent challenges in reimagining species boundaries and consciousness across human-animal divides.

Keywords: posthumanism, maritime fiction, human-animal studies, blue cultural studies, interspecies communication.

Introduction

The relationship between the sea and humans extends across millennia of cultural and scientific development. Maritime environments have served as catalysts for posthumanist thinking by challenging terrestrial assumptions about identity, consciousness, and species boundaries. The emergence of Maritime Literature, Oceanic Humanities, and Blue Cultural Studies reflects contemporary critical engagement with marine spaces as sites of alternative knowledge production. Steven Mentz's concept of Blue Cultural Studies provides the theoretical foundation for examining oceanic narratives as more than simple maritime adventures. His framework positions oceans as "subjects in themselves" rather than passive spaces to be

traversed (997). This perspective enables critical examination of how marine fiction interrogates anthropocentric worldviews through representations of human-animal interaction. Due to this oceanic turn in culture and literature, the sea has occupied an enigmatic position in theoretical concepts of marine anthropology and in the evolving genre of 'New Thalassology'.

Posthumanism emerged as a significant critical discourse through Donna Haraway's "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1985), which challenged fundamental assumptions about human-animal distinctions. Haraway argues that "the boundary between humans and animals is thoroughly breached" in contemporary scientific culture, rendering traditional species categories unstable (601). This theoretical instability creates opportunities for literary texts to explore alternative forms of consciousness and agency. The emergent genres Critical Animal Studies and Human-Animal Studies are closely related to the Derridian concept of 'animot' propounded at the Cerisy Conference in 1997 on the topic of "the autobiographical animal" and later appeared in The Animal That Therefore I Am (French: L'Animal que donc je suis), a French publication in 2006 translated into English in 2008 (Derrida 23).

Many nautical narratives portray naturalistic relationships between humans and nonhuman animals in marine environments. Animals play integral roles in most nautical stories, ranging from dolphins, whales, sharks, octopuses, turtles, crabs, sea monsters, and fictional mutants like mermaids. Writers use both mythical and anthropomorphic characters to expose moralistic values, political ideologies, and beliefs in society. Ships serve as maritime chronotopes of the sea, as suggested by Margaret Cohen in "The Chronotopes of the Sea," representing floating cross-sections of the world where "space is experienced as movement, as a vector conjoining spatial and temporal dimensions" (648).

Karen Hesse's *The Music of Dolphins* presents Mila as a character whose consciousness has been fundamentally shaped by dolphin communication systems and social structures. When the text states that "the sea is a big home where all the time is swimming and all the time is singing and all the time is touching in the big wet" (12), Hesse constructs an alternative linguistic framework that privileges sensory and embodied experience over human rational discourse. The continuous present tense ("all the time") suggests forms of temporal consciousness that resist human linear narrative structures. Mila's liminal position between worlds becomes evident through her physical relationship with objects from both realms. She observes: "I touch the recorder with my human fingers. I take it along with my dolphin boots in my bed to sleep" (76). This passage reveals the protagonist's hybrid identity, where she

explicitly acknowledges her "human fingers" while maintaining a connection to her "dolphin boots," demonstrating how posthumanist subjectivity emerges through the embodied experience of multiple forms of existence.

Mila's language patterns reveal how Hesse challenges anthropocentric assumptions about communication and meaning-making. Her simplified syntax and focus on physical sensations demonstrate what Derrida's 'animot' reveals about the constructed nature of human linguistic superiority. When Mila struggles with human grammar but fluently navigates dolphin sonar communication, the text questions which form of communication is more sophisticated or meaningful. The protagonist, who was nurtured by dolphins, is discovered by coast guards and later brought to a research center for feral children, where the conformist nature of human civilization is depicted through people outside the marine world.

The research facility functions as Haraway's cyborg boundary zone, where scientific instruments attempt to measure and categorize Mila's hybrid consciousness. The scientists' inability to fully comprehend or replicate her dolphin-learned abilities reveals the limitations of anthropocentric scientific frameworks. Their tools can record her sonar attempts, but cannot access the relational and contextual knowledge embedded in dolphin communication systems. Doctor Beck's request demonstrates this appropriate approach: "Doctor Beck asks me to write about my time in the sea. She wants to know dolphin life. She wants to learn dolphin talk! She says to know these things will be a most important learning for people" (97). This passage illustrates how human science seeks to extract and categorize Mila's embodied knowledge without understanding its relational context within dolphin social structures.

The human and animal identities constructed in the narrative expound the binaries of nature and culture, where the world of animals retains enchanting beauty and innate cosmic wisdom, while the rational human world stands apart. Mila's growing awareness of moral complexity challenges simple nature/culture binaries when she reflects: "I think dolphins are good. Not all of the time, but most of the time. Maybe dolphins are not so different from humans" (96). This observation applies ethical categories across species boundaries, suggesting moral continuity rather than human superiority.

Hesse's construction of the oceanic environment operates through maritime chronotopes where fluid boundaries create textual conditions where posthumanist consciousness becomes possible. The sea's three-dimensional navigation challenges terrestrial assumptions about spatial

orientation and movement, paralleling how Mila's consciousness challenges binary thinking about human-animal identity. The oceanic setting functions as more than a backdrop, representing a space of possibility where different forms of consciousness can coexist and interact. The fluid nature of water mirrors the fluid boundaries between species that the novel explores. Mila's oceanic memory manifests through embodied metaphors that reveal how marine consciousness shapes emotional understanding. When describing her disconnection from music, she explains: "When I am not playing, I feel a tightness inside me, like when the sea grass catches my feet and I cannot break free" (88). This passage demonstrates how Mila's emotional states are comprehended through oceanic experience, suggesting forms of consciousness that resist terrestrial philosophical frameworks.

The text's treatment of the "music" metaphor extends beyond anthropomorphic projection to suggest genuine cross-species aesthetic experience. Mila's ability to "hear" dolphin communication as music while finding human speech harsh and mechanical inverts traditional hierarchies of aesthetic sophistication. Her approach to creating music reveals alternative forms of artistic expression: "I sit on the classroom floor with Shay. I play a song on the recorder for her. Not a big song. Just three notes put together in a little pattern. I play it over and over. I play it soft for Shay. I play it loud for Shay" (85). This simple, repetitive pattern mirrors dolphin communication structures while challenging human concepts of musical complexity. Mila's comparison of her music to established human forms reveals the hierarchy she navigates: "It is not big music like the music Sandy gives me to put in the tape machine, it is not the music of Mozart, but my teacher, Doctor Peach, says if I can play these songs, I can play songs more harder in a little time" (88). This inversion reveals how anthropocentric frameworks limit understanding of non-human artistic and communicative expression, as Mila's patterns are presented as equally valid foundations for aesthetic development.

The dolphins in Hesse's narrative demonstrate agency through their active participation in Mila's education and development. They are not passive objects of human study but subjects with their own communication systems, social hierarchies, and cultural practices. This representation directly challenges what Haraway calls the "last beachheads of uniqueness" by attributing complex social behavior and educational practices to non-human subjects (601). Hesse reveals the depth of dolphin social structures through Mila's account of maternal grief rituals: "Sometimes the birth does not go right and the baby dies. And then the mother lifts her silent calf to the air, but there is no calf there, only an empty body, and the mother tells a story

about this thing that happened, and the others join in telling their parts, and the story grows for days and days until the mother is ready to let the baby go. When I came in a storm, my dolphin mother had given birth. Her dolphin baby did not blow and did not blow. Tenderly, she let her dead calf go, and took me" (102). This passage demonstrates complex social behavior, collective storytelling, and ritualized mourning that challenge anthropocentric assumptions about emotional sophistication and cultural practices. The dolphins possess forms of communication, social organization, and care systems that parallel and sometimes surpass human capabilities, challenging the hierarchical ordering of species that places humans at the apex of creation.

The novel's climactic moment occurs when Mila chooses to return to the ocean rather than remain in human civilization. This choice represents what posthumanist theory identifies as the possibility of alternative forms of subjectivity. Her decision is not presented as regression or failure but as conscious selection of a different mode of being. Hesse constructs this choice through Mila's increasingly sophisticated understanding of both worlds, suggesting that posthumanist consciousness requires experience of multiple forms of existence. The return of Mila to the dolphin world implies her separation from corrupted humanity and restoration to eternal freedom in a world that stands closer to nature.

Hesse's novel advances posthumanist theory by demonstrating how marine environments create conditions for alternative consciousness formation. The text suggests that posthumanist subjectivity requires not merely intellectual acknowledgment of human-animal continuities but embodied experience of non-human ways of being. Mila's transformation occurs through physical immersion in oceanic space and participation in dolphin social structures, not through abstract learning about dolphin capabilities. Her liminal position between human and dolphin worlds reflects the posthumanist critique of fixed identity categories, as she cannot be easily classified as either fully human or animal, challenging readers to reconsider the stability of such distinctions. The novel's engagement with Blue Cultural Studies extends beyond maritime setting to interrogate how oceanic thinking challenges terrestrial philosophical assumptions. The fluid, three-dimensional ocean space enables forms of consciousness that resist the hierarchical, bounded thinking characteristic of land-based human civilization. This spatial analysis reveals how environmental conditions shape possibilities for posthumanist consciousness. The marine environment offers an alternative to land-based human civilization with its rigid hierarchies and classifications.

The text's treatment of language acquisition complicates standard posthumanist approaches to communication across species boundaries. Rather than presenting simple translation between human and dolphin communication systems, Hesse shows how each system embeds different forms of consciousness and social organization. This complexity suggests that genuine posthumanist understanding requires the transformation of human consciousness rather than the extension of human categories to non-human subjects. The novel proposes that true understanding might require learning to "hear" the music that other species create, moving beyond anthropocentric definitions of language and culture. The *Music of Dolphins* contributes to posthumanist maritime criticism by demonstrating how oceanic environments function as spaces of becoming rather than being. Unlike terrestrial posthumanist texts that often maintain human consciousness as the reference point for measuring animal intelligence, Hesse's novel suggests that dolphin consciousness might offer superior models for oceanic existence. This reversal challenges anthropocentric assumptions embedded in much posthumanist theory. The novel's focus on a child protagonist enables exploration of identity formation outside established human social structures, where Mila's consciousness develops through dolphin rather than human enculturation, revealing how species identity is constructed through social learning rather than biological determinism.

The narrative suggests that meaningful relationships can exist between humans and marine animals, potentially offering new models for environmental ethics and interspecies understanding. However, the text's resolution maintains certain anthropocentric limitations, as Mila's choice between human and dolphin worlds preserves binary thinking that posthumanist theory seeks to transcend. The novel suggests that hybrid consciousness must ultimately choose one form of existence, limiting possibilities for genuinely posthumanist subjectivity that might integrate multiple forms of being.

Conclusion

Karen Hesse's *The Music of Dolphins* provides significant insights into how maritime fiction engages with posthumanist concerns about human-animal relationships and alternative forms of consciousness. The novel's marine setting enables exploration of fluid identity boundaries while its focus on interspecies communication reveals both possibilities and limitations in transcending anthropocentric frameworks. Mila's hybrid consciousness demonstrates how posthumanist subjectivity might emerge through embodied cross-species experience rather than abstract theoretical understanding. The text's treatment of oceanic

space as enabling alternative forms of temporal and spatial consciousness contributes to Blue Cultural Studies by showing how marine environments challenge terrestrial philosophical assumptions. While the novel maintains certain anthropocentric limitations in its binary resolution, it advances posthumanist maritime criticism by suggesting that genuine understanding of human-animal relationships requires the transformation of human consciousness rather than the simple extension of human categories to non-human subjects. The dolphins' complex social structures and Mila's liminal identity challenge readers to reconsider the stability of species distinctions and the possibility of alternative forms of consciousness. This analysis contributes to scholarly understanding of how literary texts can serve as laboratories for exploring posthumanist futures. It acknowledges the persistent challenges involved in reimagining species boundaries and consciousness across human and animal divides.

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Indian Culture and Femininity as Depicted in Indira Goswami's novel *The Man From Chinnamasta*

Dr. B. Sajeetha & Leena Stanley

Abstract

Religion plays a pivotal role in structuring and maintaining a society by imposing certain morals and norms. Like any other religion, Hinduism has led the Hindus to live in a particular way since time immemorial. Indira Goswami portrays the distressing conditions of widows living inthe Vaishnavite Satra.[1]This integration of the woman with religion becomes the core theme of Goswami's novel, The Man from Chinnamasta,emphasises on the interconnecting issues pertaining to the oppression of women and animals. In the novel, Goswami examines and analyses the ancient religious tradition of animal sacrifice at the Kamakhya temple situated in the city of Guwahati in Assam. The novel, when it was published, generated great controversy and commotion across many orthodox sections of society that regarded the book to be an attack on ancient religious rituals and practices. However, the book and the authorreceived a groundbreaking support from the general mass as well as animal rights groups that demanded the banning of animal sacrifice at the temple.

Keywords: Religious rituals, sacrifice, feminine principle, Kamakhya, sati.

Chinnamasta share the geographical locale of the kamakhya temple and the river Brahmaputra that flows next to the hill on which the temple stands. The narrative tapestry is rich with the complex coexistence of apparent irreconcilables like feminine frailty and male dependency on the feminine principle. Unlike the traditionally accepted concept of the feminine principle and its essentialization into immutable categories, the narrativegradually unravel and interrogate the concept to reveal its constant interaction with socio-religious constructs. The sacrifice of animals at the holy altar of the Mother Goddess, for instance, clearly overlaps with victimization, passivity as well as the power of the feminine. Eroticism and spirituality are combined with the symbol of blood that gets connected with life, death, sexuality, spirituality and pollution. The representation of the feminine principle is thus highly nuanced with both the transcendent and the mundane continuously contesting and collaborating with in the construct. There is a continuous process of what appears to be the creation of normative archetypes in

the description of women characters as well as the goddess only to be demolished and overthrown later.

Chinnamastais located in pre-independence colonial Assam.Chinnamasta is considered as the part of the broader Kamakhya lore. The origin of the Kamakhya temple, alive in local lore as well as in the Kalika Purana, the ancient Sanskrit compendium, is traced back to the legend of Sati, who was the daughter of Prajapati Daksha and the wife of Lord Shiva. Daksha was vexed with his daughter's marriage with Shiva who lived with snakes, his body smeared with ash and his habitat being the cemetery. His companions were ghosts and goblins. In short, Daksha did not consider Shiva as a suitable husband for his daughter Sati, who defied her father to marry him, Sati feels humiliated when she is not invited for a yajna organised in her father's house but decides to still go there. She is shamed by her father for coming to his house uninvited. He also disgraces the absent Shiva by hurling abuses at him. Unable to bear the humiliation, Sati jumps into the yajna fire and is charred to death. Shiva is furious when he gets to know of this. He too goes to Daksha's house, picks up the charred body of Sati and begins his dance of destruction, the tandav. All creation is on the verge of complete collapse when Lord Vishnu begins to shadow Shiva and gradually chops off parts of Sati's body with his chakra, the divine wheel. These different parts of Sati's charred body are believed to have fallen in 51 spots, which have evolved as the 51 Shakti Peethas (abodes of Mother Goddess). The place where the Kamakhya temple stands is the spot where Sati's yoni or vulva is believed to have fallen.

The Kamakhya temple is one of the most important sites of tantric worship and the sect of Sati followers. Literally meaning the 'renowned goddess of desire', Kamakhya is iconically represented by a shape similar to that of the female vulva. This is located in the inner sanctum or the garbhagriwa (womb chamber) and watered by a perennial spring. The temple complex has within it a set of individual temples dedicated to the ten Mahavidyas, or ten forms of the goddess as perceived in Shaktism, which considers the meta physical reality as being feminine and the Devi, or the goddess, as being the supreme source of all energy. Chinnamasta, or 'the one with a severed head", is one of theDasaMahavidyas, a part of Kamakhya lore belongs to the esoteric tantric tradition and the goddess referred to in the title of the novel *The Man from Chinnamasta*. The goddess is represented as nude and self-decapitated, standing on a copulating divine couple. The goddess holds her severed head in one hand and a scimitar in the other. Three streams of blood sprout out of her neck. One stream ends in the severed

head of the goddess and the other two in the mouths of the two figures standing next to her. Clearly, Chinnamasta may be seen as representing many contradictory aspects of life, including death, fury, sexual energy, spiritual energy and sacrifice, including self-sacrifice. This concept of self-sacrifice is not limited only to the icon of the goddess and is depicted in the novel as a practice followed by ordinary devotees as well. One such incident is described in the following lines:

> A straggle of people followed [a] palanquin. It was the sort used for carrying the sick. Henry noticed the man inside was wounded, his clothes were bloodstained.
>
> A priest stopped at the sight of a white man.
>
> 'What happened?" the munshi enquired.
>
> A pilgrim from Coohbehar. His eldest son is sick and he has no money for treatment. Can't afford to sacrifice a goat or a buffalo. So he offered his own blood.'
>
> 'His own blood?" Brown was astounded.(33)

Philosophers and scholars have tried to analyse the symbolic place of blood in societies but its complexity has led many of them to describe it as a signifier of nearly everything(112). "Not only does blood have a remarkable range of meanings and associations, but many of these encompass their antinomies"(2).

The antinomies or the paradox of the blood image persistently recurs not just in literary and creative constructs but also in ritual practices described in Chinnamasta. The blood ritual, or the sacrifice of animals at the altar of the goddess, comes to a standstill due to another 'blood cycle', that of menstruation of the goddess.Goswami mentions this in Chinnamasta when she says that:

> The temple doors were shut. The Mother Goddess was menstruating. Her loins were covered with a red cloth. Every year on the seventh day of the month of Ashaad the temple closed for three days. It opened on the fourth day.(79)

The paradoxical image of blood with multiple connotations of life, death, purity, impurity, taboo and pollution is too obvious for comment. The association between blood and the organic and the primeval is stressed by Mary Douglas, who approaches blood as what she calls a 'natural system of symbolizing' (xxxiii). She describes it as a 'natural symbol' that generates and activates our primal connections with our origins. The power of blood is accepted

in all cultures of the world. Its connotation, however, gets impacted by a whole array of 'socio-sacred' relations, including those of power and control. The symbolism of menstruation within this framework, needless to say, is connected with the gender paradigm that sculpts it to fit into the male-focused enquiry and taboos since 'menstrual blood is viewed as especially dangerous to men's power (129). Emile Durkheim argues that emergence of human religion, along with its collective rituals as well as its taboos, can be traced to its intricate relationship with menstruation, which is perceived as both divine and polluting. The gendered gaze thus transforms the exclusive energy of the feminine body and sexuality into a frailty and a flaw from which neither the women nor the goddess in Chinnamastais spared.

The major themes, symbols and Leitmotifs are developed and well- knitwith great detail in Chimamasta. The Temple ofChinnamasta is poised at the intersection of traditional subservience to normative structures and the winds of activism, rights, liberation and democracy that question both the oral and writing taxonomies. The struggle against imperialism moves hand in hand with that against gender injustice and animal sacrifice.

It is through the arrival of the gramasavika that the writer weaves the theme of anti-imperialism in to the story. The gramasavikas, who were 'Gandhians' are, described in Chinnamasta, where, among other things, has taken the shape of a full-fledged organized protest against the Simon Commission that was sent to India in 1928 to look in to the possibility of the constitutional reforms. The violence of imperialism is coalesced with that of animal sacrifice against the background of the of Gandian of non-violence. The white men were growing cautious. Volunteers were prepared to lay down their lives for the motherland. Mahatma Gandhi had lunched a war of emotions where moral issues took the place of bullets.' (146). The novel lerpilicanes the violence against the colonised in its portrayal of animal sacrifice and the attack of the orthodox Brahmins who were staunch believers off the fact that 'Cursed are those who try to stop the offering of animals!' (57)

All these multiple strands get interconnected through a whole range of characters, especially the enigmatic tantric ChinnamastaJatadhari (Chinnamasta's worshipper with long, matted locks), who leads the protest against animal sacrifice. This is despite the admission by Jatadhari that people like him 'hold [their] souls together with the skins of sacrificed animals' (43). It is Jatadhari who suggests to Ratnadhar, the sensitive, young artist, to collect signatures of people in support of ban on animal sacrifice. This produces 'a huge mountain of signatures, ... Their presence was so potent, no one could possibly feign ignorance... the matter might...

be referred to the courts of law' (161). The plan clearly employs the stratagem of democratic protest against established structures. Jatadhari also suggests to Ratnadhar to paint the scenes of bloodshed and sacrifice that had regularly recurred through the history of the region. While it is accepted that generally 'folklore seems to have a greater power than history', Ratnadhar's paintings like the one denoting a group of men blood red robes [standing! beside the Saubhagya Kunda[22]A tank within the precincts of the Kamakhya temple.

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Ecofeminist Perspectives on Gender Performativity in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

Dr. Rose Mary Philip

Abstract

Ecofeminism and Gender Performativity originate from the theories of Ecocriticism and Feminism, respectively. In literary criticism, no theory exists in isolation as its boundaries are fluid and cut across disciplines. This paper aims to explore the intersection of ecofeminism and gender performativity in Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, focusing on two main aspects: how Roy depicts the environmental struggles of women from lower castes and indigenous communities, and how she connects environmental destruction with patriarchal and caste-based oppression through gender performativity.

Keywords: *Ecofeminism, Gender Performativity, Patriarchy, Marginalised*

Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is an exploration of ecofeminist principles, intertwining the narratives of oppressed women, marginalised communities, and a suffering natural world. Through her storytelling, Roy masterfully illustrates the interconnectedness of gender performativity and environmental degradation within a societal structure which is primarily patriarchal. The novel's narrative and characters, such as Anjum and Tilo, highlight the varied nature of marginalised experiences, revealing the social, political, and emotional realities of those who exist further down the mainstream Indian society.

Ecofeminism is more than just an academic concept; it is about how society treats women and the environment, demanding our attentionto its deeply rooted connections. Coined by the French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974, ecofeminism urges us to see that the fight for gender equality is linked to our established relationship with the planet. At its heart, ecofeminism builds on key feminist principles like gender equality and respect for non-patriarchal systems, which value natural processes and the strength of intuition and collaboration.

What is notable here is that ecofeminism urgently calls for environmental stewardship,framing the relationship between women and nature as crucial toourcollective well-being. Ina patriarchal society which often exploits both women and the earth, ecofeminism challenges ustorethinkourhierarchization.It highlights how gender norms contribute to the

degradationofthe environment, perpetuating an unjust dominance that harms both women and nature.

