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ROLE OF MULTILINGUALISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

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EDITORS

Dr.A.Banupriya
Dr.H.Kalaivani



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Edited by

Dr. A. Banupriya

Dr. H. Kalaivani

Ink n Ivory Publishing House

DAC Aves, G1, Maple Block, Narashiman Nagar, Polichalur, Chennai -75
Tamilnadu, India.

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EDITORIAL PROFILE



Dr. A. Banupriya

M.A., M.Phil., TEFL/TESOL., Ph.D

Dr. A. Banupriya is an English professor with nine years of teaching experience, specialized in American and British literature. Her academic journey, spanning an M.A., M.Phil., TEFL/TESOL certification, and a Ph.D., reflects her dedication to the study and teaching of language and literature.

In addition to her academic work, she has published 15 research articles, edited 2 books and has presented papers in national and international conferences. She is a trained soft skills instructor, committed to helping learners communicate with confidence and clarity. Her approach blends literary insight with practical communication strategies.

With extensive experience in editing and proofreading, Dr. Banupriya ensures precision and refinement in every piece she works on. Her passion for language, teaching, and excellence continues to shape her professional journey.



Dr. H. Kalaivani
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D

A proficient Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Vels Institute of Science, Technology, and Advanced Studies, Pallavaram, Chennai. With an inspiring nine years teaching experience, she holds a PhD in Pluralistic Trauma in World Literature. She has penned down 15 research articles, 5 book chapters and published 5 poems. Her recent accomplishment includes securing second place in a National Level Poetry Writing Competition. She is a bundle of talent with an insight and interest over literature.

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Role of Multilingualism in Higher Education Research



Dr. A. Banupriya

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies (VISTAS)



Dr. H. Kalaivani

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies (VISTAS)

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Half of a Yellow Sun: A Study of Cultural Memory, War Trauma, and Postcolonial Identity

Dr. A. Banupriya, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) is one of the most powerful contemporary African novels that reconstructs the Nigerian-Biafran War (1967-70) through the lens of cultural memory, trauma, and postcolonial identity. This article examines how Adichie reimagines national history through personal narratives and how she integrates political conflict with intimate human experience. Using a cultural memory framework, the analysis shows how the novel functions as an archive of suppressed histories and fragmented memories of war. It explores major themes such as nationalist ideology, ethnic tensions, gendered experiences of violence, the psychological consequences of war, and the politics of storytelling.

The paper argues that *Half of a Yellow Sun* not only rehabilitates forgotten narratives but also interrogates the processes through which nations remember and forget. Through its polyphonic narrative structure, shifting perspectives, and emotional realism, the text foregrounds the intersection of private memory and collective trauma, making the novel a significant contribution to global postcolonial literature.

Keywords: Cultural Memory, Biafran War, Trauma, Postcolonial Identity, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Nigerian Literature, Nationalism, Violence, Memory Studies

Introduction

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* stands as a monumental work of contemporary African literature, offering a deeply intimate yet politically expansive portrayal of the Nigerian-Biafran War. Published in 2006, the novel blends fictional storytelling with historical reconstruction, functioning both as a literary narrative and a cultural archive. At its core, the novel challenges the silence surrounding the war—a historical event often marginalized in official Nigerian historiography. The narrative revives erased memories of suffering, survival,

resistance, and identity, and it uses literature as a medium to restore agency to those whose voices have been long forgotten.

Through multiple perspectives primarily those of Ugwu, Olanna, and Richard-Adichie portrays how ordinary individuals are shaped by and respond to national crisis. The novel engages with critical themes such as nationalism, the formation of Biafra, ethnic tension between the Igbo and Hausa communities, gendered violence, and the psychological aftermath of war. By anchoring these themes within personal stories, Adichie demonstrates that cultural memory is preserved most effectively through lived experience rather than official political narratives.

This article analyzes *Half of a Yellow Sun* through the lens of cultural memory and trauma studies while also drawing on insights from postcolonial and feminist theory. It argues that Adichie's novel is a seminal work that bridges the gap between personal recollection and collective memory, making the text an important site for understanding war, identity, and the politics of remembrance.

Cultural Memory and the Reconstruction of History

Cultural memory theorists such as Jan Assmann argue that memory is transmitted not only through personal experiences but through cultural forms such as literature, ritual, and symbol. *Half of a Yellow Sun* serves exactly this function-it becomes a repository of memories that were suppressed in Nigeria's postwar narrative. Adichie herself has stated that she wrote the novel because the stories of Biafra remained "absent and incomplete" in Nigeria's public history.

The title-a reference to the Biafran flag-reinforces the novel's role as a cultural memory text. The half of a yellow sun symbolizes both hope and fragmentation, evoking the incomplete realization of the Biafran dream and the incomplete process of collective remembering after the war.

Throughout the novel, Adichie integrates oral storytelling, family history, photographs, letters, and Richard's unfinished book *The World Was Silent When We Died* to show how memory is stored, transmitted, and sometimes lost. This meta-narrative structure strengthens the novel's function as a literary archive.

Polyphonic Narrative Structure

One of the most striking features of the novel is its polyphonic structure. By presenting the narrative through three primary voices-Ugwu (the houseboy), Olanna (the educated elite), and

Richard (the British expatriate)-Adichie captures diverse social positions and perspectives. This multiplicity allows readers to experience the war through varying emotional, class-based, and cultural experiences.

- **Ugwu's perspective** foregrounds the war through the eyes of a child and later a young soldier, positioning him as a carrier of collective trauma.
- **Olanna's perspective** represents the gendered experience of war-displacement, sexual violence, and the burden of emotional labour.
- **Richard's narrative** exposes the complications of identity, cultural appropriation, and the gaze of the outsider.

The nonlinear timeline further reinforces the fragmentation typical of trauma narratives. The jumps between early sixties and late sixties mimic the unreliability and irregularity of memory itself. This technique enables Adichie to highlight how traumatic histories do not unfold smoothly but return in fragments.

Nationalism and the Birth of Biafra

Adichie portrays the rise of Biafran nationalism through characters such as Odenigbo, the “revolutionary,” whose home becomes a meeting ground for intellectual debate. The novel provides insights into:

- the colonial roots of ethnic tension
- the political failures of post-independence Nigeria
- the massacre of Igbo civilians in Northern Nigeria
- the psychological need for a new identity through Biafra

For many characters, Biafra represents hope—a rebirth of dignity and self-determination. For instance, when Olanna witnesses the massacre at Kano, the political suddenly becomes deeply personal, and the call for Biafra transforms into a survival instinct rather than an abstract ideology.

Yet, the novel does not romanticize nationalism. Adichie exposes its contradictions, such as class divisions, corruption, and propaganda within Biafra itself. Ugwu's conscription into the army and the violence he witnesses reveal the darker side of nationalist warfare.

Trauma and the Psychology of War

Trauma is a central theme throughout the novel. Each character experiences a different form of psychological rupture:

1. Ugwu's Trauma

Ugwu's transformation from a naïve boy into a soldier who participates in violence—including the rape of a bar girl—reveals the moral fragmentation created by war. Adichie uses Ugwu to demonstrate how trauma induces both victimhood and perpetration.

2. Olanna's Trauma

Olanna suffers displacement, loss of stability, and the emotional burden of caring for others. Her traumatic memory of “the legs in the bowl”—the severed limbs of a child carried by a refugee—becomes a recurring symbol of Nigerian brutality. Olanna's trauma is also gendered; she bears the emotional and physical consequences of war in ways the male characters do not fully comprehend.

3. Richard's Trauma

Although an outsider, Richard's trauma is tied to his struggles with belonging. His inability to fully own the story of Biafra reflects a postcolonial tension—can a foreigner ever claim the authority to narrate another culture's pain? Adichie employs flashbacks, silence, repetition, and fragmented scenes to illustrate the persistent and haunting nature of trauma memory.

Gendered Experiences of War

While the novel deals with political and military conflict, Adichie foregrounds women's experiences, which are often omitted from official histories. Women in *Half of a Yellow Sun* face:

- displacement and starvation
- loss of children
- sexual violence
- emotional labour of holding families together

Olanna, Kainene, Mama, Amala, and other women represent different social and class experiences of gendered oppression. Kainene's disappearance symbolizes the thousands of missing women of war whose stories were never documented.

The novel also critiques patriarchal authority. Even progressive men like Odenigbo fail to recognize the emotional labour performed by women. Adichie challenges male-dominated narratives of nationalism by showing that the burden of war falls disproportionately on women's bodies and minds.

The Politics of Storytelling

One of the novel's meta-narrative elements is the unfinished book written by Richard, titled *The World Was Silent When We Died*. The name itself critiques global silence during the Biafran War. However, the significant revelation comes at the end-Ugwu, not Richard, is the actual author of the book. This shift is symbolic:

- It returns narrative agency to an African voice.
- It rejects colonial mediation of African history.
- It affirms that those who lived the history should write it.

Ugwu's act of writing becomes an act of healing. It is also a political act—an assertion that cultural memory must be shaped by those who bear the scars.

Violence, Starvation, and Humanitarian Crisis

Adichie vividly depicts starvation, disease, and displacement. The humanitarian crisis in Biafra is shown through:

- kwashiorkor-ridden children
- lack of medicine
- air raids
- refugees flooding the countryside

Her descriptions are raw yet empathetic, capturing both physical suffering and emotional resilience. These scenes revive historical memory of the Biafran famine, which international photography and media once documented but which many modern readers have forgotten.

Postcolonial Identity and the Question of Belonging

Adichie critiques the lingering impact of colonialism, which contributed to ethnic division, political instability, and identity crises. British political decisions created artificial borders and deepened ethnic mistrust. Richard's character represents the postcolonial outsider who desires belonging but never truly attains it.

For the Igbo characters, Biafra becomes a symbolic rejection of colonial legacy. Yet, the failure of Biafra raises questions about whether postcolonial nationhood can ever fully escape its colonial roots.

The Ending: Loss, Memory, and Unfinished Healing

The novel ends with the disappearance of Kainene—a haunting symbol of unresolved trauma. Her absence stands for the thousands of people who vanished during the war and whose families received no closure. The ending is not a traditional resolution but a reminder that:

- trauma continues across generations
- cultural memory is ongoing
- healing is incomplete
- some losses cannot be overwritten

Ugwu's decision to write his book suggests that storytelling becomes a form of survival. Literature becomes a site of memory work, regenerative and healing yet truthful about pain.

Conclusion

Half of a Yellow Sun is a powerful literary contribution that reclaims suppressed cultural memory and foregrounds the human consequences of war. Through multi-layered narratives, Adichie reconstructs a historical tragedy with emotional depth, political insight, and ethical sensitivity. The novel not only revives the forgotten stories of Biafra but also interrogates the broader processes of remembering and forgetting in postcolonial societies.

Adichie's narrative demonstrates that national histories are incomplete without the voices of ordinary individuals—women, children, servants, and survivors. The text, therefore, becomes a communal archive that preserves trauma while offering pathways toward healing and understanding. In doing so, *Half of a Yellow Sun* solidifies its place as an essential work of global literature and a profound commentary on the politics of memory.

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The Eco-Psycho-Feminist Self: Understanding Identity and Trauma in Atwood's *Surfacing*

Dr. H. Kalaivani, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science
Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

This article offers a psycho-feminist reading of *Surfacing* (1972) by Margaret Atwood, exploring how the unnamed female narrator's journey of trauma, alienation, and re-birth on the Quebec Island reflects both the internal psychology of feminine subjectivity and the broader structural dynamics of patriarchy, power and nature. Drawing on psychoanalytic concepts of trauma, identity formation and the unconscious, alongside feminist theory on gender roles, the gaze and agency, the novel is shown to dramatise how a woman emerges from fragmentation and suppression to a recuperated self-relation. Key concerns include the narrator's severed genealogical/maternal bonds, the male gaze and objectification, the binary opposition of nature/culture, and the final radical choice of immersion in the wilderness. Ultimately, *Surfacing* suggests that feminine subjectivity is not simply a passive victimhood but a radical site of resistance and transformation.

Keywords

psycho-feminism; trauma; female subjectivity; male gaze; nature/culture; Margaret Atwood; *Surfacing*; identity; ecofeminism; feminine psychology.

Introduction

Margaret Atwood's novel *Surfacing* has long been treated through the lenses of Canadian identity, ecofeminism and feminist literary criticism. What is less frequently foregrounded is the psycho-feminist dimension: how the novel uses internal psychological processes (trauma, repression, alienation) in the service of feminist critique of patriarchal culture and female identity. In this article I argue that the narrator's descent into the island wilderness, her breakdown and re-emergence represent a psycho-feminist journey: the confrontation of the feminine self with the dominant masculine/animal world and the reconstitution of agency within nature and female lineage.

By “psycho-feminist” I mean the intersection of psychoanalytic frameworks (unconscious, repression, trauma, subjectivity) with feminist concerns (gendered power relations, objectification, agency of women). I will first outline the novel’s context and key motifs, then analyse the narrator’s psychic structure (alienation, repression, trauma), move to feminist concerns (male gaze, gender performance, motherhood), examine the nature/culture nexus, and finally show how the ending suggests a transformation of subjectivity.

Context and Overview of Surfacing

In *Surfacing*, published in 1972, Atwood presents a largely unnamed female narrator who returns to the Canadian wilderness to search for her missing father. During her stay she gradually sheds the cultural trappings of her urban life, descends into the wild, and ultimately emerges with a radically changed sense of self. The novel is rich in both psychological and symbolic dimensions the title itself suggests both “coming to the surface” and “rising from below,” implicating awakening, eruption, resurfacing of the self. Scholars have noted how Atwood intertwines themes of woman and nature, patriarchy and identity. For instance, one study points to “women characters ... affected by the brutality, blindness, and deadlock created by imperial, patriarchal ... power structures.”

I situate this reading as psycho-feminist because the narrator’s journey follows a logic of internal fragmentation and re-integration, while simultaneously exposing gendered structures of oppression thus merging the personal/psychic with the political and social.

Psychic Alienation and Trauma

From the outset the narrator is alienated from language, from her parents, from the conventions of her life. The novel uses fragmentation of time and memory to present a self out of joint. One critic observes:

“Atwood uses the narrator’s near-constant feeling of alienation to comment on the alienation of all women.”

Repression and the Unconscious

The narrator’s back-story remains opaque: she has aborted a pregnancy, she has lost her father (disappearance) and her mother is dead. These losses function as psychic wounds: the abortion is both literal and metaphorical, representing a severing of female lineage and a repression of maternal/feminine potential. As one paper shows, the novel deals with “the

suppression of trauma and mechanisms that allow it to reconfigure” via intergenerational transmission.

Psychoanalytically, the abortion may stand for the narrator’s self-betrayal, her inability to sustain a connection to her body, nature, and lineage. The wilderness quest becomes a descent into the unconscious where she must face these disavowed parts of herself.

Identity Fragmentation and Reconstruction

The narrator shifts between identities: the urban professional, the tourist, the child on the island, the “animal-woman.” This suggests a split subjectivity. In psycho-feminist terms, feminine subjectivity is often split between the “true self” and the socially constructed self. The novel dramatizes this via imagery of peeling away dresses, discarding language, stripping down to a more primal state.

“Midway through the novel ... the boundary between sanity and madness dissolves. ... The narrator must lose her civilized self to rediscover her primal self.”

This can be read as a psychic journey of individuation: confronting the shadow-self (the suppressed feminine, the body), and re-emerging with an integrated subjectivity.

Feminist Concerns: Gender, Gaze, Motherhood

The Male Gaze and Objectification

The female narrator is frequently the object of viewing and judgement. In one recent article, Nivetha and Samundeeswari discuss the “male gaze” in *Surfacing*: how the narrator is defined and surveilled by male characters, and how this impacts her sense of self.

From a psycho-feminist standpoint, the male gaze internalizes an objectifying viewpoint that the woman self-objectifies. The narrator’s alienation from her body and her decision to “become one with nature” can be read as a refusal of the objectifying gaze. Psychically, she must reclaim her subject-position, not as object.

Gender Performance and Myth

Atwood uses mythic structures and the performativity of gender. Dhanappriya’s article argues *Surfacing* subverts binaries (male/female, human/animal, mind/body) and emphasises fluid selves.

Psycho-feminist theory recognises that gender is not merely a social role but internalised via the unconscious, language and body. The narrator's shedding of clothes, language and civilization can be interpreted as shedding the imposed gender role and reconnecting to a pre-constructed femininity tied to nature and body.

Motherhood, Maternal Lineage and Feminine Transmission

One of the more nuanced readings (Feldman-Kołodziejuk) uses psychoanalysis to explore how the narrator's abortion, her fractured relation to her mother and her return to nature reflect the intergenerational disruptions of feminine lineage

In psycho-feminist theory, motherhood and maternal transmission are crucial for feminine subjectivity: the relation to mother, daughter, offspring, cycles of care. The narrator has rejected motherhood (the abortion) and thus severed her connection to the female line. Her journey becomes one of reconnecting, symbolically or literally, with maternal source and nature, reclaiming the capacity to give/self-give life (to nature, to self).

Nature, Culture and the Feminine Self

Nature as Feminine Symbol and Site of Liberation

Atwood's novel persistently links the female protagonist with nature: the lake, the island, the animals, the forest. Many ecofeminist readings treat *Surfacing* as an eco-feminist text in which the subjugation of women and nature is parallel

From a psycho-feminist lens, nature represents both the repressed unconscious feminine and a site for the narrator's regression/re-birth. She returns to nature to escape patriarchal culture, but also to heal the psychic wounds inflicted by it.

The Return and Re-birth

The climax of the novel is the narrator's immersion in the lake and her decision to become part of the wilderness. While some readers interpret this as madness, I read it as psychically necessary: death of the old self and rebirth of a new subjectivity. This aligns with the psychoanalytic motif of transformation via crisis. The narrator's "surfacing" is not just resurfacing from water but emerging from the unconscious into consciousness, from fragmentation to wholeness, and from objecthood to agency.

Psycho-Feminist Reading: The Journey of Feminine Subjectivity

Stage 1: Alienation and Objectification

Early in the novel the narrator is alienated from her body, her past, her mother, her sexuality. She expresses detachment: “I no longer know how to talk to people.” (Atwood). She finds that others define her: the male partner, her father’s legacy, the tourist friend’s gaze. This corresponds to the psychoanalytical concept of the woman as Other, as Linda Nicolson might say, constructed via male desire and language. She has internalised fragmentation.

Stage 2: Repression and Descent into the Unconscious

The return to the island triggers memories: childhood, father’s disappearance, maternal death, abortion. These traumas have been repressed. The wilderness demands that she confront them. Psycho-feminist theory emphasizes that women’s trauma is often relational (mother-daughter, father-daughter, partner) and structural (patriarchy). The narrator must face:

- The traumatic abortion (her severing from maternal capacity and female lineage)
- The father’s disappearance (the missing masculine guarantee, but also the patriarchal structure she inherits)
- The mother’s death/absence (loss of maternal transmission)
- By plunging into these psychic depths she undergoes breakdown.

Stage 3: Resistance and Shedding of Gendered Constraints

As the narrator discards clothes, language and social conventions she symbolically rejects the feminine role prescribed by patriarchal culture. She resists the male gaze and the objectifying look. She refuses to remain in the role of victim; instead she actively chooses to live differently. The psycho-feminist interpretation sees this as a reclaiming of subjectivity: rejecting the defined feminine self, and reconstructing a feminine self that is not defined by male norms.

