The papers in this book, covering a wide range of themes such as history, globalisation, colonialism, trauma, ecology, cinema, science, post-humanism, feminisms, and alternative sexualities, explore the structures of power that bring about and contour the prevailing, stereotypical and hegemonic notions of identity, gender and culture. The focal point of these interactions is the perpetual dissemination of ideas which stimulate the knowledge system with its roots spread across diverse scholarly disciplines.

This collection will be of great interest to academicians, scholars, researchers, and students, as it explores various discourses in literature, cultural studies, literary theory and film studies.

Arshad Ahammad A. is Assistant Professor of English at M.S.M. College, Kayamkulam, India. His research interests include literary and cultural theory, narratology and historical fiction. He has completed doctoral research on the representation of religious history in historical novels and submitted his thesis to the University of Kerala. He is also the author of a number of journal articles, and acted as the guest editor of the December 2019 issue of *Littcrit*, an internationally acclaimed research journal from Kerala.

Nada Rajan is Assistant Professor of English at M.S.M College, Kayamkulam, India. She is currently pursuing her PhD on Prison Narratives at the University of Kerala. Her areas of interest include film studies, literary and cultural theory, media studies and life writing. She is the author of *Spotlight*, a book on film studies, and has published a number of research articles.

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Literature, Theory and the History of Ideas

Arshad Ahammad A. Nada Rajan

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AND THE

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An Updated Compendium

EDITED BY

Arshad Ahammad A.

Nada Rajan

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CHAPTER FIVE

PARADIGMS TO LITERATURE IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

Najila T. Y.

> CAESAR. The time of universal peace is near:
> Prove this a prosperous day, the three-nook'd world
> Shall bear the olive freely. (Shakespeare 4.6. 5-7)

Octavius, after his win over Antony in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1623), thus declares the arrival of a new world order sans borders, with ensuing peace. Antony had already extended the frontiers of his jurisdiction beyond Rome. For Cleopatra, he had assumed the image of an imperial sovereign straddling the oceans, with the whole world under his sway. Octavius defeats Antony at the Actium in his pursuit of the empire and in anticipation of a cosmopolitan world, which, he predicts, would engender peace and stability. The vision of Octavius, however, pre-empts the establishment of an inclusive and representative democratic world order, with civilisation and an organised way of life imposed by the expansion of Rome's authority alone. Such a conception imagines an empire as a federation of states with fluid borders that permit free trade and movement, while refraining from grappling with the question of authority and sovereignty. Authority is inevitably outside, with just the unification of space taken to be coterminous with social integration. This total exteriority of sovereignty makes such a polity precariously balanced.

Shakespeare rejects this notion of empire as a mere aggregation of space devoid of cultural/national affiliation, thereby creating an operational world polity. The issue of sovereignty aside, the mind is inevitably intertwined with the social and cultural environment it inhabits. This imminent situatedness of the human condition impedes the evolution of a moment that is truly global. Scarius, one of Antony's followers, voices this apprehension when he laments that they have kissed away kingdoms and provinces. In the play, Shakespeare forebodes the volatile

nature of such systems that does not address the inevitable sense of dislocation that emanates from cultural and territorial attachment. Philip Leonard understands globalisation to have begun with the conception of Shakespeare that

> . . . invokes a universal sovereignty that connects the people of the world, . . . (envisaging) an attachment that is not limited to ethnic affiliation or geographic proximity, an economy that does not impose restrictions on the movement of commodities, and a polity that does not root itself in the idea of national self-determination. (1)

This study attempts to theoretically explore the concept of globalisation in relation to national and cultural identities. It traces the conceptual underpinnings of the phenomenon of globalisation, with a focus on the paradoxical forces of integration and fragmentation. It will also examine the feasibility of innovative critical paradigms informed by globalisation to ascertain the thematic and narrative dimensions of literature in the globalised world and to decipher the manner in which the mediation between the national and the global in literary representations reflects the tensions of the national in an increasingly transnational, commodified world.