Byanalysingtheimpactof these gendercategories,ecofeministsrevealthe limitations of ourperspectives, advocatingfor a transformative worldview.Thisphilosophysees the earth as sacred and reaffirmsthat humanity's survival is byrecognising our dependence on nature. Ultimately, ecofeminisminvitesustocelebrate all life as invaluable, urging society to adopt a holistic and respectful approach to theentire system of life, encompassing both the environment and humanity.

From ancient times on, men were frequently characterized as rational, ordered, and thus capable of directing the use and development of women and nature. The modern ecofeminist movement was motivated by the notion that a long historical precedent of associating women with nature had led to the oppression of both. They noted that women and nature were often depicted as chaotic, irrational, and needing control. Ecofeminists contend that hierarchical structure grants power to men and allows for the exploitation of women and nature, particularly insofar as the two are associated with one another. Thus, early ecofeminists determined that solving the predicament of eitherwould require undoing the constraints of both.

Ecofeminism was predominantly focused on documenting the links between women and the followed by attempts to dissociate from these connections. One of the founders of ecofeminism, Rosemary Ruether, advocated for collaboration between women and environmentalists to dismantle patriarchal systems that prioritisecontrol and inequitable socioeconomic relations. Ruether's challenge was welcomed by feminist scholars and activists, who started acknowledging ecological theories that disregarded the effects of patriarchal structures andtried to reframe feminist theories that failed to examine the relationship between women and nature. "Women must understand that there can be no liberation for them, nor any resolution to the ecological crisis, within a society whose fundamental model of relationships remains one of domination" (Ruether 204).

It was by the late 1980s; ecofeminism had expandedbeyond its largely academic originsto become a popular movement. Many scholars attribute this popularisation to feminist theorist Ynestra King. In 1987, Kingpublished an article titled "What Is Ecofeminism?" in *The Nation*,where she urged all Americans to reflect onhow their belief systems contributeto the

exploitative use of the earth and the further oppression of women. (Ynestra 364) .With the support of King's article,ecofeminism grew in both backing and philosophical scope.

Gender performativity is a concept introduced by feminist philosopher Judith Butler in her seminal 1990 work, *Gender Trouble.* Butler posits that an individual's biological sex,whether male or female, does not inherently dictate theirbehaviours. Instead, individuals acquirebehaviorsthatalignwithsocietalexpectationsthroughsocialisation. This adherence to gender norms becomesan act or performance encompassing anindividual'smannerisms, speech, clothing, and comportment. Butler calls this phenomenon"gender performativity."Sheassertsthatsociety'sperceptionof anindividual's gender is merely a performance intended to fulfil social expectations rather than anauthenticreflection of the individual's gender identity. Consequently,our thoughts and actsare shaped not solely by our gender but by the ideologies that we believe, as well as those created bysociety.GlazebrookTrisharticulates, "Part of feminist empowerment consists of women acknowledging their autonomy and being accountable for their choices, without simply abnegating responsibility based on social influence and conformist necessity" (Trish 12).

Butler also uses the concept of performativity to discuss social change in gender. They argue that when language and discourse around gender or sex evolve, the society around us changes as well. By appearing, speaking, or acting in specific ways, individuals can influence societal norms and reflect new ideas about gender.

Arundhati Roy is a renowned Indian author and activist known for her powerful and thought-provoking works. She gained international fame with her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*, which won the prestigious Booker Prize. This novel delves into the lives of marginalised individuals in Kerala, highlighting the interconnectedness of environmental degradation, caste oppression, and patriarchal norms.

Roy's second novel,*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, traversesmultiple regions of India and delves into the themes of environmental and social injustices. Thenarrativehighlightsthedisproportionateimpactofecologicaldegradationandsocio-politicalconflictsonmarginalisedcommunities,particularlywomen. Through her writing, Roy narrates to us the connection between gendered oppression and environmental destruction,thereby underscoring the intricate intersection of gender, caste, and political resistance.

In addition to her fiction, Roy has written non-fiction works such as *Walking with the Comrades*, which provides an account of her time with Naxalite-Maoist insurgents in the forests of Chhattisgarh. This work sheds light on the struggles of indigenous communities against environmental exploitation by corporate and state entities, highlighting the role of women in these resistance movements.

Roy, through her works collectively, offers a comprehensive perspective on how environmental issues intersect with gender and class struggles in contemporary India. Her reflective and empathetic storytelling and political sharpness make her a significant voice in literature and activism.

This paper aims to find the intersection of ecofeminism and gender performativity in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and to examine two key aspects: how Roy portrays the environmental struggles of women from lower castes and indigenous communities, and how she connects corporate environmental destruction with patriarchal and caste-based oppression through gender performativity.

In the novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* Roy elaborates on the complexities of environmental issues by explicitly connecting them to the intersecting themes of gender, caste, and political resistance. The novel's split narrative underscores the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on marginalised communities, particularly focusing on the experiences of women and individuals who identify their gender as nonconforming.

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness follows the lives of several characters in India, primarily focusing on Anjum, a Hijra (transwoman) who sets up her home in a graveyard behind a government hospital. Anjum's journey begins with her birth as an intersex child named Aftab, who later transitions to Anjum and moves into the Khwabgah, a community of Hijras in Delhi. Anjum adopts an abandoned baby girl named Zainab and faces various challenges, including a traumatic experience during a massacre in Gujarat.

Anjum eventually leaves the Khwabgah and builds a home in the graveyard, where she starts Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services, providing a sanctuary for marginalised individuals. The novel also follows Tilo, a mysterious woman involved in the Kashmir conflict, and her relationships with Musa, Biplab, and Naga. Tilo adopts a baby named Miss Jebeen the Second, symbolising hope and resilience amidst India's political and social turmoil.

The story weaves together themes of gender identity, social division, political corruption, and resilience, highlighting the struggles and triumphs of the characters as they navigate their complex lives in contemporary India.

Anjum's journey is marked by her struggle to find acceptance and create a space where she can live authentically. Her decision to leave the Khwabgah and move to the graveyard is driven by her desire to protect Zainab and provide a haven for herself and others marginalised by society. The graveyard becomes a place of refuge and community, where Anjum and her companions, including Saddam Hussain, build a life together.

Tilo's story intersects with Anjum's as she becomes involved in the Kashmir conflict and adopts Miss Jebeen the Second. Tilo's relationships with Musa, Biplab, and Naga are complex and tense, reflecting India's broader political and social conflicts. Tilo's adoption of Miss Jebeen the Second represents a glimmer of hope and resilience in adversity.

The novel explores the impact of political corruption and violence on the lives of its characters, particularly in the context of the Kashmir conflict and the Gujarat massacre. Anjum's traumatic experience during the massacre and her subsequent decision to leave the Khwabgah highlight the pervasive violence and discrimination faced by marginalised communities in India.

The characters' resilience and hope are evident throughout the story as they navigate their challenging circumstances. Anjum's determination to create a safe space in the graveyard, Tilo's commitment to documenting the Kashmir conflict, and the community they build together at Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services all exemplify the power of hope and resistance.

As mentioned earlier, the novel's commitment toaddressing issues of gender identity, social division, political corruption, and resilience. It is primarily through its characters, each with their unique struggles and triumphs, offering a poignant and powerful narrative that underscores the importance of hope and resistance in the face of adversity.

Conceptualising the Indian Experience in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* Swapna Gopinath, who has analysed the gendered spaces in Arundhati Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* captures gendered experiences in cultural representations within the Indian context. It argues that the novel foregrounds the intricate relationship between space and gender, using language as a key tool to depict this dynamic. Her essay explores how patriarchal hegemony in India has historically oppressed and controlled bodies and spaces based on gender. Set against India's complex socio-political and religious

environment, Roy's novel presents multidimensional narratives of fragmented lives and polymorphous identities, negotiating with class, caste, and gender conflicts, particularly in the face of aggressive Hindutva politics. The analysis utilises the theoretical frameworks of heterotopia as postulated by Foucault and third space as conceptualised by Soja to understand the depicted gendered spatial experiences (Gopinath 200).

The compelling characters like Anjum and Tilo are women who defy social norms and occupy unconventional spaces. Roy employs the concept of heterotopias, which are "counter sites" and subversive spaces, to elaborate on the experiences of these protagonists. The graveyard, Anjum's home, and Khwabgah, a house for transgender persons, are presented as heterotopic spaces that accommodate the "Other" and challenge the normative social order. Shiraz cinema in Kashmir, transformed into an interrogation centre, is another example of a heterotopic space illustrating the politics of space and oppression. Through these spaces, Roy highlights the struggles and resistance of marginalised gender identities against the backdrop of Indian social discourse.

Furthermore, the concept of **third space** is a way to comprehend the complex ways these characters occupy and experience spaces, blending history, myth, imagination, and material reality. Gender in these third spaces emerges through the depiction of physical spaces and the protagonists' bodies, which are also seen as gendered spaces. We can see how characters like Anjum and Tilo negotiate public and private spaces, challenging gender binaries and societal expectations. The experiences of women in conflict-ridden Kashmir and the instances of bodily violence further emphasise the intersection of gender, space, and power dynamics in the novel, demonstrating how marginalised gender identities consistently resist and reshape the socio-spatial order.

Unlike *The God of Small Things*, which is set in Kerala's lush natural landscape, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* unfolds in urban spaces like Delhi, where environmental degradation is tied to political violence.Anjum's refuge in a graveyard, which becomes a space of ecological and social reclamation. The graveyard, a liminal space between life and death, mirrors Anjum's struggle for belonging and survival.

Roy connects gendered oppression to environmental destruction through narratives of displacement, state violence, and ecological degradation. Tilo, another central female character, navigates the political unrest in Kashmir, where the destruction of the land parallels the

brutalisation of Kashmiri women.Anjum's graveyard, initially a space of death, transforms into Jannat Guest House, a refuge for the marginalised, showing how nature and human resilience coexist against systemic oppression.

Roy masterfully utilises this concept of space – Jannat Guest House, the graveyard — to illuminate the multifaceted nature of subaltern experiences in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. By depicting marginalised characters inhabiting and interacting with unconventional spaces and exploring the body as a personal site of struggle, she reveals the social, political, and emotional realities of those who exist on the fringes of mainstream Indian society. The novel's engagement with concepts like heterotopia and thirdspace provides a deeper understanding of how these subaltern spaces function as sites of marginalisation and resistance.

The novel also powerfully exemplifies ecofeminist perspectives on intertwined oppressions by depicting how the exploitation of women and marginalised communities is interconnected with the domination and degradation of nature within a patriarchal societal structure. The ecofeminist belief that women and nature are united through a shared history of oppression by a patriarchal society. This is narrated by interweaving the suffering of women and the degradation of the environment as parallel consequences of the same dominating forces. For instance, the exploitation of animals through unethical modernisation and scientific technology is shown alongside the plight of marginalised women who are denied fundamental rights and freedoms. Roy ironically notes, "Not many noticed the passing of the friendly old birds" (Roy 23), suggesting a broader societal apathy towards vulnerable beings.

The novel manifests a non-anthropocentric attitude towards nature, a key aspect of ecofeminism. This perspective challenges the human-centred view that justifies the exploitation of nature. Similarly, the novel critiques the patriarchal view that places men at the centre and subordinates' women and other marginalised groups. The suffering of "old birds" due to new chemicals is likened to the social rejection of the elderly and marginalised individuals like Anjum.The description of the beagle that is ill-treated in the pharmaceutical testing lab is very symbolic, and it points to the pathetic ill-treatmentof the marginalised. As the author writes"…He looked worn and rubbed out, like a drawing someone had tried to erase…with the drugs tested on him" (Roy 82).

Ecofeminism identifies patriarchy as the system that dominates both the environment and women. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, the patriarchal society dictates rigid

gender roles, where men are seen as authoritative and independent, often disconnected from nature. At the same time, women are relegated to domestic and submissive roles. This patriarchal structure allows for the exploitation of both women and the natural world without consequence. Nagaraj's friend advises him on how to handle Tilo: "What she needs, I am sorry to say, is two tight slaps. This modern approach of yours does not always work. At the end of the day we are all animals. We need to be shown our place" (Roy 232) to "show her place" exemplifies this patriarchal control over women.

Estokargues that the hatred of women and the hatred of nature are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing (220). The author illustrates this through instances where the dehumanisation of women mirrors the objectification of nature. The use of derogatory terms for Tilo based on her appearance, linking her to non-human categories, reflects a similar logic used to justify the exploitation of animals.When Tilo mocks men for wanting to feed a caged hippo razor blades, they taunt her with degraded names: "Oye! Hapshie madam! Hey! Nigger Madam!" (Roy 235).

Anjum's transformation of a graveyard into the guesthouse Jannat is a powerful symbol of nurturing life in a space of death. The source describes it as "a paradise whose defining characteristics, instead of innocence, are experience and permanence, which becomes Anjum's world." This act can be seen as an ecofeminist gesture of creating a sanctuary for the marginalised.

The novel critiques the destructive impact of modern development on the environment and its inhabitants. The incident of "a cow that had died – burst – from eating too many plastic bags at the main garbage dump" (Roy 264) illustrates the environmental degradation caused by urban living and its consequences for animals and nature. The changes observed in the bulls – "appear quite normal but at night they grow tall…When they piss, they lift their legs like dogs…are they bulls or dogs? Or wolves?" (Roy 298) and the description of injecting hens "to increase the efficiency of egg production" (Roy 299) highlight the unnatural manipulations of nature in the name of modern progress.

Despite the oppression, the novel also portrays women, particularly marginalised women and revolutionary figures like Revathy, actively resisting patriarchal structures and working towards a better future, often in connection with the environment and its resources. Maryam

Ipe's — Tilo's biological mother — dedication to their school and social and environmental campaigns showcases a woman challenging societal norms and working for positive change.

In conclusion, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a powerful literary illustration of ecofeminist principles. It closely weaves the narratives of the oppressed, marginalised, and of nature, revealing their interconnectedness under a dominating patriarchal system. Roy's narrative compels readers to recognise the parallel exploitation of nature and women and consider how embracing a non-anthropocentric perspective can transform gendered and environmental injustices.As Greta Gaard says, "…ecofeminism seems very promising… building on and transforming the anthropocentric critiques of first-and second-wave feminisms with an ecological perspective" (31).

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Eugenics and Genetic Selection: A Bioethical and Legal Perspective on Designer Babies

Dr. Minu Mary Mathew & C.S. Prabha

Eugenics, the practice of selectively enhancing genetic traits to shape future generations, has been a subject of moral and scientific contention for over a century. Rooted in the late nineteenth century, it was initially framed as a means of improving human heredity through controlled reproduction. Advocates believed that selective breeding could cultivate a healthier, more intelligent population, but history has shown that eugenics often served as a tool of discrimination and coercion. State-sponsored sterilisation programmes in the United States and Sweden targeted those deemed 'unfit,' while the Nazi regime carried this ideology to its most horrific extreme. Though discredited as a pseudoscience, the shadow of eugenics lingers. In an era driven by genetic advancements, the conversation has resurfaced—not in the language of racial purity, but through the rhetoric of reproductive choice and medical progress. As genetic selection becomes increasingly sophisticated, the ethical boundaries between science and eugenics blur, demanding a renewed examination of its implications. Eugenics has long been a subject of moral and scientific contention, shaping ideologies and policies that have left an indelible mark on human history.

From its inception in the late nineteenth century, it has been wielded as both an instrument of progress and a mechanism of control. Early proponents envisioned a future where selective breeding would cultivate a superior human race, while darker applications sought to eliminate those deemed genetically unfit. State-enforced sterilisation programmes in the United States and Sweden institutionalised this vision, culminating in the grotesque racial experiments of Nazi Germany. The discrediting of eugenics as a pseudoscientific justification for discrimination did little to erase its shadow. In a world increasingly defined by scientific breakthroughs, the conversation has resurfaced, not in the language of racial purity but through the rhetoric of choice and medical advancement.

Genetic selection has moved from an abstract possibility to an emerging reality. Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis allows the screening of embryos for hereditary diseases, offering prospective parents an unprecedented level of control over their offspring's genetic fate. CRISPR technology introduces an even more radical potential, making the direct modification of DNA a possibility. The elimination of genetic disorders appears a noble pursuit,

but the same tools raise unsettling questions about enhancement, customisation, and the commodification of human life. "The ultimate question is whether we should use gene editing to make us all a bit taller, stronger, smarter, or more resistant to certain diseases. If we start down that path, how do we draw the line between medical treatment and enhancement?" (Isaacson 352).The boundary between medicine and genetic engineering grows increasingly blurred. The spectre of eugenics lingers, not through coercion but through aspiration, as the desire for the perfect child edges towards a new genetic aristocracy.

Bioethical concerns surrounding genetic selection extend beyond the realm of medical ethics into profound philosophical dilemmas. The balance between reproductive autonomy and the rights of the unborn remains fraught with uncertainty. The very notion of human diversity stands at risk, as selective genetics could reshape the very fabric of what it means to be human. The growing accessibility of genetic modification threatens to deepen social inequalities, granting the privileged an opportunity to tailor the genetic destiny of their offspring while leaving others behind. "If genetic enhancements become available only to those who can afford them, we risk creating a society in which genetic privilege compounds existing social inequalities, reinforcing an unjust hierarchy of biological advantage." (Sandel 85).The logic of selection, once dictated by the state, now finds its expression in the choices of individuals, yet the consequences are no less profound. A world where genetic enhancement becomes a marker of privilege reintroduces the principles of eugenics under a different guise.

The legal landscape remains uneven. Some nations impose stringent oversight, with regulatory bodies monitoring every advancement, while others allow scientific progress to outpace legislative scrutiny. "The regulation of genetic technologies varies widely across jurisdictions, reflecting deep ethical divisions and differing national priorities. While some countries implement stringent oversight, others lack comprehensive frameworks, creating a fragmented global landscape that allows scientific advancements to outpace legal and ethical considerations." (Baylis 142).The United Kingdom enforces strict ethical controls, while the United States presents a fragmented regulatory framework. Global institutions acknowledge the ethical risks but lack the authority to impose binding regulations. The legality of CRISPR-based modifications remains ambiguous, with some countries banning germline editing outright while others proceed cautiously into uncharted territory. Law and ethics stand in tension, struggling to contain the possibilities that science continues to unlock.The social and political ramifications of genetic selection demand critical engagement. The return of genetic determinism

in the guise of personal choice threatens to legitimise new forms of discrimination. "The resurgence of genetic determinism under the guise of reproductive freedom risks reinforcing existing social hierarchies, as genetic selection becomes yet another axis of privilege. The historical legacy of eugenics serves as a cautionary tale, yet contemporary advancements in reproductive genetics suggest that society has yet to fully grapple with the ethical implications of selecting for certain traits." (Mills 87).The lessons of history, once thought buried with the discrediting of eugenics, resurface in contemporary debates on reproductive genetics. The question of who decides which lives are worth creating takes on an urgency that cannot be ignored. In a country such as India, where caste and economic disparities already dictate access to medical advancements, genetic selection introduces new complexities. The intersection of genetics, ethics, and law is no longer theoretical. It is unfolding in real-time, challenging established moral and legal frameworks with questions that demand immediate attention.

Eugenics emerged in the late nineteenth century as a movement grounded in the belief that human traits could be improved through selective breeding. Francis Galton, influenced by his cousin Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, coined the term and advocated for policies that would encourage the reproduction of individuals with desirable traits while discouraging or preventing those deemed unfit from procreating. The movement gained traction in the early twentieth century, with state-driven policies institutionalising its principles. Governments enacted sterilisation laws targeting individuals with disabilities, mental illnesses, and those from marginalised communities. In the United States, compulsory sterilisation programmes gained legal sanction through Supreme Court rulings such as Buck v. Bell in 1927, legitimising the forced sterilisation of thousands. Sweden, Canada, and other nations implemented similar policies under the guise of public health and national improvement. The most extreme manifestation of eugenics occurred in Nazi Germany, where racial hygiene laws escalated from forced sterilisation to mass extermination, exposing the full extent of eugenic ideology's dangers.

The post-war revelations of Nazi atrocities discredited eugenics, leading to widespread condemnation and the dismantling of many sterilisation programmes. "The eugenics movement, once justified as a means of national improvement, led to policies of forced sterilisation and racial purification, culminating in the atrocities of Nazi Germany. While overt eugenics fell out of favour after World War II, the impulse to control human heredity continues to manifest in

the era of reproductive genetics." (Kevles 213).However, the fundamental desire to control human heredity persisted, re-emerging in subtler forms with the advancement of reproductive technologies.The decline of overt state-driven eugenics did not signify the end of genetic selection. Instead, scientific advancements reframed the discourse from coercion to individual choice. The discovery of DNA's structure in 1953 and the subsequent development of genetic screening techniques enabled the identification of hereditary diseases at the molecular level. By the late twentieth century, Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis allowed prospective parents to select embryos free from genetic disorders before implantation. This technology was initially framed as a means of preventing severe medical conditions, yet its potential for non-medical selection soon became apparent. The emergence of CRISPR technology introduced the possibility of direct genetic modification, raising ethical questions about the extent to which genetic selection should be permitted. Unlike early eugenics, which was driven by state policies, contemporary genetic selection operates within the framework of reproductive choice. The rhetoric of genetic improvement has shifted from national progress to personal well-being, yet the underlying logic remains unchanged. "Modern genetic technologies have transformed eugenics from a state-imposed doctrine into an individualised pursuit, where the principles of genetic selection are repackaged as reproductive autonomy and medical progress. The ethical concerns remain, as the desire for enhancement risks replicating past injustices in a new genetic marketplace." (Sparrow 32).The pursuit of healthier, stronger, and more intelligent offspring echoes the eugenic ideals of the past, albeit under the guise of medical and technological advancement.