Stage 4: Re-birth, Re-connection and Agency

Finally, the narrator emerges from the lake, connected to the wilderness and ready to re-enter society on her own terms. She has reconciled with her body, with nature, with her maternal line. Her subjectivity is no longer fragmented. Psycho-feminist theory emphasises that liberation is not simply escape, but transformation: to integrate the self, to connect with the body, to resist

oppression and claim agency. The narrator's "surfacing" is thus symbolic of a new feminine subjectivity—one that inhabits both nature and culture, but on her own terms.

Critical Reflections and Limitations

While the psycho-feminist reading illuminates the internal dynamics of feminine subjectivity in *Surfacing*, it is also important to recognise limitations. First, Atwood's novel has been more frequently read in ecofeminist terms (women and nature suffering under patriarchal capitalism) than explicitly psycho-feminist. Yet, psycho-feminist concerns overlap with ecofeminism (trauma, subjectivity, body, nature).

Second, the final transformation remains ambiguous: the narrator may be psychotic or free. Some readers interpret the ending as madness rather than liberation. The psycho-feminist reading proposes that the crisis is necessary but not inherently redemptive unless followed by integration and agency.

Third, the novel remains within the discursive framework of the early 1970s: single protagonist, wilderness quest, maternal hole. Contemporary feminist theory might critique the binary framing of nature/culture or the idealisation of "return to nature." Psycho-feminist readers must be careful not to romanticise the wilderness as escape. The locus of transformation is internal rather than purely external.

Implications for Feminist Theory and Practice

The psycho-feminist reading of *Surfacing* suggests several broader points:

1. Feminine subjectivity is shaped not only by social structures (patriarchy, gender roles) but by internalised psychic processes (trauma, repression, alienation). Thus feminist theory must attend to the inner psychic dimension, not only structural critique.
2. The body, the maternal line, nature and the unconscious are critical loci of feminist liberation. Reclaiming the body (and mothering potential) means confronting trauma and fragmentation.
3. The decisive act in *Surfacing* is not merely escape but re-entry: the narrator must return to society with transformed subjectivity. Feminist praxis similarly must involve reintegration, not withdrawal.

4. Lastly, the interweaving of nature and subjectivity in the novel warns against purely discursive or textual analyses of feminism; the material, bodily, ecological dimensions of female psychology matter.

Conclusion

In *Surfacing*, Margaret Atwood offers more than an ecofeminist or Canadian-identity novel. Through the unnamed female narrator's descent into the wilderness and emergence into a new self, the text stages a psycho-feminist journey: alienation, trauma, rebellion, transformation. The internal psychic struggles (abortion, mother-daughter rupture, objectification under the male gaze) are intimately linked to external gendered and patriarchal structures. The novel suggests that feminine subjectivity must confront both the inner and outer forces of oppression, and only by doing so can it reclaim agency, connect with body and nature, and emerge "surfaced".

For feminist theory and feminist psychology, this reading underscores the importance of integrating psychoanalytic insights with gender critique. It reminds us that women's liberation is not only structural change but psychological reconstitution. *Surfacing* thus remains a vital text for exploring the complex terrain of feminine subjectivity in the late-twentieth-century and beyond.

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Oceanic Memory and Ecological Affect in *The Whale Rider*, *The Deep*, and *Weather*: A Blue Humanities Reading

Dr Devika T.S., Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science
Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

The emergence of the Blue Humanities has redirected critical attention from land-centred ecocriticism to oceanic spaces as sites of cultural memory, historical violence, and ecological imagination. This article examines how contemporary fiction redefines the ocean as a sentient and storied space through close readings of Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider*, Rivers Solomon's *The Deep*, and Jenny Offill's *Weather*. Drawing on postcolonial ecocriticism, hydro-criticism, affect theory, and decolonial ecocriticism, the study argues that these texts collectively challenge anthropocentric paradigms by foregrounding nonhuman agency and oceanic memory. Ihimaera reclaims the sea as a site of ancestral return and indigenous ecological knowledge; Solomon reconfigures the ocean as a repository of intergenerational trauma rooted in the Middle Passage; and Offill renders the sea as an affective horizon that registers contemporary climate anxiety. Through a comparative framework, the article demonstrates how oceanic narratives mediate relationships between history, identity, and ecological crisis, thereby expanding the scope of the Blue Humanities. By positioning the ocean as an ethical and imaginative space, the study underscores the capacity of literature to foster ecological empathy and to reimagine human responsibility in an era of planetary precarity.

Keywords

Blue Humanities, Oceanic Memory, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Hydro-criticism, Affect Theory, Climate Anxiety, Indigenous Ecologies, Afrofuturism, Marine Narratives

Introduction

In recent years, the ocean has emerged as a critical site of inquiry within the environmental humanities, prompting a decisive shift from land-centred modes of analysis toward what has come to be known as the Blue Humanities. This "blue turn" responds to the growing recognition that marine spaces are not peripheral to cultural, historical, or ecological narratives but are central

to the formation of global modernity. Long imagined as an aesthetic backdrop, a route of imperial expansion, or an inexhaustible resource, the ocean is increasingly understood as a complex ecological frontier and a cultural archive that holds layered histories of migration, colonialism, slavery, and environmental transformation. As climate change accelerates rising sea levels, ocean warming, and marine extinction, the sea demands renewed critical attention as a dynamic, sentient space where human and nonhuman histories intersect. Within this framework, the ocean is no longer conceived as an empty or passive expanse but as an active agent that shapes cultural memory, ecological consciousness, and ethical relations between species and environments.

Despite this growing scholarly engagement with marine environments, critical attention to oceanic narratives in contemporary fiction remains uneven, particularly at the intersection of postcolonial studies and climate discourse. While postcolonial ecocriticism has productively examined land-based environments shaped by colonial extraction and displacement, the ocean has often been treated as a secondary or symbolic space rather than as a primary site of cultural meaning. Similarly, climate fiction has tended to privilege apocalyptic futures and terrestrial catastrophe, leaving the affective, historical, and ethical dimensions of marine spaces undertheorised. This gap is especially evident in studies that isolate individual theoretical approaches—such as postcolonial ecocriticism, hydro-criticism, or affect theory—without integrating them into a cohesive analytical framework. Consequently, the ocean’s role as a space where colonial histories, intergenerational trauma, and contemporary eco-anxieties converge has not been sufficiently examined through a comparative literary lens. Addressing this lacuna is crucial, as oceanic narratives offer distinctive ways of articulating ecological vulnerability, cultural survival, and ethical responsibility in an era increasingly defined by planetary crisis.

Responding to this critical gap, the present study examines how Witi Ihimaera’s *The Whale Rider*, Rivers Solomon’s *The Deep*, and Jenny Offill’s *Weather* reimagine the ocean as a space of memory, trauma, and ecological anxiety within distinct yet intersecting cultural contexts. The central research question guiding this analysis is how these texts conceptualise the sea not merely as a setting but as an active, meaning-making force that mediates relationships between history, identity, and environmental crisis. Methodologically, the paper adopts an interdisciplinary framework that brings together postcolonial ecocriticism, hydro-criticism, affect theory, and decolonial ecocriticism in order to foreground both the material agency of water and the emotional registers through which ecological crises are experienced. It argues that contemporary oceanic fiction redefines the sea as a sentient and storied space that challenges anthropocentric paradigms, recuperates marginalised histories, and fosters ecological empathy. By situating the

ocean at the centre of literary analysis, this study demonstrates how marine narratives expand the scope of the Blue Humanities while offering ethically engaged ways of imagining ecological futures.

By reading these three texts together, this article advances a comparative model for Blue Humanities scholarship that foregrounds cultural specificity while tracing shared oceanic imaginaries across indigenous, diasporic, and contemporary urban contexts. Ihimaera's novel recuperates the sea as a site of ancestral return and indigenous ecological knowledge; Solomon's speculative narrative reconfigures the ocean as a repository of historical trauma and collective survival; and Offill's fragmentary prose renders the sea as an affective presence that registers the psychological weight of climate crisis. Taken together, these narratives demonstrate how oceanic spaces mediate between past violence, present vulnerability, and future uncertainty. The sections that follow first outline the theoretical foundations of the Blue Humanities before offering sustained textual analyses of each work, culminating in a comparative discussion that re-maps the ethical and imaginative possibilities of ocean-centred literary studies.

Situating the ocean as a central analytic category rather than a marginal backdrop, this study underscores the urgency of rethinking literary representations of marine environments in the context of ecological precarity and historical accountability. The Blue Humanities framework adopted here insists that oceans are not only sites of environmental concern but also ethical spaces that compel reflection on responsibility, care, and coexistence across human and nonhuman worlds. By foregrounding oceanic memory and affect, the article demonstrates how literature can function as a critical medium for negotiating ecological loss, cultural survival, and climate anxiety. In doing so, it affirms the relevance of ocean-centred narratives to contemporary debates in environmental humanities, postcolonial studies, and climate fiction, establishing the sea as a vital locus for reimagining ecological ethics in the twenty-first century.

The emergence of the Blue Humanities marks a significant intervention in environmental humanities by challenging the longstanding terrestrial bias of ecocritical thought and repositioning the ocean as a primary site of cultural, historical, and ecological meaning. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey observes, the "blue turn" calls attention to the sea as a space where "histories of empire, migration, and environmental transformation are materially and imaginatively entangled" (DeLoughrey 4). Rather than treating the ocean as an abstract or empty expanse, Blue Humanities scholarship foregrounds its material depth, mobility, and relationality, emphasising how marine environments actively shape narratives of belonging and displacement.

Patricia Yaeger similarly argues that oceans function as “dense cultural systems” that register capitalism, waste, and ecological vulnerability, thereby demanding new critical vocabularies attuned to fluidity and scale (Yaeger 524). This shift expands ecocriticism beyond land-based frameworks and enables a more nuanced engagement with global modernity, in which the sea operates as both an ecological frontier and a cultural archive. By foregrounding the ocean’s agency and historical density, the Blue Humanities provides a crucial conceptual foundation for analysing literary texts that grapple with colonial histories, climate change, and the affective dimensions of ecological crisis.

Central to Blue Humanities scholarship is the reconceptualization of the ocean as an archive that stores and circulates memory, trauma, and cultural meaning across time and space. Christina Sharpe’s theorisation of the ocean through the concept of “the wake” powerfully articulates how the Atlantic functions as a site of ongoing historical reverberation, where the afterlives of slavery continue to shape Black existence in the present (Sharpe 18). This understanding of the sea as a repository of unresolved histories aligns with Astrida Neimanis’s argument that water carries “traces of past events and relations,” binding bodies, environments, and temporalities together (Neimanis 3). Such perspectives challenge linear and anthropocentric notions of history by foregrounding the ocean’s capacity to remember, transmit, and transform human experience. Within literary studies, this archival quality of the sea enables readings that foreground submerged narratives of violence and survival, positioning marine spaces as active participants in cultural remembrance rather than as silent witnesses to historical catastrophe.

Postcolonial ecocriticism provides a crucial lens for examining how oceanic spaces have been shaped by, and continue to bear the marks of, colonial and imperial power. As Rob Nixon contends, environmental degradation in postcolonial contexts is often the result of “slow violence,” a form of attritional harm that unfolds gradually and remains largely invisible within dominant narratives (Nixon 2). When extended to marine environments, this framework exposes how oceans have functioned as routes of colonial expansion, sites of extraction, and zones of disposability, particularly for indigenous and diasporic communities. Elizabeth DeLoughrey emphasises that island and oceanic literatures frequently resist these colonial mappings by reasserting indigenous epistemologies and relational modes of inhabiting the sea (DeLoughrey 21). Through postcolonial ecocriticism, the ocean emerges not only as a space of exploitation but also as a terrain of resistance, where marginalized communities reclaim ecological knowledge and challenge imperial hierarchies embedded in environmental discourse.

Hydro-criticism further extends this analytical framework by insisting on water's material agency and its role in shaping subjectivity, history, and ecological relations. Rejecting purely symbolic readings of water, hydro-critical approaches treat oceans, rivers, and seas as dynamic forces that actively configure cultural and biological life. Astrida Neimanis argues that water is "a co-constitutive force of embodiment," emphasising that human and nonhuman bodies are fundamentally entangled through shared aqueous matter (Neimanis 15). Similarly, Stefan Helmreich's work on microbial seas demonstrates how oceanic life destabilises human-centred epistemologies by revealing multispecies networks that exceed human perception and control (Helmreich 9). Within literary analysis, hydro-criticism enables a reading of marine spaces as living media through which histories circulate and identities are formed. This approach is particularly productive for texts that foreground the ocean as a carrier of memory and trauma, where water operates not as a metaphorical backdrop but as an active, meaning-generating presence.

Affect theory complements postcolonial ecocriticism and hydro-criticism by illuminating the emotional and psychological dimensions through which ecological crises are experienced and represented in literature. Rather than focusing solely on material degradation, affect theory attends to feelings such as grief, fear, anxiety, and hope as constitutive elements of ecological consciousness. As Stacy Alaimo notes, environmental crises are lived "through bodies and emotions," shaping ethical responses to nonhuman worlds in deeply personal ways (Alaimo 12). In the context of climate change, these affective responses often manifest as eco-anxiety, a pervasive sense of dread linked to environmental uncertainty and loss. Literary texts, through their formal strategies and narrative textures, render these emotions legible, enabling readers to engage with ecological crisis at an affective level. By integrating affect theory into Blue Humanities scholarship, this study foregrounds how oceanic narratives mediate not only historical and ecological knowledge but also the emotional currents that shape human engagement with marine environments.

Taken together, postcolonial ecocriticism, hydro-criticism, and affect theory enable a multidimensional understanding of the ocean as a sentient, storied, and ethically charged space. Rather than treating these approaches as discrete methodologies, this study mobilises them in dialogue to examine how marine environments mediate power, memory, and feeling across cultural contexts. As Patricia Yaeger suggests, oceanic thinking compels critics to confront "scale, depth, and interconnection" in ways that unsettle human mastery and linear historical narratives (Yaeger 530). Within this composite framework, the ocean emerges as an agent that resists

containment-materially, historically, and affectively-therby challenging anthropocentric modes of interpretation. This theoretical synthesis provides the foundation for the close readings that follow, demonstrating how Ihimaera, Solomon, and Offill each deploy oceanic imaginaries to reconfigure relationships between ecology, history, and subjectivity within the expanding discourse of the Blue Humanities.

Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* situates the ocean at the centre of Maori cosmology, presenting the sea as a living ancestral presence rather than a neutral natural setting. Deeply rooted in indigenous epistemologies, the novel reclaims the ocean as a source of cultural memory and spiritual authority that precedes and resists colonial histories. The narrative repeatedly affirms the sea as an origin space, recalling the ancestral figure of Paikea, who, according to Maori legend, arrived in Aotearoa riding the back of a whale, thus establishing an enduring bond between people, ocean, and marine life. Ihimaera foregrounds this relationship when the narrator asserts that "the sea was our ancestor and our sustainer," collapsing distinctions between human lineage and marine ecology (Ihimaera 7). Through such invocations, the novel challenges Western anthropocentric frameworks that conceptualise the ocean as a resource to be exploited, instead articulating a relational worldview in which the sea functions as a living archive of genealogy, identity, and belonging. This oceanic orientation aligns with postcolonial ecocritical arguments that indigenous narratives recuperate ecological knowledge systems erased by colonial modernity, restoring the sea as a site of continuity, memory, and ethical relation (DeLoughrey 24).

The symbolic centrality of the whale in *The Whale Rider* further reinforces the ocean's role as a mediator between human and nonhuman worlds. Within Maori cosmology, whales are regarded as sacred beings that embody ancestral wisdom and ecological guardianship, a belief that Ihimaera weaves into the fabric of the narrative. The mass stranding of whales on the shore is not portrayed as a natural accident but as a crisis of relational imbalance between the community and the marine world. Koro Apirana's despair in the face of the stranded whales reflects a rupture in ancestral continuity, underscoring the ethical responsibility humans bear toward the ocean and its creatures. This moment resonates with hydro-critical readings that emphasise water as an active agent shaping moral and cultural meaning, rather than as a passive environment (Neimanis 28). The whales' suffering becomes a material manifestation of cultural disconnection, suggesting that ecological crises are inseparable from disruptions in indigenous knowledge systems. By positioning the whale as both kin and messenger, Ihimaera affirms the

ocean's capacity to communicate ecological distress and ancestral warning through nonhuman agency.

Paikea's relationship with the ocean and the whales becomes the primary narrative through which ancestral return and cultural renewal are articulated. Marginalised within her community due to patriarchal traditions that privilege male succession, Paikea nevertheless demonstrates an intuitive and affective bond with the sea that surpasses inherited authority. Her ability to hear the voices of the whales and to respond to their distress signals a form of ecological attunement grounded in indigenous relationality rather than institutional power. Ihimaera underscores this connection when Paikea reflects that she can "feel the pull of the ocean inside her," suggesting an embodied continuity between human and marine life (Ihimaera 102). From a postcolonial ecocritical perspective, this moment signifies the recovery of indigenous ecological knowledge that operates through affect, kinship, and spiritual responsiveness rather than dominance or control. Paikea's bond with the ocean thus challenges both colonial and patriarchal hierarchies, affirming that ecological authority emerges from relational care and ancestral memory rather than gendered inheritance.

The climactic episode in which Paikea mounts the lead whale and guides it back to the sea crystallises the novel's vision of the ocean as a living archive capable of renewal and continuity. This moment is not framed as an act of human mastery over nature but as a reciprocal gesture of trust between human and marine kin. As the narrative describes, Paikea "leaned forward and pressed her body against the whale, feeling its heartbeat answer her own" (Ihimaera 129), an image that powerfully conveys trans-species intimacy and shared vitality. Such moments resonate with ecofeminist and hydro-critical insights that emphasise relational embodiment and mutual dependence between human and nonhuman life forms (Neimanis 41). The ocean here functions as a space of ancestral return, where past, present, and future converge through affective and ecological connection. By allowing Paikea to succeed where traditional authority fails, Ihimaera suggests that cultural survival depends on re-establishing ethical relationships with the marine world rather than asserting dominance over it.

Through its ocean-centred narrative, *The Whale Rider* ultimately redefines ecological belonging as a form of cultural memory sustained through relational ethics rather than territorial possession. The sea operates as a sentient witness to Maori history, carrying ancestral knowledge that can be accessed only through humility, care, and reciprocity. This vision aligns with Elizabeth DeLoughrey's assertion that oceanic narratives often "re-map colonial space by restoring

indigenous temporalities and ecological relations” (DeLoughrey 32). Ihimaera’s novel thus exemplifies how Blue Humanities scholarship can function as a decolonial practice, recuperating marine environments as sites of resistance to colonial epistemologies. By framing the ocean as a living archive of ancestry and resilience, *The Whale Rider* affirms the possibility of ecological renewal grounded in indigenous knowledge systems, offering a powerful counter-narrative to extractive and anthropocentric models of environmental engagement.