Thomas L. Friedman, in his eponymous book *The World is Flat* (2005)*,* perceives the world as flattened by globalising forces. The work traces the beginnings of globalisation in its first imperial version in 1492, when travel and trade was driven by the quest for resources and market. Globalisation, in its second phase, shrank the world even further in the 1800s when multinational companies accentuated the idea for market and labour (9). Technological advancements in connectivity and travel have rendered the world tiny with unimaginable speed in the third, most advanced stage (10). This topology is redolent of Ronald Robertson's definition of globalisation "as a concept (that) refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (8). The advent of globalisation implied the collapse of national borders, symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall——an event that Friedman identifies as one of the great levellers of the new compressed world (52). Friedman analyses the global ramifications in trade and commerce, with the wall breaking down the capitalist/communist divide. The demolition denotes the collapse of the physical along with the ideological and also alludes to the homogenisation of space—— geographical, cultural, social and virtual. Transnational travel and migration, characteristic of globalisation, accelerated the concomitant ideas of a global culture and citizenship. Globalisation, here, is a thesis of

integration that contends that space is continuous with the incidence of concerns that affect the world as exemplified by natural phenomenon such as climate change and human spheres of action, along the lines of global markets. These activities are not circumscribed by national borders.

Van Gogh's painting, *A Pair of Shoes,* had sparked much philosophical contemplation, with Heidegger envisaging the shoes as a metaphor for a connection to the earth. Heidegger imagines the shoes to be that of a peasant woman and its rugged materiality is ascribed to the peasant's lived life (qtd. in Cording 16). Philip Leonard cites Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* as reversing this connection and surpassing territoriality by the ubiquitous proliferation of brands that have ungrounded this association:

> You used to be able to tell a person's nationality by the face. Immigration ended that. Next you discerned nationality via the footwear. Globalization ended that. Those Finnish seal puppies, those German flounders – you don't see them much anymore. Only Nikes on Basque, on Dutch, on Siberian feet. (qtd. in Leonard 11)

Consumerism as a homogenising force of globalisation effects a cultural convergence that characterises modernity. Pieterse identifies an increased sensitivity to cultural differences salient in globalised contexts and analyses it through three paradigms:

> Cultural difference is enduring and it generates rivalry and conflict . . . global interconnectedness leads to increasing cultural convergence, as in the global sweep of consumerism. . . . The third position holds that what have been taking place are processes of mixing or hybridization across locations and identities. (4)

All these paradigms reflect the politics of multiculturalism with varying implications. With the cultural convergence brought about by consumerism in the second paradigm, there is a kind of assimilation into the dominant culture, while the first one forebodes a clash of civilisations with a reassertion of differences. It accounts for the fragmentation effectuated by culture sensitivity in the globalised scenario, while the latter narratives galvanise sanguine prospects of homogenisation, whether skewed or diffusive. Pieterse notes that the differences encountered at close quarters are not cultural alone any more, but national differences along with gender, ethnic or religious divergences (43).

According to Benedict Anderson, the nation is only an imagined community as members of the entity never come into contact with, or know, all the others. However, as opposed to a material connection, the attachment they share is territorialised and perpetuated in the mind (Anderson 6). The inward-looking nation distinguishes itself against the

total exteriority of the Other. The imagined communion of the nation-state affords a lasting appeal by virtue of its concern with immortality, a concern that nationality shares with religion rather than with political ideologies. Nationalism promised something more exalted than the mundane self; something that addresses the void precipitated by the decline of religion with the rise of enlightenment after the eighteenth century. Cenotaphs or tombs for unknown soldiers accord immortality to anonymous hundreds as opposed to arbitrary mortality, an inescapable part of human life (Anderson 50). They thus infuse an other-worldly exaltation to the materiality of the mundane world. The "vernacularizing thrust of capitalism" (Anderson 40) intensified national consciousness, with provincial newspapers firmly establishing the common interests of people as a collective. Shared news interests, sports teams and patriotic symbols, all strengthen the concept of natonalistic belonging.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri consider the nation-state as severing bonds with the holy as claimed by the divine right of monarchy, with the denouncing of national identity as an extension of the monarchic body (qtd. in Leonard 17). The nation-state acquires the possibility of sovereign self-governance inherent in the human condition without any transcendent sanction. The administrative functions of the state as expressions of the self, replaced transcendent command in the modern world. A sense of belonging attached to the newly-minted administrative structure; in other words, national identification heralded the genesis of the nation-state. The nation-state as territorialised emanates a situated identity with one form of transcendence replacing another, "a social and spiritual essence conceived around a common cultural heritage, consanguineous bond, a shared language and geographical proximity" (Leonard 18).