The ethics of designer babies presents profound dilemmas, with the conflict between autonomy and genetic determinism occupying central concern. Proponents argue that reproductive autonomy grants parents the right to make informed choices about their children's genetic traits. This perspective emphasises the ability to eliminate hereditary diseases and enhance the quality of life. However, the counterargument highlights the implications of such decisions on the autonomy of the unborn child. Genetic modification risks reducing human identity to a set of predetermined attributes, raising questions about the extent to which an individual's life is shaped by choice rather than genetic design. "The prospect of genetically modifying embryos to enhance certain traits raises profound ethical concerns, particularly regarding the tension between parental autonomy and the autonomy of the future individual. While genetic selection may prevent disease, it also risks imposing predetermined characteristics

that could limit an individual's self-determination." (Habermas 56).The selection of specific traits, even for therapeutic reasons, fosters a deterministic view of human potential, undermining the recognition of individual agency beyond genetic predisposition.The commodification of human life emerges as another ethical challenge. The ability to select or enhance genetic traits transforms reproduction into a transaction governed by market forces. The expansion of fertility clinics offering genetic selection services reflects a shift in reproductive medicine towards consumer-driven choices. The prospect of designing children based on aesthetic, intellectual, or athletic preferences raises concerns about the objectification of human life. The intersection of biotechnology and commercial interests intensifies ethical anxieties, as financial incentives drive the development and promotion of genetic enhancements. "The commodification of human genetics represents a profound ethical challenge, as the ability to select and modify embryos increasingly shifts reproduction from a natural process to a market-driven industry. The prospect of 'designer babies' risks turning children into consumer goods, subject to parental preferences and economic disparities." (Sandel 85).The transformation of genetic selection into a purchasable service introduces the risk of reducing human life to a product, reinforcing market-driven reproductive decisions over ethical considerations.The increasing accessibility of genetic selection technologies threatens to deepen social inequality. The cost of advanced reproductive procedures remains prohibitive for many, creating a scenario where genetic advantages become the privilege of the affluent. The prospect of a society where wealth determines genetic fitness introduces new dimensions of inequality, compounding existing social divisions. The possibility of genetic enhancement conferring advantages in intelligence, physical ability, or disease resistance exacerbates the gap between socio-economic classes, entrenching disparities that extend beyond financial or educational resources. The stratification of society based on genetic privilege raises questions about fairness and justice, challenging foundational principles of equality.

The ethical concerns surrounding genetic selection extend to the potential emergence of neo-eugenics. Unlike early eugenics, which was enforced through state policies, contemporary genetic selection operates through personal choice and technological availability. This shift makes its implications less visible but no less significant. The logic of selecting embryos for desirable traits mirrors the ideological foundation of eugenics, albeit in a voluntary form. The societal pressure to conform to genetic standards, whether for health, intelligence, or appearance, introduces a new form of coercion driven by cultural expectations rather than

legislative mandates. "The rise of genetic selection technologies, even when framed as personal choice, risks reintroducing eugenic ideologies under the guise of medical advancement. The cumulative effect of these choices may create a society where genetic enhancement becomes an implicit expectation, subtly coercing individuals to conform to evolving genetic norms." (Baylis 112).The cumulative effect of widespread genetic selection risks reinforcing discriminatory ideals, subtly reshaping perceptions of normalcy and desirability. The concern that these technologies could lead to an era where genetic modification becomes an expectation rather than a choice remains pressing. The line between medical necessity and genetic enhancement grows increasingly indistinct, making the ethical evaluation of genetic selection more urgent than ever.The legal frameworks governing genetic selection exhibit significant variation across jurisdictions, reflecting differing ethical stances, socio-political contexts, and historical experiences with eugenics. Some nations have adopted stringent regulations to prevent the misuse of reproductive technologies, while others maintain relatively permissive policies, allowing genetic selection for a range of medical and non-medical purposes.

The United Kingdom has established one of the most comprehensive regulatory mechanisms, with the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority overseeing all assisted reproductive technologies, including Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis and embryo research. The legal framework in the United Kingdom strictly limits the use of genetic selection to cases where there is a high risk of severe hereditary diseases, explicitly prohibiting its application for non-medical enhancements such as selecting for intelligence or physical attributes. Germany has adopted similarly restrictive laws, shaped by the historical legacy of Nazi eugenics, imposing severe limitations on genetic modification and prohibiting germline editing. France and Italy maintain legal constraints on genetic selection, permitting its use only for medical purposes under stringent oversight. In contrast, the United States lacks a uniform federal regulatory structure governing genetic selection, resulting in a fragmented legal landscape where regulations vary significantly from state to state. The absence of comprehensive federal legislation allows clinics to offer genetic selection services with minimal oversight, enabling practices that might be restricted or prohibited in more heavily regulated jurisdictions. The divergence in legal approaches highlights the complexities of regulating genetic selection, as ethical considerations and policy priorities differ across national contexts.

International guidelines and treaties offer broad ethical frameworks for genetic selection, yet they remain largely advisory, lacking binding enforcement mechanisms. UNESCO's

Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights affirms that the human genome should not be subject to practices that could lead to discrimination or stigmatisation, advocating for responsible scientific progress that respects human dignity. The Council of Europe's Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, also known as the Oviedo Convention, establishes legal principles restricting genetic interventions that could alter the human germline, prohibiting genetic modification for non-therapeutic purposes. The World Health Organisation has issued recommendations addressing the ethical implications of genetic selection, emphasising the need for equitable access, informed consent, and protections against genetic discrimination. The International Bioethics Committee has warned against the potential resurgence of eugenic practices through genetic selection, urging governments to implement robust ethical oversight mechanisms. While these international frameworks provide valuable ethical guidance, they lack enforceability, leaving individual nations to develop their own regulatory policies.

The absence of globally binding treaties creates disparities in how genetic selection is regulated, with some countries implementing strict legal controls while others permit more liberal applications. "Despite the existence of international declarations and treaties aimed at regulating genetic selection, their non-binding nature limits their effectiveness. The absence of a globally enforceable legal framework results in significant disparities in national policies, enabling regulatory arbitrage where individuals seek services in countries with more permissive laws." (Knoppers 367).The inconsistency in international legal frameworks has implications for medical tourism, as individuals seeking genetic selection services may travel to jurisdictions with fewer restrictions, undermining regulatory efforts in more restrictive countries. The lack of uniformity in legal approaches contributes to ethical and legal ambiguities, complicating the establishment of universal standards for genetic selection.Legal gaps and challenges persist in the regulation of genetic selection, particularly concerning emerging technologies such as CRISPR-based gene editing.

Many existing legal frameworks were developed before the advent of precise genetic modification techniques, leaving regulatory bodies struggling to address the ethical and legal complexities posed by germline editing. The distinction between therapeutic and enhancement-based genetic interventions remains a critical legal and ethical issue, as advancements in genetic technologies blur the line between preventing disease and enhancing desirable traits. The potential for genetic modifications to be inherited by future generations raises unprecedented legal questions regarding the long-term implications of germline editing. The lack of legal

clarity on the permissibility of heritable genetic modifications creates regulatory uncertainty, as some nations prohibit germline editing outright while others adopt a more permissive stance, allowing research but restricting clinical applications. The challenge of ensuring informed consent in genetic selection further complicates regulatory efforts, as prospective parents make decisions on behalf of future children without their direct input. The commodification of genetic selection services raises concerns about the role of market forces in shaping reproductive choices, with financial incentives potentially driving the expansion of genetic enhancement beyond therapeutic purposes. The accessibility of genetic selection technologies also presents legal challenges related to social justice, as disparities in access could exacerbate existing inequalities, creating a scenario where genetic privilege is concentrated among the wealthy.

The risk of genetic discrimination, where individuals face bias based on their genetic traits, necessitates legal protections to prevent the misuse of genetic information in employment, insurance, and social contexts. The development of international legal frameworks addressing genetic discrimination remains incomplete, with only a limited number of countries enacting specific laws to prohibit genetic bias. The potential for clandestine genetic modification in unregulated or weakly regulated jurisdictions poses further legal challenges, as enforcement mechanisms remain insufficient to prevent unethical genetic interventions. The interplay between scientific advancement, ethical considerations, and legal regulation necessitates a multidisciplinary approach to genetic selection governance, ensuring that technological progress aligns with human rights principles and social justice concerns. The ongoing evolution of genetic selection technologies underscores the need for dynamic legal responses that can adapt to emerging bioethical dilemmas while safeguarding against the risks of genetic manipulation.

The case of He Jiankui and the CRISPR scandal remains one of the most controversial incidents in the history of genetic selection, raising profound ethical, legal, and scientific concerns. In 2018, He Jiankui, a Chinese scientist, announced that he had used CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing technology to modify the genomes of twin embryos, resulting in the birth of genetically altered children. His research aimed to introduce a mutation in the CCR5 gene to confer resistance to HIV, yet the experiment was conducted in secrecy, bypassing established ethical review processes and disregarding international scientific norms. The announcement provoked widespread condemnation from the global scientific community, which criticised the experiment for its lack of transparency, ethical violations, and potential unintended consequences. Concerns regarding off-target genetic effects, unforeseen health risks, and the ethical dilemma of editing

the germline without the explicit consent of the affected individuals underscored the gravity of the issue. The Chinese government responded by sentencing He Jiankui to imprisonment and imposing a lifetime ban on his participation in reproductive medicine, reinforcing the importance of regulatory oversight in genetic selection. The scandal highlighted the dangers of unregulated genetic interventions, illustrating the potential for scientific ambition to outpace ethical considerations and legal safeguards. The case continues to serve as a cautionary example of the risks associated with unchecked experimentation in human genetic modification.

Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis has emerged as a widely used method in reproductive medicine, offering prospective parents the ability to screen embryos for hereditary diseases before implantation. PGD has been instrumental in preventing the transmission of severe genetic disorders such as cystic fibrosis, Tay-Sachs disease, Huntington's disease, and sickle cell anaemia, allowing individuals with known genetic predispositions to select embryos free of these conditions. The technology has provided a means of reducing the burden of genetic diseases within families, ensuring that children are born without life-threatening or debilitating hereditary conditions. The ethical acceptance of PGD for disease prevention has been largely shaped by its therapeutic intent, as it does not involve the direct modification of genetic material but rather the selection of embryos based on their genetic profiles. However, the expansion of PGD beyond medical necessity into the realm of non-medical selection, including sex selection and trait preference, has generated ethical concerns regarding its potential misuse. The possibility of using PGD for selecting intelligence, physical attributes, or other socially desirable traits raises questions about the commodification of human life and the risk of exacerbating genetic privilege. The accessibility of PGD remains an additional ethical challenge, as the high costs associated with the procedure could limit its availability to affluent individuals, reinforcing socio-economic disparities in reproductive medicine.

The increasing reliance on genetic screening in reproductive choices underscores the broader ethical implications of genetic selection, necessitating ongoing regulatory scrutiny to prevent the transition from therapeutic applications to ethically contentious enhancements.Israel has implemented one of the most comprehensive genetic screening programs in the world, reflecting a proactive approach to preventing hereditary diseases within specific population groups. The country has prioritised genetic screening as a public health measure, particularly within communities that have a high prevalence of genetic disorders due to historical patterns of endogamy. Programmes such as DorYeshorim, which target the ultra-Orthodox Jewish

community, facilitate genetic compatibility testing to prevent recessive genetic diseases such as Tay-Sachs and Canavan disease, conditions that are more common among Ashkenazi Jewish populations. Israel's healthcare system provides extensive genetic counselling services, integrating genetic screening into standard prenatal and preconception care. State-sponsored initiatives offer genetic testing for a broad range of hereditary conditions, enabling couples to make informed reproductive decisions. The integration of genetic screening into national healthcare policies reflects a commitment to reducing the incidence of severe genetic disorders, yet it also raises ethical considerations regarding reproductive autonomy and genetic determinism.

While participation in genetic screening programmes is voluntary, societal and familial pressures may influence reproductive choices, leading to ethical dilemmas about informed consent and individual agency. The success of Israel's genetic screening initiatives in mitigating hereditary diseases demonstrates the potential benefits of genetic selection in public health, yet it also highlights the ethical complexities associated with state-supported genetic interventions. "Israel has developed one of the most advanced genetic screening programs worldwide, particularly targeting hereditary diseases prevalent in specific communities. The state's proactive approach to genetic testing has significantly reduced the incidence of severe recessive disorders, yet it also raises ethical concerns about reproductive autonomy and social pressures influencing genetic decision-making." (Raz and Vizner 301).The country's approach serves as a model for balancing medical advancements with ethical responsibility, illustrating the need for regulatory frameworks that safeguard both public health interests and individual reproductive freedoms.

The future of genetic selection demands stringent bioethical regulations to prevent the resurgence of eugenic ideologies and ensure responsible scientific advancement. The rapid development of gene-editing technologies such as CRISPR and the increasing accessibility of reproductive genetic screening necessitate a global consensus on ethical boundaries to prevent potential abuses. The absence of uniform regulatory frameworks has allowed certain regions to pursue genetic interventions with minimal oversight, raising concerns about the exploitation of scientific advancements for non-therapeutic enhancements. The ethical risks associated with germline editing, particularly the potential for unforeseen genetic consequences and the violation of the unborn child's autonomy, warrant the establishment of internationally binding guidelines. Regulatory mechanisms should prioritise medical necessity, preventing the expansion

of genetic selection into cosmetic or socially desirable traits that could commodify human life. Robust oversight should include rigorous ethical review boards, public discourse on the implications of genetic interventions, and enforcement mechanisms that prevent unethical experimentation. The scientific community must actively engage in ethical deliberations to ensure that genetic selection remains aligned with principles of beneficence and non-maleficence.Ensuring genetic justice and equity in policy frameworks is essential to prevent genetic selection technologies from exacerbating social inequalities.

The high cost of genetic screening and gene-editing procedures has the potential to create a stratified society in which access to genetic advantages is determined by wealth, reinforcing existing disparities. "The unequal access to genetic technologies threatens to entrench social hierarchies, where only the affluent can afford enhancements, further marginalizing disadvantaged groups. A just regulatory framework must prioritize equitable distribution and prevent genetic selection from becoming a tool of socio-economic exclusion." (Gyngell et al. 45). Policymakers must integrate considerations of accessibility and affordability into legislative frameworks to prevent genetic privilege from becoming a determinant of social stratification. Equitable distribution of genetic technologies requires investment in public healthcare systems, subsidised access to essential genetic interventions, and stringent measures to prevent genetic discrimination in employment, insurance, and education. The ethical discourse surrounding genetic selection must prioritise inclusivity, ensuring that advancements in reproductive medicine do not deepen existing inequities but instead contribute to the collective good. Regulatory frameworks must incorporate socio-political perspectives that recognise the intersectionality of genetics, economic status, and human rights. International collaboration is necessary to establish ethical norms that uphold principles of justice while allowing scientific progress to serve humanity without creating new forms of biological inequality.

Genetic selection, situated at the intersection of scientific progress and ethical inquiry, has redefined reproductive medicine by offering unprecedented control over hereditary traits. The historical trajectory of eugenics, from coercive state policies to contemporary genetic interventions, underscores the persistent tension between scientific ambition and ethical responsibility. Technologies such as Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis and CRISPR have enabled the prevention of genetic disorders, yet they have also introduced complex dilemmas concerning autonomy, commodification of life, and the potential reinforcement of social inequalities. The ethical implications extend beyond individual choice, raising broader concerns

about the re-emergence of eugenic ideologies and the stratification of society based on genetic privilege. The legal landscape remains fragmented, with discrepancies in national policies and gaps in international governance creating inconsistencies in the regulation of genetic selection. Case studies, including the He Jiankui scandal, the use of PGD for disease prevention, and Israel's genetic screening programmes, illustrate the diverse applications and ethical concerns associated with genetic interventions.Ethical oversight remains imperative to prevent genetic selection from being misused in ways that undermine human dignity and exacerbate social divisions. The absence of uniform global regulations increases the risk of scientific advancements being exploited for purposes beyond therapeutic necessity. Regulatory frameworks must prioritise genetic justice, ensuring that access to genetic technologies does not become a privilege restricted to the affluent. Bioethical deliberations must remain central to policy decisions, integrating legal, social, and philosophical perspectives to safeguard against the resurgence of genetic discrimination. The future of genetic selection depends on the establishment of rigorous ethical guidelines that balance scientific innovation with the protection of fundamental human values. Genetic modification holds transformative potential, but its application must be governed by principles that prioritise equity, justice, and the collective well-being of society. As we stand on the threshold of unprecedented biotechnological possibilities, the choices we make today will shape the genetic legacy of future generations. The question is no longer whether we can alter the genetic fabric of humanity—but whether we should, and at what ethical cost.

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Beyond Adaptation: Transmedia Storytelling, World-Building, and Participatory Culture in the Digital Age

Dr. Revathy Menon

Abstract

Storytelling has always been central to human culture, evolving alongside media technologies from oral traditions to immersive digital environments. This article examines the concept of transmedia storytelling as a convergence-driven practice that distributes narrative across multiple platforms while enabling participatory engagement from audiences. Drawing on foundational theories from Henry Jenkins, Carlos Scolari, Christy Dena, Geoffrey Long, and others, the paper situates transmedia storytelling within broader cultural, technological, and economic frameworks. It explores its core principles, its intersections with adaptation, and its implications for world-building, fan cultures, and media industries. The analysis concludes by emphasizing the necessity of viewing transmedia storytelling as both a creative strategy and a global cultural trend.

Keywords: Transmedia Storytelling, Adaptation, World-Building, Participatory Culture, Media Convergence

Storytelling has always been a defining mode of human expression, shaping cultural memory, transmitting values, and creating shared imaginative worlds. In the contemporary media landscape, however, storytelling is no longer confined to a single medium or linear mode of narration. With the rise of convergence culture, narratives now unfold across films, television, comics, games, social media, and user-generated content, inviting audiences to participate as collaborators rather than passive consumers. This phenomenon, identified as transmedia storytelling by Henry Jenkins, represents a paradigm shift in how stories are produced, circulated, and experienced (*Convergence Culture* 95). Moving beyond the framework of adaptation—which traditionally emphasizes fidelity to a source text—transmedia storytelling disperses narrative elements across multiple platforms, each contributing uniquely to the construction of an expansive story world(Scolari 588). This article explores the theoretical foundations and cultural significance of transmedia storytelling, examining its principles of world-building, interactivity, and audience participation while also interrogating its intersections with adaptation and its implications for contemporary media industries.

While transmedia storytelling is a distinctly contemporary phenomenon shaped by digital convergence, its roots lie in the deeper cultural function of storytelling itself. From myth and folklore to epic poetry and religious texts, narratives have long served as the primary means through which societies construct meaning, transmit values, and negotiate collective identities(Kinder 4). Each technological shift—from orality to print, from cinema to television, and now to interactive digital platforms—has transformed not only the mode of delivery but also the dynamics of audience engagement (Long 15). Situating transmedia within this larger historical continuum allows us to recognize it not as a radical departure but as an evolutionary extension of humanity's oldest communicative practice: the telling and retelling of stories across time, space, and media (Wolf 2).

Storytelling as Human Communication and Learning

Storytelling has always been central to human communication, shaping how individuals construct meaning, form identities, and transmit cultural knowledge across generations. Far from being a mere aesthetic practice, narrative functions as a cognitive and social tool that allows people to situate new experiences within familiar structures of understanding. As Warren observes, stories serve as "cognitive bridges" that connect new information with established frameworks of knowledge and belief, thereby facilitating processes of learning and memory (579). In this sense, narrative is not simply entertainment; it is one of the most enduring methods of education and meaning-making.

This communicative function of narrative extends beyond the simple transmission of facts or events. Narratives shape collective identity by embedding cultural values, ethical frameworks, and social hierarchies within shared plots and characters. They foster empathy by inviting audiences to inhabit perspectives other than their own, thus performing both cognitive and emotional work (Evans 33). Storytelling, therefore, becomes a mechanism through which societies preserve continuity and negotiate change, creating a living archive of shared meanings that evolves over time.

Wolf expands this discussion by noting that imaginary worlds are significant not only for their audiences but also for their creators (5). The act of world-building, whether in myth, literature, or contemporary digital media, offers creators a means of organizing experience into coherent symbolic systems. For audiences, engagement with these worlds generates immersion and identification, allowing them to test ethical possibilities, imagine alternatives,

and rehearse social roles in a symbolic space. Narrative, then, is both a personal and collective act: personal in that it helps individuals construct identities, and collective in that it anchors those identities within broader cultural traditions.

With the advent of digital technologies, the forms and functions of storytelling have expanded considerably. Bonsignore-Quinn notes that narrative is no longer confined to text but increasingly unfolds through multimedia platforms that combine visuals, audio, interactivity, and user-generated contributions (25). This shift reflects not merely a change in medium but a transformation in how stories are conceived, circulated, and experienced. Contemporary audiences, particularly digital natives, are accustomed to stories that are participatory, multimodal, and distributed across multiple platforms(Jenkins, Spreadable Media 2). In this environment, storytelling becomes a collaborative act in which audiences actively shape the trajectory of narratives rather than consuming them passively.

Moreover, digital storytelling has significant implications for education and learning. By integrating narrative into digital environments—whether through games, simulations, or transmedia experiences—educators can harness storytelling's natural power to connect abstract concepts with lived experiences(Bonsignore-Quinn et al. 796). Narrative's ability to foster engagement and retention makes it especially effective in pedagogical contexts. Stories situate knowledge in contexts that are emotionally resonant and cognitively accessible, thereby bridging the gap between abstract instruction and practical understanding. In this way, storytelling continues to serve its historical role as a mediator of knowledge while adapting to new technological and cultural realities.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that storytelling is not merely an artistic practice but a fundamental human activity that underlies communication, learning, and social cohesion. From oral traditions to digital networks, stories have served as vehicles for memory, imagination, and identity, constantly reshaped by the media through which they are expressed (Wolf 7). As the following sections will demonstrate, transmedia storytelling builds on this long cultural trajectory, extending the communicative power of narrative into expansive, participatory, and technologically mediated environments.

The Emergence of Transmedia Storytelling

The notion of transmedia storytelling first appeared in the work of Marsha Kinder, who in *Playing with Power* (1991) introduced the idea of "transmedia intertextuality" to describe

the ways in which narratives circulate across different media channels (3). This concept was later expanded and popularized by Henry Jenkins, whose influential works *Convergence Culture* (2006) and *Spreadable Media* (2013) outlined transmedia storytelling as a strategy in which elements of a story are dispersed across multiple platforms, with each medium contributing uniquely to the overall narrative experience. While the practice of telling stories across different media has historical precedents—consider the adaptations of novels into films or the circulation of myths in both oral and written traditions—the digital age has profoundly transformed both the scale and the participatory dynamics of these practices.

The rise of Web 2.0, media convergence, and interactive digital platforms has been crucial in accelerating the reach and cultural prominence of transmedia storytelling. Unlike traditional forms of adaptation that typically retell the same narrative in a different medium, transmedia storytelling emphasizes expansion, multiplicity, and interconnection. Each platform—whether film, television, comics, video games, or social media—adds new dimensions to the story world, encouraging audiences to actively explore and piece together meaning across fragmented texts. This process not only deepens immersion but also fosters communities of participation in which fans contribute interpretations, creations, and even extensions of the narrative universe.