Rivers Solomon’s *The Deep* reconfigures the ocean as a space of intergenerational trauma and historical reckoning, transforming the Atlantic into a living archive of the Middle Passage. Drawing on Afrofuturist aesthetics and speculative myth-making, the novella imagines an underwater community of wajinru-descendants of enslaved African women who were thrown overboard during the transatlantic slave trade. The ocean, in this narrative, is neither empty nor forgetful; it is saturated with memory, bearing the weight of lives lost to colonial violence. Solomon foregrounds this premise by asserting that the sea “remembers all that was taken into it,” positioning water as a medium that refuses historical erasure (Solomon 3). This vision aligns closely with Christina Sharpe’s articulation of the Atlantic as a site of ongoing historical reverberation, where the afterlives of slavery continue to structure Black existence in the present (Sharpe 15). By situating trauma within the material depths of the ocean, *The Deep* challenges terrestrial histories that marginalise maritime violence and insists on the sea’s role as a custodian of submerged, unresolved pasts.

Central to Solomon’s narrative is the paradoxical representation of the ocean as both a site of death and a womb of new life. The wajinru are born from violence, yet their existence testifies to survival beyond historical annihilation. The sea, having received the bodies of enslaved women, becomes a generative space that transforms trauma into a new mode of being. This duality is encapsulated when the narrative describes the ocean as a place where “death and birth were bound together, inseparable” (Solomon 18). Such a representation aligns with hydro-critical perspectives that emphasise water’s capacity to hold contradictions-simultaneously destructive and sustaining (Neimanis 22). The ocean in *The Deep* thus resists moral simplification; it is neither solely a grave nor a sanctuary but a fluid archive where violence and resilience coexist. By situating Black survival within the depths of the sea, Solomon reclaims maritime space as central to diasporic memory rather than peripheral to it.

The burden of remembering this traumatic history is carried by Yetu, the wajinru’s designated historian, whose role foregrounds the affective weight of intergenerational memory.

Yetu alone bears the collective memories of her people, a task that causes profound psychological distress and alienation. The narrative underscores the unbearable nature of this responsibility when Yetu confesses that “the memories live inside her like a second ocean, one she is drowning in” (Solomon 44). Affect theory is particularly illuminating here, as it reveals how trauma operates not only as historical knowledge but as an embodied, emotional experience transmitted across generations. Solomon’s depiction of Yetu’s suffering resonates with Rob Nixon’s concept of slow violence, wherein the harm of slavery persists through delayed, cumulative effects that shape present lives (Nixon 6). Memory in *The Deep* is thus not redemptive by default; it is heavy, painful, and ethically complex.

The wajinru’s collective decision to forget their traumatic origins further complicates the ethics of memory and survival. In order to live without constant anguish, the community relinquishes remembrance, outsourcing their history to Yetu. This act raises difficult questions about whether forgetting constitutes healing or another form of loss. Solomon does not offer an easy resolution; instead, the ocean becomes the silent witness to this tension between survival and historical accountability. As one elder explains, remembering “would break us all,” suggesting that forgetting functions as a protective, if fragile, strategy (Solomon 52). From a postcolonial ecocritical perspective, this selective forgetting reflects the broader politics of historical erasure imposed by colonial modernity, where traumatic maritime histories are submerged beneath dominant narratives of progress. The sea, however, continues to hold what the community cannot bear, reinforcing its role as a material archive that exceeds human control.

Yetu’s eventual refusal to carry the memories alone marks a turning point in the narrative, transforming the ocean from a site of solitary suffering into a space of communal reckoning. By returning the memories to the wajinru, Yetu redistributes trauma, allowing it to be collectively acknowledged rather than privately endured. This moment affirms Christina Sharpe’s insistence that confronting the wake of slavery requires shared, ongoing engagement rather than individual containment (Sharpe 21). The ocean, in this act, facilitates not erasure but ethical remembrance, enabling a form of resistance rooted in communal survival. Solomon thus reimagines the sea as a medium through which historical trauma can be faced without being denied, challenging narratives that seek closure or transcendence.

Ultimately, *The Deep* positions the ocean as a sentient archive of Black diasporic history—one that insists on remembrance while enabling transformation. The wajinru’s posthuman existence, shaped by marine life and aquatic embodiment, further destabilises anthropocentric

frameworks by situating identity within multispecies and aqueous relations. As Stacy Alaimo argues, such trans-corporeal imaginaries reveal how bodies are shaped by environmental histories beyond human intention (Alaimo 28). Solomon's ocean is thus not merely a symbolic space but a material force that shapes culture, memory, and being. By rendering the sea as both scar and sustainer, *The Deep* exemplifies the capacity of Blue Humanities narratives to confront historical violence while imagining alternative futures rooted in ecological and cultural resilience.

Jenny Offill's *Weather* approaches the ocean obliquely, yet its presence permeates the novel as an affective force that registers the psychological toll of climate change in contemporary life. Unlike *The Whale Rider* and *The Deep*, which foreground marine spaces directly, *Weather* situates the ocean within an urban, domestic, and intellectual landscape, where environmental catastrophe is apprehended through news fragments, lectures, and digital media. The sea emerges as a looming horizon of threat, frequently invoked through references to rising sea levels, melting ice caps, and extreme weather events. Lizzie's consciousness is shaped by the knowledge that "the seas are rising faster than predicted," a refrain that punctuates the narrative and underscores the pervasive anxiety of ecological instability (Offill 34). In this sense, the ocean functions less as a physical setting and more as an omnipresent undercurrent of dread, emblematic of the broader climate crisis that infiltrates everyday thought and emotion.

Affect theory provides a productive framework for understanding how *Weather* renders climate change as an emotional condition rather than a distant abstraction. Lizzie's persistent unease exemplifies what scholars identify as eco-anxiety—a diffuse yet intensifying fear associated with environmental uncertainty and anticipated loss. The novel's fragmented structure, composed of brief reflections and discontinuous observations, mirrors the disjointed and overwhelming nature of climate awareness in the Anthropocene. Offill captures this affective state when Lizzie admits that "it's hard to focus when you're thinking about the end of the world" (Offill 57). The ocean, frequently evoked in reports of flooding and coastal devastation, becomes a symbolic site where future catastrophe gathers emotional weight. Through this affective lens, *Weather* demonstrates how climate crisis is internalised, producing psychological turbulence analogous to the ocean's unpredictable currents.

The novel's engagement with the ocean also foregrounds the concept of slow violence, as articulated by Rob Nixon, wherein environmental harm unfolds gradually and unevenly rather than through spectacular disaster (Nixon 4). In *Weather*, the threat posed by the sea is persistent yet deferred, manifesting through incremental changes rather than immediate catastrophe.

Lizzie's fixation on preparedness-stockpiling supplies, following climate discourse, and imagining survival scenarios-reflects an anticipatory mode of living shaped by this slow-moving crisis. The ocean's rising levels thus operate as a temporal pressure, destabilising perceptions of safety and continuity. This deferred violence heightens anxiety precisely because it resists resolution, situating the sea as an ever-approaching force that cannot be easily confronted or contained within narrative closure.

From a decolonial ecocritical perspective, *Weather* also raises questions about privilege and uneven vulnerability within climate discourse. Lizzie's anxieties, while sincere, emerge from a position of relative security, contrasting sharply with communities-particularly coastal and island populations in the Global South-for whom oceanic threat is already a lived reality. The novel indirectly gestures toward this imbalance when Lizzie acknowledges that "some people are already living in what we call the future" (Offill 89). Here, the ocean becomes a marker of environmental injustice, revealing how climate anxiety in the Global North often anticipates catastrophes that others are currently enduring. This tension complicates the affective economy of the novel, situating the ocean as both a psychological metaphor and a material site of global inequality.

Formally, Offill's minimalist prose echoes oceanic rhythms of ebb and flow, reinforcing the thematic presence of water throughout the text. The narrative's oscillation between personal reflection and global concern mirrors the movement of tides, drawing readers into an affective experience of instability and uncertainty. As Astrida Neimanis suggests, water's capacity to "shape feeling and thought" extends beyond its material presence, influencing narrative form and temporal perception (Neimanis 67). In *Weather*, the ocean structures not only thematic content but also narrative texture, producing a literary enactment of ecological anxiety that resists linear resolution. The sea's absence as a physical setting thus becomes its paradoxical strength, underscoring how deeply marine crises penetrate cultural and psychological life.

Ultimately, *Weather* expands the scope of the Blue Humanities by demonstrating that oceanic imaginaries need not be confined to coastal or maritime narratives. The novel positions the sea as an affective horizon that shapes ethical reflection, emotional life, and perceptions of futurity in the Anthropocene. By rendering the ocean as an unseen yet omnipresent force, Offill highlights the ways in which climate crisis permeates everyday existence, challenging readers to confront ecological responsibility beyond geographical proximity. In doing so, *Weather* complements the ancestral and historical oceanic narratives of Ihimaera and Solomon, offering a

contemporary register of climate anxiety that affirms the ocean's centrality to ecological imagination in the twenty-first century.

When read together, *The Whale Rider*, *The Deep*, and *Weather* reveal the ocean as a shared yet diversely articulated site of memory, affect, and ecological consciousness, demonstrating the conceptual breadth of the Blue Humanities. Across all three texts, the sea functions as an active, meaning-producing force rather than a passive backdrop, challenging anthropocentric frameworks that marginalise marine spaces. Ihimaera presents the ocean as an ancestral archive sustaining indigenous continuity; Solomon renders it a repository of historical trauma and diasporic survival; and Offill evokes it as an affective horizon of climate anxiety shaping contemporary subjectivity. Despite their differing genres and contexts, these narratives converge in their insistence that the ocean holds histories that exceed human control and demand ethical engagement. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues, oceanic texts often “collapse distinctions between nature, history, and culture,” foregrounding relational modes of understanding ecological space (DeLoughrey 6).

A key point of convergence among the texts lies in their shared emphasis on memory as an oceanic process. In *The Whale Rider*, memory is ancestral and regenerative, flowing through myth, kinship, and ecological reciprocity. In *The Deep*, memory is traumatic and burdensome, submerged yet persistent, requiring collective reckoning to enable survival. In *Weather*, memory takes the form of anticipatory awareness, shaped by scientific knowledge and mediated through media saturation. These differing modes of memory align with Christina Sharpe's contention that the ocean operates as a site where “the past that is not past” continues to structure the present (Sharpe 13). The sea thus becomes a temporal medium, holding ancestral origins, historical violence, and future catastrophe within its depths. Through these varied representations, the texts collectively expand the Blue Humanities' understanding of how oceanic memory operates across cultural and affective registers.

The texts also diverge significantly in the ethical and emotional registers through which they engage the ocean. Ihimaera's narrative is ultimately restorative, envisioning the sea as a space of healing and continuity grounded in indigenous epistemology. Solomon's work occupies a more ambivalent terrain, where the ocean is both a scar of colonial violence and a medium of cultural regeneration. Offill's novel, by contrast, offers no such restoration, instead situating the ocean within an unresolved landscape of anxiety and uncertainty. These divergences underscore the flexibility of Blue Humanities discourse, which accommodates mythic, historical, and

psychological engagements with marine space. As Patricia Yaeger notes, oceanic thinking compels critics to grapple with “multiple scales of time and affect simultaneously,” resisting singular or totalising interpretations of ecological meaning (Yaeger 528).

Another significant distinction lies in the positionality from which each text approaches the ocean. *The Whale Rider* centres an indigenous worldview that predates and resists colonial modernity, asserting relational ethics rooted in place and ancestry. *The Deep* emerges from a diasporic, Afrofuturist perspective, reclaiming the ocean as a site of Black history that has been systematically erased from dominant narratives. *Weather*, situated within a Western urban context, reflects a more mediated and abstract engagement with the sea, filtered through information networks and intellectual discourse. This contrast highlights the uneven distribution of ecological vulnerability and awareness, a point central to decolonial ecocriticism. As Rob Nixon reminds us, environmental crises are experienced unevenly, with marginalised communities bearing disproportionate burdens of ecological harm (Nixon 9). The ocean, across these texts, thus becomes a lens through which global inequalities are made visible.

Taken collectively, these narratives re-map the Blue Humanities as a field attentive not only to marine environments but also to the cultural, historical, and affective conditions through which oceans are imagined and experienced. By foregrounding nonhuman agency, each text destabilises human exceptionalism: whales act as ancestral mediators, water carries trauma across generations, and rising seas shape psychological life. This emphasis aligns with Stacy Alaimo’s concept of trans-corporeality, which insists that human bodies and environments are materially and ethically entangled (Alaimo 2). Through their varied representations of the ocean, Ihimaera, Solomon, and Offill collectively demonstrate that marine spaces are central to understanding ecological responsibility, cultural survival, and climate futures. In doing so, they affirm the Blue Humanities as a vital interdisciplinary framework for rethinking the ethical stakes of living in an increasingly ocean-shaped world.

This study has demonstrated that contemporary oceanic fiction plays a crucial role in reorienting ecological thought by positioning the sea as a sentient, storied, and ethically charged space. Through close readings of *The Whale Rider*, *The Deep*, and *Weather*, the article has shown how the ocean functions as an active agent in shaping cultural memory, historical reckoning, and affective responses to ecological crisis. Across indigenous, diasporic, and urban contexts, the sea emerges not as a neutral backdrop but as a dynamic medium through which relationships between humans, nonhuman life, and planetary systems are negotiated. By foregrounding ancestral return,

intergenerational trauma, and climate anxiety, these texts collectively challenge anthropocentric assumptions and insist on relational modes of ecological understanding.

The application of postcolonial ecocriticism, hydro-criticism, and affect theory has enabled a multidimensional reading of oceanic narratives that accounts for both material and emotional ecologies. Ihimaera's novel affirms indigenous ecological knowledge rooted in kinship and reciprocity; Solomon's speculative reimagining confronts the violent maritime histories of slavery while envisioning collective survival; and Offill's minimalist prose captures the pervasive psychological impact of climate change in the Anthropocene. Together, these works expand the conceptual scope of the Blue Humanities by demonstrating how oceans mediate power, memory, and feeling across temporal and cultural scales. The sea, in these narratives, becomes a site where past injustices, present vulnerabilities, and future uncertainties converge.

Beyond literary analysis, the implications of this study extend to broader conversations within environmental humanities and ecological ethics. In an era marked by rising sea levels, marine degradation, and climate precarity, oceanic narratives compel renewed attention to the moral and political dimensions of human engagement with marine environments. By rendering the ocean as a living archive of memory and affect, fiction fosters ecological empathy and ethical responsibility, encouraging readers to confront both historical accountability and future stewardship. The Blue Humanities, as this article suggests, offers a vital framework for understanding the ocean not merely as a space to be managed or feared, but as a relational entity central to imagining more just and sustainable ecological futures.

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Curtains and Clues: Theatre as a Site of Murder in Ngaio Marsh's *Enter a Murderer*

Dr. I. Jane Austen, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

This chapter examines the theatrical imagination in Ngaio Marsh's *Enter a Murderer* (1935), where the world of performance becomes a stage for crime, deception, and revelation. As a professional theatre director, Marsh transforms the stage from a backdrop into a symbolic arena that mirrors the structures of performance, illusion, and truth. The analysis draws upon Richard Schechner's Performance Theory to explore how Marsh constructs crime as a performative act and detection as a process of re-staging reality. The novel's central murder-committed during a live performance-collapses the boundary between art and life, transforming the theatre into a site of moral inquiry. Through the lens of performance, this chapter argues that Marsh's detective fiction dramatizes the tension between role-playing and authenticity, showing that justice, like theatre, depends on exposure, timing, and revelation.

Keywords: crime, deception, revelation, illusion, reality

Introduction

Among the eminent writers of the Golden Age of detective fiction, Dame Ngaio Marsh (1895–1982) occupies a unique place. While her contemporaries Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers mastered the craft of puzzle and logic, Marsh brought to detective writing the sensibility of a stage director. For her, the crime scene is not merely an event of violence but a performance—a carefully orchestrated act within a web of observation and illusion.

Her second novel, *Enter a Murderer* (1935), epitomizes this fusion of theatre and crime. Set within the Unicorn Theatre, the story revolves around a live performance that turns fatal when an actor is shot on stage with a real bullet. Inspector Roderick Alleyn, attending the play as a spectator, becomes both audience and investigator. The crime blurs the line between scripted drama and unscripted murder, between the actor's role and the criminal's mask.

The stage, in Marsh's vision, is not merely a setting but a metaphor for the human condition—a place where appearances conceal truth, and revelation must be staged. This chapter explores how *Enter a Murderer* uses theatricality to question authenticity, identity, and justice, reading Marsh's novel through Richard Schechner's Performance Theory.

Theoretical Framework: Richard Schechner's Performance Theory

Richard Schechner's Performance Theory provides a valuable lens for understanding the theatricality embedded in *Enter a Murderer*. Schechner argues that performance is not confined to the stage but is a broad cultural and behavioral paradigm, shaping how humans act, interact, and present themselves. He introduces the concept of "restored behavior", meaning actions that are repeated, rehearsed, and culturally learned rather than spontaneous or original. These restored behaviors—gestures, movements, emotional expressions, social roles—constitute the fundamental units of performance, whether in theatre, ritual, or everyday life.

Schechner suggests that all performances share certain structural features:

- They have a script or pattern, even if improvised.
- They are directed toward an audience, explicit or implied.
- They involve the manipulation of appearance, identity, and meaning.
- They require a space set apart from ordinary life.

In this sense, theatre is simply one manifestation of a much broader phenomenon. Social life itself is a sequence of "performed" roles: the professional persona, the public façade, the polite façade, and the private self, each shaped by cultural conventions. Performance, therefore, becomes a method of understanding human identity, not merely an artistic form.

Applying Schechner's Performance Theory to *Enter a Murderer*

When this framework is applied to Ngaio Marsh's *Enter a Murderer*, it becomes evident that Marsh constructs both crime and detection as performative acts governed by the same principles that Schechner identifies.

1. The Murder as a Performed Act

The central murder in the novel occurs during a live theatrical performance, where the audience initially perceives it as part of the scripted play. This literal staging of the crime exemplifies Schechner's idea of performance as "twice-behaved behavior"—the murder is

choreographed, rehearsed through knowledge of the play's blocking, and executed within the aesthetic conventions of stagecraft. The killer exploits the grammar of performance: props, timing, lighting cues, audience expectations, and the illusion of fiction.

By substituting a real bullet for the prop, the murderer inserts real violence into a fictional frame, thereby collapsing the distinction between restored behavior and spontaneous action. The crime becomes an act of perverted artistry—a malicious performance designed to appear as part of the spectacle.

2. The Detective as Re-performer and Director

Inspector Roderick Alleyn's investigation mirrors the work of a director reconstructing a scene. He re-stages the suspects' movements, questions their "performances," and interprets gestures, cues, and spatial relations. In Schechner's language, Alleyn is reconstructing the restored behavior of the actors during the fatal moment in order to reveal the one action that deviated from the script.

His role consists of:

- replaying performances (interrogations as re-enactments),
- examining the "blocking" of actors on stage,
- reading gestures and tone as meaningful signs,
- and finally assembling the crime into a coherent narrative—much like directing a scene.

Thus, detection becomes a meta-performance: the detective stages the truth by arranging the fragments of other people's performances into a new, accurate sequence.

3. Criminality as Role-Playing

Schechner's theory also highlights the performative nature of identity. The murderer must convincingly "act" like a normal cast member, suppressing guilt, anxiety, or motives. Their everyday persona becomes a mask worn for an audience—both the theatre spectators and the social world backstage.

