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Ruins of War, Bodies of Memory: Trans-Corporeality and Material Ecocriticism in *Funny Boy*, *Noontide Toll* and *Lord of the Flies*

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Abstract

This paper will discuss the convergence between ecocriticism and trans-corporeality in the post-ethnic conflict era as manifested in *Funny boy* by Shyam Selvadurai, *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding as well as *Noontide Toll* by Romesh Gunsekera. Ecocriticism looks at how nature and the environment have been represented in literature whereas trans-corporeality looks at the relationship between the human body and the non-human world. The contemporary literature is mostly focused on the human effect of war and the natural world is considered a passive setting. Both *Funny Boy* by Shyam Selvadurai and *Noontide Toll* by Romesh Gunsekera focus on the effects of conflict, but one focuses on the perceived Civil War and the other on ethnic conflict. Nevertheless, instead of representing the war as such, both novels concentrate on the post-war events, discussing the consequences that the war had on the people and society. According to this study, there is a gap in the literature that is hard to fill: the role of the environment as a force behind the delivery of trauma and historical change is under-explored.

This paper contends that nature is a potent narrative tool by examining how this compelling storytelling tool is used in *Funny Boy*, *Noontide Toll* and *Lord of the Flies* to destroy the environment. It lets readers experience the depths of war by using the transformation of landscape as an element instead of only through the lens of human lead protagonists or working as first-hand witness. This style creates a stronger bond between the reader and the setting, which emphasizes the long-lasting trauma of war on the soil and the human soul. However, the works of William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, a fiction book in the context of the third world war that is being expected, demonstrate the fact of how seriously nature can affect human psychology. The narrative exposes the psychological decline of a collection of children, who are stuck on an island, through the prism of ecocriticism and trans corporeality in that nature is a key factor in the development of a group of children into madness. By using material ecocriticism and trans-corporeality, this paper shows how the environment will transform into a manifestation of memory and trauma. It assumes that the natural world is not a mere spectator but it is engaged in and mirrors the psychological and historical changes resulting due to the war. In this perspective, the paper demonstrates the deep symbiosis of human and environmental change and provides insight into the impact of post-conflict landscapes in the modern war-related literature.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Trans-Corporeality, Trauma, Psychological, War, Psychological conflict

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary method that examines the connection of literature with the environment in which people are increasingly concerned with ecological degradation. It develops beyond nature writing to other fields such as material ecocriticism, which studies the interaction of literature with such issues as pollution, climate change, and the consequences of human action on the planet. As a research topic, ecocriticism is an essential field of study that brings novel insights, considering a text through the prism of ecology, which leads to the opportunity to go into more analytical details and novel studies. It disputes the conventional meanings, paving the way to new understandings of human-nature relationships in literature. In this paper, the interplay of ecocriticism and psychoanalysis in *Noontide Toll* and *Funny Boy* presents a special perspective on how the psychological environment of the characters can be viewed as their personal traumas intertwine with environmental stories. War novels are drafted with a variety of perspectives, covering the deepest effects of war. These stories explore the human lives, the nature and consequences of war and the complex nature of politics surrounding it. They embrace sociological and cultural aspects and provide abundant grounds to ecocritical examination.

The purpose of this research paper is to show that ecocriticism can be used to indicate human. In the novels *Funny Boy* and *Noontide Toll*, emotions. The civil and ethnic wars of Sri Lanka have been the setting of these novels which portray the horrors of war not by direct description but by looking at the after effects and the events preceding the wars. They do it through their emphasis on the degradation and the chaos of nature, and this can be regarded as a metaphor of the psychological degradation that is induced in people. This metaphorical embodiment of environmental and human trauma gives a subtle look on the effects of war. The use of trans-corporeality by the authors is also explored in this paper as different objects and environments in *Funny Boy* and *Noontide Toll* are characters themselves. What this investigates is how the devastation of the post-war is projected through the personification of these things and how this reflected the effect on the human psyche.