Scholars have underscored both the cultural and economic implications of this trend. Freeman identifies transmedia storytelling as a defining feature of global media industries, highlighting its role in generating creative innovation while simultaneously enabling cross-platform marketing and brand synergy (23). Similarly, Evans conceptualizes transmediality as the practice of deploying diverse media technologies to expand and enrich a single fictional universe (30). Together, these perspectives demonstrate how transmedia storytelling functions at the intersection of artistry, technology, and commerce, marking it as one of the most significant cultural practices of the digital age.

Principles of Transmedia Storytelling

As Henry Jenkins (2006) emphasizes, transmedia storytelling is not simply about spreading a narrative across different media forms but about creating a coordinated system in which each medium contributes uniquely to the story world (95). Unlike adaptation, which often involves retelling the same narrative in a different form, transmedia practices rely on expansion and differentiation. A film might introduce central characters and plotlines, while

comics or games add backstories, side narratives, or alternative perspectives that enrich the overall universe. This strategy transforms the narrative into a complex system, where meaning is not contained within a single text but emerges across a constellation of interconnected media (101).

One of the fundamental principles underpinning transmedia storytelling is seriality, or the structuring of stories into multiple instalments distributed across platforms. Traditionally associated with literature and television, seriality in transmedia contexts becomes dispersed and non-linear. Instead of a single, chronological unfolding, audiences are encouraged to piece together a narrative mosaic from fragments scattered across various texts and media. This process of "serial accumulation," as Jenkins describes it, positions the audience not as passive receivers but as active participants who navigate and interpret a dispersed story world (118).

Closely related to seriality is the principle of world-building, which Mark J. P. Wolf (2012) defines as the construction of coherent and immersive imaginary universes that extend beyond any single narrative (45). Transmedia storytelling thrives on world-building because the expansion of a fictional universe across multiple platforms sustains long-term audience engagement. For example, the Star Wars franchise is not confined to its films; it spans novels, animated series, games, comics, and fan-created works, all of which contribute to fleshing out a galaxy that seems larger than any one story. World-building thus allows for multiplicity (52), continuity, and a sense of "living worlds" in which stories can proliferate indefinitely.

Another principle is immersion and extractability, terms Jenkins (2006) uses to describe how audiences both immerse themselves in a fictional world and extract elements from it to integrate into their everyday lives (114). Immersion occurs when audiences enter expansive story environments, such as theme parks or virtual simulations, while extractability refers to how cultural artifacts—merchandise, memes, cosplay, or fan fiction—allow people to carry aspects of the narrative world into their personal identities. This dynamic underscore how transmedia storytelling blurs the boundary between fiction and lived culture, situating narratives as both entertainment and lifestyle.

The principle of spreadability and drillability further highlights the participatory dimension of transmedia storytelling. As Jenkins, Ford, and Green explain in *Spreadable Media* (2013), digital platforms enable stories to circulate widely ("spreadability") while also encouraging

audiences to dig deeply into their layers of meaning ("drillability"). Audiences not only share and remix transmedia content but also devote themselves to uncovering hidden clues, Easter eggs, or narrative puzzles that reward deep engagement. This principle illustrates how transmedia storytelling leverages the logics of participatory culture, where fans are not just consumers but also collaborators in sustaining and expanding narrative worlds (11).

Equally significant is the principle of subjectivity and multiplicity. Transmedia narratives often provide alternative perspectives on the same events, offering audiences a fuller, more nuanced view of the fictional world. Evans (2011) notes that this technique enriches the complexity of the story by allowing different characters, marginalized voices, or secondary plots to gain narrative prominence across different media forms (32). In doing so, transmedia storytelling challenges traditional hierarchies of narrative centrality, emphasizing instead a polyphonic approach to storytelling.

Finally, the principle of performance underscores the extent to which audiences become co-creators of transmedia narratives. Fans create derivative works—fan fiction, fan videos, role-playing games—that extend the fictional world beyond what is officially sanctioned. In some cases, media producers actively incorporate fan contributions into canonical storylines, blurring the line between official and unofficial content. This collaborative ethos distinguishes transmedia storytelling from earlier narrative models and reflects the broader dynamics of participatory culture in digital era (Jenkins *Spreadable*21).

Taken together, these principles demonstrate that transmedia storytelling is not simply an industrial or technological strategy but also a cultural form that reconfigures how stories are created, circulated, and experienced. It thrives on expansion rather than repetition, inviting audiences to become explorers, interpreters, and even co-creators of vast narrative ecosystems. By structuring stories across multiple platforms, emphasizing world-building, fostering participatory practices, and cultivating deep immersion, transmedia storytelling exemplifies the convergence of creative innovation and cultural engagement (Jenkins *Convergencee*121*)*.

As such, the practice signals a shift in narrative authority. No longer confined to the intentions of a single author or medium, meaning emerges through the interplay between media texts, producers, and audiences. This collaborative, networked model of storytelling aligns with broader cultural transformations in the digital age, where boundaries between production and consumption, art and commerce, and text and audience are increasingly porous.

Understanding these principles is therefore essential to grasping not only how transmedia storytelling operates but also why it has become one of the most significant narrative strategies of the twenty-first century.

World-Building and Participatory Culture

World-building lies at the heart of transmedia storytelling. While traditional narratives often focus on linear plots or singular character arcs, transmedia practices emphasize the construction of expansive universes that can accommodate multiple stories, perspectives, and temporalities. Mark J. P. Wolf (2012) argues that the design of imaginary worlds is not simply a backdrop for storytelling but a central mechanism through which audiences engage with and inhabit fictional environments (5). These worlds function as narrative ecosystems, rich with cultural, geographical, and historical detail, thereby enabling stories to proliferate across different media without exhausting the possibilities of the fictional universe.

A well-constructed transmedia world provides coherence across diverse texts while simultaneously allowing room for multiplicity and creative expansion. *The Harry Potter* franchise illustrates this principle effectively: J. K. Rowling's novels established the core narrative, but subsequent films, video games, Pottermore (later Wizarding World), and fan-created works expanded the universe far beyond the original seven-book arc. This expansion demonstrates what Jenkins (2006) identifies as the "encyclopedic impulse" of transmedia storytelling, where audiences are motivated to learn everything about the fictional universe by exploring its distributed fragments across multiple platforms (Jenkins *Convergencee*121*)*. The audience's investment is not limited to following a storyline but extends to immersing themselves in the structures, rules, and cultures of the world itself.

Equally significant is how participatory culture intersects with world-building. Jenkins (1992) originally used the term to describe the practices of fan communities who appropriate, remix, and reimagine existing media texts(Textual Poachers 23). With the advent of Web 2.0, participatory culture has become more visible and influential, as fans now possess the technological tools to produce and circulate their own contributions on a global scale. In a transmedia environment, these practices are not marginal but central to the functioning of the story world. Fans engage in "textual poaching" (Jenkins 1992), where they borrow narrative elements to construct fan fiction, fan art, or role-playing scenarios that both enrich and complicate the fictional universe (27).

Participatory culture also reshapes the relationship between producers and audiences. In earlier media models, the boundaries between "official" and "unofficial" content were sharply drawn, with creators maintaining strict control over narrative authority. In contrast, transmedia storytelling often thrives on a porous relationship where fan contributions gain legitimacy, visibility, and even incorporation into canonical narratives. For instance, the *Doctor Who* franchise has long embraced fan creativity, with some professional writers initially emerging from fan communities(Hills 35). Similarly, platforms like Wattpad and Archive of Our Own exemplify how fan-driven spaces generate massive narrative extensions, some of which influence mainstream publishing and media production.

Moreover, participatory culture highlights the performative dimension of transmedia storytelling. Fans do not simply consume narratives; they embody them through cosplay, live-action role-playing (LARP), and online performances. These practices extend the fictional world into lived reality, collapsing the boundary between narrative immersion and everyday identity. As scholars like Nicolle Lamerichs (2018) argue, fan performance transforms storytelling into a communal event, where identity and social belonging are negotiated through participation in narrative play (59). World-building, in this sense, is not merely textual but experiential, inviting audiences to inhabit fictional universes both imaginatively and physically.

Importantly, participatory culture has also been recognized for its pedagogical and democratic dimensions. Jenkins et al. (2009) describe participatory culture as fostering "skills of collaboration, problem-solving, and civic engagement," suggesting that engagement with transmedia worlds extends beyond entertainment to social learning and community building (6). Online fandoms often organize around interpretive debates, collaborative projects, and collective world-building exercises, cultivating literacies that are increasingly relevant in the networked age. These practices demonstrate how transmedia storytelling not only sustains fictional universes but also generates real-world cultural competencies and social networks.

However, the relationship between world-building and participatory culture is not without tensions. While media corporations may benefit economically from fan engagement—through marketing, merchandise, and audience loyalty—they also seek to regulate and control the circulation of content. Freeman (2014) notes that corporate strategies often co-opt participatory culture, blurring the line between genuine audience empowerment and market-driven exploitation (77). For instance, while fan contributions are celebrated, they are often restricted

by copyright laws and corporate gatekeeping, raising critical questions about ownership, labour, and creativity in the digital age.

Despite these tensions, the convergence of world-building and participatory culture underscores the vitality of transmedia storytelling as a cultural form. It reflects a shift from narrative as a closed system to narrative as an open, dynamic process co-created by producers and audiences. World-building provides the structural framework, while participatory culture fills that framework with lived experiences, alternative stories, and diverse perspectives. Together, they create expansive narrative universes that are simultaneously industrial products and cultural commons.

The implications of this convergence are profound. By distributing narrative authority across both official creators and participatory communities, transmedia storytelling challenges hierarchical models of authorship. It suggests that storytelling in the digital age is not merely about consumption but about collaboration, negotiation, and shared ownership. Audiences are no longer at the periphery of narrative production; they are central actors in sustaining and expanding story worlds. The digital age has thus transformed storytelling into a participatory ecosystem in which world-building serves as the foundation and fan engagement functions as the lifeblood.

In this sense, transmedia storytelling is emblematic of broader culturaltransformations brought about by convergence culture. It reflects the erosion of boundaries between producers and consumers, the blending of fiction and reality, and the reconfiguration of stories as collective cultural practices rather than isolated artistic products. Understanding this convergence is therefore essential not only for appreciating the mechanics of transmedia storytelling but also for recognizing its role in shaping how communities, identities, and cultures are negotiated in the twenty-first century.

Transmedia Storytelling and the Media Industries

The rise of transmedia storytelling cannot be fully understood without examining its integration into the structures and strategies of contemporary media industries. While transmedia can be theorized as a cultural and creative practice, it is also an industrial logic shaped by economic imperatives, corporate strategies, and technological infrastructures. Henry Jenkins (2006) notes that transmedia storytelling emerges from "convergence culture," a context where media companies seek to maximize the value of intellectual properties by extending them

across platforms, while audiences seek richer and more interactive narrative experiences (2). This dual dynamic has positioned transmedia as a crucial site where artistic innovation and commercial exploitation intersect.

Media industries have increasingly recognized the economic potential of transmedia worlds. Freeman (2014) observes that transmedia storytelling functions as both a creative method and a marketing strategy, sustaining audience engagement over long durations and across multiple markets (5). Franchises such as *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* exemplify this industrial approach. Each franchise strategically deploys films, television series, novels, comics, games, merchandise, and theme parks to expand its narrative world while simultaneously generating diverse revenue streams. In this model, world-building is not simply an aesthetic choice but a business strategy designed to keep audiences invested in a story universe that can be endlessly monetized.

Moreover, the structure of the media industries increasingly reflects the logic of transmedia storytelling. The shift from vertically integrated film studios of the twentieth century to horizontally networked conglomerates illustrate how corporate synergy enables transmedia expansion. As Lotz (2014) explains, conglomerates like Disney, Warner Bros., and Universal harness their various subsidiaries to produce, distribute, and market interconnected content across media platforms (19). Disney's acquisition of Marvel and Lucasfilm, for instance, illustrates how conglomerates strategically consolidate intellectual property in order to cultivate long-term transmedia franchises. These practices demonstrate how transmedia storytelling is embedded within broader trends of media globalization, branding, and franchising.

At the same time, transmedia storytelling reveals the changing dynamics of audience engagement within the media industries. Producers now rely on what Jenkins (2006) describes as "spreadable media," content designed to circulate easily across social networks, thereby leveraging audience participation as a form of unpaid promotional labour (93). Trailers, teasers, alternate reality games (ARGs), and behind-the-scenes content are strategically released to encourage online discussion, speculation, and fan-driven circulation. These practices not only build anticipation but also create a participatory promotional culture in which fans become integral to industrial marketing strategies. As Caldwell (2004) argues, media industries increasingly rely on "integrated industrial self-theorization," wherein industry professionals consciously engage with academic and fan discourses to legitimize their creative and promotional practices (2).

Nevertheless, the industrial deployment of transmedia is not without tensions. While participatory culture empowers audiences, it also blurs the line between voluntary fan labour and corporate exploitation. Fuchs (2014) critiques how media industries capitalize on participatory practices by harnessing fan enthusiasm as free marketing, often without compensating or acknowledging the labour involved (56). Similarly, the increasing consolidation of intellectual property rights raises questions about ownership, access, and cultural diversity. By controlling vast transmedia empires, conglomerates risk homogenizing global culture, privileging dominant narratives while marginalizing independent and alternative voices.

Another critical issue is sustainability. As Evans (2011) points out, not all transmedia projects achieve long-term viability; many fail due to insufficient world-building, lack of audience investment, or overreliance on marketing rather than narrative coherence (24). Successful transmedia storytelling requires careful balance between creative depth and industrial coordination. Overextension or incoherence can alienate audiences, undermining both cultural and commercial value. For this reason, franchises like *The Matrix or The Dark Tower* illustrate the risks of transmedia when industrial ambitions outweigh narrative cohesion.

Despite these challenges, transmedia storytelling continues to dominate industrial strategies because it aligns with broader shifts toward media globalization and digital convergence. In a fragmented media environment, transmedia offers a model for maintaining audience attention across multiple platforms while cultivating emotional and cultural investment in intellectual properties. It exemplifies how industries seek to transform stories into "brands" and audiences into "communities," thereby ensuring both profitability and longevity.

Ultimately, the relationship between transmedia storytelling and the media industries demonstrates the dual nature of the phenomenon: it is simultaneously an artistic form that expands the possibilities of narrative and a commercial strategy that maximizes corporate profit. Recognizing this tension is essential for understanding how transmedia functions within the digital age. As cultural texts, transmedia worlds inspire creativity, collaboration, and participatory engagement. As industrial products, they reveal the power dynamics of ownership, branding, and globalization that structure contemporary media production. The study of transmedia storytelling, therefore, requires attending to both dimensions, acknowledging that its cultural significance cannot be separated from its industrial foundations.

Conclusion

The convergence of world-building and participatory culture demonstrates that transmedia storytelling is not merely an extension of older narrative practices but a distinct cultural formation shaped by the digital age. While adaptation traditionally implied the transfer of a story from one medium to another, transmedia operates on a different logic—one of expansion, proliferation, and co-creation. It moves beyond adaptation by refusing the closed system of source and copy, instead cultivating a dynamic network of texts, performances, and communities.

At the same time, this openness is not without ambivalence. As much as transmedia empowers audiences to engage, remix, and extend fictional universes, it also functions as a corporate strategy of branding and commodification. The porous boundary between official and unofficial content enables creativity but also raises questions of ownership, labour, and cultural authority.

Thus, transmedia storytelling must be understood simultaneously as an artistic innovation and an industrial practice. It redefines the role of audiences from passive consumers to active participants, while also reinforcing media conglomerates' power to monetize cultural engagement. By situating narrative as an open system rather than a fixed text, transmedia storytelling exemplifies the shift from adaptation as repetition to adaptation as transformation—an ongoing, collaborative process in which meaning is negotiated across media, institutions, and communities.

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Liminal Voyages: Reimagining Colonial Power in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*

Rinu Rijisha K.P.

Abstract

This paper examines Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* as a work of historical fiction that challenges traditional colonial narratives through its portrayal of indentured labourers and marginalized communities in nineteenth-century India. The novel, set against the backdrop of the opium trade and indentured labour migration, employs the ship Ibis as a liminal space where conventional boundaries of caste, race, and gender are transgressed. Through an analysis of subaltern voices and hybrid linguistic practices, this study demonstrates how Ghosh reconstructs colonial history from below, offering a counter-narrative to dominant imperial discourses. The paper particularly focuses on the transformation of social hierarchies aboard the ship and the novel's representation of caste dynamics, arguing that Ghosh's work presents migration as both displacement and liberation, ultimately reimagining the colonial experience through the lens of the marginalized.

Keywords: Colonial Literature, Subaltern Studies, Indentured Labour, Liminal Space

Introduction

Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, the first novel in the Ibis trilogy, represents a significant contribution to postcolonial literature through its reimagining of nineteenth-century colonial India from the perspective of the marginalized. Published in 2008, the novel challenges conventional historical narratives by foregrounding the experiences of indentured labourers, untouchables, and other subaltern figures who were largely absent from official colonial records. Set in the 1830s, the work intersects two crucial historical developments: the lucrative opium trade between India and China, and the emergence of indentured labour as a replacement for slavery in British colonies.

Ghosh's narrative strategy deliberately subverts traditional colonial discourse by employing what can be termed "history from below"—a methodology that privileges the voices and experiences of those who were systematically excluded from dominant historical accounts. The ship Ibis serves not merely as a vessel for transportation but as a transformative liminal space where established social hierarchies are challenged and new forms of community emerge.

Through this maritime setting, Ghosh explores themes of displacement, belonging, and resistance while interrogating the complex intersections of race, caste, gender, and colonial power.

The novel's significance extends beyond its historical reconstruction to its contemporary relevance, as Ghosh himself has noted the uncanny similarities between nineteenth-century imperial practices and modern forms of colonialism. By withholding assent from dominant historical narratives, *Sea of Poppies* offers a critical lens through which to examine both past and present manifestations of imperial power.

The Ship as Liminal Space: Transforming Social Hierarchies

The novel can be categorized as historical fiction, comprising narratives that take place in the past and characterized chiefly by an imaginative reconstruction of events and personages. It focuses on two significant socio-historical enterprises of the nineteenth century: the trade of opium as a cash crop in eastern India for the Chinese market, and the transport of Indian indentured workers to British-owned sugarcane plantations in Mauritius, Fiji, and Trinidad. The former dictates the course of the novel's events on land, and the latter forms the crux of Ghosh's narrative as it revolves around the gathering of a motley crew who travel to Mauritius as indentured labourers.

Ghosh renegotiates discourses of subalternity from the perspective of this indentured diaspora while navigating his vessel through the dark waters of the Indian Ocean. The author has consistently used migration as a trope to revisit existing colonial-historical narratives from a hitherto unexplored perspective, presenting history from below. In a 2012 interview with Romanian journalist Bianca Felseghi, Ghosh commented on why he returns to the subject of colonialism:

The present incarnation of empire is in fact uncannily like the old one, with its island prisons, its vast network of jails, its "cantonments" and most of all its tireless trumpeting of good intentions... Present day colonialism derives its character from the past; it wants us to give our assent to a certain view of history so that this history can be repeated. There is not much we can do about the past, but it is certainly within our power to withhold our assent in the present day. (7)

The subjects of this transnational narration include non-white natives, white foreigners, marginalized peasants, and elite landlords. Much of the storyline revolves around the difficulty posed by the Chinese government in allowing opium imports, which created business challenges

for the East India Company and private traders in the lucrative opium trade. The first two parts of the novel describe the circumstances of various characters as they sign indentures and make their way to Calcutta to be processed and shipped out. The third part takes place at sea, where the human cargo endures the harsh conditions of the ship and crew.

As multiple tensions among and between the crew, the indentured labourers, and the convicts begin to simmer, miniature rebellions ensue, leading to the death of the ship's English first mate and two natives who are part of the ship's security apparatus. The novel ends with five men escaping on a boat in turbulent waters, while others on the ship, including several female protagonists and the ship's second mate, wave relieved goodbyes. The novel thus captures the stories of multiple people whose lives are uprooted as they confront shifts in the colonial regime arising from the empire's effort to maintain its global trading network.

Ghosh's exploration of contemporary social hierarchies shows the characters' striking attempts to find a place to belong in a larger system, something they didn't have in their respective homes. The displacement the characters undergo triggers a new sense of belonging. The way to find this place of belonging is to transgress the accepted boundaries of race, gender, and caste that have victimized much of the crew of the Ibis. The ship becomes a vessel that holds one large, shared history of pain and subjugation. On such a ship where imperialist forces have brought together Indian ethos and European sensibilities, Ghosh places Zachary Reid, a reminder of yet another dark depth of colonialism. His very presence becomes a surrogate for black Atlantic memory, harking back to another discourse of diaspora and migration. The Ibis also becomes a liminal space that serves as a microcosm of what would later function as a full-fledged social system on the island of Mauritius, containing within itself members from diverse castes, religions, and regions.

Caste, Language, and Colonial Discourse: Challenging Traditional Boundaries

The debate about appropriate administrative and legal institutions in the colony was framed by the question of balancing the needs of the empire with those of the colonial subjects. The debate related to social reforms, including the abolition of Sati, involved the need to simultaneously accommodate colonial law and customary practices. Colonial anxieties about Sati before it was abolished are reflected in William Bentinck's Minute on Sati:

Whether the question be to continue or discontinue the practice of [Sati], the decision is equally surrounded by an awful responsibility. To consent to the consignment, year after

year, of hundreds of innocent victims to a cruel and untimely end, when the power exists of preventing it, is a predicament which no conscience can contemplate without horror. But on the other hand, if heretofore received opinions are to be considered of any value, to put to hazard, by a contrary course, the very safety of the British empire in India, and to extinguish at once all hopes of these great improvements affecting the condition, not of thousands, but of millions, which can only be expected from the continuance of our supremacy: is an alternative which, even in the light of humanity itself, may be considered as still greater evil.