Here, the crime is not merely a violent act but the result of sustained performance: a curated identity presented to others until the detective unmask it.

4. The Audience as Participant

The theatre audience, witnessing the murder, becomes unintentionally part of the performance. Schechner argues that audiences complete a performance by interpreting and reacting to it; Marsh uses this idea to show how perception shapes truth. The audience's initial misreading of the murder as fiction demonstrates the power of theatrical framing to control interpretation.

Through Schechner's lens, *Enter a Murderer* emerges not only as a detective story set in a theatre but as a narrative fundamentally about the theatricality of human behavior. Both the criminal and the detective participate in performances—one to conceal truth and the other to reveal it. Marsh's novel thus embodies Schechner's claim that "performances mark identities, bend time, reshape bodies, and tell stories," illustrating that theatre and crime share a deep structural and symbolic kinship.

Curtains and Clues: Performance and Crime in *Enter a Murderer*

1. The Theatre as a Moral and Symbolic Space

The novel opens within the bustling world of the Unicorn Theatre, where actors, directors, and stagehands prepare for a performance of *The Rat and the Beaver*. The setting instantly immerses readers in an atmosphere of illusion and artifice, where everything is staged and rehearsed. When actor Arthur Surbonadier is shot on stage with a real bullet, the boundary between art and life collapses. The theatre becomes a microcosm of society—a place where everyone performs a role, and truth is hidden behind a script.

Under Schechner's lens, this space functions as a ritual performance: a collective event where the ordinary world is suspended, and symbolic actions reveal deeper truths. The crime interrupts this ritual, turning art into moral chaos. Marsh uses this disruption to suggest that crime, like theatre, both conceals and reveals the human need for control and recognition.

2. The Murder as Performance

Schechner's concept of "restored behavior" illuminates the murderer's act as a form of performance. The killer rehearses, substitutes props, and stages the act meticulously—mirroring the process of directing a play. The real bullet, smuggled into the prop gun, becomes a fatal mis-enactment of artifice. The murder, therefore, is not spontaneous violence but a scripted act,

echoing Schechner's view that performances are "twice-behaved behaviors"-deliberate replays of learned actions.

By making the murder occur in full view of an audience, Marsh forces readers to confront the voyeurism of spectatorship. The theatre audience, shocked yet fascinated, mirrors the reader's position-both complicit and detached. The act of watching itself becomes part of the moral investigation.

3. The Detective as Director

Inspector Roderick Alleyn functions as the novel's director of truth. Like a theatre director reconstructing a play, Alleyn re-stages the crime by examining performances-rehearsals, gestures, dialogues, and blocking. Each suspect becomes an actor repeating their "lines" under interrogation. His role aligns perfectly with Schechner's notion of "restored performance", as Alleyn must reconstruct what happened on stage to uncover the authentic sequence behind the illusion.

Marsh uses Alleyn's dual role-as both spectator and investigator-to emphasize that detection itself is an act of critical interpretation. The detective, like the director, must separate performance from sincerity, illusion from intention. Justice, in this framework, becomes a carefully directed spectacle where truth is revealed through the dismantling of deception.

4. Masks, Roles, and the Performance of Identity

Marsh's theatre world foregrounds the fluidity of identity-a theme central to both Performance Studies and detective fiction. The actors in *Enter a Murderer* live double lives: professional personas on stage and private selves behind the curtain. The murderer's success depends on performing normality; the detective's success depends on recognizing that performance.

Schechner's idea that "performances mark identities, bend time, reshape and adorn the body" resonates here. In the novel, the mask is both a literal theatrical prop and a metaphor for social disguise. The final revelation of the murderer functions as an unmasking ritual, restoring moral and social order. The curtain's fall symbolizes not closure but catharsis-the purging of illusion through truth.

Conclusion

In *Enter a Murderer*, Ngaio Marsh transforms the theatre into a crucible of moral and psychological tension. Through the lens of Richard Schechner's Performance Theory, the novel reveals that both crime and detection are performative acts—each demanding rehearsal, audience, and revelation. The stage becomes a symbolic space where human behavior is stripped of its masks and exposed under the light of inquiry.

Marsh's narrative demonstrates that truth itself is a form of performance—constructed, enacted, and revealed through ritual. The detective, like the director, restores order by guiding the actors toward a final, truthful scene.

Thus, the theatre in *Enter a Murderer* is not only the site of murder but also the stage of moral reckoning. Marsh's insight lies in recognizing that life, crime, and art all share the same grammar of performance. The curtain falls not merely on the play, but on illusion itself.

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The Fragmented Self in 21st-Century Narratives: Identity, Memory, and Trauma in Contemporary Fiction

Dr. S. Farhana Zabeen, Associate Professor, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

This chapter examines the fractured construction of identity in contemporary fiction, focusing on how trauma, memory, and narrative instability shape the fragmented self. Drawing on trauma theory and narrative psychology, it explores how four significant novels—Ian McEwan’s *Atonement*, Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*, Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, and Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*—interrogate the coherence of selfhood. Through an analysis of temporal dislocation, embodied trauma, and the ethical burden of memory, the chapter argues that these narratives mirror the disjunctions of modern identity. The fragmented self becomes not merely a symptom of trauma but a metaphor for resilience and reconstruction. In an era defined by displacement, loss, and guilt, the literature of fragmentation reveals the enduring human capacity to create meaning from brokenness.

Keywords

Fragmented self; Trauma; Memory; Contemporary Fiction; Identity; Narrative form; Guilt; Postmodernism

Introduction

The contemporary novel has witnessed a growing preoccupation with disintegration-of history, memory, and identity. The traditional conception of the self as coherent and continuous is replaced by a more unstable, performative notion. In an age of trauma, displacement, and technological mediation, the human subject finds itself fragmented, suspended between memory and forgetting. Writers such as Ian McEwan, Kazuo Ishiguro, Arundhati Roy, and Khaled Hosseini articulate this instability through narrative fragmentation, nonlinear temporality, and metafictional self-awareness. Their novels probe how guilt, trauma, and repression fracture the self, transforming identity into a process rather than a fixed essence. As Paul Ricoeur (1991)

notes, narrative is central to our sense of self-continuity; when narrative collapses, so does identity. These authors depict precisely this collapse-and the painful effort to rebuild.

Theoretical Framework: Trauma, Memory, and Identity

The fragmented self in contemporary fiction is best understood through the intersecting lenses of trauma theory, memory studies, and narrative identity. Each discipline addresses a different dimension of how the self is destabilized by suffering, loss, and the limits of language. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have witnessed an epistemological shift from viewing identity as stable to perceiving it as fractured, performative, and mediated through discourse. This shift, deeply influenced by psychoanalysis and postmodern theory, redefines trauma not merely as an individual wound but as a collective and narrative phenomenon.

Cathy Caruth's (1996) *Unclaimed Experience* remains foundational in trauma studies. She defines trauma as an "unclaimed experience," an event that "is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known" (p. 4). The trauma survivor is haunted by an event that cannot be entirely remembered or forgotten. The belatedness of trauma - its deferred arrival in consciousness - leads to narrative fragmentation. Characters in contemporary fiction, such as Briony in *Atonement* or Amir in *The Kite Runner*, are emblematic of this belatedness: their lives are shaped by the return of repressed guilt or pain, long after the event itself. Thus, trauma becomes both a temporal and ontological rupture - it fractures the continuity of identity and transforms narrative into an attempt at repair.

Sigmund Freud's early writings on hysteria and repetition compulsion laid the groundwork for understanding trauma as the compulsion to relive the past. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud identifies repetition as a paradoxical process through which the psyche attempts to master what it cannot consciously process. This "repetition without remembering" manifests in contemporary narratives as circular structures, flashbacks, and unreliable memory. These formal techniques not only mimic the psychology of trauma but also highlight the limits of representation. Language, as Caruth (1996) argues, becomes both a medium and a barrier: "The story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality-the escape from its referential force-rather attests to its endless impact" (p. 7).

Judith Herman (1992) expands this psychological model into a social one. She observes that trauma "shatters the construction of the self that has existed before the trauma" (p. 51),

leading to disconnection and emotional numbing. However, she also emphasizes recovery through testimony and remembrance. For Herman, healing begins when survivors integrate the traumatic experience into their personal narrative. Literature becomes a crucial space for this re-narration: the act of writing or reading trauma fiction mirrors the therapeutic process of witnessing. The reader, positioned as an ethical witness, participates in reconstructing the fragmented self through empathy and interpretation.

Paul Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity further deepens this understanding. In *Time and Narrative* (1984) and later essays, Ricoeur argues that identity is not a fixed essence but a narrative construct - "we are the stories we tell about ourselves." When trauma disrupts the ability to tell a coherent story, identity itself collapses. Fictional narratives, by reconfiguring time and memory, allow characters (and readers) to reimagine coherence amid fragmentation. This narrative reconstruction aligns with Dominick LaCapra's (2001) notion of "working through," which distinguishes between the compulsive repetition of trauma ("acting out") and the conscious engagement that leads toward understanding. Literature that confronts trauma, therefore, offers both an aesthetic and ethical framework for working through collective and personal wounds.

Postcolonial theory contributes another dimension to the discourse of fragmentation. Homi Bhabha's (1994) *The Location of Culture* introduces the idea of hybridity - the notion that postcolonial identity is always formed in an "in-between" space, never whole, but continuously negotiated. This in-betweenness resonates with the trauma of historical displacement, exile, and cultural erasure experienced by characters in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. Fragmentation, in this context, is not merely psychological but geopolitical: the self is fractured by colonial histories, migration, and the dislocation of belonging.

Memory studies, too, illuminate how the self is both sustained and unsettled by remembrance. Pierre Nora's (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire* ("sites of memory") emphasizes how collective memory substitutes for lost history. In contemporary fiction, personal memory becomes a site where private and public histories intersect. The characters' fragmented recollections symbolize the struggle to reconcile individual guilt with collective trauma. This is particularly visible in McEwan's and Ishiguro's protagonists, whose internal conflicts reflect broader cultural anxieties about authenticity, truth, and accountability.

The theoretical intersections of Caruth, Herman, Ricoeur, Bhabha, and Nora reveal that fragmentation is not simply a breakdown but a mode of existence in the modern world. Trauma disrupts linear time, forcing narrative to adopt circular, recursive, and self-reflexive forms. Memory, while unstable, becomes the only means through which identity can be pieced together. As Ricoeur (1991) reminds us, “to be oneself is to be capable of recounting oneself.” The fragmented self, therefore, embodies the paradox of modern subjectivity: defined by rupture yet sustained through storytelling. Contemporary fiction transforms trauma into narrative energy, turning the disintegration of the self into the very condition of art.

Fragmentation and Guilt in Ian McEwan’s *Atonement*

Ian McEwan’s *Atonement* (2001) offers one of the most sophisticated representations of guilt and narrative reconstruction. Briony Tallis’s false accusation against Robbie Turner becomes the origin of her lifelong attempt to reassemble a fragmented moral identity. The novel’s metafictional structure-revealing in the final section that Briony is both author and narrator-embodies her fractured psyche. She confesses: “I gave them happiness, but I was not so self-serving as to let them forgive me. Not quite, not yet” (McEwan, 2001, p. 351). This admission captures her divided consciousness: the writer seeking redemption and the guilty child trapped in memory. McEwan’s manipulation of temporal order-moving from 1935 to wartime France and then to the late twentieth century-mirrors the fragmentation of Briony’s self over time. As Caruth (1996) argues, trauma resists closure because it is “experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known” (p. 6). Briony’s repeated acts of storytelling become her failed attempts to master this belated knowledge. Through metafiction, McEwan blurs the line between fiction and confession, demonstrating how narrative itself becomes both the source and the salve of fragmentation.

Memory and the Manufactured Self in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*

Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go* (2005) examines fragmentation through the lens of artificial identity. The clones at Hailsham-Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth-struggle to build coherent selves within a system that denies their humanity. Kathy’s narration, fragmented and retrospective, is filled with lapses and circular reflections: “I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won’t lose my memories of them” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 282). Memory functions as both preservation and illusion. The reader senses gaps-moments Kathy avoids or forgets-that expose the limitations of self-knowledge. Ishiguro employs understatement and ellipsis to mimic the numbness of trauma; the characters’ calm acceptance of death underscores their emotional

disassociation. As Thomas Fuchs (2007) observes, trauma distorts temporality by trapping the self in ‘a perpetual present that excludes the future as a dimension of constancy’ (p. 380). Kathy’s narrative, hovering between nostalgia and denial, enacts precisely this perpetual present. Her selfhood is constructed not from truth but from the fragile continuity of recollection—a haunting metaphor for modern memory culture.

Silence, Shame, and the Postcolonial Psyche in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*

Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997) situates fragmentation within the intertwined realms of personal trauma and colonial history. The twin protagonists, Rahel and Estha, internalize social taboos and familial violence that fracture their sense of self. Roy’s nonlinear structure, shifting between 1969 and the 1990s, mirrors the cyclical return of trauma. Her language itself is broken, poetic, and recursive: “They all broke. The Love Laws lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much” (Roy, 1997, p. 33). The staccato rhythm embodies the unspeakable nature of trauma. As Cathy Caruth (1996) argues, trauma is a story that ‘can only be told in fragments.’ Roy’s syntax literalizes this fragmentation, transforming grammar into psychology. Moreover, the novel’s political context—the caste system and colonial residue—links private trauma to collective wounds. Homi Bhabha’s (1994) concept of hybridity is relevant here: the twins’ fractured identities emerge from the collision of colonial modernity and indigenous constraint. Their adult silence is not emptiness but resistance—a refusal to conform to a narrative of healing imposed by patriarchal or colonial structures.

Guilt, Redemption, and the Burden of Memory in Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*

Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* (2003) presents fragmentation as the moral consequence of betrayal. Amir’s inability to protect Hassan becomes the axis of his self-alienation. The novel’s first-person narration traps readers within Amir’s divided consciousness, oscillating between confession and evasion. His reflection near the end—“It was only a smile, nothing more. It didn’t make everything all right. It didn’t make anything all right. Only a smile” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 371)—captures the ambivalence of redemption. Trauma, as Judith Herman (1992) suggests, cannot be undone; it can only be integrated through acknowledgment. Amir’s return to Kabul and his care for Sohrab function as acts of narrative repair, attempts to rewrite his moral identity. Yet Hosseini resists easy closure. The kite-flying scene replays childhood innocence, but its repetition signals how guilt lingers as a structural feature of memory. Like Briony in *Atonement*, Amir’s self-forgiveness remains incomplete, reflecting the ethical impossibility of true atonement in trauma fiction.

Comparative Reflections: The Ethics of Fragmentation

While the four novels differ in setting and style, they converge in portraying the self as perpetually divided between memory and narrative reconstruction. *Atonement* and *The Kite Runner* foreground guilt as the source of psychic rupture; *Never Let Me Go* and *The God of Small Things* emphasize the structural forces-social, biological, and colonial-that produce fragmentation. All four texts blur the boundary between remembering and rewriting. As Ricoeur (1991) notes, 'to tell one's story is already to interpret one's life.' The narrators' attempts at self-narration become ethical acts of survival. Each author also employs distinct formal strategies: McEwan's metafiction questions the reliability of confession; Ishiguro's understatement masks existential terror; Roy's poetic fragmentation transforms trauma into language; Hosseini's realist frame uses sentiment to expose moral ambivalence. Together, they chart the evolution of the postmodern psyche-disjointed yet searching for coherence.

Narrative Form as a Site of Healing

Fragmentation in these novels does not merely depict psychological damage; it performs a therapeutic function. The act of narration becomes a way to confront and reconfigure the self. Ricoeur (1991) describes this process as 'emplotment'-the weaving of events into a meaningful whole. For Briony, Kathy, Rahel, and Amir, storytelling is both confession and catharsis. Through writing, remembering, and retelling, they transform chaos into pattern, even if the pattern remains incomplete. The fragmented form thus invites readers to participate in this reconstruction, mirroring the empathetic work of trauma recovery described by Herman (1992). In confronting the limits of language, these texts affirm that meaning can emerge not from coherence but from the courage to inhabit brokenness.

Conclusion

The fragmented self in twenty-first-century narratives reflects both the fractures of modern existence and the resilience of human consciousness. In *Atonement*, *Never Let Me Go*, *The God of Small Things*, and *The Kite Runner*, identity is constructed amid loss, guilt, and historical disruption. These authors employ fragmentation not as chaos but as an aesthetic of survival-transforming trauma into narrative, silence into speech, and memory into moral inquiry. The fragmented self emerges, paradoxically, as the most authentic expression of modern subjectivity: unstable yet enduring, incomplete yet profoundly human. Through their broken

forms, these novels teach that healing lies not in restoring the past, but in narrating the fracture itself.

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Reararticulating Feminine Subjectivities: A Postcolonial Feminist Inquiry into Sudha Murthy's Narrative

Ms. R. Sindhu, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science
Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

Three Thousand Stitches by Sudha Murthy is a collection of poignant and inspiring stories that highlight various social issues in India. This research article examines the book through the lens of postcolonial feminism, exploring how Murthy addresses themes of gender, caste, and social justice. By applying postcolonial feminist theory, we can better understand the intricacies of the character's experiences and the broader implications of their stories within the context of contemporary Indian society.

Introduction

Sudha Murthy's Three Thousand Stitches is a narration of stories that reflect the author's deep engagement with social issues and her commitment to humanitarian causes. The book's title story recounts Murthy's efforts to uplift Devadasis, a marginalized group of women in India. This article applies postcolonial feminist theory to analyze how Murthy's narratives challenge traditional power structures, advocate for women's rights, and highlight the intersectionality of gender, caste, and social issues. Sudha Murthy is a highly acclaimed Indian author whose writing is known for its unique and diverse aspects. One of the prominent features of her writing is empathy. She portrays her characters with a deep sense of empathy and understanding, making her stories relatable and appealing to readers from all walks of life. Her stories often contain social commentary, inequality, injustice, and discrimination.

Sudha Murthy's writing is deeply rooted in Indian culture and traditions, and she uses her stories to showcase the diversity and richness of Indian society, promoting cross-cultural understanding. She also adds an element of humor to her writing, which makes her stories light-hearted and relatable. Sudha Murthy's writing is grounded in realism, and she portrays her characters and settings with authenticity, making her stories believable and relatable. Three Thousand Stitches highlights the experiences of marginalized individuals in Indian society, including neglected women from the Devdasi culture. The devadasi system is a cultural practice

in which girls are dedicated to a deity and are expected to serve as temple dancers and provide sexual services to upper-caste men. Despite being banned in India in the 1980s, the practice still exists in some parts of the country, and many women continue to face stigma and discrimination due to their association with the system. One of the strengths of the book is how it portrays the struggles and resilience of women from the Devadasi culture. Sudha Murthy narrates stories of women who have faced discrimination and abuse due to their association with the Devadasi system, highlighting the need for societal change and support for these women. She also emphasizes the importance of education and empowerment in helping these women break free from the cycle of poverty and oppression.

Postcolonial Feminism: A Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial feminism is a critical framework that examines the impact of colonialism on gender relations and the unique challenges faced by women in postcolonial societies. It emphasizes the intersectionality of oppression, recognizing that multiple factors, including race, class, caste, and ethnicity, shape women's experiences. This approach is particularly relevant to Murthy's work, as it allows for an analysis of how her stories address the complexities of Indian society.