Noontide Toll by Romesh Gunsekera also talks of the Sri Lankan post-war landscape through a character called Vasantha who is a taxi driver. His travels bring him to different places, where he meets a multiplicity of people. It is these interactions that show the ubiquity of war, ghostly tradition, not just to Vasantha but to Sri Lankans in general. His interactions disclose not just the haunting aftermath of the war on Vasantha, but also its endemic influence on the lives of the people he encounters. This travel in a war-ridden world landscape is the touching subject of memory, trauma, and the complicated experience of healing. The whole novel is divided into two distinct parts, North and South, with six chapters each and also counting prologue and an epilogue. In the story the North of Sri Lanka is being described as a landscape that is extensively devastated by war, making it struggle with its traumas and damages, whereas the South, though not unharmed, is inclined towards the story of hope and rebirth, in search of a new beginning. Jaffna Fort, the image of which is used in *Noontide Toll*, in the chapter Folly is far more than a historic landmark but a profundity of metaphor of the psychological and emotional traumas of Sri Lankan people in the post-war period. The fort, which is symbolized by the character Dilshan, a former fighter turned a tour guide, is an objectification of his traumatic history and ethical complications of survival. Dilshan recalls the event when a female combat

veteran also sought refuge in this Jaffna Fort during the war, she feeds her baby and Dilshan is left with no option but to shoot her. Dilshan recalls an awful experience, during which he had to perpetrate an unthinkable act, depicts the trauma-filled background and the redemption fight. His story is representative of the rest of the national scene, where historical locations of interest are overlaid with personal stories of sin, guilt, and forgiveness seeking. So, the ruined fort of Jaffna turns out to be the image of the destroyed psychological condition of Dilsan.

In chapter three, *Dead House* is used as an image of survival in the face of war. Through the story combines individual and group experiences of Mrs. Kleene, Mahen. trauma, which demonstrates how the house encompasses transcorporeality concerning the individual stories to the larger context of the effects of war. Here we are introduced to Mr. in this chapter, *Dead House*. When the house is laid waste to by a bomb, Ponampalam and his son visit their old house after the war. Mahen who does not know anything about the war in Sri Lanka is taught by the Mrs. Kleene who sought refuge in the house against the war. The house itself is turned into a symbol of survival, a representation of the spirit of people who took the fight directly. Conversely, Mahen as a representative of the audience obtains understanding of the trauma and the strength of a war veteran. Mr. Ponampalam, or Mrs. Kleene, unlike his father, has not personally had to undergo the horrors of the war. He is able to learn about the quiet miseries and lives of the people through the house and its surroundings, and this reflects the process of knowing and empathy of the readers. Towards the end of the chapter, Mahen displays a desire to remain in the house. Mr. Ponampalam, who is rubbing his face like a deserted place, says, I don't know, son, I don't know whether I can. I was taught here when I was a child, and I thought even then the place was haunted. Suppose you were living there now? Here, we can see that the house as a symbol of the destructive power of war has not gotten over the wounds, and neither has Mr. Ponampalam. Accordingly, the house represents a figure of psychological instability experienced by both Mr. Ponampalam and Sri Lanka as the long-term effects of the conflict and the process of recovery.

In the *Noontime Toll* by Ramesh Gunasekera, a number of factors, such as ecocriticism, highlight the persistence of the effects of war. Scars, physical and psychological, are the marks of the perpetual trauma which people are subjected to. One such heart wrenching incident is in the chapter Roadkill where a hotel employee Saraswati, who is a worker, displays a quick and firm reaction on a rat, which suggests that she had some violent past, presumably with the LTTE. The scar on her neck is a very real reminder of the physical and emotional upheaval that was experienced, which is a reflection of the internal, unhealed wounds of war. In the story Janus in *Noontide Toll*, discusses how societal healing and the personal trauma coexist in a post-war Sri Lanka. Manil, a former soldier whose leg has been amputated is a symbol representing the long-lasting psychological and physical scar of war. Although there has been an endeavor to bring a new wave of peace and restructure the country, it could be seen that Manil experience demonstrates that the psychological wounds of war are not completely healed in many people, and this will continue to go alongside societal development.

In *Noontide Toll* of Romesh Gunesekeera and *Funny Boy* of Shyam Selvadurai, the protagonists are seen as channels through which war and ethnic conflict trauma is experientially conveyed. Just like Arjie in *Funny boy* first meets the ethnic explores the

Tamil-Sinhalese conflict through the lens of the experiences of other people, Vasantha in *Noontide Toll* also has to traverse the postwar environment by way of his surrounding characters. Arjie is first informed about the ethnic conflict by the accounts of his relatives, especially Radha Aunty, who has a romantic relationship with a Sinhalese man against the social stigmas. Her love does not erase the traumatic experience of being beaten up by the rapists during a train ride, but this event by Radha Aunty vividly portrays the bloody aspect of the war. This event not merely forms her disillusionment but it also affects the way Arjie thinks about the Tamil- Sinhalese division. Likewise, the story of Vasantha in *Noontide Toll* is supplemented by the ones of other characters, including Sarath and Dilshan who are conveyor belts through which the intricacies of war and how it affects people and societies can be perceived. Vasantha, like Arjie, is a witness and decoder of the human toll of the conflict through their narration as well, which is the role of the story as a narrative way into the narrative.