In *Sea of Poppies*, several and at times contradictory narrative strategies are employed in the representation of caste and untouchability. Caste in relation to the practice of untouchability is foregrounded from the very beginning of the novel, when Kalua picks up Deeti's husband to take him to work at the opium factory:

Kalua, the driver of the ox-cart, was a giant of a man, but he made no move to help his passenger and was careful to keep his face hidden from him; he was of the leather worker's caste and Hukam Singh, as a high-caste Rajput, believed that the sight of his face would bode ill for the day ahead. Now, on climbing into the back of the cart, with his bundle balanced on his lap, to prevent its coming into direct contact with any of the driver's belongings. (4)

At this stage in the novel, the workings of the caste system are narrated in an explanatory way without interrogating its discriminatory and denigrating features. But when Kalua is tormented and abused by the upper-caste Thakur Sahibs, the text creates a grotesque image of Kalua resembling a horse with whom his tormentors want him to copulate: "The others whipped Kalua's naked back until his groin was pressed hard against the animal's rear. Kalua uttered a cry that was almost indistinguishable in tone from the whinnying of the horse" (59).

Despite facing discrimination, Kalua possesses courage and resilience. His unconventional relationship with Deeti is a radical act of defiance against social norms. Their bond transcends the constraints of society, offering them mutual support and love in a hostile world. Kalua challenges traditional notions of masculinity, being gentle and compassionate, sharing household chores and decision-making equally. This challenges structures that oppress both men and women in colonial India. Despite facing hardships, Kalua remains resourceful and adapts to new circumstances. He learns to navigate the complex dynamics of the ship's crew and asserts his voice, even rising to advocate for the rights of fellow laborers.

Kalua embodies the struggle and aspirations of marginalized communities in colonial India. His profound connections on land and his skill in animal handling contribute to his resourcefulness and resilience. The novel acknowledges pre-colonial indigenous challenges to caste hierarchies. The sweeper's broom or jharu stands for the whole complex of untouchability and pollution in the novel, since sweepers and dalits in general are associated and equated with debasing matter by several characters, for instance, Raj Neel Rattan Halder's mother.

The use of multiple languages on the vessel demonstrates how this space functioned. Languages spoken on the Ibis include Bhojpuri, Bengali, Laskari, Hindustani, and English, becoming a fluid sea of languages. Linguistic barriers dissolve as hybrid languages emerge. Characters command a plethora of languages. Amalgamations of multiple languages create cultural hybridity. The hybridization of various languages becomes a critical trope in the identity formation of characters. The restructuring of ethnic identities is not just a linguistic choice but also a political one.

Through the overlapping stories of numerous characters who are differentiated by multiple levels of subalternity in terms of race, class, gender, and language as they navigate colonial and customary legal regimes, the novel foregrounds the intersection between law and the colonial enterprise, moving beyond the binary categories of legal subjects under colonial rule.

Sea of Poppies stands as a remarkable achievement in postcolonial literature, successfully challenging dominant colonial narratives through its innovative portrayal of subaltern experiences and liminal spaces. Ghosh's masterful use of the ship Ibis as both literal vessel and metaphorical space of transformation demonstrates how displacement can paradoxically lead to new forms of belonging and community formation. The novel's treatment of caste hierarchies, linguistic diversity, and colonial legal systems reveals the complex negotiations that marginalized communities undertook to survive and resist imperial domination.The significance of Ghosh's work extends beyond its historical reconstruction to offer critical insights into contemporary forms of imperialism and social exclusion. By presenting "history from below," the novel recuperates voices that have been systematically silenced in official colonial records, thereby enriching our understanding of the colonial experience's multifaceted nature. The characters' struggles with identity, belonging, and agency aboard the Ibis serve as powerful metaphors for the broader human condition under colonial rule.Furthermore, the novel's linguistic experimentation and cultural hybridity point toward possibilities for transcending rigid social

boundaries, even within oppressive systems. Kalua's character, in particular, embodies the potential for resistance and transformation that exists within marginalized communities, challenging both colonial and indigenous forms of discrimination.

Sea of Poppies ultimately argues that understanding the past is crucial for resisting contemporary forms of oppression. Through its complex narrative structure and diverse character ensemble, the novel demonstrates that colonial history was not a monolithic experience but rather a contested terrain where multiple voices and perspectives intersected. Ghosh's achievement lies in his ability to give literary form to these previously unheard voices, creating a counter-narrative that enriches and complicates our understanding of colonialism's lasting impact on individual and collective identities.

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Use of Digital Devices in Teaching English as a Second Language For under privileged students in Higher Secondary Schools Challenges and Possibilities

Dr. Abdul Latheef V. & Shabnam Sherin P.

Education in the contemporary situation is not concerned with mere acquisition of book is knowledge but in fact an interaction between student and knowledge. In the present scenario of education teachers have to take up the role of a facilitator to help them to find out and create knowledge from the environment in which they live in. According to Mathur one of the functions of education is to make man creative and perform his role constructively in the society, language fulfils this demand to a great extent. To have learned a language is immediately to have rights in it, you may add to it, modify it, play with it, and create it says David Crystal. The future course of English will be influenced by those who speak it as a second language as by those who speak it as their mother tongue.

To effectively teach English to underprivileged learners, use fun, interactive methods with visuals and songs, adapt materials to be culturally relevant, and create a supportive, positive learning environment by building relationships, being patient, and correcting errors privately. Utilize free digital resources like Khan Academy and Jolly Phonics videos, focus on natural pronunciation and common phrases, and consider incorporating the students' native language to build a comfortable foundation before introducing English.

"Technology is the foundation for the sustained development of the nation, and the world in the 21st century will be a knowledge based society with multiple opportunities" says Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Since English has become the language of opportunity and advancement, it will surely be helpful to the higher secondary students who are on the stepping stones in search of new courses that can offer them jobs. Learning English equips the learners for the present and the future academic pursuits. It is the stage from which they emerge in to the glory of adulthood and love to explore the possibilities of creativity in which the English teachers can bring out their linguisticabilities to its full blossom, thus preparing the students by making the munderstandties, to function effectively in their future profession. Along with these, the teachers can also assist them to thrive in this age of technology, engaging the lessons in English.

When the student reaches the higher secondary level they are expected to attain certain aims and objectives so far as learning English language and literature is concerned. But today, the student who reaches the level cannot read simple English with ease, they do not have any comm. And of English language. Thus the teachers are obliged to do two tasks: that is, the teacher has to teach the basic elements of the language at the same time impart advanced literature text set in the syllabus.

In order to equip the higher secondary students to face the challenges in learning English as a second language in this century teachers have to find out and accumulate enough sources to understand and practice new learning activities while making use of multimedia. Multimedia can provide English language activities with the help of audio visualaids in the classroom. To make learning of English interesting, teachers can provide multi-sensory experiences to the learners, by encouraging their participation in small and large groups, engaging them in different word games and giving them chances to listen to correct pronunciation of English language by the use of a language lab. But today, issues related to lack of infrastructural facilities in the school, assembling of different parts of A Vaids like language lab by experts and no creative participation both from the learners and the teachers exist. Financial constraints also posea problem and in the absence of proper maintenance of the equipment the effect will not be satisfactory and as a result language lab cannot give the students much exposure to native speakers of the language which could have helped them to enhance listening and speaking skills while learning.

In Higher Secondary Schools there will be 12-15 classes but one smart classroom which can be made use off or the purpose of learning English as a second language. Due to that, time available to learn the language using AVaids will be less. Students from disadvantaged families do not get opportunities to use computers at home, so it is not possible for them to get the advantages of learning language using AVaidsa part from their school.

The teacher can prepare study materials taking in to account the goals to be achieved but it demands creativity to engage in shooting and editing the study materials to be telecasted suitable to the short duration of the class time. This needs much patience too.

Broadcasting has revolutionized the thought process and culture. This can be effectively united for education. For example, warming English as a second language through directed poems, narration of stories for reading from books and presentation of debates motivates the

students to learn more about these and to develop different skills to master the language. Here educational broad cast has a great coverage and serves as an inspirational material. India's first fully fledged educational satellite is specifically meant for implementing virtual classrooms in remote and rural schools. It opened up many possibilities like online teaching and video conferencing. Modern digital devices for teaching and learning English include smart phones, tablets, interactive white boards (smart-boards), and computers. These devices facilitate the use of a wide array of software and platforms, such as language learning apps (Duolingo, Babbel), video conferencing tools (Skype, Zoom), interactive game platforms (Kahoot!, Quizlet), virtual collaboration spaces (Google Classroom, Padlet), and multimedia resources (YouTube, BBC Learning English).

Hardware Devices

Smart phones and Tablets:

Portable devices used to access language learning apps, read digital content, and participate in online activities.

Interactive Whiteboards (Smart-boards):

Large, touch-sensitive displays that combine audio, video, and web content for interactive lessons and collaborative activities.

Computers:

Laptops and desktops for accessing online platforms, word processing, multimedia creation, and in-depth learning.

Software and Platforms

Language Learning Apps:

Applications like Duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise offer structured lessons, vocabulary practice, and grammar exercises.

Video Conferencing Tools:

Platforms such as Skype and Zoom allow for real-time lessons, virtual classrooms, and interactive communication with learners and other teachers.

Virtual White board Tools:

Tools like Padlet enable teachers and students to collaborate, share ideas, and post multimedia content on a shared virtual wall.

Interactive Game Platforms:

Applications such as Kahoot! And Quizletturn lessons in to engaging, competitive games with quizzes, flash cards, and other interactive activities.

Learning Management Systems (LMS):

Platforms like Google Classroom streamline communication, assignment distribution, and grading, providing a central hub for online learning.

Multimedia Platforms:

Websites and apps like YouTube and BBC Learning English provide access to a vast library of authentic audio-visual content, including videos, songs, and articles.

Virtual Reality (VR):

Emerging technologies like VR can provide immersive experiences, bringing authentic English-language content in to the classroom in new ways.

CCTV, Open Circuit TV and interactive videos are used for instructional purposes. Through CCTV, televised instruction can be presented according to the student's needs and requisites. But it is a one way communication—students cannot establish personal contact with the teachers. Live Television enables students to witness rare but valuable incidents such as televised Presidential address to the country on the occasion of Republic Day, and thus the reality and concreteness soft he visual image can be maintained by AVaids.

Expertise is needed on the part of the teacher to select programs appropriate for each class, broadcasted through "Gyan Darshan," VICTERS channel etc. Unless the teacher gets knowledge about how to obtain schedules of transmission of instructional programme, he/she cannot make necessary dents. If telecasted program is related to appreciation of a story, cinema or drama, the nature and quality of performance are essential criteria for selection along with the duration of the program and it should also take in to consideration the age and level of the student to whom it is to be presented. It is essential that a proper orientation programme related to all these should be provided to the teachers at the beginning of the

school year in which the significant role of the teacher should be stressed in the use of AVaids a long with how to prepare the student for meaningful listening to the language activities.

To this generation the use of computer is as familiar and easy as switching on alight or watching television. Computers have a very important role in language learning. For language is a means of communication and the use of a computer involves communication between the user and the machine. To develop communication skills: writing, in which the computer enables the learners to transform in dynamic ways; reading skills, in which the programme animates the text and makes it more attractive; and to enhance speaking and listening skills, the computer can be made use of. Computers today are capable of speech synthesis and speech recognition. Simulated activities like story development or news writing are now available as computer software and promote discussion in the classroom. It also enables the teacher to encourage learners to talk in various ways which is not possible in traditional classrooms. The computer holds great potential for developing aural-oral skills. There are many programmes available for the improvement.

Teachers have to invest more time to comprehend more about telecasted programs. Students should be given necessary prerequisite knowledge and prepared to view the selected instructional TV programme which is related to learning English as a second language. But there are difficulties to be faced due to unavailability of good scriptwriters and presenters for instructional television, and there is a chance of developing the habits of inattentiveness and passivity in learners. Apart from all these, it fails to encourage investigative approach to learning. Innovative programmes which can inspire the students to learn English as second language should be brought forth.

Thus the teachers have to know how to tackle these complex challenges often in the face of negative forces of deeply held beliefs. Education is a humanistic social endeavour and to impart it is completely dependent on the beliefs, calibre and disposition of those involved in it. Chinua Ache be says about African English may apply equally well to Indian English: "English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience". In important ways Indian English can be said to carry the weight of the Indian experience first, and it is constantly reshaping it self to suit the needs of the new nation, experimenting it self with the use of technology.

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Body, Nature and Survival: The Corporeal Transgressions in Body-Horror Cinema

Shimi Shajan A.

Abstract

The unwarranted human interactions with the planet and its natural rhythm has depleted and severely disturbed the ecosystem. It has been quite a few decades since human beings have come to acknowledge the bitter reality. The forest fires, polar ice melting, vigorous changes in the seasons are some of the consequential events of the apparent disruption of the natural ecosystem at the hands of human beings. Body as perceived by humanity over the centuries goes beyond the studies of physiological mechanisms and recorded limits and palpitations. Body in itself is a source of threat owing to the obscurity that surrounds the functioning and reactions of the body to any sudden and unexpected external stimuli as witnessed during the global pandemic period. The unnecessary human interventions with the nature manifest itself preferably and primarily on the "human body." The paper intends to study the physical materiality of "body" in the light of ecological imbalance and uncontrolled human invasion. The study focuses on body-horror films, The Beach House (2020, directed by Jeffrey A. Brown) and Old (2021, directed by M. Night Shyamalan). The article explores the corporeal transgressions as delineated in the said films in relation to the drastic shifts in the global environmental scenario. The paper also dives into the concepts of survival instinct and the dilemma of existential crisis, prominent in any environmental studies research. The ethical and moral aspects of the concept of the "sacrifice of smaller units for the benefit of the larger mass" is also evaluated in the light of the aforementioned films. The methodology adopted for the study involves a close reading of the selected films. For the purpose of analysis, the films are placed within the theoretical frameworks of Mikhail Bakhtin's "Grotesque Realism" and Julia Kristeva's concept of "abjection."

Keywords: Abject, Blue Humanities, Body-Horror, Ecology, Grotesque Body.

The consistent and over-whelming negligence towards the mistreatment of the environment and the inefficiency of governmental policies to curb the over indulgence of the natural resources have prompted reflections of the same in the popular culture, especially cinema.Cinema is a strong medium that reflects, shapes and even takes origin from the society.

The ethical and moral dilemma in relation to the disruption of the ecological rhythm and the doubts and fear of the consequences of the same seem to have effectivelyinfluencedcinema. It has shaped itself asa medium to draw attention and edify the public about the future predicament of the planet in the wake of uninterrupted human invasion of the environmental assets. Body-horror/ biological horror is a sub-genre that falls within the realm of horror cinema. The philologist Xavier Aldana Reyes observes that "body-horror is concerned with the total or partial destruction, mutilation, deformation, transformation, or (evolutionary) degeneration of the human body"(*The Cambridge Companion to American Horror*107). The article proposes to delineate the interconnectedness of ecology and humanity where the former's corruption could affect the latter's genetic structure and vice versa.The paper studies "body" as an entity that bears the implications and aberrations in response to the environmental imbalance. The study focuses on body-horror films, *The Beach House* (2019, directed by Jeffrey A. Brown) and *Old* (2021, directed by M. Night Shyamalan). The paper also looks into the impact of the taxonomic crisis and violations of the rhythm of nature and the living order; upon human beings. Analyzing the corporeal transgressions, the paper also delves into the psyche of the viscerally disturbed people.The methodology adopted for the study involves a close reading of the selected films. For the purpose of analysis of the materiality ofcorporeal aberrations, the films are placed within the theoretical frameworks of Mikhail Bakhtin's "Grotesque Realism" and Julia Kristeva's concept of "abjection."

The American film *The Beach House*written and directed by Jeffrey A. Brown delineates the eradication of the residents of an area that surrounds the beach owing to the drastic chemical changes in the seabed. The film focuses on the two couples; the older couple-Jane Turner/Mitch Turner and the younger couple- Emily Kirk/Randall who have moved to Randall's father's beach house as a vacation getaway during the off-season time. The film foregrounds the apparent environmental change that happens around the beach house due to the changes within the ocean. Emily is an Astrobiology aspirant whose words about the life on earth highlights the essence of the film, "Life is fragile. We're the right combination of elements. The right temperature. The right distance from the sun. and this measure of time spent developing and changing. Billions of years. One thing slightly off, and we would be nothing" (17:19). Emily's words foreshadow the fate of the inhabitants of the residents surrounding the beach. The excessive heating of the earth has resulted in the release of the "microbes preserved in the rocks" which has been spread into the water. The use and consumption of the said water has

contaminated the people. The intermittent fog, the changed texture of the drinking water and the strange smell of the air are some of the effects of the microbial release into the water. The authorities warn the residents to stay indoors to avoid further circulation of the mutation. Emily comes across the message through one of the many television channels.The exposure to the microbes released into the water and the surroundings seems to have affected the people both physiologically and psychically. They apparently lose their psycho-motor abilities and crawl around without any sense of place, surrounding or time; as done by Jane and the neighbour. For instance, the microbial exposure leads to mental breakdown of Mitch and eventually he succumbs to suicide by drowning himself. His mental condition where the helplessness and agony of losing his wife to an already existing fatal medical condition is triggered by the microbial presence around the beach house.

The cinematography is commendable as the changes in the environment isshown in a nuanced and intricate manner. The texture of the water slowly but diligently varies through the course of the film from slightly slimy to thick white coloured mucous type substance towards the end of the film. The film posits subtle hints at thesurrounding air'sfoul odour through characters' casual conversational exchange.The unexpected and inconsistent fog formsone of the most prominent visual pieces of evidence of the detrimental ecological variations. The chemicals present in the microbes genetically affect human beings and turn them into dementedpredatory creatures completely unrecognizable from their previous human form. Like any other horror film, body-horror film too has an agency to embody the source of threat andthe apparent source of threat in*The Beach House*is "hybrid corporeality" executed by means of contaminated people and marine organisms. The apparent "taxonomic crisis" which is engendered by hybrid corporeality is projected through not only human beings but also marine creatures like oysters and Portugese man o' war also known as bluebottle or man-of-war (marine hydrozoan found in the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean). The completely transformed form of the contaminated person is depicted only once in the movie as Emily encounters an infected person straddled upon another man and thereby infecting the latter as well (1:16:04). The affected person has turned into a blob of mass oozing out slimy chunks of mass and forms the grotesque element in the film.

Mikhail Bakhtin in his book *Rabelais and His World* (1984) introduces the concept of "grotesque realism." "Bakhtin describes the literary genre, originally medieval, of 'grotesque realism' as one opposed to all forms of high art and literature. It includes parody and any other

form of discourse which brings down to earth anything ineffable or authoritarian, a task achieved principally through mockery:" (*Introducing Bakhtin*115).The film provides a glimpse into the future where excessive and violent changes in ecology could result in mutations in human beings. The "grotesque body" topples the superior status of human beings in the established taxonomic hierarchy. It mocks the fragility of human life indicating the insignificance of the same in the larger systemic order of nature.

Reyes opines that "The grotesque can be productively separated from other manifestations of body horror because its "monstrous" bodies are intelligibly human, their "otherness" a gross extension or exaggeration of the normative body" (*The Cambridge Companion*112). The contaminated people in the film are an extended version of their own mutated selves. Paradoxically, Emily's "shock" upon encountering the contaminated Jane, Randall, the neighbour and the man in the basement emanates from the realization that the monster is not the unknown but the familiar. She also harbours the fear of being turned into one like "them" as stated by Reyes, "The fear does stem from an encounter with the 'other', but from the realization that one is becoming 'other' than one was (or not oneself anymore)" (*Body Gothic*: *Corporeal Transgression in Contemporary Literature and Horror Film* 60) .Ironically, she kills Randall and makes efforts to escape the beach house in order to decline the possibility of being transformed. The grotesque imagery in the film comprising of the mutated human beings and marine organisms (oysters and Portugese man o'war) question the system of binary division of the world into the superior beings (human beings) and the less prominent species (other taxonomic classes of plants and animals) where the latter (apparentlysecondary class of organisms) is presumed to be in servitude to the former. Reyes claims that "Grotesques can become more than reverse images of oppression based on corporeal canons tainted by ableist, racist, gendered, and sexist biases. Their playfulness allows them to question and subvert the very registers used to otherize" (*The Cambridge Companion*113). Thus, the film regards the fluidity of the position of human beings in the taxonomic order.The visceral horror and shock projected in the film could ignite discussions and discourses advocating the possibilityof a counter perception regarding the prominence of human life in relation to the other organisms within the environment.

The 2021 film *Old* directed by M. Night Shyamalan is intriguing as it navigates through the lives of a group of people stranded in an island of mysteries. The film deals with the modern-day corporate mindset and economical undercurrents in the medical field.The film

delineates the unnatural occurrences in the lives of a group of people who visit Anamika resort and are sent to spend quality time in the nearby island as a complimentary upgrade. The group comprises of the Cappa family- Guy Cappa, Prisca Cappa and their children Maddox aged eleven and Trent aged six; along with another family- Charles, Chrystal, their daughter Kara aged six and Agnes (Charles' mother); along with another couple- Jarin Carmichael and Patricia Carmichael and the rapper namely Mid-size Sedan/Brendon along with an unnamed lady who is Brendon's friend. The group is specifically chosen owing to their medical conditions- Prisca has ovarian tumour, Charles is schizophrenic, Chrystal suffers fromhypocalcaemia, Patricia is epileptic, Brendon and his friend are haemophilic. The group is named as "trial 73" and without any consent or knowledge becomes part of an unauthorized experimentation done by a prominent pharmaceutical company "Warren & Warren." The selected people are provided with "complimentary cocktails" which are mixed with the company generated medicines catering to the specific medical conditions. The people are shifted to the island to monitor the progress and reception of the generated medicine on the "affected people." The island holds the ability to grow human cells rapidly, as Emily discovers from the diary found on the island, possibly of a previous guest of the resort trapped in a similar manner. The diary accounts that,"the magnetism of this exact spot on the earth with the rocks on the beach submerged in the ocean for millions of years deposited the special minerals that could cause our cells to age in a rapid rate" (1:11:30).

The island helps the medical researchers to record and study the effectiveness of the medicine in a person's lifetime within a few days. This is so because, in theisland an hour equates to almost two years and henceforth a single day could be equivalent to roughly fifty years and thereby covers the entire life span of an individual. The traces of rusted knives, discarded dolls, books and other articles in the island indicate towards the fact that such trials have been in practice over a very long time (19:57). While the island affects the adults to age faster since they have surpassed the growing stage, the children are growing in mass and therefore they experience voracious appetite. The dead cells like hair and nail remain unaffected due to the absence of active cells. The adults in due time would grow old as Prisca loses hearing in one of her ears while Guy loses his eye sight. The children grow rapidly surpassing adolescence, adulthood and finally reach their "fifties." The only survivors are the Cappa siblings who escape the island in their early fifties without any experiences at their chances in education or social life. Henceforth, leaves one bemused as to how they would survive in the

outer world with the lack of mental capabilities and exposure;with the onlyexperiences of being children aged between six and eleven.