Analysis of Key Stories

1. **Three Thousand Stitches:** The titular story of the collection is a powerful narrative about Murthy's efforts to rehabilitate Devadasis, women who were traditionally dedicated to temples and often subjected to exploitation. Through a postcolonial feminist lens, this story can be seen as a critique of the intersection of patriarchy and caste-based oppression. Murthy highlights the resilience and agency of these women, challenging the dominant narratives that marginalize them. The story also underscores the importance of education and economic independence in empowering women and breaking the cycle of exploitation.

2. **How to Beat the Boys:** In this story, Murthy recounts her experiences as the only female student in her engineering college. She faces discrimination and bias but perseveres, eventually excelling in her field. This narrative exemplifies the postcolonial feminist theme of resistance against patriarchal norms. Murthy's determination to succeed in a male-dominated environment serves as an inspiration for women in similar situations, encouraging them to challenge gender stereotypes and assert their rights.

3. **A Life Unwritten:** This story focuses on the plight of a woman from a marginalized community who overcomes significant obstacles to achieve her dreams. The narrative explores

themes of social justice, highlighting the importance of access to education and opportunities for marginalized groups. From a postcolonial feminist perspective, the story critiques the structural inequalities that perpetuate the marginalization of certain groups and advocates for a more inclusive and equitable society.

Themes and Implications

1. **Intersectionality:** Murthy's stories vividly illustrate the concept of intersectionality, demonstrating how gender, caste, and socioeconomic status intersect to shape women's experiences. By highlighting the struggles and triumphs of women from diverse backgrounds, Murthy emphasizes the need for an intersectional approach to addressing social issues.

2. **Empowerment through Education:** A recurring theme in *Three Thousand Stitches* is the transformative power of education. Murthy consistently advocates for education as a means of empowerment, particularly for women and marginalized communities. This aligns with postcolonial feminist principles, which emphasize the importance of education in challenging oppressive structures and promoting social change.

3. **Agency and Resilience:** The stories in *Three Thousand Stitches* celebrate the agency and resilience of women who navigate and resist oppressive systems. Murthy portrays her characters as active agents of change, challenging traditional power dynamics and asserting their rights. This emphasis on agency aligns with postcolonial feminist goals of recognizing and amplifying the voices of marginalized women.

Conclusion

Three Thousand Stitches by Sudha Murthy offers a rich tapestry of narratives that address critical social issues in India. Through the lens of postcolonial feminism, we can appreciate the depth and complexity of Murthy's stories and their contributions to discussions on gender, caste, and social justice. By highlighting the intersectionality of oppression and the transformative power of education, Murthy's work serves as a powerful call to action for a more inclusive and equitable society.

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Memory, Trauma, and Marginality in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Dr. S. Haritha, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science
Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* offers a powerful examination of memory, trauma, and the societal forces that confine individuals to the margins of contemporary Indian life. This chapter explores the complex interplay between memory and identity in the novel, analysing how personal experiences intersect with collective histories shaped by caste, gender, and socio-economic inequalities. Through a non-linear narrative approach, Roy reflects the fragmented nature of memory, illustrating how it both reveals and obscures the truth of lived experiences. As the characters grapple with the weight of historical trauma and societal expectations, the novel uncovers the politics of memory-how the act of remembering can empower yet also oppress. Ultimately, this chapter argues that remembering is not merely a personal act but a collective one, challenging entrenched power structures and fostering hope for marginalized voices.

Keywords

Memory, Marginality, Trauma, Caste, Gender, Nonlinear Narrative, Socio-Political Constructs.

Introduction

Arundhati Roy's seminal work, *The God of Small Things*, intricately weaves a tapestry of memories that speaks to the social fabric of India's Kerala region. Through a non-linear narrative structure, the novel dissects the complexities of memory as both a personal and collective experience. Memory, in Roy's narrative, is not a simple recollection of past events; it is a multifaceted phenomenon that reflects the characters' emotional and psychological landscapes. The disjointed timeline of the story emanates from the characters' shattered recollections, illustrating how trauma disrupts the flow of memory, mapping a territory where

personal histories bleed into the collective consciousness of a society marked by rigid hierarchies and enduring scars.

The notion of marginality in *The God of Small Things* is intricately linked to the politics of memory. Characters such as Velutha, an untouchable carpenter, and Ammu, a woman navigating the oppressive expectations of a patriarchal society, epitomize the harsh realities of societal exclusion. Velutha's life embodies the brutalities inflicted upon those marginalized by caste, revealing how systemic discrimination shapes their existence. Memory becomes a double-edged sword for these characters: for Velutha, it serves as a sharp reminder of his relegated status, while for Ammu, it evokes a painful nostalgia and longing for a love that defied societal constraints. Their shared memories complicate the narrative, suggesting that intimacy in the face of oppression serves as both a refuge and a site of potential resistance.

A significant aspect of Roy's exploration of memory pertains to historical trauma. The political backdrop of Kerala—marked by its colonial past, class struggles, and caste politics—subtly permeates the narrative, infusing the characters' lives with the weight of collective memory. The narrative reflects on the implications of events such as the Syrian Christian's caste hierarchy and the ramifications of the love affair between Ammu and Velutha, drawing attention to how personal tragedies resonate within the broader socio-political context. As the narrative oscillates between the present and the past, Roy exposes the intergenerational transmission of trauma and its impact on identity formation. The characters' lives are not isolated tales but echo the wounds of a society grappling with deeply entrenched inequalities, thus revealing an overarching critique of historical amnesia.

In tandem with themes of trauma and memory, *The God of Small Things* delves into the complexities of familial relationships. The narrative structure mirrors the chaotic and often painful dynamics within the Ipe family, where love, loss, and betrayal intertwine. The attempts to remember family history are fraught with contradictions and suppressed truths, shaped by societal expectations that regulate behavior, particularly for women. The omnipresent influence of the family matriarch, Mammachi, and her oppressive nature serve as a lens through which the repercussions of internalized patriarchy can be examined. The memories of violence, both emotional and physical, are repressed yet linger, shaping the choices and identities of the younger generation. Roy deftly illustrates how the politics of memory operates within familial confines, creating a legacy of silence that stifles personal expression and autonomy.

Roy's employment of disjointed temporality also emphasizes how memories can morph and change over time. The characters' attempts to reconcile their past with their present highlight the malleability of memory itself. The act of remembering is portrayed not simply as a retrieval of facts but as an active engagement where memories are reconstructed and negotiated. This dynamic is particularly salient in the narrative as Ammu and Velutha's love story unfolds against the backdrop of societal taboos and expectations. Their love, although tender, is ultimately doomed by the rigid structures of caste and family loyalty, rendering their memories both precious and painful. The novel suggests that while certain memories are cherished, they are equally fraught with the burden of societal judgment and familial opposition, complicating the characters' quest for belonging and acceptance.

Furthermore, the novel's ending reinforces the idea that memory, though painful, can operate as a source of hope and resistance. As the characters navigate their lives, the fragments of memory they cling to become a means of asserting their identities against the oppressive forces that seek to marginalize them. Roy illustrates that marginalized voices, rather than being silenced by systemic factors, can find solace in the act of remembering, galvanizing a sense of agency that transcends societal expectations. The resilience demonstrated by the characters embodies a silent protest against the forces of marginality, suggesting that memory, in its most potent form, is an act of reclamation and defiance.

The pivotal role of memory in *The God of Small Things* invites readers to engage critically with the structures of power that underpin society. The novel challenges the dominant narratives that persist in erasing or simplifying the experiences of marginalized communities. By foregrounding individual memories and their intersection with collective histories, Roy compels a re-examination of the politics of memory in the context of the broader sociopolitical landscape. Through the lens of the characters' experiences, she elucidates the ways in which memory and marginality inform each other, creating a dialogue between the past and the present that underscores the complexities of identity formation in a stratified society.

Memory as Fragmented Narrative

One of the most striking features of *The God of Small Things* is its fragmented, non-linear structure. This disjointed temporality reflects the psychological and emotional fragmentation experienced by the characters, particularly the twins, Estha and Rahel. Their memories are presented in fractured vignettes that oscillate between past and present, resisting a cohesive, chronological retelling. This narrative choice is deeply symbolic: it mirrors the trauma that

distorts time and destabilizes linear memory. Trauma, as Cathy Caruth argues, is not fully grasped in the moment of its occurrence; it returns in belated, haunting ways. Roy's narrative structure captures this belatedness, this deferred understanding of pain.

Memory in the novel functions not merely as a tool for recollection but as a battleground for identity and meaning. The characters' attempts to make sense of their lives through memory are constantly thwarted by social taboos and systemic oppression. As readers, we are invited into a realm where remembering is both an act of personal catharsis and political subversion.

The Intersections of Memory and Marginality

Roy uses memory to unearth the deep-seated hierarchies that govern Indian society. Characters like Velutha, a Dalit (Untouchable) carpenter, and Ammu, a woman who defies patriarchal norms, are central to this exploration. Velutha's presence in the narrative is heavily mediated by memory—both cherished and vilified. He is remembered as the gentle, skilled carpenter who loved selflessly, but also as a transgressor of caste boundaries. His love affair with Ammu is at the heart of the novel's tragedy, and it is remembered with a complex mixture of tenderness, guilt, and social outrage.

For Ammu, memory is equally double-edged. Her love for Velutha is a moment of liberation, a rebellion against the oppressive structures of caste and patriarchy. Yet, this memory is also steeped in pain and societal condemnation. The recollections of their brief union are colored by loss, longing, and the violence of societal retribution. Roy shows that for marginalized characters, memory cannot be separated from the systems that seek to erase or vilify their experiences. Instead, memory becomes an act of survival, a refusal to forget what society demands they repress.

Historical Trauma and Collective Memory

The novel also engages with the broader canvas of historical trauma. Kerala's political landscape—with its unique history of communism, colonialism, and caste—is intricately woven into the personal lives of the characters. Roy does not explicitly dwell on historical events, but she subtly infuses the narrative with their reverberations. The Syrian Christian caste hierarchy, the legacies of British colonial rule, and the ideological promises and failures of communism all leave their imprints on the characters' psyches.

The love affair between Ammu and Velutha, for instance, is not merely a personal act of rebellion but a symbolic challenge to centuries of caste oppression. The brutal consequences they face are a testament to how historical traumas persist in the present. Roy critiques not only the memory of colonialism but also the complicity of local power structures in perpetuating inequality. This intertwining of personal and collective memory disrupts the idea of history as a neutral, objective record. Instead, history is shown to be deeply selective, shaped by those in power and often reliant on the erasure of marginalized voices.

Family as a Site of Repression and Memory Politics

Within the Ipe family, Roy explores how memory operates within the microcosm of domestic life. The family unit is both a source of comfort and a mechanism of control. Characters like Mammachi and Baby Kochamma embody the internalized values of caste, patriarchy, and colonialism. Their memories are often skewed to uphold social order, reinforcing the very hierarchies that oppress others within the family.

Rahel and Estha, as children, internalize these dynamics. Their memories are suffused with fear, confusion, and a yearning for love and stability. Roy deftly shows how the family becomes a crucible in which societal norms are reproduced and enforced. Memory, in this context, becomes a site of both repression and potential resistance. The children's selective recollections, their silences and sudden flashes of insight, reflect the ways in which memory is shaped by power and emotion.

The Poetics of Remembering: Language and Temporality

Roy's use of language is central to her exploration of memory. Her lyrical prose, playful syntax, and unconventional grammar mirror the fluidity and unpredictability of remembering. She often employs repetition, wordplay, and childlike diction to evoke the fragmented consciousness of her characters. This stylistic approach allows her to convey the emotional truth of memory, which often resists rational articulation.

Temporality in the novel is equally unstable. The narrative shifts between timelines without clear demarcation, blending past and present into a continuous, overlapping experience. This collapse of time challenges the reader's perception and demands an active engagement with the text. Roy thus creates a literary space where memory is not bound by linear progression but exists as a palimpsest-layered, overwritten, and continually in flux.

Memory as Resistance and Reclamation

Perhaps the most powerful aspect of memory in *The God of Small Things* is its capacity for resistance. In a world where systemic forces seek to silence dissent and sanitize history, the act of remembering becomes inherently political. The novel's ending, though quiet and subdued, holds a radical potential. In recalling Ammu and Velutha's forbidden love, Rahel and Estha engage in an act of emotional and historical reclamation. Their silent companionship, their shared grief and tenderness, suggest that memory can offer a space for healing and resistance.

Roy does not offer a romanticized vision of memory's power. She acknowledges its pain, its unreliability, and its burden. Yet, she also insists on its necessity. To remember is to resist erasure. To tell one's story—even in fragments, even in whispers—is to assert one's humanity against forces that would deny it. In this way, memory becomes a tool for reclaiming identity, dignity, and agency.

The God of Small Things is a profound meditation on the politics of memory and marginality. Through its fragmented narrative, lyrical language, and deeply human characters, the novel challenges dominant histories and foregrounds the lived experiences of those excluded from official narratives. Roy demonstrates that memory, though painful and contested, is a vital means of understanding oneself and one's place in the world. It is through the act of remembering—however fractured or fraught—that the marginalized reclaim their stories, resist oppression, and assert their enduring presence in the fabric of history.

By intertwining personal memory with broader social critique, Roy not only destabilizes the boundaries between the individual and the collective but also redefines the act of storytelling as an act of political intervention. *The God of Small Things* thus stands as a powerful testament to the resilience of memory and the transformative potential of literature in confronting the legacies of injustice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* serves as a powerful commentary on the politics of memory and its intersection with marginality, exploring how personal and collective histories shape identity within the constraints of societal structures. The non-linear narrative provides a rich framework for understanding the disruptions of memory and the painful legacies of trauma that pervade the lives of the characters. By interrogating the dynamics of caste, gender, and family, Roy reveals the nuances of memory as both a refuge and

a site of conflict. The characters' struggles highlight the importance of remembering as an act of resistance against the forces of oppression, emphasizing the necessity of reclaiming marginalized voices in the face of adversity. Ultimately, Roy's narrative articulates a profound understanding of how the act of remembering not only shapes personal identities but also serves as a means of challenging historical injustices and forging paths toward healing and empowerment.

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Tasting Resistance: Postcolonial Culinary Narratives and the Politics of the Palate in South Asian Women's Writing

Dr. M. Sivaselvi, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

In many South Asian homes, recipes are passed down not on paper, but through memory measured in pinches, gestures, and inherited rhythms. Within these intimate culinary exchanges lies a deeper narrative of resistance and remembrance. This paper explores how South Asian women writers transform food into a literary device that reclaims silenced histories, affirms cultural identity, and articulates postcolonial trauma. Drawing on texts such as *The Mistress of Spices* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and *Climbing the Mango Trees* by Madhur Jaffrey, the study analyses how kitchens emerge as spaces of political and emotional agency. Here, the act of cooking becomes a form of storytelling, where spices speak of exile, dishes carry diasporic longing, and taste evokes ancestral memory. Using a decolonial feminist framework, the paper reveals how these narratives confront the double erasure of gender and colonisation by turning the domestic into the defiant. Ultimately, it argues that culinary literature by South Asian women transcends the personal, inviting readers to rethink food not just as flavour, but as a form of cultural resistance something we read, feel, and remember.

Keywords

Postcolonial food writing, South Asian women's literature, culinary memory, feminist resistance, decolonial narrative, diaspora identity

Introduction

Food is never just food - especially in South Asia, where every spice carries a story, every kitchen remembers a history, and every shared meal becomes an unspoken archive of survival. When South Asian women write, the kitchen is not merely a domestic space. It becomes a battlefield, a sanctuary, a map of memory, and sometimes, the only territory where they can quietly resist the forces that try to define them.

Postcolonial women's writing from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal often uses culinary imagery as a political language. Through recipes, flavours, and food memories, women authors speak about identity, migration, trauma, love, and power-subjects that mainstream political discourse frequently sidelines.

Food as a Language of Resistance

In many households, women are expected to cook, but rarely allowed to speak. Postcolonial women writers flip this narrative. They turn cooking into a rebellion. A character preparing biryani may be fighting erasure of her cultural identity; a woman simmering lentils may be silently asserting her economic independence; a grandmother rolling rotis may be passing on wisdom that no textbook contains.

Flavours become metaphors

- the burning of chilli mirrors anger,
- the sweetness of jaggery reflects longing,
- the bitterness of neem signifies generational pain.

By transforming food into language, women reclaim the right to narrate their own stories.

Culinary Memory and Postcolonial Identity

For communities fractured by colonisation, Partition, displacement, and migration, food becomes one of the strongest anchors of identity. Many South Asian women writers explore how recipes travel across borders or disappear due to conflict.

When a mother teaches her daughter an old recipe, she is not just teaching cooking-she is preserving:

- a culture,
- a forgotten homeland,
- a way of being.

These small rituals become acts of healing in narratives shaped by exile, trauma, and postcolonial rupture.

The Politics of the Palate

The palate itself carries politics: whose food is respected, whose cuisine is dismissed as “smelly,” whose eating habits are labelled “exotic,” and whose diet is considered “civilized” or “modern.” Women writers highlight how food policing and culinary stereotypes are linked to class, caste, religion, and colonial prejudice.

For example:

- Dalit women writing about beef expose caste oppression.
- Muslim women writing about festive food reclaim cultural pride in a politically hostile climate.
- Sri Lankan Tamil women writing about famine or food scarcity remind readers of war-inflicted suffering.
- Through these perspectives, the palate becomes a political map.
- Kitchen as Intellectual and Emotional Space

Contrary to colonial stereotypes that viewed domestic labour as inferior, many South Asian women writers portray the kitchen as a space of creativity, negotiation, and thought. It becomes the place where women:

- imagine freedom,
- negotiate relationships,
- nurture revolutions in the smallest gestures.
- The kitchen is not a prison it is a laboratory of resilience.

Why These Narratives Matter Today

In an era of globalisation, packaged foods, and disappearing culinary traditions, women’s narratives about cooking reclaim authenticity. They remind us that:

- food is a form of heritage,
- recipes are records of survival,
- flavours are repositories of memory,
- and women are the primary keepers of these legacies.

By reading these culinary narratives, we learn how ordinary acts - cutting vegetables, boiling rice, grinding spices - carry extraordinary political and emotional weight.

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Voices from the Margins: A Study of Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Ms. V. Jennifer Rani, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science
Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

The representation of marginalized voices in literature serves as a crucial tool for exposing systemic oppression and reclaiming silenced identities. Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) is a poignant exploration of female subjugation, resilience, and solidarity in war-torn Afghanistan. The novel captures the intersection of gender, class, and political marginalization through the intertwined lives of Mariam and Laila, two Afghan women bound by fate and shared suffering. This paper examines how Hosseini's narrative gives voice to the marginalized—particularly women—within the patriarchal, war-ravaged, and religiously restrictive Afghan society. Drawing from feminist and postcolonial perspectives, this article discusses how Hosseini's portrayal of women challenges the traditional silence surrounding female agency, transforms the private domestic sphere into a site of rebellion, and redefines motherhood, sacrifice, and endurance as acts of resistance.