The ethnic conflict between Tamil and Sinhalese is a background of *Funny Boy* by Shyam Selvadurai, a coming-of-age novel. Arjie, the main character, follows his way through life, maturing as a child, then as an adult, and the maturing of the character is reflected in the changing environment and the rising conflict on the ethnic front. Selvadurai is able to portray the aspect of innocence lost, and the nature of war as changing not only to the individual but to the community as well. It is not a story of Arjie and his changing perception alone but also the change in the society as a whole, and the horrors of ethnic warfare.

The transformation of the house where Archie and his family lived into a gloomy, ravaged ruin in *Funny Boy* reflects the psychological trauma of the family. The first account of the house with the antique warmth is contrasted with the last account of it that is bare and emptied by the war. The equivalent of this bodily destruction is the inner emotional and psychological damage caused by war. "By the time I had returned onto our road, I could already feel a few drops of rain on my arms. The road was deserted. From the top of it, I could see our house, its black walls and beams visible above the other houses. When I reached it, I pushed open the gate. Something was different from the last time I was there. The house looked even more bare, even more desolate than before. Then I realized what had happened and I stared at our house in shock. Everything that was not burnt had been stolen. Whatever had remained intact— furniture, uncharred beams, doors, windows, even the hinges and the drainpipes— had been taken. How naked the house appeared without its doors and windows, and how hollow and barren, with only scraps of paper and other debris in its rooms. I felt hot, angry tears begin to well up in me as I saw this final violation. Then, for the first time, I began to cry for our house. I sat on the veranda steps and wept for the loss of my home, for the loss of everything that I held to be precious. I tried to muffle the sound of my weeping, but my voice cried out loudly, as if it were the only weapon I had against those who had destroyed my life." This poignant play of *Funny Boy* portrays the intense feeling of loss that is experienced by Archie. The home which used to be so comfortable has been turned into an empty, ravaged thing, just like the tragedy of war. One can see the sorrow as Archie wishes to have lost not only the physical part, but also the symbolic destruction of his past and identity. His tears turn out to be a strong symbolic image of fighting against the forces which have smashed his world. The story in *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding takes place in an uninhabited island and it preconditions the speculative narrative, which predicts the third world war. Although based not on clear

historical events, the novel studies the psychological crisis brought by the environment. The island, which is symbolically called a scar on the face of the world turns into a microcosm of inner struggles of young people living there. At first, there is the exotic beauty of the island, cloaked in green trees and pink stones, as opposed to the increasing messiness. Children who were not aware of the survival instincts at the start of their play, it turns out that society and its principles are fragile when subjected to pressure. With the progression of the story, the harmless setting of the island in *Lord of the Flies* is remodeled in a darker manner, and it reflects the betrayal of the children into the realms of barbarism. At first, the island was presented as a paradise but it turns into a terrifying environment. Once innocent and playful the boys turn into savages, characterized by unkempt appearance, and unsanitary habits, into rituals of violence. Their transformation is the reminder of the frailty of civilization and the strong power of environment on human behavior. The fact Golding uses of their integration with the previously beautiful but now frightening environment being the symbol of the descent into a barbaric state also comes out as a tragic commentary of the nature of the darkness within the human soul.

Overall, the ecocriticism and trans corporeality investigation in the texts under consideration offers an in-depth understanding of the way of how the human and the environmental discourses merge. Themes of trauma, memory and physical environment serve as the determining factors and they exhibit the same interdependence of human experience and nature. Specifically, the incorporation of the *Lords of the Flies* by William Golding comes as a very important supplement to the story because it emphasizes the psychological and environmental decay that occurs when society lacks order. Such intertwining of the themes in the texts further leads to the need to acknowledge how the environment influences the personality of any man and as well as the reverse and thus in an attempt to strengthen the human-environment co-existence in the future.

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