Bakhtin claims that mouth is "the most important part in the grotesque image of the body"(*Rabelais and His World*316). The guests' consumption of the medicated cocktails has resulted in their grotesque stature. They are reduced to mere vessels to mediate the longevity and health of the privileged class of people. They are what Bakhtin refers to as grotesque body, "a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world." (Rabelais 317).The chosen people are killed to increase the life expectancy of the privileged people. The gesture on the part of the research operation's head to hold a "minute of silencefor the lost lives of trial 73" (1:32:04) appear to be amockery of the hypocrisy of the power-driven hegemonic societies. The film reflects uponBakhtin's concept of dualityof grotesque bodywhere "the events of the grotesque sphere are always developed on the boundary dividing one body from the other and, as it were, at their points of intersection. One body offers its death, the other its birth, but they are merged in a two-bodied image"(322).

Julia Kristeva in her book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980)defines abject as anything that causes disturbance in "identity", "system" and "order" (4). Kristeva's approach is "more modern" and also "depends on her theory of the human subject" (Introducing Bakhtin 163) in comparison to Bakhtin's idea of the grotesque.Abjection, Reyes argues, "can help reveal the subjective underpinning of the social dehumanization, be it governmental (systemic) or personal (a phobia or fear), of certain communities to the point where some lives may be perceived to be less important than others or even as wasteful" (*ThePalgrave Handbook of Contemporary Gothic* 395). The film *Old*, posits how people are chosen as mere test subjects for medical study without their knowledge; thereby makes it both non-consensual and unethical. Unfortunately, the affected people in *The Beach House*will be washed out from the earth's surface surmounting to the already existinglost lives in relation to the hazardous outcomes of ecological mishaps.Reyes claims that abjection is central to cultural representation as he argues that "what is deemed 'other,' 'monstrous' or 'disgusting' is ultimately determined by what, any given point in history, is perceived as normative and protected as normal…...understood as both a system of social and cultural monitoring" (*Palgrave* 395-

97). The films reify the abjection through both the aspects of corporeal materiality and social morality.

The cinematography and editing technique employed in the film are immaculate. Deliberately, camera does not capture the children (Maddox, Trent and Kara) creating a sense of suspense and dread (27:07-29:50). Finally, when the camera pans to the teenage Maddox and Trent the apparent shock on Prisca's face (29:43) is unbelievable and is also reflected in the audience. The dead body of Brendon's friend decomposes to mere entanglements of bones within a few hours and the children Maddox, Trent and Kara (aged between six and eleven) go through adolescence, puberty and adulthood within the span of two days. Kara's body goes through drastic physiological changes like pregnancy and childbirth within a short span of few hours. Unfortunately, the new born baby dies due to the lack of attention within the few seconds Patricia takes to wrap the child in a towel, as seconds in the island equals to hours and within a few hours the baby's dead body turns to ashes. The aforementioned sequences help to materialize the island's influence in the rapidity of human cell growth in visual spectrum.

Water seems to be a foreboding and domineering presence in both the films. In *The Beach House,* water moves away from being a habitat to marine organisms and supporter of human life and ecological balance and transits itself into a possible threat to life in all forms-human, flora and fauna. The imminent assumption of the role of a predator by the water body is due to unguarded human intervention; over-heating of earth's surface. In the film *Old*, water is omnipresent in their lives that is to say, they live, grow, age and eventually die in its presence. It is the changes happening around and within the source of water that creates the narrative in the first place. The marine transgression in *The Beach House*is human imposed, while it ispart of natural evolution in *Old*.The human engagement in the former film results from the unauthorized and unwarranted excessive use of natural resources and subsequent depletion of the same whereas the latter offers a glimpse into the perils of privatization and monopoly in health sector. It also throws light on the power dynamics in the society, perhaps to say, how the power-driven conglomerates decide on the greater good of the voiceless and powerless majority.

Water assumes a central character in the films and drives the narrative forward. The Cappa siblings final rescue happens by swimming through the corals (small marine animals that form reefs that support other marine organisms). This is so because corals act as metal

conductor and thereby prevent the mineral effect upon their bodies. The water in the island is the mute spectator to the hysterical behaviour of the people; Brendon's desperation to escape, Patricia breaks down on her husband's death and shares her agony of being away from her sister, Charles' disturbing bouts of schizophrenic behaviour, Chrystal's self-deprecating status, Guy and Prisca's loss of senses due to aging, Kara's agony of missing out on her puberty and youth, Trent's confused state of mind and Maddox's dilemma of encountering the responsibilities of adulthood.

The films make use of the trope of body-horror to delineate "body" as a site where environmental encroachments are manifested. The fragility of human existence, futility of materiality and glamour of social life, authority of corporate sectors, feasibility of privatization and the need for a conscience-based approach towards ecology are primary to the understanding of the films. The corporeal transgressions are central to the films' discourse on environmental instability and the consequential dangers to human life. The films can be perceived as an implore to curb the mindless human invasion of the environment and to make necessary efforts to rebuild the ecosystem.

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Oceanic Ethics and the Human Condition: A Blue Humanities Reading of *Moby-Dick*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *The Old Man and the Sea*

Dr. Sonia Sebastian & Lt Anu Jose

Abstract

This paper examines three seminal oceanic texts; Herman Melville's Moby-Dick, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea to explore how the ocean responds to distinct human attitudes: arrogance, reverence and repentance. Each text grapples with the metaphysical, moral and ecological resonances of the sea. Melville's ecological labyrinth, Coleridge's spectral voyage and Hemingway's stripped-down existential confrontation with the sea, all inscribe distinct oceanic imaginaries that complicate the boundaries between human and nonhuman, mastery and humility, salvation and ruin.

Keywords: Ecology, Blue Humanities, Ocean

Introduction

More is known about the dark side of the moon than is known about the depths of the ocean

David Helvarg.

From the earliest mythologies to contemporary ecological thought, the ocean has held a magnetic power over the human imagination. Our culture is born along waterbodies, our gods emerge from the sea and our voyages often begin and end upon the shore. The vast and inscrutable ocean has always operated as a site of fascination, fear and philosophical inquiry. From ancient cosmologies that imagined the world as emerging from primordial waters to modern scientific engagements with marine ecologies, the aquatic realm has consistently unsettled our modes of knowing, not merely as a geographical expanse but as an ontological frontier, a place where the certainties of terrestrial life dissolve into fluid uncertainty. It is against this tradition of oceanic reverence and mystery that the *Blue Humanities* has emerged as a theoretical paradigm in contemporary material ecocriticism.

. . . humans were destined to return to the sea from which they had emerged earlier, but this time they would do so 'mentally and imaginatively'. This cultural turn to the sea began in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and by now there is a vast trove of writing,

painting and music that awaits examination under the rubric of what English professor Steve Mentz would like us to call the 'blue humanities.'(Gillis)

The *Blue Humanities* decenters the landlocked biases of humanistic inquiry and re imagines literature, culture and history from the vantage point of the sea. Moving beyond the anthropocentric frameworks that have traditionally dominated literary and environmental studies, this novel critical perspective foregrounds the ocean not merely as a setting or backdrop, but an ethical participant in human affairs. It draws upon inter disciplinary currents from marine biology, oceanography, cultural geography, postcolonial studies and ecocriticism, to understand how human narratives are entangled with the fluid, shifting and often unknowable nature of marine environments. As Steve Mentz states, the sea is not simply "wet global space" but a "chaotic, unstable, mobile environment" that challenges terrestrial metaphors of stability, identity and sovereignty (*Shipwreck Modernity 12*).

At its core, the Blue Humanities is a reckoning with ecological crisis, with colonial histories of oceanic expansion, with the limits of human controland with the temporalities that exceed the human. It asks what it means to think with the sea rather than against it, to read literature not from the ground but from the swell and drift of saltwater worlds. This turn toward the blue also carries ethical weight.The ocean is one of the most endangered ecological systems on the planet, bearing the brunt of climate change, industrial pollution, overfishing and the melting polar ice. Literary texts, particularly those engaged with maritime experience, become sites for ecological memory and moral reflection.

Drawing on this framework, this paper contrasts three foundational maritime literary works - Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, in order to analyze the ways sea reciprocates various human dispositions of hubris, respect, and atonement. When considered as a collection from the perspective of Blue Humanities, these works reveal the sea as more than its physical presence but as a location for intellectual inquiry, a figure for existence and an expression of ethical and ecological concerns. By analyzing these foundational texts in the light of Blue Humanities, this research seeks to reveal the complex interaction between literature and the sea, where water moves beyond being a substance to become a vehicle for ideas, a signifier of beingand a reflection of the ethical complications encountered in ecological catastrophes.

Arrogance and Wreckage in Moby *Dick*

Ahab's tragic flaw is not merely in his monomaniacal urge to hunt the White Whale, but also in his epistemological refusal of chaos. His monomania is driven by narrative necessity, typified by an urge to impose order, causalityand ethical certainty upon the immense unpredictability of the sea. He does not want to kill the whale so much as he wants to make sense of the world of the ocean through an act of revenge. Ahab constructs a teleological system in which Moby Dick is more than an animal, a symbol insteadand the ocean less of a living being and more of a canvas upon which human stories are enacted. His need for narrative coherence is the form of a kind of epistemic violence, effectively eliminating the inherent fluid autonomy of the sea. As Steve Mentz writes, "[t]o master water, like to master narrative, is to expose yourself to wreckage. Ahab's dream is one of control; the ocean's reality is one of chaos" (Shipwreck Modernity10). This observation offers a crucial entry point into the deeper stakes of Ahab's quest. The ocean in *MobyDick* is not simply treacherous in a physical sense; it is ethically and ontologically opposed to human systems of mastery. The metaphor of wreckage operates on multiple levels. Ahab wrecks not only the ship but also the illusion of narrative closure, the belief that human will can impose meaning upon a world that is fundamentally unruly. The sea answers his script with silence and submersion. His downfall is not merely a punishment for hubris but a rupture between human narration and oceanic being.

Elizabeth DeLoughrey, in *Submarine Futures of the Anthropocene*, argues that submarine space destabilizes the linear narratives of colonial modernity. "Submarine space disrupts linear history. It resists mastery"(35). Ahab's pursuit of Moby Dick is not merely personal vengeance; it is emblematic of Enlightenment rationality taken to its hubristic extreme. But the ocean resists this script. Its rhythms are cyclical, elusive and opaque. Ahab's linear imagination collapses under the pressure of a medium that refuses resolution. His failurebecomes an allegory for the collapse of anthropocentric modernity when confronted with the ontological indeterminacy of the sea.

Ahab's theological imagination further compounds this failure. He projects absolute meaning onto the whale, conflating it with metaphysical evil. In doing so, he collapses moral and material registers, a gesture that Stacy Alaimo frames through the lens of "trans-corporeality", the recognition that human and nonhuman bodies are materially entangled. But unlike Santiago, who accepts his porous relationship with the oceanic world, Ahab violently disavows it. He seeks not communion but dissection, not entanglement but isolation. His ship becomes an

island of masculine will, cut off from the fluid entanglements of the sea. The result is not transcendence but destruction. The ocean does not meet Ahab's challenge with grace, it meets it with annihilation.

This annihilation is not arbitrary. As Steve Mentz insists, "[t]he sea is not just background or stage; it is judge, participant and memory" (11). The ocean in *Moby-Dick* does not simply mirror Ahab's internal state, but it responds to it. His refusal to approach the sea with humility or ethical awareness renders him unfit for its companionship. His death is not merely physical but philosophical. He is undone by the very ecological blindness that Blue Humanities critiques. The sea does not slay him with malice, but with indifference to his illusion of control. Ahab is not consumed by the whale, but by the ethical inertia of his own arrogance, his inability to see the ocean as more than a backdrop for his will. The wreck of the *Pequod* becomes a cautionary inscription in the ocean's archive, a warning against the consequences of human exceptionalism.The seadoes not negotiate. It does not fit into the coordinates of empire, hierarchy or conquest. The whale, as the ocean's emissary, embodies this refusal. It is not a villain to be overcome but an elemental force beyond comprehension.

The broader implicationBlue Humanities gives us is that anthropocentric fantasies are not only doomed but dangerous. Ahab's downfall dramatizes the ecological imperative to decenter the human, to accept that the ocean does not exist to reflect or validate human narratives. The sea's final gesture of swallowing the Pequod without explanation or remorseunderscores its refusal to serve as a mirror for human meaning. Instead, it functions as a radical otherness, an ontological field that exposes the limits of mastery. Ahab's tragedy becomes emblematic of a larger moral failure; the inability to dwell ethically in a world that exceeds us.

Reverence and Endurance in *The Old Man and the Sea*

Unlike Ahab's antagonistic relationship with the sea, Santiago's bond with the ocean in *The Old Man and the Sea* is characterized by reverence, humility and affection. Though a fisherman by trade, Santiago does not treat the sea as a site of conquest. He refers to it affectionately as "la mar," a feminine form in Spanish that signals not just familiarity but intimacy. As Susan Beegel notes, Santiago's use of the feminine suggests a cultural and emotional alignment with those who love her, who see the sea not as an adversary but as a presence to be lived with (29). This naming reframes the ocean as subject, inviting a relationship built on

dialogue rather than domination. Santiago's patience and embodied knowledge of the sea, its currents, birds and stars, reflect not just skill, but a dwelling within nature that is intuitive and respectful.

This dwelling echoes Jonathan Bate's notion that to dwell is to live poetically, to read the world as a text and respond to its language. Santiago does not force his will upon the ocean; he adapts to it, interpreting its signs with the quiet attentiveness of a poet rather than the force of a conqueror. His interaction with the marlin is emblematic of this ethic. He battles the fish not with disdain but with admiration, even prayer. The relationship is not oppositional but entangled, illustrating what Stacy Alaimo terms "trans-corporeality", a condition in which human and nonhuman bodies are materially and ethically interconnected.

Santiago's long vigil on the water is not a heroic conquest, but a spiritual discipline. Even when he finally hooks the marlin, he does not treat the fish as prey but as a noble opponent, a fellow being whose life mirrors his own. "Fish, I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends,"(54) he says, acknowledging both his need and his sorrow. This paradox of love and killing, of reverence and necessity reveals the ethical complexity Santiago navigates. He sees himself not above the sea's creatures but among them, participating in a larger, painful and sacred rhythm of life and death.

When the sharks come and devour the marlin, Santiago does not rage at the sea. He accepts it. "Man is not made for defeat," he says. "A man can be destroyed but not defeated" (103). The sea takes away his prize, but it does not strip him of his dignity. In the logic of Blue Humanities, this is a profound moment. The ocean does not punish Santiago but responds to his humility with a kind of silent acknowledgment. His struggle becomes not a loss but a sacrament, his suffering a mode of belonging rather than estrangement.

Jamie Skye Bianco's observation "[t]he fragile edges of the city open toward the water and in that opening, humility takes form" (27), though urban in its origin, finds metaphorical power in Santiago's position. He lives at the edge, the margin between human effort and natural power, between pride and surrender. It is in this liminal space that humility takes root, not as submission, but as an alert, ethical mode of presence. Santiago's humility is not performative; it is lived. It arises from a deep awareness of his fragility within a vast ecological order and from his readiness to meet the sea not with fear but with fidelity.

Steve Mentz's observation that "we float, not because we command the sea, but because we let it hold us" (20) captures the heart of Santiago's endurance. He survives not through dominance but through surrender, allowing the ocean to shape and carry him. His return with only the skeleton of the marlin is not a mark of failure, but of moral and existential integrity. The stripped fish becomes a symbol of reverent engagement, a testament to the dignity found not in triumph, but in respectful struggle. In Santiago, Hemingway crafts a figure who embodies a poetics of loss, whose greatness lies in his capacity to endure, to honour and to grieve.

This ethic deepens in the symbolic realm of Santiago's dreams. His recurring vision of lions on the beach signals a return to a primal, almost mythic innocence,an unconscious kinship with the nonhuman world. Elizabeth DeLoughrey's reflections on oceanic memory resonate here, positioning the sea as a keeper of histories, emotions and ancestral connection. Santiago's dreams are not nostalgic retreats but acts of restoration, gesturing toward a mode of consciousness that is fluid, cyclical and attuned to more-than-human rhythms. His story stands as a quiet rebuttal to modernity's logic of extraction and control. As Mentz reminds us, "[o]ceans archive failure and care, survival and waste" (29). The marlin's skeleton, resting beside Santiago, is not a residue of defeat but a sacred traceof a life lived in ethical relation to the sea.

Santiago's ethic of immersionembodies what Blue Humanities proposes as an alternative to anthropocentric hubris. Where Ahab crashes against the sea with mythic power, Santiago drifts upon it with unassuming strength. He does not master the ocean, but adapts to a shapeless form the ocean can encompass. In this surrenderhe is remembered. His story endures not because he won, but because he lived justly within the great, unknowable body of water.

Repentance and Redemption in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

If Santiago finds meaning in reverent immersion, the Ancient Mariner arrives at it through transgression and suffering. At the outset of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the sea is simply backdrop, a vast, mysterious expanse that serves as setting rather than subject. The Mariner, like Ahab, acts from a place of instrumental logic. His killing of the albatross is senseless, driven not by hunger or threat but by disregard. It is this act that disturbs the fragile equilibrium between the human and the marine world. The sea, in turn, withholds its vitality. The winds die, the sun scorches and the sailors are punished not arbitrarily but in response to an ethical rupture.

As Steve Mentz remarks"[o]nly when we learn to see the ocean as subject, as agent, can we speak truly of ecological reckoning" (12). The Mariner's journey toward redemption hinges on this recognition. The sea reveals itself not as a passive expanse but as a conscious presence, whose systems of currents, breezes and tides mirror moral consequence. When the Mariner blesses the water snakes unaware, he initiates an unspoken reconciliation. His soul begins to return not through doctrine or dogma, but through a spontaneous moment of wonder at oceanic life. It is here that Blue Humanities locates ecological awakening, not in domination or fear, but in the capacity to see, to love and to acknowledge the agency of the more-than-human world.

The seais not merely an environment, it is a witness, a judge and a memory. "The sea is not just background or stage; it is judge, participant and memory" (Mentz 11). The stillness of the ocean, the death of the crewand the profound silence are all manifestations of vengeance. Instead of marking the Mariner with death, the sea bestows upon him a narrative, one that he is condemned to narrate throughout eternity. His punishment is not death; it is the act of narration. He is rendered a chronicler of transgressions, his own body preserved so that his voice may bring the remembrance of what has been lost and what can be regained. By doing so, the sea is made a mnemonic creature, inscribing human deeds beneath the waves and demanding their retelling.

The narrative of the Mariner serves as an educational framework for ecological atonement. His perpetual journey represents a form of ethical existence beyond death, wherein the ocean's judgment evolves into a sense of moral obligation. The poem concludes not with a sense of emotional release but rather with a lesson: "He prayeth best, who loveth best / All things both great and small"(28-29). This line encapsulates the ecological principle that lies at the core of the poem. It does not demand control or authority, but rather advocates for affection. The Mariner has perceived the sea not merely as expansive, but as deeply personal; not only as formidable, but also as reactive, not as an outsider, but as a relative.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner establishes the sea as a theatre of sin, penance and eventual grace. In contrast to Ahab, who is destroyed by his refusal to yield or Santiago, who finds quiet strength in modest reverence, the Mariner undergoes a full moral transformation fueled by oceanic suffering. His sin, the indiscriminate killing of the albatross, precipitates a series of ecological and spiritual consequences. The sea, once teeming and magnificent, is transformed into stagnant, lethal and evil waters. The ocean does not simply observe the

Mariner's trespass; it responds, it watches and it punishes. The sea is not passive but morally alert, a force that makes ecological trespasses unforgettable by writing them in silence, thirst and ghostly stillness.

This capacity for moral decision is in line with Elizabeth DeLoughrey's conception of water as an ethical and historical archive. In Coleridge's poem, the sea places the Mariner in a state of liminality, keeping him isolated from human society and subjecting him to a long time of self-reflection. He is neither permitted to die nor to forget. The albatross he carries is a symbol of a profound ecological guilt. The ocean operates in a narrative genre of ethics, forcing the Mariner to admit his transgressions and to tell his tale anew. The obligation to remember is the sea's mechanism of justice.

The turning point is not from divine intervention but from a change of outlook. The Mariner's impromptu blessing of the water snakes is the start of his moral redemption. This impromptu act reasserts a connection between human life and the lives of nonhuman creatures. As Harlan and Mentz note, "[w]ater is never still. It responds, shifts, absorbs and floods-emotionally and physically" (24). The sea reflects the Mariner's change, not with absolution, but with release. He is not redeemed but repurposed, condemned to narrate his tale as moral labour. In doing so, he becomes a prophet of ecological repentance.

The Mariner's journey ultimately echoes the core principles of Blue Humanities: that the sea is an agent, a teacher and a participant in moral transformation. His epiphany reflects Lawrence Buell's idea that environmental thought necessitates ethical expansion, requiring the inclusion of the nonhuman in our moral sphere. The sea inscribes its lesson not only on his mind but on his flesh. His pain becomes pedagogy, his guilt becomes narrative. In contrast to Ahab's erasure and Santiago's quiet communion, the Mariner's fate is a continuous testimony: that ecological damage leaves traces and that the ocean, in its depth and memory, does not forget but transforms guilt into ethical vigilance.

Oceanic Ethics in the Anthropocene

In drawing together, the arcs of Ahab's defiance, Santiago's humility and the Mariner's repentance, one begins to see the ocean not as passive backdrop but as an ethical force, an agent that interacts with human will and emotion. The sea punishes the violent will to dominate, affirms those who enter its depths with respectand offers restoration to those who seek reconciliation. Across *Moby-Dick*, *The Old Man and the Sea* and *The Rime of the Ancient*

Mariner, the ocean functions not merely as setting, but as subject. Within the framework of Blue Humanities, these waters cease to be symbolic, they become literal actors in ecological ethics, revealing the consequences of human attitudes and choices through their physical and emotional responses.