Keywords: Marginalization, Feminism, Patriarchy, Resistance, Afghanistan, Khaled Hosseini, Postcolonialism

Introduction

Literature has long served as a platform for the articulation of voices excluded from dominant social narratives. The concept of “voices from the margins” encompasses the experiences of those silenced by structures of power—whether based on gender, class, race, or colonial dominance. In the global literary context, postcolonial and feminist writers have increasingly sought to restore agency to marginalized identities, foregrounding the stories of those silenced by history. Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a significant contribution to this discourse, offering an empathetic portrayal of Afghan women whose lives are shaped by oppressive traditions, political turmoil, and social invisibility.

Published in 2007, the novel spans over three decades of Afghan history—from the Soviet invasion to the rise of the Taliban and beyond. Through the lives of Mariam and Laila, Hosseini provides an intimate yet political narrative that brings women’s lived experiences from the peripheries to the center of discourse. The novel transforms personal suffering into collective resistance, making it an exemplary text in discussions of marginalization and empowerment.

Theoretical Framework: Feminism and Postcolonialism

The analysis of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* benefits from a dual theoretical lens combining **feminist literary theory** and **postcolonial critique**. Feminist theory explores how patriarchal structures silence and control women, while postcolonialism interrogates the effects of imperialism and cultural domination. Both perspectives converge in Hosseini’s narrative, as Afghan women experience layered forms of subjugation—under patriarchal authority, colonial influence, and religious fundamentalism.

As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak asserts in *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, marginalized women—especially those from non-Western societies—are doubly silenced: by patriarchy and by colonial discourse. Mariam and Laila exemplify this condition. Their voices are suppressed within domestic hierarchies and political chaos, yet Hosseini’s narrative allows them to “speak” through their resilience, maternal bonds, and acts of defiance. Similarly, Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s critique of Western feminism is relevant here; she emphasizes the need to understand women’s oppression within specific cultural contexts rather than through homogenizing global narratives. Hosseini’s portrayal respects this nuance, presenting Afghan women as complex agents rather than mere victims.

Marginalization and Gender in Afghan Society

Afghanistan, as represented in the novel, is a deeply patriarchal society where women’s lives are defined by obedience, marriage, and reproduction. Mariam, born as an illegitimate child, represents the earliest layer of social exclusion. Her identity as a *harami* (bastard) positions her as a social outcast even before birth. Her mother Nana bitterly reminds her, “*A man’s heart is a wretched, wretched thing, Mariam. It isn’t like a mother’s womb. It won’t bleed, it won’t stretch to make room for you*” (Hosseini 27). This statement encapsulates the generational trauma passed from one marginalized woman to another, a chain perpetuated by societal cruelty.

When Mariam is married off to Rasheed, an older widower in Kabul, her marginalization takes on domestic and psychological dimensions. Her worth is measured through fertility, and

her repeated miscarriages diminish her status within the household. Rasheed's control, verbal abuse, and violence mirror the patriarchal norms normalized by the larger society. Thus, Mariam's life symbolizes the collective voicelessness of women in patriarchal Afghanistan—a nation where laws and religion are manipulated to control female existence.

In contrast, Laila's character represents modernity and education—a glimpse of hope amid oppression. Her father, Babi, values knowledge and encourages her to study: “*You can be anything you want, Laila... society has no interest in what you want. But I do*” (Hosseini 113). Yet, after the Taliban's rise, her education and freedom become meaningless under restrictive decrees that confine women to domestic spaces. Both Mariam and Laila illustrate how socio-political transformations, while devastating for all, are particularly catastrophic for women.

The Taliban Regime: Political Marginalization

Under Taliban rule, women's identities are erased from public life. They are forbidden from working, studying, or even walking alone. The burqa becomes both a literal and metaphorical veil—an enforced invisibility. Hosseini writes, “*The Taliban are here to protect you... from yourselves*” (Hosseini 248), exposing the absurdity of patriarchal control masked as protection.

Mariam and Laila's confinement within Rasheed's house mirrors the political imprisonment of Afghan women. The domestic sphere becomes a microcosm of the nation itself—where tyranny, fear, and silence reign. Hosseini's narrative thus transforms the home into a site of both oppression and eventual rebellion. The act of Mariam killing Rasheed is not merely personal vengeance but symbolic liberation—a silenced woman reclaiming voice and agency through an ultimate act of resistance.

Female Solidarity as Resistance

A central theme in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is the transformative power of **female solidarity**. Mariam and Laila's relationship evolves from suspicion to sisterhood, demonstrating how shared suffering can create profound empathy and strength. Their bond subverts patriarchal attempts to isolate women from one another. Through collective resilience, they construct an emotional refuge amid violence.

This sisterhood aligns with the feminist notion of “**the politics of care,**” as described by theorists like Carol Gilligan and Sara Ruddick, who highlight empathy and interdependence as

counterforces to patriarchal domination. Mariam's final act-taking responsibility for Rasheed's death-symbolizes the ultimate maternal sacrifice. In her death, she becomes a martyr for women's freedom: "*She was leaving the world as a woman who had loved and been loved back. She was leaving it as a friend, a companion, a guardian. A mother. A person of consequence at last*" (Hosseini 370).

Mariam's execution marks a tragic but powerful reclamation of dignity. She moves from silence to speech, from invisibility to immortal remembrance. Laila, in turn, continues her legacy by returning to Kabul to rebuild a girls' orphanage, symbolizing hope and continuity for Afghan women.

Motherhood and the Reclamation of Agency

Motherhood in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is not merely biological but ideological-a metaphor for endurance and continuity. While patriarchal systems often confine women to motherhood as their sole identity, Hosseini reconfigures it as a space of empowerment. Mariam's nurturing of Laila and her children transcends traditional definitions of maternity, becoming an act of self-definition.

Similarly, Laila's determination to raise her children in a peaceful Afghanistan underscores a feminist assertion of the future as female. The domestic sphere, once a prison, becomes a site of reconstruction and hope. In this sense, Hosseini reimagines motherhood as a radical form of resistance-where love, care, and education emerge as revolutionary forces against destruction.

Language, Silence, and the Act of Bearing Witness

An essential aspect of marginalized experience is **silence**-the forced absence of voice. In the novel, silence is both a weapon of oppression and a mode of survival. Mariam's silence shields her from further punishment, but it also becomes a language of endurance. As Trinh T. Minh-ha asserts, "To speak is to resist, but silence too can be resistance when language is denied."

Hosseini's prose, though simple, carries poetic intensity that gives texture to this silence. The imagery of Kabul-its ruins, dust, and fading beauty-reflects the inner desolation of its women. Yet, the author's lyrical depiction of ordinary gestures-Laila brushing Aziza's hair, Mariam praying at dawn-transforms silence into testimony. In narrating their stories, Hosseini performs an act of *bearing witness*, ensuring that these voices from the margins are heard across cultures.

Postcolonial Dimensions: The Other within the Other

While Hosseini's work is primarily feminist in tone, it also reflects postcolonial tensions. Afghanistan's identity crisis-torn between tradition, foreign invasion, and religious extremism-creates internal hierarchies of power. Within this fractured society, women represent "the Other within the Other," doubly marginalized by both imperial politics and patriarchal culture.

The repeated invasions—from Soviet to American—bring promises of liberation but seldom transform women's lives. Hosseini's narrative critiques this external savior complex, implying that true emancipation must arise from within Afghan society itself. In this regard, the novel resonates with Spivak's notion of "strategic essentialism," where marginalized groups must momentarily unite to assert their collective agency.

Narrative Technique and Symbolism

Hosseini employs a **dual narrative structure**, alternating between Mariam's and Laila's perspectives. This narrative symmetry bridges generational and social divides, allowing readers to witness the evolution of female subjectivity in Afghanistan. The structure itself becomes an act of inclusion-granting equal narrative authority to two marginalized women.

Symbolically, the novel uses recurring motifs of **windows, doors, and light** to represent confinement and freedom. The **burqa** is perhaps the most powerful symbol: while it conceals and isolates, it also unites women through shared suffering. Mariam's execution scene, where she sees "a thousand splendid suns" shining over Kabul, transforms this symbol of concealment into transcendence—a poetic affirmation of female endurance.

Education and Reconstruction: Reclaiming the Future

The closing chapters of the novel emphasize education as a path toward liberation. Laila's decision to return to Kabul and work at the orphanage signifies a shift from survival to reconstruction. The girls' education she champions becomes a metaphor for rebuilding a nation from its ruins. This aligns with postcolonial feminist visions where empowerment begins with access to knowledge.

By ending with hope rather than despair, Hosseini ensures that the marginalized voices he resurrects are not victims of history but agents of change. Laila's unborn child, hinted to be a girl, represents continuity—the birth of a generation unburdened by silence.

Global Reception and Ethical Representation

Hosseini's portrayal of Afghan women sparked global empathy and awareness. However, it also raises questions about the **ethics of representation**. As a male, diasporic writer, Hosseini navigates the fine line between advocacy and appropriation. Yet his compassionate gaze avoids sensationalism. His storytelling humanizes rather than exoticizes, making Afghan women's stories universally relatable without erasing their cultural specificity.

Critics such as Nadine Gordimer have praised Hosseini's ability to "give the world the voices of the voiceless." The novel thus functions as both literature and testimony—a bridge between the global center and the periphery.

Conclusion

Voices from the margins are not merely echoes of suffering—they are calls for recognition, justice, and transformation. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini amplifies the silenced experiences of Afghan women, revealing how personal narratives intersect with national trauma. Through Mariam and Laila, he constructs a tapestry of endurance, sacrifice, and hope that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries.

The novel's power lies in its reclamation of agency through empathy. Mariam's death and Laila's rebuilding are not opposites but continuities in the struggle for voice. By transforming pain into resistance and silence into storytelling, Hosseini demonstrates that even within the most oppressive systems, humanity and compassion endure. In giving voice to the marginalized, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* becomes more than fiction—it becomes a moral act of remembrance and renewal.

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Blurring the Geographical Boundaries: Spatial Ambiguity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Dr. N. Sumathi, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* analyses the complex role of spatial ambiguity at large in bringing out the gothic structure of the plot. Morrison constructs a geography in which physical spaces are inseparable from the psychological, historical and supernatural forces that shape the lives of formerly enslaved people. The novel deals with the gothic elements to reveal the harsh themes of slavery and women suffering through the supernatural forces that shape the pain and trauma of a character, Sethe which represents the entire community of people. The presentation of setting as a stable or neutral backdrop is the conventional style of narrative structure of the plot but Morrison here transforms the spaces such as 124 Bluestone Road, the Clearing, Sweet Home and the fugitive landscape into fluid and more unstable environments that resist fixed interpretation. These spaces shift in meaning depending on the memory, trauma and haunting, creating a narrative world where boundaries are blurred between past and present, real and supernatural and interior and exterior.

The narrative strategy adopted by Morrison in this novel elevates the style of writing through disoriented view of slavery which fractures the characters' ability to inhabit space securely or coherently. The haunted house at 124 becomes a living, reactive entity that embodies unresolved trauma and the Clearing oscillates between a site of communal healing and a space of psychic rupture, and the enslavement and escape are rendered deliberately unmapped to show the inner conflict and spatial ambiguity through the characters' shift in places and not able to fix in a place. It also represents the fugitive movements of the characters and also the dangers of such movements made by these characters especially women characters. It challenges the readers to face the ways in which historical violence continues to occupy physical and emotional spaces. The destabilizing of spatial coordinates the fragmentation of memory and identity experienced by her characters. This paper analyses how spatial ambiguity places a vital role in shaping the narrative structure of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

Introduction

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a novel in which space refuses stability. Houses shift in meaning, landscapes blur between memory and reality, and the boundaries between the living and the dead collapse into one another. From the opening line - "124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom"-Morrison signals that physical settings in the novel are not passive backdrops but volatile, emotionally charged environments that shape and are shaped by the trauma of slavery. The house at 124 Bluestone Road is not merely a location; it is a living presence, a site where history erupts into the present and where the past refuses to remain contained. As Morrison herself notes in *Playing in the Dark*, American literature is haunted by "the shadow of a presence that is not quite present," and *Beloved* literalizes this haunting through its unstable, ambiguous spaces.

Spatial ambiguity in *Beloved* emerges from the novel's central concern: the afterlives of slavery and the ways trauma distorts one's relationship to place. Scholars have long recognized that Morrison's narrative structure disrupts linear time, but fewer have emphasized how the novel also disrupts coherent space. As Ashraf H. A. Rushdy argues, *Beloved* "collapses the geography of memory and the geography of the present," creating a world in which characters inhabit multiple spatial realities simultaneously. Similarly, Katherine Clay Bassard notes that Morrison's landscapes are "sites of both terror and transcendence," where the physical environment becomes inseparable from the psychological scars of enslavement.

This spatial instability is most evident in the novel's key locations. The house at 124, described alternately as "loud," "quiet," and "full of spite," shifts in atmosphere depending on who occupies it and what memories surface within it.

Spatial Ambiguity

Spatial ambiguity refers to the deliberate blurring, destabilization, or indeterminacy of physical setting within a literary text. Instead of presenting space as fixed, coherent, or mappable, authors create environments that are shifting, contradictory, symbolic, or difficult to locate, thereby disrupting the reader's sense of orientation. This ambiguity often reflects deeper thematic concerns such as trauma, memory, identity, or the instability of reality.

Sethe's escape route is described in fragments:

"She walked until she couldn't walk anymore." (p. 93)

"A boatman had rowed her across." (p. 94)

Sweet Home is remembered differently by each character. Paul D recalls:

“It wasn’t sweet and it sure wasn’t home.” (p. 14)

The geography of *Beloved* is intentionally fragmented. Sethe’s escape is unmappable - a series of disconnected images rather than a coherent route. Sweet Home is remembered inconsistently, showing how trauma fractures spatial memory.

This unmappability reflects the historical reality that enslaved people were denied stable relationships to land, home, and geography. Ashraf Rushdy argues that *Beloved* “collapses the geography of memory and the geography of the present,” creating a world where space cannot be coherently mapped (*Remembering Generations*, 2001).

Morrison opens the novel with the line:

“124 was spiteful.” (*Beloved*, p. 3)

Later, the house is described differently:

“124 was loud.” (p. 199) “124 was quiet.” (p. 281)

These shifting descriptions show that 124 is not a fixed physical structure but a volatile emotional environment. Its atmosphere changes depending on who occupies it and what memories surface. The instability of the house mirrors Sethe’s unstable psychological state, where trauma continually resurfaces and reshapes her perception of space. Linda Krumholz argues that Morrison’s spaces “refuse to be fixed,” reflecting the instability of identity and memory after slavery (“The Ghosts of Slavery,” *African American Review*, 1992).

124 is described as:

“Full of a baby’s venom.” (p. 3)

The Clearing is described as a place where Baby Suggs “called to the women to cry” and “let the children come.” (pp. 87–88)

The Clearing, once a place of communal healing under Baby Suggs, becomes a site of psychic rupture when Sethe is attacked by the ghostly presence of *Beloved*. Even Sweet Home, the plantation where Sethe was enslaved, is remembered in contradictory ways-sometimes pastoral, sometimes horrific - revealing how trauma fractures the ability to perceive or recall

space consistently. The Clearing, where Baby Suggs preaches self-love, is another ambiguous space. The Clearing is both a physical place in the woods, a symbolic space of spiritual renewal and memory-space that the characters revisit internally. Its boundaries are porous, shifting between literal and metaphorical. When Sethe is attacked by the ghostly presence of Beloved in the Clearing, the space becomes unstable again. A place once associated with healing becomes a site of terror, showing how trauma can retroactively alter the meaning of space. As critic Linda Krumholz observes, Morrison's spaces "refuse to be fixed," mirroring the instability of identity and memory in the aftermath of slavery. Both spaces carry symbolic weight far beyond their physical descriptions.¹²⁴ 124 symbolizes trauma, guilt, and the unresolved presence of the dead. The Clearing symbolizes healing, community, and spiritual renewal - until Beloved's presence transforms it into a site of terror. These spaces are symbolically overloaded, meaning they function simultaneously as physical locations and as metaphors for emotional and historical forces. Katherine Clay Bassard notes that Morrison's landscapes are "sites of both terror and transcendence," where physical space becomes inseparable from spiritual and historical meaning (*Spiritual Interrogations*, 1999).

Beloved is rich in spatial ambiguity which is a key aspect of its narrative and thematic depth. It allows the readers to explore the psychological and social dimensions of the characters' experiences. Each physical and mental space mentioned in the novel symbolizes the gothic structure, search for identity, gothic power and its influences and instability of characters in both physical and mental spaces.

124 Bluestone house symbolizes the past and the entrapment of memory as Sethe and Denver are trapped in a persistent memory that refuses to set them free. The Clearing, the backyard over which 124 Bluestone overlooks represent a place of renewal, where memory is encouraged to reacquaint with itself with its bodies that have been violated by slavery. Paul D's heart is described as "tobacco tin lodged in his chest." is a spatially configured representation of his traumatic memories, which he protects from being overwhelmed by the perpetual loss of identity, family and friends. This reveals the memory and identity associated with Sethe in connection to Paul D. The whitefolk's fear of and desire for power over their slaves is metaphorized as a jungle of their own creation, highlighting the oppressive dynamics of their relationship with the enslaved. The characters perceive and experience trauma in an unstable spatial order challenging the linear temporality of western thought. This disruption allows Morrison to shift remembering the past as a trauma of the individual psyche to the collective

national sphere. These elements of spatial ambiguity in *Beloved* invite multiple interpretations and meditations on various levels, making the novel a complex and thought - provoking work.

This paper argues that spatial ambiguity in *Beloved* is a deliberate narrative strategy that reflects the disorienting legacy of enslavement. By destabilizing place, Morrison reveals how trauma disrupts one's ability to inhabit space securely, coherently, or fully. It argues that Morrison's use of spatial ambiguity is central to the novel's exploration of trauma, haunting, and historical memory. It reveals how the past persists not only in the mind but also in the very spaces people inhabit, turning geography into a site of both suffering and potential healing. Through this lens, *Beloved* emerges as a work in which space itself becomes a dynamic participant in the narrative, shaping and being shaped by the characters' ongoing struggle to reclaim their lives in the aftermath of slavery. It examines spatial ambiguity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, arguing that the novel's unstable, shifting, and haunted spaces function as narrative mechanisms that embody the trauma of slavery and the fragmentation of memory. Through an analysis of 124 Bluestone Road, the Clearing, and the broader geography of the post-Civil War United States, the paper demonstrates how Morrison destabilizes physical space to reflect psychological dislocation, historical erasure, and the spectral presence of the past.

Spatial ambiguity refers to the deliberate construction of settings that resist stability, clarity, or fixed meaning. In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison uses this ambiguity not as a stylistic flourish but as a structural and thematic device that mirrors the fractured realities of formerly enslaved people. Each dimension of spatial ambiguity—instability, symbolic overload, unmappability, and haunting—corresponds directly to the psychological and historical dislocations produced by slavery.

In *Beloved*, spaces do not remain constant. They shift in atmosphere, meaning, and emotional resonance depending on who occupies them and what memories surface. The 124 Bluestone Road is a shifting environment and the house is described as “spiteful”, “loud”, “quiet” and “full of a baby's venom”. These contradictory descriptions show that 124 is not a fixed physical structure but a volatile emotional landscape. Its instability reflects the instability of Sethe's inner world, where trauma continually resurfaces.