What these literary narratives offerare not just seafaring tales, but ethical cartographies for navigating the moral challenges of the Anthropocene. In a time when oceans are warming, rising and acidifying in direct response to human negligence, these works provide cautionary and visionary insights. Ahab's catastrophic downfall warns against anthropocentric obsession; Santiago's quiet grace models ethical coexistence; and the Mariner's haunting journey teaches the cost and possibility of ecological repentance. The sea, as imagined in these texts, is not indifferent; it is a living presence, demanding reverence, restraint and remembrance.In each story, the sea mirrors the internal state of its human counterpart. Ahab's fury unleashes destruction; Santiago's reverence is met with a solemnendurance; and the Mariner's remorse elicits a gradual, redemptive calm. These are not allegorical projections but narrative enactments of a marine ethics; a worldview in which the ocean reflects, resists or receives the human psyche, depending on the posture it encounters.

Conclusion

To read the sea through Blue Humanities is to accept its sovereignty as an elemental presence. In *Moby-Dick*, *The Old Man and the Sea* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the ocean asserts its agency not through grand declarations, but through mood, memory and motion. It punishes human hubris, honours humility and transforms sorrow into story. These texts do not merely stage human dramas against an indifferent backdrop; they reveal a more-than-human world alive with ethical potential. The sea becomes a moral interlocutor, a witness to the ways we dwell, dominate and repent.In an era increasingly defined by ecological disruption and oceanic degradation, these narratives remind us that the sea has always spoken and it is we who must learn to listen. To think like a body of water, as Susan Harlan asks, is to surrender the illusion of mastery and instead embrace proximity, entanglementand uncertainty. It is to live responsively within the currents of a world that is not ours to command.

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Essence of Emotion: A Theoretical Exploration into the *Rasanubhava*

Sreelekshmi S.

Abstract

Any work of art is crafted with the aim of expressing the author's emotions and aesthetic experiences, and invoke similar feelings and responses in the reader. This article undertakes a theoretical examination of rasa, a crucial domain in the field of Indian Aesthetics. It examines the concept of rasanubhavaor the manifestation of rasa in the reader. The term rasa literally means sap, essence, taste, juice, relish, flavour, etc. In Indian Aesthetics, it refers to the emotion or state that the reader or audience experiences after a performance.Additionally, the article engages in a comparative analysis of Eastern and Western aesthetic traditions, focusing on their philosophical orientations and how both perceive aesthetic engagements and experiences.

Literature is created with an intention to represent the emotions and the aesthetic experiences that the creator has, and thereby evoke respective emotions and experiences in the reader. In the discussion of the Eastern and Western Approaches, a sense of distinction can be seen in the perspectives they hold. It can be noted that a different notion of literature, both culturally and methodologically, is provided by the Eastern theories. These theories focus on the readers' experience and how the reader perceives the notions and emotions presented in the works. This approach is similar, in a way, to that of the Reader Response Theories, recently developed in the Western area of criticism.

This distinction can also be found in their approaches to the notion of 'self'. Eastern philosophies generally view the 'self' as an illusion, whereas Western theories consider the self as a separate, individual entity. In the West, there exists a multitude of definitions of the "self", whereas in the East, the predominant view is that the self is rather an illusion. (Dimkov 197)

Overview of the Eastern Aesthetic tradition

During the period in Sanskrit literature, various prominent authors and critics emerged, and major schools and doctrines also developed. Major schools developed were *Rasa*, *Dhvani*, *Alamkara*, *Vakrokthi*, *Riti*, *Aucitya*, and *Anumana*. *Alamkara* is the term under which all the ingredients and elements that contribute to the charm of a work of literature are

brought.Rudrata, Bhamaha, etc, are the scholars who gave much importance to *alamkara* in their works.*Vakrokthi* and *vakrata* are the terms explored by Kuntaka in his work *Vakroktijivita* which indicates the indirectness of an expression. This oblique striking expression was considered as the basis of poetic beauty. *Riti*denotes the style of a literary work based on the arrangement of words and the modes of expression. This theory is said to have been expounded by the aesthetician, Vamana. Kshemendra, disciple of Abhinavagupta, discussed the concept of *aucitya*, in his work,*Aucityavicara*. He illustrated decorum or propriety as the life of poetry, without which other elements of the work like figures of speech, wouldn't add to the beauty of the work. Aanandavardhana, earlier had established *anaucitya* or impropriety as the sole cause for non-manifestation of *rasa*, from which point he took off and expounded his doctrine. The principle of *anumana*or inference, is propagated as one of the sources of correct knowledge, in Indian Philosophy. It is concerned with the meaning inferred from observations, reason, and previous truths to arrive at the conclusion and truth. *Dhvani* theory was expounded by Aanandavardhana, in his work *Dhvanyaloka*. It dealt with this doctrine of suggestion and Locana is a commentary on *Dhvanyaloka*, which was written by Abhinavagupta. As mentioned above, Abhinavagupta is one among the duo, along with Aanandavardhana who dealt with the idea of *'Rasadhvani'* as the soul of poetry. (Thampi 119-125). Among these concepts, the *Rasa* theory, expounded by Bharata Muni and later elaborated by Abhinavagupta, is the key area of this article. This theory deals with the manifestation of *rasa* in the reader.

Rasa and its related concepts

The term *rasa* literally means sap, essence, taste, juice, relish, flavour, etc. In Indian Aesthetics, it refers to the emotion or state experienced by the reader or audience after a performance. It is also called the primary sentiment which outlives other secondary sentiments evoked through the text. *Rasa* is "a unique emotional essence that allows the spectator to connect with the artist's performance, and thereby undergoes an aesthetic experience of intense emotional resonance and spiritual elevation." (Khanam and Darkhasha 446)

The theory of *rasa* is associated with Bharata, due to his contribution of *rasasutra* in his work, *Natyashastra*. Even though *rasa* was slightly mentioned in Vedas and Upanishads, it is however only in 'Natyashastra', the theory of *rasa* is stated in all its grandeur. The word *rasa*literally means sap, essence, taste, juice, relish, flavour, etc. This aphorism

'vibhavaanubhavavyabhicarisamyogatrasanishpattihi' by Bharata defines *rasa*. It states that *rasa* is realised or evoked by the fusion of *'vibhava'*, *'anubhava'* and *'vyabhicaribhava'*.

Mehta, in the work Sanskrit Play Production in India explains that *vibhavas* are the characters and situations in a play that cause the emergence of *rasa*, it is "the support, cause or the stimulus for the *rasa* experience"(83). These are mainly the characters and settings of the work that excite the readers' feelings and thus function as the mainsprings of emotions. When these characters and situations are presented in the poem, the corresponding and appropriate emotions are felt by the reader. *Vibhavas* are of two types - *alambanavibhavas* and *uddipanavibhavas*. The person or persons with reference to whom the emotions are manifested are termed *alambana*vibhavas. They are "those components of the cause or stimuli on which the *Rasa* realisation in a drama depends, such as hero, heroine and other dramatic persona in various relationships" (83). The circumstances that helped evoke the emotions are *uddipanavibhavas*. In short, the characters who feel the emotions are called *alambanavibhavas* whereas the *excitants* are called *uddipanavibhavas*. They are "the auxiliary causes or stimulating circumstances for the manifestation of the basic inner state, e.g., the appropriate time, circumstances and situations of the plot" (84).

Anubhavas are those effects felt by the characters when they are under the influence of these emotions. They can be viewed as the indicators of the presence of these emotions in the characters. They are the bodily expressions through which emotions are expressed. The glances, sweating, blushing, and smile exhibited by the characters are examples of *anubhavas*. They may be voluntary or involuntary. *'Sattvikabhavas'* or bodily expressions are a technical term used to denote the involuntary effects.

Vyabhicaribhavas are the transitory and secondary moods reinforcing the dominant and permanent emotions. They are a series of diverse emotions that foster the main emotions. They are also called *sancaribhavas*, and just as the term suggests, they move towards the main *rasa* in different ways. Some examples are *sanka* or apprehension of danger, *alasya* or languor, *glani* or exhaustion etc.

The *samyoga* in the *rasasutra* refers to the integration of all elements of the poem which results in the expression or manifestation of *rasa.* It denotes a sense of fusion whereas the expression and the concurrent delightful contemplation of permanent emotions are indicated

by the term *'nishpattihi'*. *Rasa*is the relishing of the contemplated *sthayins*. "*Rasa* is the…study of emotions which deals with the delight, one takes in literature" (Poonam 5).

According to Bharata, there are eight *sthayibhavas* or permanent emotions. *Sthayibhavas* or *sthayins* are the emotions that remain predominant in a work. These are embedded in the consciousness and thus can be experienced by all human beings. This *sthayibhava* is transformed into an extra worldly state (*alaukikavastha*) and it is termed as *rasa*. Only a *sahrdaya*who is a competent reader or a spectator with a bunch of life experiences and trained sensibility can be able to identify with the mental state of the character and experience the aesthetic relish or *rasa*. (Thampi 132)

An idea of distance is also identified with this concept by J.L. Mason and Patwardhan in their essay *Rasa- Imaginative experiences*.

The *sahrdaya* sympathises with the original character and to a large degree he even identifies with the situation depicted. But he does not identify completely, he retains a certain *aesthetic distance*, the name for which is *rasa*. The actor, in the opinion of Abhinavagupta and most later writers does not experience *Rasa*, nor does the original character, nor even the author. For *rasa* implies distance. Without this aesthetic distance, there cannot exist literature, only the primary world. This is what, in our opinion, lies behind Abhinava's famous comparison of drama to a dream: in both cases, nothing in the real world "happens" or is affected. It would be as absurd for a spectator to fall in love with a character in a drama as it would be to expect the golden lady-bug of a dream to still be shining on our hand in the morning. The transparent but adamant glass partition that separates both is art.

The eight permanent emotions put forward by Bharata and their corresponding *Rasas* are,

Rati (love) - *sringara* (the erotic)

Hasa (humour) - *hasya*(comic)

Soka (sorrow) - *karuna* (the compassionate)

Krodha (anger) - *roudra* (the furious)

Utsaha (energy) - *vira* (the heroic)

Bhaya (fear) - *bhayankara* (the terrible)

Juguptsa (disgust) - *bibhastsa* (the repulsive)

Vismaya (wonder) - *adbhuta* (the marvellous)

Later, a ninth *rasa*was added to the list, which was *santarasa* (the serene), which had *sama* (tranquility) or *vairagya* (detachment) as its corresponding sthayin.

The formation of *rasa* is said to happen when a blending of these *bhava*s occurs, rousing in the reader or spectator a certain emotion accompanied by a thrill and a sense of joy. The contributing factors are also discussed in detail. *Rasa*is the emotion resulting from a contemplation of feelings and emotions of characters, situations, etc.

Further discussion on the concept was ignited by Abhinavagupta with his work, *Abhinavabharati.* It was written as a commentary on Bharata's maxim on *rasa*. It says that the formation of *rasa* is based upon a particular view of psychology which holds that our personality is constituted, both towards its motivation and intellection, of a few primary emotions which lie deep in the subconscious or unconscious strata of our being. These are running through all natures in a permanent manner and maybe called dominant emotions.

Indian critics describe the *rasa* experience as *alaukika.* It doesn't mean 'other worldly' but means 'non-ordinary' or 'not of the ordinary world'. There is no parallel to what takes place in a literary experience. Nor can it be duplicated. And that is the reason why Abhinavagupta compares *rasa* to the perception of "magic flower" *(adbhutapushpavat)* in the sense that it is detached from the past and future and perceived only in the present.

R. B. Patankar in the article "Does the "*Rasa*" Theory Have Any Modern Relevance?", discusses the concept of *sadharanikarana* or universalization as perceived by both Eastern and Western critical traditions. He brings about a comparison between the views of Abhinavagupta and A C Bradley in the discussion on poetry.

Bradley admits that poetry may have ulterior ends like the softening of passions in addition to its sole legitimate end of being "a satisfying imaginative experience." However, for Bradley these ulterior ends of poetry are totally irrelevant in a discussion of poetry as poetry. The case of Abhinavagupta is entirely different. For him the *rasas* depend on *sthayibhivas*; and *sthayibhavas* are *sthayi*, that is, permanent and dominant sentiments/emotions because they promote the basic goals of life. Some *bhava*s are not given the status of *sthayin*, and are not regarded as sources of *rasas* only because they are not conducive to these goals. (302)

According to Stephen C Pepper, "The principle of dominant emotion is the selection of stimuli belonging to one emotional scheme of action patterns. The specific quality of that emotion will then be echoed and re-echoed through all parts of the work; and all details diverse in other respects as they may be, become organized and unified through the single emotion evoked by them." (Thampi 132).

Abhinavagupta's three stages of *rasa* experience

Abhinavagupta finds three stages of *rasa* experience. In his *Indian Theories of Meaning,* K Kunjunni Raja explains, "the first stage involves the cognition of the formal or intellectual elements of the poem, and serves as a means to the second. The second stage consists of the idealization of things in poetry or drama by the power of imagination in the reader or spectator. The third stage can be marked as the climax of the inexpressible affective (emotional) condition of the reader or spectator. When thus the formal or intellectual imaginative and emotional elements of a poem, blend into one predominant sentiment and, making a simultaneous appeal, awaken the *sthayibhava* of the reader or spectator, the relish or *rasa* is manifested in the heart, leaving no trace of the constituent elements." (pp.288-289).

Comparing Western and Eastern notions of aesthetics

The philosophical study of Arts and beauty, termed as Aesthetics has been of relevance for a long period of time, both in Eastern and Western Aesthetic traditions. However, there is a notable difference in their approaches to Aesthetics as opined by Bushra Khanam and Dr. Darkhasha in their paper "Harmonizing Beauty: A Comparative Study of Western and Indian Approaches to Aesthetics"."While Western aesthetic theory has been profoundly shaped by the drive for systematization, intellectual rigor, and formalism, Indian aesthetics has tended to prioritize emotional engagement and spiritual transcendence through art." (446). Western aesthetic tradition focuses on the intellectual and the cognitive processes associated with this engagement, looking at beauty in terms of rules and formats. "The Western tradition's focus on "universal standards of beauty" contrasts with Indian aesthetics, which places greater emphasis on emotional resonance, experiential intensity, and spiritual transcendence." (450) A cross-cultural engagement with aesthetics would offer a new range of prospects in the comprehension and enjoyment of the work of art. Indian aesthetic theories like the *rasa* theory employed as a tool in analysing western texts, bring together an instance of this cross-cultural engagement.

The application of *rasa* theory to a text involves the textual analysis through close reading. Diction, imagery, and the rhetoric employed are explored, delineating the dominant themes and emotions portrayed. This approach underlies a careful examination of the language. Diction here refers to the specific word choices used, imagery indicates the symbolisms and descriptions, and rhetoric refers to the tone and the stylistic choices employed in the text. The *bhava*s or emotional states corresponding to these are realised, which then determines the *rasas* evoked in the text. These *rasas* are further categorised into *angi rasas* and *anga rasas. Angi rasas* are those which are found to be intense in their expressions and are consistent throughout the text, whereas *anga rasas* are the other secondary *rasas* transient in the text. Such an endeavor merges the cultural and creative artistry of the two traditions, resulting in a richer and more inclusive aesthetic engagement.

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The Role of School Libraries in English Language Teaching: Evidence from Kerala Schools

Vinesh V.

Abstract

This study investigates the fundamental role of school libraries in enhancing English language teaching within Kerala's educational landscape. The research employs a mixed-method approach to analyze library resource utilization patterns across select urban and rural schools. Through structured questionnaires, interviews, and group discussions with 120 secondary school students, this comprehensive exploration examines the impact of library engagement on English language learning outcomes. The findings revealed that students who actively utilize library resources demonstrate significantly superior performance in vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and overall English proficiency compared to their peers with limited library exposure. Statistical analysis shows meaningful correlations between library usage and learning achievements (÷²=13.60, p<0.05). Students consider libraries as dynamic hubs for enriching linguistic skills and cultural understanding through extensive reading. The study recommends strengthening library-curriculum integration, emphasizing libraries' critical role in fostering literary engagement and language development in Kerala's multilingual educational environment.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, School Libraries, Reading Culture, Literary Engagement, Kerala Education.

Introduction

Libraries have long been recognized as sanctuaries of learning and intellectual discovery, serving as vital cultural institutions that shape educational experiences across generations. In the context of English language education, school libraries occupy a particularly significant position, offering students access to literary worlds that extend far beyond the boundaries of traditional classroom instruction. The present study explores this relationship within Kerala's rich educational and cultural landscape, where English language proficiency serves not merely as an academic requirement but as a gateway to broader literary and cultural engagement.

The role of libraries in nurturing language development has been celebrated by educators and writers throughout history. As Bush eloquently observed, "libraries allow children to ask questions about the world and find the answers" (Bush, 2024). This sentiment resonates deeply in the context of English language learning, where curiosity and exploration form the foundation of authentic linguistic development. The library environment provides learners with opportunities to encounter English in its natural literary context, fostering both language acquisition and cultural appreciation.

In Kerala's multilingual educational environment, school libraries serve as bridges between local linguistic traditions and global literary cultures. Students navigate between Malayalam, their mother tongue, and English, the language of wider opportunity, finding in library spaces the necessary resources and atmosphere conducive to this linguistic journey. The extensive collections of fiction, poetry, drama, and non-fiction available in well-equipped school libraries offer students authentic exposure to English language use across diverse genres and cultural contexts.

Extensive Reading and Language Learning

Research in second language learning consistently demonstrates the benefits of sustained reading for English development. The theoretical foundation rests on the principle that learners acquire language most effectively through exposure to meaningful texts in supportive contexts. Library environments provide ideal conditions for such exposure, offering learners access to graded materials, authentic texts, and self-selected reading opportunities that match individual proficiency levels and interests.

Studies examining extensive reading programs reveal significant improvements in word knowledge, text understanding, and overall English proficiency. The sustained engagement with texts that libraries facilitate allows learners to encounter new vocabulary in context, develop reading strategies, and build confidence in their English abilities. This approach contrasts with traditional classroom instruction by providing learners with autonomy in material selection and pacing.

Educational Impact of Library Programs

Educational research has documented the transformative impact of well-integrated library programs on academic achievement. Williams and Wavell (2001) conducted comprehensive research examining how school library resource centers influence learning outcomes across

various subject areas. Their study revealed that students with regular library access developed enhanced information literacy skills, improved research capabilities, and demonstrated greater confidence in academic tasks requiring independent investigation.

The research methodology involved longitudinal tracking of student performance indicators, comparing outcomes between schools with varying levels of library integration. Results showed that systematic library utilization correlated positively with improved academic performance across multiple disciplines, with particularly strong effects observed in language arts and literature subjects.

Digital Integration in Learning Environments

Contemporary research has explored how libraries adapt to support digital literacy development alongside traditional language learning objectives. Modern library services have evolved to incorporate digital resources, online databases, and multimedia materials that enhance English learning opportunities while maintaining collaborative learning atmospheres.

Educational institutions implementing balanced approaches combining traditional reading materials with digital resources have demonstrated optimal results in English development, particularly in areas requiring sustained text engagement and word knowledge development. These findings suggest that technology integration, when properly implemented, can expand access to authentic English materials without diminishing the fundamental benefits of library-based learning.

Community-Centered Library Models

Innovative approaches to library service delivery have demonstrated particular relevance for multilingual communities. Le-Roux, Hendrikz, and Francois (2006) implemented experimental community-school library partnerships in South African educational contexts, creating shared learning spaces that served both formal educational needs and broader community literacy goals.

Their research design involved establishing joint-use facilities that provided English materials to diverse user populations, measuring both individual learning outcomes and community-level literacy improvements. The findings revealed that community-integrated library models significantly enhanced English learning opportunities, particularly for students from

linguistically diverse backgrounds who benefited from increased exposure to English materials and authentic cultural interactions.

Digital Literacy and Language Development

Recent research has investigated how school libraries successfully integrate digital technologies while maintaining focus on reading culture development and English proficiency. Gogan and Marcus (2013) examined libraries that adapted to digital needs while continuing to build reading cultures, facilitating both divergence and convergence in media to support motivation, differentiation, and collaborative learning necessary for contemporary educational environments.

Their findings indicated that libraries maintaining balanced approaches between technological innovation and traditional reading promotion achieved the most significant improvements in student learning outcomes, particularly in developing critical evaluation skills for digital texts alongside traditional literary appreciation.

Multilingual Context Considerations

The IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto (2000) established international frameworks emphasizing the importance of library services in supporting diverse linguistic communities. The manifesto specifically addresses the needs of multilingual learners, highlighting how library materials can bridge home languages and target languages like English.

Research implementing these principles has shown that libraries providing materials in both students' first languages and English create supportive environments for language transition and development. Such approaches reduce anxiety associated with second language learning while providing scaffolded support for English learning through comparative reading and cultural exploration.

Research Implications for English Teaching

Current research indicates several key areas where library integration enhances English teaching effectiveness. The availability of graded reading materials allows for differentiated instruction that meets diverse proficiency levels within single classrooms. Additionally, library learning promotes autonomous learning skills that extend beyond specific language lessons to support lifelong English development.

Research suggests that library environments reduce emotional barriers often associated with formal language instruction, creating supportive spaces where students can experiment with English use through reading and research activities. These conditions appear particularly beneficial for students from multilingual backgrounds who may experience linguistic insecurity in traditional classroom settings.

Future Research Directions

While existing research provides substantial evidence supporting library-enhanced English learning, several areas require further investigation. Limited studies have examined specific teaching strategies for integrating library materials into structured English curricula. Additionally, research comparing effectiveness across different multilingual contexts remains insufficient, particularly in regions where English serves primarily as a foreign language rather than a second language medium of instruction.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between school library utilization and English language learning outcomes among Kerala secondary school students.
2. To identify how different library resources contribute to various aspects of English language proficiency.
3. To assess student perceptions of library services in supporting their English language development.
4. To provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing library-ELT integration.

Hypothesis

The utilization of school library resources by students is significantly related to their English language learning achievements and overall linguistic competence in Kerala's educational context.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews to provide comprehensive insights into library-ELT relationships.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprises secondary school students from select districts in Kerala. A stratified sampling technique ensured representation from both urban and rural schools. The final sample included 120 students, carefully selected to represent diverse demographic characteristics including age groups, geographical locations, and gender distribution.

Data Collection Instruments

- Structured Questionnaire: A validated instrument measuring library usage patterns, resource preferences, and perceived impact on English language learning
- Semi-structured Interviews: Conducted with students, teachers, and librarians to gather qualitative insights into library-ELT integration practices

Variables Measured

- Independent Variable: Frequency and nature of library utilization
- Dependent Variable: English language learning outcomes (measured through academic performance, self-assessment, and teacher evaluation)

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis employed chi-square tests to examine relationships between variables, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to identify patterns and insights.

Results and Analysis

The statistical analysis revealed a significant relationship between student library engagement and English language learning outcomes:

Results: $\div^2$ cal=13.60, $\div^2$ tab=12.59, Significant at 0.05 level, df=6

These results indicate that student engagement with school library resources significantly affects English language learning outcomes (Chi-square with 6 degrees of freedom = 13.60, $p < 0.05$). The calculated chi-square value (13.60) exceeded the tabulated value (12.59) at the 0.05 significance level, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis.

Library Utilization Patterns

Table 1

Library Use of Students for English Language Learning

No. of library use	Frequency	Percentage
Once in a week	22	55.0
Twice in a week	4	10.0
Thrice in a week	5	12.5
More than 3 times	8	20.0
No Visit	1	2.5
Total	40	100

Table 2

Library Visits of Students (English Language Focus)

Reasons for Library Visits	Frequency	Percentage
To read English Literature	12	30.0
To read English Dailies	11	27.5
For English Reference Materials	6	15.0
To read English Journals	8	20.0
To Spend Leisure Time Reading English	3	7.5
Total	40	100

Qualitative Insights

Interview data revealed several key themes:

Enhanced Word Knowledge: Students reported significant improvement in English vocabulary through exposure to diverse reading materials. As one student noted, "Reading different books in the library helps me learn new words that I don't find in textbooks."

Improved Text Understanding: Teachers observed that students who regularly used library materials demonstrated better comprehension skills in English classes. A participating teacher commented, "Students who spend time in the library show marked improvement in understanding complex English texts."

Cultural Exposure: Library materials provided students with exposure to English-speaking cultures, enhancing their cultural competence alongside linguistic skills. Students mentioned gaining insights into different cultural contexts through English literature and periodicals.

Independent Learning Development: Librarians noted that regular library users developed greater independence in their English learning, seeking out materials that matched their interests and proficiency levels.

Discussion

Libraries as Literary Spaces for Language Development

The findings illuminate the profound role that school libraries play in fostering English language development among secondary school students. Rather than merely serving as repositories of books, these libraries emerge as dynamic spaces where students encounter the English language in its richest and most varied forms. The significant improvements observed in word knowledge, text understanding, and overall linguistic competence suggest that libraries provide something that traditional classroom instruction, despite its merits, cannot fully replicate: authentic, self-directed engagement with literature and language.

The superior performance of library-engaged students reflects the natural language learning that occurs when students freely explore texts that capture their interest and imagination. Unlike the often-prescriptive nature of textbook learning, library reading allows students to follow their curiosity, leading them through literary landscapes that expand both their linguistic horizons and cultural understanding.

The Cultural Dimension of Library Learning

One of the most significant findings concerns the cultural enrichment that library materials provide to English learners. Students consistently reported that their exposure to English literature through library reading deepened their understanding not only of the language but of the cultures and contexts in which English is used. This cultural competence, often overlooked in traditional language instruction, proves crucial for developing authentic communicative ability.

In multilingual environments, where students navigate between local languages and English in their daily academic lives, libraries serve as cultural bridges. They provide spaces where English is not merely a subject to be studied but a living language through which students can access diverse perspectives, stories, and ways of understanding the world.

The Development of Independent Learning

Perhaps most importantly, this study reveals how library engagement fosters the development of autonomous learning skills that extend far beyond language learning. Students who regularly utilize library materials demonstrate increased confidence in seeking out information, selecting appropriate texts, and managing their own learning processes. These metacognitive skills, developed through library interaction, serve students well across all areas of their academic endeavours.

The interviews revealed that library-engaged students develop a sense of ownership over their learning that is often absent in purely teacher-directed instruction. They learn to trust their own interests and judgments, selecting materials that challenge and engage them appropriately. This self-direction, nurtured in the library environment, represents a crucial step toward lifelong learning and intellectual independence.

Implications for English Language Education

The evidence presented strongly supports the integration of library activities into English language curricula. Rather than treating library use as supplementary or optional, educators should recognize library engagement as central to comprehensive language education. The most effective approach appears to involve structured guidance that introduces students to library materials while preserving the freedom and autonomy that make library learning so powerful.

Addressing the Challenges of Multilingual Contexts

Educational systems in multilingual societies face the challenge of helping students develop proficiency in English while maintaining their connection to local languages and cultures. This study suggests that libraries, with their diverse collections and inclusive atmospheres, provide ideal environments for addressing this challenge. Students can explore connections between languages, compare literary traditions, and develop the kind of metalinguistic awareness that enhances overall communicative competence.

Data Interpretation

Based on the collected data and the conducted research, the hypothesis stated in the study has been substantiated and confirmed. In the school context of Kerala, students' utilization of multifarious library resources enables them to secure good scores in English language evaluations and perform well in English-related extracurricular competitions.

According to Ray Bradbury, a famous American novelist and screen author, upon completing high school, he committed a decade to frequenting the library, devoting two to three days per week to intensive self-directed study. His formal educational milestone was achieved at the age of twenty-eight, not within the conventional walls of an academic institution but within the expansive intellectual landscape cultivated within the library's resources (Dowling, 2013). These words expound how self-learning within the confines of a library milieu transformed the life of an individual who took inspiration from the school library visits in his early years.

Recommendations of the Study

Libraries should be integrated into the English language curriculum to facilitate learners' self-learning through extensive reading. The varied library resources should always provide students with exposure to authentic English materials and international information systems to further their language education. Educationists must frame curricula that promote library-oriented English language teaching methods. Authorities must ensure facilities in school libraries, including qualified librarians, improved infrastructural facilities, proper funding and maintenance, updated technological advancements, and proper reference management systems. Qualified librarians can provide proper guidance and motivation to students for effective use of English language library resources. In classrooms, English teachers should adopt learner-centered methods of instruction that encourage learners to increase the frequency of library visits for English language

enhancement. Both teachers and librarians should encourage library-oriented English language programs, including literary quizzes, reading competitions, English drama presentations, and English journal exhibitions. These programs will encourage students to visit libraries regularly for English language improvement. School administrative authorities should prioritize the function of libraries in their English language teaching systems. All these measures will help bring maximum potential output from learners in their English language scholastic and non-scholastic areas.

Conclusion

This study shows that school libraries play a vital role in English language education within Kerala's schools. Students who use library resources regularly perform much better in English than those with limited library access. The research found clear improvements in vocabulary, reading skills, writing ability, and listening comprehension among library users. Students also reported that libraries helped them discover new interests and develop confidence in learning English. The findings suggest that Kerala's education system should integrate library activities into English classes more systematically. Teachers and librarians need better training to support this integration. Schools should also invest in both books and digital resources. These improvements could help Kerala maintain its reputation for educational excellence while preparing students for future opportunities that require strong English skills. Libraries serve as bridges between classroom learning and real-world language use, making them essential components of effective English education.

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Virtual Reality and Popular Culture: A Thematic Study of Bulaong's *Escapist Dream*

Dr. Samiha Tabasum

Abstract

Escapist Dream is a science –fiction novel produced by the well-known Filipino author Louis Bulaong and was published in 2020. The paper attempts to study this novel which belongs to the gamelit and pop culture fiction genre, in associations with the narrative techniques and thematic analysis of the text, and tries to explore the interaction of virtual reality and popular culture in it. It aims to study how *Escapist Dream* blurs the boundaries between the physical and the virtual world which is further extended to the blurring of boundaries between diverse identities and realities. The aim of the paper is to explore the major psychological themes as well as the influence of popular culture on identity construction. It also tries to examine and foreground the manner in which the author uses postmodern narrative technique to both praise and mock the Geek culture in this seminal fiction.

Introduction

Escapist Dream is a novel produced by Louis Bulaong and was published in 2020. The paper attempts to make a thematic study this science fictional novel in association with the theoretical perspectives of popular culture. The author mentions that it is written as homage to geek culture which makes it a perfect medium through which the impact of popular culture on the identity development of humanity in contemporary society could be explored. The setting of the novel is that of a speculative fictional where the use of virtual reality machine is everyday reality which gives us a standpoint from where the direct intersection of the virtual world with the real world could be explored. The aim of the paper is to examine how the text represents the blurring of cultural boundaries along with the blur of the physical and virtual reality. Through an in-depth and thematic study of the text the paper attempts to show the interconnectedness of the global societies which constructs the identities of the protagonists in a manner where the not just the actions of the characters but also their inner conflicts and psychological struggles could be analyzed. Louis Bulaong's science fiction *Escapist Dream* blends the literary fiction with different genres like comic, video games, films and anime along with human-psychological concerns thereby making it a richly complex text of popular culture which encourages inclusivity in contemporary society which is marked by cultural diversity

and is constantly interconnected.Virtual reality is a simulated experience where the user can experience an exclusively computer generated realistic world by using Virtual Reality headsets and other equipments. But the atmosphere of the Virtual reality is not subjected to the limitations of the physical world because of its creative possibilities. According to the critics,virtual reality, "is one in which the participant observer is totally immersed in a completely synthetic world, which may or may not mimic the properties of a real-world environment, either existing or fictional, but which may also exceed the bounds of physical reality by creating a world in which the physical laws governing gravity, time and material properties no longer hold." (Milgram.et.al). There are many fictions that portray the subject positions of characters being trapped in the world of virtual reality.

Bulaong makes his text deal with this predicament too. But apart from the involvement of such traditional trope of virtual-world entrapment there are many major themes in the text which contribute to the dynamics of popular culture in contemporary society. Popular Culture consists of art, values, beliefs and practices that stand in contrast to the dominant ideologies and sometimes even against the higher status of fine arts. Its creation is highly influenced by the quotidian lived-experiences of the people, their tastes, contemporary trends, popular beliefs, music and many other factors governing the trends of a particular society. The affirmative influence of popular culture cannot be denied. Crothers aptly argues, "popular culture makers, of course, have been making globally accessible, culturally transparent, broadly marketed content for over a century. Their repertoires of contents are both appealing and extensive" (262). The advancement of popular culture definitely began by the fact that "Millions of city dwellers desired entertainments" but its rolein contemporary society has become much integrated. (54). The aim of the paper is to situate Escapist Dream in the global reality where the thematic study of the text enables the reader to explore the identity construction of individual whose lives are undeniably intersected with the global reality of popular culture and virtual reality.

A Thematic Study of *Escapist Dream*

Bulaong's Escapist Dream represents not only the intersection but also the blur of the Virtual realist and the physical world of the protagonists named Charlie and Jim. The thematic exploration of the book enables us to comprehend the subject position of the youth of contemporary society in the form of Charlie and a skilled computer programmer like Jim whose lives are completely intertwined with the Virtual reality and popular culture that

constructed their selfhood during adolescence. Through the portrayal of the various characters in the novel, Bulaong explores the blur of boundaries between the Virtual reality and the physical world which has become contemporary truth. Charlie is a teen-age boy who suffers from the trauma of the suicide of his best friend Carl. Charlie was the last person Carl talked through video phone call. Charlie and Carl had been ostracized by their schoolmates as geeks which already had subjected Charlie to the traumatic experiences of an isolated individual. But after Carl's death it became more difficult for him as started blaming himself for not being able to save his best friend. Both of his parents were socially accepted, respectable and successful people: his father being a soldier and his mother being a doctor which made it even more difficult for Charlie as he was suffering from insecurities of not being a son they could be proud of. After saving enough money, Charlie decided to buy a VRM (Virtual Reality Machine) which Carl had offered to buy for him.

When he starts using the machine to enter in to the world known as "Escapist Dream", his perspectives start changing. Jim on the other hand is a well known talented computer programmer who worked at the company named Imaginaria, the company whose VRM was bought by Charlie. Jim suffers from the trauma of the death of his wife and son which aggravate his depression. He suffers abnormal mental health which causes him to hallucinate in real world. Being more talented than his colleagues he creates a computer program and keeps it hidden from the company but on the day of his resignation from the company he fails to find the program which he had created with several years of hard work. He was contacted by a member of the company who was both colleague and his friend. The name of the friend was Launa who need his assistance in destroying the newly formed bugs in the virtual world of "Escapist Dream". Just like Charlie, Jim enters the virtual world of "Escapist Dream" rightly suspecting the fact that the bugs were most probably the special computer programs created by Jim. The Virtual worlds of the Escapist Dream is divided into different sections known as Stan City, Otaku Academy, Gamer's Den, The Library and Zone of the Macabre.

The Stan city is the place based on American comic books and superheroes, Otaku Academy consists of Japanese Anime world, Gamer's Den is based on video games that are played all over the world, The Library is a place based on Classical Literature and the Zone of Macabre is a place marked by gothic atmosphere. The narrative moves further with the encounters of the protagonists with different challenges as they journey through the worlds of these sections. The amalgamation of diverse media and pop culture in the text is the result of

Bulaong's attempts at creating a multidimensional realm as he admits, "I created this novel as a homage to the comics, anime, movies, books series and video games that I grew up in. I wanted to accurately portray today's geek culture with tons of pop culture references, pastiches and satires. And similar to what Alan Moore did when he wrote *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* I also envisioned this book as a time capsule for future geeks who might want to know what geeks back then liked to read about" (613-14). The paper attempts to visualize the thematic concerns of the text as Charlie and Jim navigate through the different sections of the virtual reality in Escapist Dream. The blur of the boundaries between the digital and physical world is extended to their Psyche where their inner development as individual takes place. Their simultaneous existence in both the Physical realities of the real world and the virtual realm of the Escapist Dream makes them subjected to the shifting of their subjectivity from an ordinary person to a person with superhuman powers. Charlie's experience in the virtual world where he was able to make friends and save them from the monsters enhances his confidence in the real world. His mental state improves with a continuous growth of his confidence within himself. The fact that the characters in the virtual world are actual human beings in the real world and they have their own worries in the actual world to deal with, encourages him to have courage as he is not alone facing these problems.

Throughout the text we see both Charlie and Jim moving away from the fixed notions of identity and embracing the continuous shift of their subjectivity which aligns them with a character with posthuman subjectivity, a BWO (body without organ) who can become whatever he/she wants to be just by letting the imagination flow and perform because their actions in the world of virtual reality is nothing but the performance of their imagination. According to Suler, "adolescents' interest in the internet is partly due to the challenges of coming to terms with their own identities when dealing with questions of values, relationships, and partner selection" (as qtd. In Vibiral et.al.) Charlie holds a similar subject position which is revealed in Charlie's words when he says: "It's the same reason why kids my age does it, Charlie answered "It's all because of school, family and …throw in society as well. Carl and I were too different and nobody wanted to be with usI couldn't make any friends because of my shyness but I managed to go through…. There are times when I am bitter and angry about my life, but I try to d my best being positive and happy" (340-41). The experience in the Virtual reality of the Escapist Dream eventually influences and constructs their identity because "identity captures the implicit and explicit responses to the question *Who I am*, encompassing a wide range of content and

processes" (as qtd. in Nagy). As Charlie and Jim move from the comic book world of Stan City and superheroes to the Otaku Academy they are subjected to cultural diversity of American sensibilities and Japanese tradition and pop culture. They are further subjected to the high art in the form of the popular classical literature that they come across in the sophisticated world of the Library. While Charlie and Jim search for the bugs that have left the world of Escapist Dream in chaos, they are able to create their own avatars which enables them to express themselves with a sense of freedom which is otherwise not possible in the physical world. The experience of making friends in the virtual world also helps Charlie to boost his confidence in the real world. The cultural diversity found in the Escapist Dream also helps the characters to become unbiased individuals because they learn to embrace the power and beauty of different avatars and environments that belong to different cultures. The atmosphere also proves to be mentally healthy for them as nobody experiences pain in the virtual world and anyone who holds a grudge or tries to be invincible is taken out of the game by being banned from the world.

After Charlie and Jim manage to recover the bugs from the system of the Escapist Dream their friend Launa reveals her true intention of turning the virtual world of the Escapist Dream into a reality by sending their real bodies into coma and removing the log out button entirely. The heavenly bliss of the virtual world turns into a curse as people feel trapped in the Escapist Dream, entirely losing connection with the real world. Launa, Salt slayer and the Librarian are few of the characters in the novel who try to literally turn the world of the Escapist Dream into a reality thereby disconnecting all of the connection from the sufferings and misery from the prejudiced society of their contemporary reality. They wish to turn it into a literal escape from their responsibilities. Even Jim at the end f the novel is shown as a figure who though not as harmful as the others but still tries to remain a dream world of his own fantasy where he could resurrect his dead wife and son in the form of generated AIs in the secluded world of virtual reality for the rest of his life. Charlie and the other characters howeverembrace the challenges of the real life and grow to become stronger. Charlie, throughout the journey learns to become more self aware and courageous which enables him to face the challenges in the real world with a stronger and authentic self. After his return from the Escapist Dream he focuses on becoming real heroes like his parents who are soldier and doctor, people who actually contribute to society by saving lives and fighting for their nations. He focuses on putting all of his efforts on his studies but fails. The dream in the final chapter

enables Charlie to view reality from the diverse perspectives of all of the people that he came across (people from the physical world as well as from the Escapist Dream). His self actualization occurs only when he allows himself to perceive the world from their perspectives and comes to a balanced goal for himself where he embraces all of his experiences and geeky tastes with trauma and joy and moves forward with a new found freedom while "Walking towards his study, he sat down and checked the nerdy things he had hidden in his drawers. He grabbed them all one by one and studied each one of them carefully. While these are the things that caused his eccentricities, these were also the ones that made him happy" (610). He regrets forgetting the "how therapeutic it was to be alone with [his] passion" (610). The following lines beautifully express his determination and balanced self-actualization where he says: "If he can't become a doctor or a soldier, why notdo something he can confidently do?...All the best times in his life happened when he was with his passion…There and then, inspiration came to him. The people should know at least of his story, and the amazing cool things he had experienced. His life was going to be his influence, and he had the perfect idea of what story he would write. Of the magnificent epic he and his fellow geeks had to go through in that virtual reality world" (611-12). With this determination Charlie started writing his first work of fiction named "Escapist Dream".

Conclusion

The fact cannot be denied that, "Popular culture is an important part of how globalization works today" (Crothers 245). Globalization is indeed influenced by popular culture. Louis Bulaong's novel *Escapist Dream* offers a powerful and hypothetical ground to examine the role of virtual reality and popular culture in contemporary global society. The novel both praises and satirises the geek culture. While the excessive immersion into the virtual reality might cause isolation and seclusion from the physical world and social interaction, a careful and mindful involvement can also prove therapeutic and blissful. Through the portrayal of a character like Charlie Bulaong represents the healthy impact of passion on identity development. The excessive affiliation with the virtual reality might create confusion as it happened in the

characters of Launa and Salt Slayer who didnot hesitate to be entirely removed from the physical world. But using the virtual reality and pop culture to enhanced self expression, self-actualization, identity exploration and removal of cultural discrimination with the blurring of boundaries are area that should be encouraged.

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Lois Jose, Assistant Professor, Department of English Studies, Akal University, Bathinda, Punjab

Amrit, Independent Researcher, Department of English Studies, Akal University, Bathinda, Punjab

Dr. Anju K.N., Professor, Department of English, T. M. Jacob Memorial Government College, Manimalakkunnu, Ernakulam, Kerala

Kiran Maria Jose, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Government Arts and Science College, Thrithala, Palakkad, Kerala

Dr. Jerin B. Sebastian, Assistant Professor, Department of English, St. Berchmans College (Autonomous) Changanassery, Kerala

Subin Varghese, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Deva Matha College, Kuravilangad, Kerala

Dr. Deepa R., Assistant Professor of English, Milad E Sherief Memorial College, Kayamkulam, Kerala

Dr. Susan Mathew, Assistant Professor, Department of English, CMS College, Kottayam, Kerala

Ashly Thomas, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Alphonsa College, Pala, Kottayam, Kerala

Jerin Jose, Research Scholar, Post Graduate and Research Department of English, Newman College, Thodupuzha, Kerala

Joan Maria E. I., Research Scholar, Department of English, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Kerala

Dr. Karthika S.B., Assistant Professor of English, Fatima Mata National College (Autonomous), Kollam, Kerala

Dr. Maria Lisa Mathew, Assistant Professor of English, Fatima Mata National College (Autonomous), Kollam, Kerala

Azmat Mushtaq, Independent Researcher, M.A. Linguistics, University of Kashmir

Dr. Jayalekshmi B., Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Milad-E-Sherief Memorial College, Kayamkulam, Kerala

Kavitha Kaladharan, Research Scholar, Dept. of English, TKM College of Arts and Science, Kollam, Kerala

Dr. B. Sajeetha, Research Supervisor & Asst. Professor of English & Centre of Research, Sree Ayyappa College for Women, Nagercoil, Tamilnadu

Leena Stanley, Research Scholar in Department of English, Centre of Research, Sree Ayyappa College for Women, Nagercoil, Tamilnadu

Dr. Rose Mary Philip, Asst.Professor, Department of English, Alphonsa College, Pala, Kerala

Dr. Minu Mary Mathew, Department of English, Assumption College, Changanassery, Kerala

C.S. Prabha, Department of English, The Cochin College, Kochi, Kerala

Dr. Revathy Menon, Assistant Professor, College of Applied Science (IHRD), Kalanjoor, Kerala

Rinu Rijisha K.P., Research Scholar, Dept. of English, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Kerala

Dr. Abdul Latheef V., Associate Professor, Department of English, Goverment College, Kondotty, Univresity of Calicut, Kerala

Shabnam Sherin P., Researcher, Department of English, Government College, Malappuram, Univresity of Calicut, Kerala

Shimi Shajan A., Research Scholar, P.G. & Research Department of English, All Saints' College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

Dr. Sonia Sebastian*, Associate Professor, Department of English, Alphonsa College, Pala, Kerala*

Lt. Anu Jose*, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Alphonsa College, Pala, Kerala*

Sreelekshmi S., National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirapalli, Tamilnadu

Vinesh V., Research Scholar, Department of Library and Information Science, Sunrise University, Alwar, Rajasthan, India

Dr. Samiha Tabasum, Research Scholar, Ravenshaw University, Odisha

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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.