The house changes depending on who occupies it. When Baby Suggs is alive, it is a place of community and healing. After Sethe kills her child, it becomes a site of haunting and isolation. When *Beloved* returns, the house becomes claustrophobic, oppressive, and almost spatially distorted. The house's instability mirrors the instability of memory and identity.

Slavery destabilizes one's relationship to place. Enslaved people were moved without consent, denied ownership of land or home and forced to live in spaces of violence. Morrison's unstable spaces mirror the instability imposed by enslavement. Spatial ambiguity also emerges when spaces carry more symbolic weight than physical detail. Morrison's settings are saturated with emotional, historical, and supernatural significance. 124 symbolizes a tomb, a memory vault, a site of haunting and a physical manifestation of guilt and grief. Its symbolic density makes it impossible to read as a simple domestic space.

The Clearing is depicted as a place of healing under Baby Suggs, a site of spiritual gathering and later, a site of psychic attack. Its symbolic meaning shifts depending on the emotional and historical forces acting upon it. It also reflects how trauma transforms ordinary spaces into sites of memory and meaning. For formerly enslaved people, no space is neutral; every place carries the weight of what happened there.

Morrison deliberately avoids giving readers a clear geographical map of the novel's world. The result is a landscape that feels disjointed, fragmented, and difficult to orient within.

The unmappability of the route of Sethe's escape is described in fragments: a riverbank, a cornfield, a boat, a shed. Sweet Home is remembered differently by each character-sometimes idyllic, sometimes horrific. The community around 124 is vaguely sketched, with no clear boundaries or landmarks. Sweet Home is both a plantation of brutal enslavement, a place Sethe remembers with moments of beauty and a site that shifts in memory depending on who recalls it. Its contradictory nature makes it spatially ambiguous - a place that cannot be fully known or fixed.

Slavery destroys the ability to claim or understand space. Enslaved people had no legal right to land, were uprooted repeatedly and lived in spaces designed to control and confine them. The fragmented geography of *Beloved* reflects this historical reality. The inability to map space mirrors the characters' inability to map their own pasts.

Spatial ambiguity in *Beloved* is haunting. Spaces are literally and metaphorically occupied by the past, haunted by memory, trauma and supernatural. 124 is haunted by the baby ghost and later by Beloved herself. The past intrudes into the present physically, not just psychologically. Rooms, fields, and landscapes become sites where memory materializes. Haunting collapses the boundary between past and present, living and dead and physical and psychological. This collapse

is a direct representation of trauma. As trauma theorists note, traumatic memory is not “past”-it is ever-present, intrusive, and spatially embodied.

The house is literally haunted:

“The baby’s ghost.” (p. 3)

Beloved’s return collapses time and space:

“She had new skin, lineless and smooth.” (p. 50)

Sethe experiences memory as spatial intrusion:

“It was as though Sethe didn’t really live in the world anymore.” (p. 95)

Haunting is the most powerful form of spatial ambiguity in the novel. The ghost occupies physical rooms, Beloved’s return makes the past physically present and Trauma invades space, collapsing boundaries between past and present. This haunting shows how slavery’s violence continues to inhabit the spaces of the present. Avery Gordon writes that haunting is “a constituent element of modern social life,” where the past “makes itself known in the present” (*Ghostly Matters*, 1997). Morrison dramatizes this idea through the haunted spaces of *Beloved*.

Spatial ambiguity represents the dislocation of slavery through ruptures in identity, memory, family structure, geography and bodily autonomy. It also represents psychological dislocation, historical dislocation and spatial dislocation. Psychological dislocation happens in characters that cannot inhabit space securely because trauma has made space unsafe. Sethe cannot distinguish between the house she lives in and the memories that live in her. Space becomes a psychological battlefield. Slavery disrupts the continuity of history. Morrison shows this by collapsing time within space, allowing the past to occupy the present and refusing linear, mappable geography. The result is a world where history is not behind the characters but around them. Enslaved people were denied stable homes. The geography of enslavement in *Beloved* is intentionally difficult to map. The uncertain route to freedom that is revealed through Sethe’s escape path in fragments – a river bank, a cornfield, a boat and a series of unnamed helpers. This fragmented geography reflects the disorientation of fugitivity. It also reflects the fragmentation in their mindset. There is a space outside time. 124 exists in a temporal blur from the past erupts into the present, trauma collapses chronological boundaries and the house becomes a site where time is spatialized - memories take up physical room. This temporal-spatial collapse is a key form of ambiguity. Thus, Morrison’s characters cannot trust space, cannot claim space, cannot escape

the past embedded in space. Spatial ambiguity becomes a metaphor for the impossibility of rootedness after slavery.

Trauma disrupts the ability to inhabit space coherently. Morrison uses spatial ambiguity to show the collapse of safe boundaries, the body as a haunted space and the past as a physical geography. Haunting in *Beloved* is spatial that the dead enter the living world, memories invade physical rooms and trauma occupies space like a physical presence. The body as a haunted space is represented through Sethe's back, scarred with the "tree," becomes a spatial metaphor - a map of trauma inscribed on the body. The past as a physical geography is depicted through characters "walk into" memories as though entering rooms. Morrison spatializes memory to show how the past remains physically present.

Conclusion

Spatial ambiguity in *Beloved* is far more than a stylistic feature; it is a structural and thematic engine through which Toni Morrison renders the psychological, historical, and emotional ruptures produced by slavery. By crafting spaces that are unstable, symbolically saturated, unmappable, and haunted, Morrison transforms geography into a living archive of trauma. The house at 124 Bluestone Road, the Clearing, Sweet Home, and the fugitive landscape all resist fixed meaning, reflecting the fractured subjectivities of characters whose lives have been shaped by displacement, violence, and the persistent intrusion of the past.

Through these ambiguous spaces, Morrison collapses the boundaries between past and present, physical and supernatural, memory and lived experience. Trauma becomes spatial-occupying rooms, landscapes, and bodies-revealing how the legacy of slavery continues to inhabit the spaces of the present. The instability of 124 mirrors Sethe's unstable sense of self; the symbolic overload of the Clearing reflects the shifting meanings of community and healing; the unmappability of Sweet Home and the escape route exposes the erasure and disorientation inherent in enslavement; and the haunting presence of *Beloved* demonstrates how the past refuses to remain contained.

Morrison's spatial ambiguity challenges traditional Western notions of space as fixed, neutral, or knowable. Instead, she constructs a Black geography shaped by memory, loss, and resilience-a geography where space itself bears witness to historical violence and its afterlives. In *Beloved*, to inhabit space is to confront the ghosts of history, and to reclaim space is to begin the difficult work of healing. Morrison's ambiguous, haunted landscapes thus serve as powerful

metaphors for the enduring impact of slavery and the ongoing struggle to reconstruct identity, community, and belonging in its wake.

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Archetypal Analysis and Post-Modern Mythmaking in Selected Works of Rick Riordan

Mr. Allen Rohit. G, Research Scholar, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science
Technology and Advanced Studies.

Dr. A. Banupriya, Assistant Professor and Research Supervisor, Department of English, Vels
Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

This research explores how Rick Riordan's *The Trials of Apollo* series reinterprets classical Greek mythology through the frameworks of Joseph Campbell's monomyth and Richard Kearney's postmodern mythmaking. While Riordan retains archetypal structures of the hero's journey, his narratives simultaneously subvert traditional heroic models by presenting flawed, humorous, and morally complex protagonists. Through themes of identity, inclusivity, disability representation, and moral ambiguity, Riordan reconstructs myth for contemporary young adult audiences. This study examines how Riordan blends ancient archetypes with modern sensibilities, reshaping mythic traditions to represent evolving cultural concerns about heroism, justice, and ethical responsibility.

Keywords: Rick Riordan, monomyth, archetype, postmodern mythmaking, Joseph Campbell, Richard Kearney, contemporary retellings, Greek mythology, *Trials of Apollo*

Introduction

Myths have historically served as foundational narratives that shape cultural identity, collective memory, and moral imagination. Originating from the Greek *mythos*, meaning "story", myth functions not merely as entertainment but as a symbolic system through which societies explain origins, human behaviour, and universal truths. As Spenser Lewis states, "A Myth is an account of the deeds of a God or supernatural being...the sacred history of a divine being or a supernatural group of beings" (Lewis 11). Greek mythology formed through influences from Minoan, Mycenaean, and wider Indo-European traditions laid the groundwork for Western literary tradition, shaping epic narratives from Hesiod's *Theogony* to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Contemporary literature has witnessed a resurgence of mythological retellings, with writers revisiting ancient narratives to address present-day concerns. Works by Natalie Haynes, Pat Barker, Claire Heywood, and Stephen Fry have reimagined mythic events by foregrounding neglected voices, especially those of women and marginal figures. Within this cultural wave, Rick Riordan stands out for his ability to adapt Greco-Roman, Norse, and Egyptian mythologies for young adult readers. His novels blend humour, fantasy, and fast-paced adventure with deeper themes of trauma, identity, and belonging.

This article analyses *The Trials of Apollo* (2016–2020) through the dual frameworks of Campbell’s monomyth and Kearney’s postmodern mythmaking, exploring how Riordan’s contemporary mythopoeia reshapes archetypal patterns to address modern values of inclusivity, emotional complexity, and moral responsibility.

Literature Review

Myth and Its Cultural Function

Myths traditionally function as cultural blueprints, shaping concepts of justice, morality, and heroism. Scholars such as Claude Lévi-Strauss argue that myths operate as structures of meaning that reveal underlying patterns of human thought. Campbell extends this structuralism by positing the “monomyth”, a universal narrative pattern observable across global mythic traditions. For Campbell, the hero’s journey is both a spiritual and psychological process through which individuals confront trials, transcend limitations, and return transformed.

Greek myths have shaped Western literary imagination for centuries. Hesiod’s *Theogony* provides the genealogical foundation of the gods, while Homer’s epics explore heroism, fate, and moral choice. Later authors such as Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus infused myths with psychological complexity and ethical ambiguity. Modern writers continue this evolution by interrogating the power structures and ideologies embedded within the myths.

Contemporary Mythological Retellings

Modern retellings often foreground marginalised perspectives. Works like Costanza Casati’s *Clytemnestra*, Natalie Haynes’s *Stone Blind*, Barker’s *The Women of Troy*, and Heywood’s *The Shadow of Perseus* reframe ancient narratives through feminist, political, or psychological lenses. Stephen Fry’s *Trilogy-Mythos*, *Heroes*, and *Troy*-repackages classical stories with wit and modern clarity while maintaining fidelity to source materials.

Riordan's contributions differ in that they aim to make myth accessible to younger audiences. By blending contemporary humour with ancient myth, Riordan creates narratives that are simultaneously educational and transformative. His protagonists-often diagnosed with ADHD or dyslexia-represent neurodiverse identities, reflecting his stated intention to create heroes modelled after his own son. Thus, myth becomes a medium for representing inclusivity and challenging normative heroic ideals.

Selected Texts: The Trials of Apollo

This study focuses on Riordan's *The Trials of Apollo* series: *The Hidden Oracle* (2016), *The Dark Prophecy* (2017), *The Burning Maze* (2018), *The Tyrant's Tomb* (2019), and *The Tower of Nero* (2020). The series follows the god Apollo, transformed into a mortal teenager named Lester Papadopoulos as punishment for past arrogance. Assigned to serve Meg McCaffrey-a twelve-year-old demigod-Apollo must confront his past mistakes, rebuild fractured relationships, and redefine his understanding of humanity.

Unlike traditional depictions of gods as omnipotent and infallible, Riordan presents Apollo as flawed, insecure, and deeply human. His journey becomes one of humility, accountability, and moral growth rather than conquest. This inversion of deity-to-hero archetypes forms a significant departure from the traditional hero's journey while still invoking its structural elements.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method, analysing Riordan's novels as primary texts. The study uses:

Joseph Campbell's monomyth from *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* as a structural framework to examine how Riordan adopts and modifies archetypal stages such as the Call to Adventure, Road of Trials, Atonement, and Return.

Richard Kearney's theory of postmodern mythmaking, especially ideas from *The Wake of Imagination* and *On Stories*, to understand how Riordan destabilises traditional mythic binaries (God/human, hero/monster, good/evil) and reconstitutes myth for contemporary readers.

The analysis focuses on narrative structure, characterisation, thematic development, and ideological shifts in Riordan's mythopoesis.

Archetypal Structure and the Monomyth

Riordan's narratives retain recognisable elements of Campbell's monomyth. Apollo's fall from Olympus functions as the *Call to Adventure*, forcing him into the mortal world where he must regain his powers. His encounters with monsters, trials, and moral dilemmas constitute the *Road of Trials*. His eventual acceptance of responsibility and embrace of humility perform the *Atonement* stage, culminating in a symbolic *Return* as a changed being.

However, Riordan intentionally disrupts the traditional monomyth. Apollo is *not* a young, aspiring hero but a disgraced god. His journey is less about glory and more about accountability. Meg McCaffrey subverts the "supernatural aid" archetype by functioning instead as Apollo's mentor, protector, and moral compass. This inversion of roles destabilises normative heroic hierarchies.

Postmodern Mythmaking: Subversion and Inclusivity

Kearney defines postmodern mythmaking as the reimagining of traditional narratives to reflect contemporary ethical and cultural concerns. Riordan's work exemplifies this through:

- Humanisation of divinity: Apollo's vulnerabilities challenge the idea of divine perfection.
- Fluid moral identities: Villains often possess sympathetic backstories; heroes make morally ambiguous choices.
- Representation of neurodiversity: Disabilities such as ADHD are framed as strengths rather than shortcomings.
- Diverse identities: Characters embody varied racial, linguistic, and sexual identities, reflecting present-day inclusivity.

By reimagining myth in this manner, Riordan democratises the heroic archetype, suggesting that heroism emerges not from birth or divine right but from ethical action and emotional growth.

Evolution of Myth for Contemporary Audiences

Riordan's retellings engage directly with evolving cultural discourses on identity, justice, and resilience. The novels address themes such as:

- trauma and healing

- mentorship and chosen family
- ecological destruction
- abuse of power
- moral responsibility

These themes resonate with young adult readers navigating complex social realities. Through humour, accessibility, and emotional depth, Riordan reinvigorates mythic traditions for a new generation.

Conclusion

Positioned at the intersection of literature, culture, and identity, this research illustrates how Rick Riordan revitalises Greek mythology through the simultaneous use of archetypal continuity and postmodern reinvention. *The Trials of Apollo* demonstrates that myths remain dynamic cultural artifacts capable of reflecting changing societal values. By subverting traditional heroic models and emphasising inclusivity, vulnerability, and ethical responsibility, Riordan transforms myth into a contemporary tool for exploring identity and justice.

His retellings reveal that modern mythmaking does not merely preserve the past—it reconstructs it to address the psychological, social, and moral concerns of the present. In doing so, Riordan invites readers to critically engage with myth while recognising its enduring power to shape both individual and collective imagination.

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Self-Realization and Indian Humanism in the Select Novels of R.K. Narayan

Mr. P. Natrajan, Research Scholar, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science
Technology and Advanced Studies.

Dr. A. Banupriya, Assistant Professor and Research Supervisor, Department of English, Vels
Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

R.K. Narayan occupies a central place in the tradition of Indian Writing in English for his subtle portrayal of the moral and spiritual dimensions of everyday life. While much critical attention has been devoted to his realism, narrative simplicity, and humour, comparatively fewer studies have examined the philosophical coherence that underlies his fictional world. This article explores the theme of self-realization and Indian humanism in four major novels-*The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The English Teacher* (1945), *The Financial Expert* (1952), and *The Guide* (1958).

It argues that Narayan constructs a consistent ethical vision in which ordinary individuals, confronted with love, loss, ambition, and suffering, undergo an inward transformation leading towards moral clarity and spiritual awareness. Drawing on Indian philosophical traditions such as Vedanta, Gandhian ethics, and the concepts of karma and dharma, the paper situates Narayan as a philosophical humanist whose work bridges the secular and the sacred.

Keywords: R.K. Narayan, Indian humanism, self-realization, Malgudi, Vedanta, ethics.

Introduction

R.K. Narayan (1906–2001) remains one of the most influential figures in Indian Writing in English, celebrated for his creation of the fictional town of Malgudi, which serves as both a geographical setting and a moral universe. Unlike his contemporaries who often addressed overt political themes, Narayan turned his attention to the inner lives of ordinary individuals, revealing the ethical and spiritual questions embedded within the routines of middle-class existence. His narrative method, characterized by economy of language, gentle humour, and understated irony, conceals a philosophical depth that aligns closely with indigenous Indian thought.

The present study examines the theme of self-realization and Indian humanism in four representative novels: *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The English Teacher*, *The Financial Expert*, and *The Guide*. These novels span more than two decades of Narayan's early creative career and represent

distinct phases in his philosophical imagination. When read together, they reveal a continuous moral trajectory in which the protagonists move from self-centred desire to ethical responsibility, and finally towards spiritual illumination. This article contends that Narayan's fiction articulates a uniquely Indian form of humanism—one that is rooted in compassion, detachment, and the recognition of the interconnectedness of all life, rather than in Western rationalist or secular humanist traditions.

Review of Literature

Critical scholarship on R.K. Narayan has traditionally emphasized his realism, comic vision, and narrative technique. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar describes Narayan as a “moral realist” whose fictional world is governed by compassion rather than satire. William Walsh highlights the distinctive “Indian sensibility clothed in an English idiom,” arguing that Narayan successfully adapted the English novel form to Indian cultural rhythms. C.D. Narasimhaiah interprets Narayan's body of work as a movement from “innocence to experience,” while P.S. Sundaram regards his fiction as a gradual journey towards self-discipline and ethical balance.

Meenakshi Mukherjee, in *The Twice Born Fiction*, situates Narayan within the broader development of Indian English fiction, noting his departure from overt nationalist concerns toward an exploration of personal morality. V.K.R.V. Murthy's work on humanism in Indian thought provides a philosophical framework for understanding Narayan's ethical vision, especially in relation to classical Indian concepts of duty, detachment, and compassion.

Despite this rich critical tradition, there remains a gap in scholarship that systematically examines the philosophical continuity across Narayan's major novels in terms of self-realization and Indian humanism. Most studies tend to focus on individual novels rather than viewing them as part of a coherent ethical project. This article seeks to address this gap by offering an integrated reading of the four selected texts, foregrounding their shared concern with spiritual and moral awakening.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretative research design based on close textual analysis. The primary texts are examined through thematic, philosophical, and postcolonial humanistic frameworks. The analysis is informed by Indian philosophical traditions, particularly Vedantic thought, Gandhian ethics, and the doctrines of karma (action and consequence) and dharma (duty and moral order). Rather than imposing an external theoretical model, the study

seeks to read Narayan's fiction from within its own cultural and philosophical context, while remaining attentive to wider debates in literary humanism.

Self-Realization in *The Bachelor of Arts*

The Bachelor of Arts presents Chandran as an educated yet emotionally immature young man whose romantic idealism and intellectual arrogance initially prevent him from achieving self-understanding. Chandran's obsession with Malathi and his subsequent disillusionment with the institution of marriage symbolize the early stages of existential crisis. His withdrawal from social life and temporary adoption of the role of a wandering ascetic marks a symbolic rejection of material and emotional attachment.

This phase of renunciation, however, is not portrayed as a permanent escape from the world. Rather, it represents a transitional stage in Chandran's moral development. Narayan suggests that self-realization does not emerge through radical withdrawal alone but through a balanced integration of duty and detachment. Chandran's eventual return to ordinary life with a transformed attitude reflects the Vedantic ideal of living in the world without being enslaved by it. Thus, the novel articulates an early version of Narayan's humanistic philosophy in which self-knowledge arises through disillusionment and introspection.

Love, Loss, and Spiritual Awakening in *The English Teacher*

The English Teacher marks a significant deepening of Narayan's philosophical concerns. The novel shifts from social satire to spiritual inwardness, presenting Krishna's journey from conventional domestic happiness to metaphysical exploration. The sudden death of his wife, Susila, becomes the central catalyst for Krishna's transformation. Rather than depicting grief as mere suffering, Narayan transforms mourning into a pathway for spiritual awakening.

Through Krishna's attempts to communicate with Susila's spirit, the novel explores the permeability of the boundary between life and death. Love, in this context, is not confined to the physical or temporal realm but becomes a metaphysical connection that transcends bodily existence. The novel reflects the Vedantic belief in the continuity of the soul and the illusory nature of material separation. At the same time, it affirms a deeply humanistic vision in which personal suffering becomes the ground for compassion, humility, and spiritual humility. Krishna's eventual serenity represents not a rejection of the world but a re-orientation toward a more expansive understanding of life and love.

Material Ambition and Moral Crisis in *The Financial Expert*

In *The Financial Expert*, Narayan turns his attention to the moral implications of economic ambition within a modernizing society. Margayya, the novel's protagonist, embodies the desire for financial success and social recognition. From a man who operates humbly under a banyan tree, Margayya rises to become a powerful financial figure, only to experience a dramatic moral and material collapse.

The novel critiques the illusion that wealth can provide fulfilment or moral legitimacy. Margayya's success is built upon manipulation, greed, and the exploitation of others' weaknesses. His eventual downfall reveals the inherent instability of a life founded on materialism alone. Narayan does not present Margayya as a purely villainous figure; rather, he is portrayed with sympathy, emphasizing his human vulnerability and social conditioning.

From the perspective of Indian humanism, Margayya's story illustrates the consequences of violating the principles of dharma and ethical responsibility. The novel suggests that economic activity, when divorced from moral consciousness, leads inevitably to spiritual emptiness. Self-realization, in this context, is achieved not through wealth but through the painful recognition of one's moral failures and the acceptance of humility.

Illusion and Enlightenment in *The Guide*

The Guide represents the culmination of Narayan's philosophical vision. Raju's transformation from a tourist guide to a spiritual guide is accidental, ironic, and deeply symbolic. Initially a figure of deception and opportunism, Raju gradually becomes imprisoned—both literally and metaphorically—within the role of a holy man. What begins as performance eventually evolves into genuine spiritual discipline.

The novel explores the tension between illusion (*maya*) and reality, suggesting that identity is often constructed through social expectation rather than inner authenticity. Raju's final act of fasting for the sake of the villagers can be read both ambiguously and affirmatively. Whether or not his act results in literal rain is less significant than the moral transformation it represents. By surrendering his ego and accepting suffering for the sake of others, Raju embodies the highest ideal of Indian humanism: self-transcendence through compassion and sacrifice.

The Guide thus completes the philosophical arc that begins in *The Bachelor of Arts*. The journey from romantic idealism to spiritual self-sacrifice illustrates Narayan's belief that true fulfilment lies not in possession or status but in ethical responsibility and spiritual awakening.

Discussion

Across the four novels, Narayan consistently constructs a vision of human life in which moral growth is achieved through inner struggle rather than external conquest. Education, love, money, and spirituality function as successive stages in the protagonists' journeys toward self-realization. Unlike Western existentialist or rationalist paradigms, which often emphasize individual autonomy and rebellion, Narayan's humanism is relational and spiritual. It is grounded in the recognition of interdependence, the acceptance of suffering as a transformative force, and the cultivation of compassion.

Narayan's use of humour and irony plays a crucial role in maintaining the balance between philosophy and accessibility. By embedding profound ethical questions within everyday situations, he avoids didacticism and allows the reader to arrive at insight through empathy rather than instruction. His narrative technique reflects the Indian aesthetic ideal of harmony, where form and content are unified in the service of moral understanding.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that R.K. Narayan's fiction transcends the boundaries of social realism to articulate a sustained philosophical inquiry into the nature of human existence. Through the lives of Chandran, Krishna, Margayya, and Raju, Narayan maps the complex journey from ignorance to awareness, from attachment to detachment, and from self-interest to self-transcendence. His distinctive form of Indian humanism, grounded in Vedantic philosophy and Gandhian ethics, offers a moral vision that remains relevant in a world increasingly shaped by materialism and spiritual disorientation.

By reading the four selected novels as a continuous ethical project, this article contributes to Narayan studies and to broader discussions of postcolonial humanism. It repositions Narayan not only as a master storyteller of middle-class India but as a philosophical humanist whose work bridges the ordinary and the eternal.

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Voices of Resistance: A Feminist-Dalit Reading of Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You*

Ms. Komaleswari. R, Research Scholar, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies.

Dr. A. Banupriya, Assistant Professor and Research Supervisor, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (2017) is a radical narrative that foregrounds the intersection of gendered oppression and caste social hierarchies. Written as a memoir-like account, the text documents the protagonist's experiences of domestic violence, emotional terror, and systemic control in a patriarchal and caste-conscious society.

This study applies a Feminist-Dalit lens to examine how Kandasamy negotiates power, resistance, and bodily autonomy, highlighting the ways in which gendered violence is compounded by caste and social marginalization. By foregrounding the politics of the female body, voice, and affective experience, this article situates Kandasamy's work as a critical intervention in contemporary Indian feminist and Dalit literature.

Keywords: Meena Kandasamy, *When I Hit You*, Feminist-Dalit theory, gendered violence, caste oppression, body politics, resistance

Introduction

Meena Kandasamy, a prominent Dalit feminist writer, poet, and activist, is renowned for addressing issues of caste, gender, and sexuality through a confrontational and lyrical prose style. *When I Hit You* is her most explicit autobiographical work, narrating the intimate horrors of marital abuse while simultaneously exposing the societal and cultural structures that facilitate such violence.

From a Feminist-Dalit perspective, this text becomes particularly significant because it emphasizes the compounded oppression of women who are both marginalized by caste and subjected to patriarchal violence. As Kandasamy herself notes in interviews, the work is an

attempt to document lived experiences of control, humiliation, and resistance that are often silenced within mainstream Indian narratives (Kandasamy, 2017).

Feminist-Dalit Framework

Feminist-Dalit theory foregrounds the intersection of gender and caste, examining how structural inequalities and patriarchal norms operate together to produce systemic oppression. Unlike mainstream feminism, which often centers upper-caste women, Dalit feminism highlights the unique struggles faced by women at the intersection of caste and gender discrimination (Rege, 1998).

In *When I Hit You*, the protagonist experiences a form of domestic violence that is not just marital but also socially and culturally sanctioned. The text illustrates how the Dalit feminist subject negotiates power and agency through language, writing, and bodily endurance. Kandasamy's narrative functions as both testimony and resistance, aligning with the goals of Dalit feminist literature: to voice the silenced and challenge hegemonic structures.

Domestic Violence as Gendered and Casteed Oppression

Domestic violence is often framed as a private, gendered issue, but Kandasamy situates it within larger social, cultural, and casteed hierarchies. The protagonist's suffering is multilayered, where her gender makes her vulnerable to physical and emotional abuse, and her caste positioning intensifies societal indifference and complicity.

Sara Ahmed's work on affective feminism provides a theoretical lens to understand how emotions such as shame, fear, and humiliation operate as tools of patriarchal and casteed control (Ahmed, 2004). The narrative repeatedly foregrounds the body as a site of violence, illustrating how the domestic space becomes a theatre of both physical assault and emotional terror.

"The body is a map of oppression, a site where the social, the political, and the intimate intersect" (Kandasamy, 2017, p. 42).

The protagonist's endurance of violence, coupled with her eventual assertion of voice, demonstrates resistance through narration, aligning with Dalit feminist strategies that prioritize testimonial authority and counter-narratives.

Language and Voice as Resistance

Kandasamy's use of poetic, fragmented, and intensely personal language challenges the conventional memoir form. The stylistic choice mirrors the rupture and trauma experienced by

the protagonist, while also functioning as an act of rebellion against normative patriarchal discourse (Rege, 1998).

By naming violence explicitly, the work transforms silence into articulation, an essential principle of Dalit feminist writing. The protagonist's narrative asserts that speaking about trauma is itself a form of agency, challenging both domestic and social structures that seek to maintain female subordination.

Intersectionality of Gender and Caste

Although *When I Hit You* primarily focuses on marital abuse, a **Feminist-Dalit reading** reveals subtle casteed undertones. The narrative exposes:

1. Societal indifference to female suffering in caste-conscious communities.
2. Internalized oppression, where women are socialized to endure abuse.
3. Structural barriers that prevent recourse, making violence an intersectional experience (Shah, 2017).

The protagonist's identity as a woman navigating these intersecting oppressions mirrors the dual marginalization faced by Dalit women—they are oppressed not only by patriarchy but also by entrenched caste hierarchies.

Resistance and Agency

Kandasamy constructs resistance as multifaceted:

- Narrative resistance: Writing as reclaiming voice and subjectivity
- Emotional resistance: Reframing fear and shame as knowledge and empowerment
- Social critique: Exposing societal complicity in gendered and casteed oppression

The protagonist's eventual assertion of voice aligns with Sara Ahmed's theory of affective resistance, which posits that emotions like anger and shame can challenge normative power relations and catalyze social critique (Ahmed, 2004).

“To speak is to resist, to name is to reclaim territory that violence has attempted to occupy” (Kandasamy, 2017, p. 97).

Comparative Insights and Implications

A Feminist-Dalit reading of *When I Hit You* emphasizes the political dimension of personal trauma. Unlike mainstream feminist narratives, Kandasamy foregrounds structural inequalities rooted in caste, class, and community, situating domestic violence within a broader social matrix.

The text also contributes to contemporary Dalit feminist discourse, highlighting how testimonial literature can challenge dominant narratives, reclaim history, and assert agency over silenced experiences.

Conclusion

When I Hit You is a seminal work in Feminist-Dalit literature, exemplifying how intimate, bodily, and emotional experiences intersect with structural oppression and caste consciousness. Kandasamy's narrative demonstrates that resistance emerges not only through public activism but also through testimony, writing, and articulation of emotion.

By applying Feminist-Dalit theory, this study reveals how Kandasamy negotiates gendered, casteed, and affective oppression, transforming personal trauma into a political act of reclamation and empowerment.

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A Longitudinal Examination of the Influence of Continuous Professional Development on Tertiary ELT Teachers' Attitudes toward Technology

Mr. Dinesh. S., Research Scholar, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies.

Dr. A. Banupriya, Assistant Professor and Research Supervisor, Department of English, Vels Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies.

Abstract

The integration of technology into tertiary English Language Teaching (ELT) has expanded rapidly; however, sustained pedagogical adoption remains uneven. Research increasingly indicates that teachers' attitudes, confidence, and pedagogical beliefs play a more decisive role than mere access to digital tools. This longitudinal study investigates the influence of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on tertiary-level ELT teachers' attitudes toward technology and their classroom integration practices over time. Employing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations conducted at multiple stages of CPD implementation. The study is theoretically anchored in Diffusion of Innovations Theory, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework.

Keywords

Continuous Professional Development; ELT; Teacher Attitudes; Technology Integration; TPACK; Technology Acceptance Model; Diffusion of Innovations; Higher Education

Contextualising Technology Integration in Tertiary ELT

The integration of digital technology into tertiary English Language Teaching (ELT) has intensified over the past two decades, reshaping instructional delivery, assessment practices, and academic communication. Tools such as learning management systems, digital assessment platforms, online discussion forums, and mobile-assisted language learning applications have become embedded within higher education ecosystems. However, the presence of technology does not automatically translate into pedagogical innovation. In many tertiary ELT classrooms,

technology remains underutilised or confined to administrative purposes rather than being employed as a transformative instructional resource.

Research in teacher cognition highlights that educators' beliefs, attitudes, and confidence significantly influence classroom practices. In the context of ELT, where teaching is deeply interactional and interpretive, instructors' perceptions of technology play a decisive role in determining whether digital tools are meaningfully integrated or superficially adopted. Resistance to change, fear of technological failure, and uncertainty regarding pedagogical value often hinder sustained adoption, even in technologically well-equipped institutions.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has emerged as a crucial intervention for addressing these challenges. Unlike one-time workshops, CPD provides sustained opportunities for skill development, pedagogical reflection, and collaborative learning. However, despite its growing prominence, limited research has examined how CPD reshapes tertiary ELT teachers' attitudes toward technology over extended periods. This study addresses this gap by adopting a longitudinal perspective to examine attitudinal and pedagogical change over time.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives on Technology Adoption in ELT

Technology adoption in ELT is a multifaceted process influenced by cognitive, social, and institutional factors. To understand how CPD impacts teachers' attitudes and practices, this study draws upon established theoretical frameworks that explain technology acceptance, diffusion, and pedagogical integration.

2.1 Teacher Attitudes and Pedagogical Readiness in Technology-Enhanced ELT

Teacher attitudes toward technology significantly influence instructional decision-making and classroom implementation. Positive attitudes are often associated with experimentation, innovation, and learner-centred practices, while negative attitudes tend to result in avoidance or minimal usage. Pedagogical readiness encompasses not only technical competence but also teachers' confidence in aligning technology with instructional goals.

In tertiary ELT contexts, pedagogical readiness is particularly important due to the autonomy teachers possess in designing curricula and selecting instructional tools. Studies suggest that without adequate confidence and conceptual clarity, teachers may perceive technology as an external imposition rather than a pedagogical asset. Consequently, attitude formation becomes central to understanding technology integration in higher education ELT.

2.2 Continuous Professional Development as a Catalyst for Pedagogical Change

CPD functions as a critical mechanism for fostering long-term pedagogical change by supporting teachers through iterative learning, reflection, and practice. Research indicates that sustained professional learning enhances teachers' self-efficacy, reduces anxiety related to technology use, and promotes reflective teaching practices.

Unlike short-term training programmes, CPD encourages gradual transformation by allowing teachers to contextualise technological tools within their instructional realities. In ELT, this sustained engagement enables educators to experiment with digital resources, evaluate their pedagogical effectiveness, and refine classroom strategies. However, empirical studies examining the durability of CPD-induced change, particularly over extended periods, remain limited-necessitating longitudinal inquiry.

2.3 Diffusion of Innovations and Social Dimensions of Technology Adoption

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how technological practices spread within educational institutions. The theory categorises adopters based on their readiness to embrace innovation and emphasises the role of communication, peer influence, and institutional culture.

In tertiary ELT settings, technology adoption is often shaped by departmental norms, collegial interactions, and administrative expectations. Teachers' willingness to adopt new tools is influenced not only by individual beliefs but also by perceived institutional support and professional recognition. A longitudinal approach allows for the examination of how these social dynamics evolve alongside CPD participation.

2.4 Technology Acceptance and Knowledge Integration: TAM and TPACK

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains technology adoption through perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. These perceptions directly influence teachers' willingness to incorporate digital tools into instructional practice. CPD interventions often enhance both dimensions by increasing familiarity and demonstrating pedagogical relevance.

Complementing TAM, the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework emphasises the integration of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge. In ELT, effective technology use requires not only technical skills but also an understanding of how digital tools support language acquisition and communicative competence. Together, TAM and TPACK provide a comprehensive lens for analysing how CPD reshapes teachers' attitudes and classroom practices over time.

3. Focus and Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the longitudinal influence of Continuous Professional Development on tertiary-level ELT teachers' attitudes toward technology and their classroom integration practices. It explores both attitudinal change and observable pedagogical behaviour, situating these within broader institutional and theoretical contexts. By examining change across multiple phases of CPD, the study foregrounds the temporal dimension of teacher development.

4. Guiding Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does Continuous Professional Development influence tertiary ELT teachers' attitudes toward technology over time?
2. How do teachers' technological confidence and classroom practices evolve following sustained CPD engagement?
3. What individual and institutional factors facilitate or constrain long-term technology integration?
4. How are TPACK components reflected in ELT classroom practices after CPD participation?

5. Methodological Framework

5.1 Research Design and Longitudinal Approach

The study adopts a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to examine attitudinal and behavioural changes across time. A longitudinal approach enables the identification of gradual shifts in perceptions, confidence, and classroom practices that are often overlooked in short-term studies.

5.2 Participant Profile and Institutional Context

Participants comprised tertiary-level ELT teachers aged between 30 and 50, working in colleges and universities across diverse institutional contexts. The sample included teachers with varying levels of technological experience, ensuring a representative range of adoption profiles.

5.3 Instruments and Procedures for Data Collection

Data were collected using structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observation schedules. Surveys were administered at three stages pre-CPD, mid-CPD,

and post-CPD to capture longitudinal trends. Interviews provided deeper insights into teachers' perceptions and experiences, while classroom observations examined actual instructional practices.

5.4 Analytical Procedures

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods to identify patterns of change over time. Qualitative data were thematically analysed to identify recurring themes related to confidence, pedagogical adaptation, and institutional influence. Triangulation enhanced the credibility and validity of findings.

6. Longitudinal Trends in Teacher Attitudes and Classroom Practices

Analysis reveals a gradual but consistent positive shift in teachers' attitudes toward technology following sustained CPD engagement. Teachers demonstrated increased confidence, reduced apprehension, and greater pedagogical intentionality in technology use. Classroom observations indicated a transition from peripheral or instrumental use of technology to more integrated practices aligned with TPACK principles.

However, the study also identifies persistent constraints, including workload pressures, infrastructural limitations, and uneven institutional support. These findings highlight that while CPD facilitates individual transformation, institutional conditions continue to shape adoption trajectories.

7. Pedagogical and Institutional Implications

The findings underscore the importance of sustained, reflective CPD models for meaningful technology integration in tertiary ELT. Institutions should prioritise long-term professional learning frameworks that emphasise pedagogical application rather than technical training alone. CPD programmes should also address institutional barriers to ensure sustainable adoption.

8. Constraints and Delimitations of the Study

The study is limited by sample size and participant attrition, common challenges in longitudinal research. Institutional constraints may also influence the consistency of CPD implementation. These limitations were mitigated through multi-institutional sampling and phased data collection.

9. Concluding Observations

This longitudinal study demonstrates that Continuous Professional Development plays a pivotal role in reshaping tertiary ELT teachers' attitudes toward technology and their classroom practices. Meaningful technology integration emerges through sustained professional learning that fosters confidence, reflective practice, and pedagogical alignment. By foregrounding the temporal dimension of teacher development, the study contributes to ELT research and offers practical insights for CPD design and institutional policy in higher education.

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Editors



Dr.A. Banupriya
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Vels Institute of Science Technology
and Advanced Studies.



Dr.H.Kalaivani
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Vels Institute of Science Technology
and Advanced Studies.

✉ inknivorypublishinghouse@gmail.com