Territorialised, exclusionary, spiritual structures of belonging, however, seem to override homogenising narratives of globalisation, thereby resulting in the reassertion of nationalisms in new forms and contexts. The paradoxical resurgence of nationalism in response to globalisation could be a reactionary response to the 'flattening' out of differences, a defence against the stripping of shared rituals and cultures, the sediments of identity:

> ". . . a particularistic expression of popular discontent and resentment generated by globalizing tendencies. More specifically, it is the homogenizing, integrative and Westernizing tendencies of globalization that appear most threatening to national identities and cultures, and provoke nationalistic reassertion" (Sabanadze 31).

This resurgence of nationalist affiliations is in line with the contention of the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, who identifies in human nature the persistence of a longing for immediate belonging, as part of a small-scale intimate community, which could be in the form of family or corporations (qtd. in Devisch). The modern society, or the 'Gesellschaft', plays out to create an antithesis of the "original community", "the warm and cosy pre-modern community, the Gemeinschaft" (Devisch).

> According to this line of thinking, we live now in an anonymous society full of selfish individuals and the close communal ties are no more than memories. This leads not only to the disintegration of society, but also to violence, the decline of norms and values, and so forth. The only solution to fight disintegration is to turn back to the period where the communal ties were present, or to strive for a future community where the former ties are restored. (Devisch)

Literature after globalisation has engaged with the phenomenon at various levels. The immersive experience of globalisation transcends the economic, social and political, and engages with literature thematically as a reflection of the sociological encounters. The instantiation——of moments in the chronology of globalisation——in literature has also been accompanied by the global turn in the production and distribution of novels. The dismantling of globalisation's homogenising narrative of cultural identity in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) explores the ghettoisation of illegal migrants (T. Y. 145-154). Sunjeev Sahota's *The Year of the Runaways* (2015) humanises the issue of illegal migration with in-depth characterisation. Dislocations of migration produce a form of de-territorialised nationalism, where national loyalties are articulated outside the territorial boundaries of the nation-state (Tsuda 182).

The cosmopolitan novel demands the formulation of renewed ethical bases to respond to the concerns of abject poverty and exploitation reflected in the narratives. Alan McCluskey draws on the work of Emmanuel Levinas for the theoretical substructure of the ethical arguments pertinent to the cosmopolitan novel and, by extension, to the multicultural globalised world order (2). For Levinas, the Other is the means to access infinity. The self and the Other are separate and the subjectivity of the self is defined against the exteriority of the Other. The complete exteriority of the Other precludes any possibility of converging to form a whole. This Other, however, is the transcendent infinity that is external to the finite self. As such, bridging this gap between the self and the Other is the means of negotiating infinity. "The act of engaging with the Other in constructive dialogue and attempting to "bridge" the interstice

that lies between it and oneself therefore requires the individual to transcend the confines of selfhood" (qtd. in McCluskey 3). In *Materiality and the Modern Cosmopolitan Novel* (2015), McCluskey examines the stylistic devices employed by three writers⸻Caryl Phillips, J. M. Coetzee, and Philip Roth⸻to replicate the encounter with 'Otherness' (3).

The dominant theoretical frameworks in examining such novels have primarily drawn on Benedict Anderson's notion of the imagined community (6), emphasising the disjunctive nature of globalisation. Berthold Schoene's *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009), on the other hand, illustrates the arrival of a truly multicultural work with rhizomatic narrative structures that reflect the multicausal, multiperspectival reality of the globalised world. He locates in writers as diverse as Hari Kunzru, Kiran Desai, Rachel Cusk and Jon McGregor a similar interweaving of the global and the local, even while the settings of their novels are as disparate as villages in India or suburbs in England. The worldview that Schoene reveals in his study of the novels is one that is cosmopolitan in the sense of being an internally heterogenous "communal web of the world" (103).

James Annesley locates symbolism in contemporary fiction, which alludes to the leitmotifs of globalisation⸻"branding, idents, ambient advertising, viral communication, guerrilla marketing, spam and the penetration of sponsorship into sport and the arts" (2). Joel Bakan's *The Corporation* (2003) posits the corporation as a psychopathic institution as opposed to a healthy body, another casualty of consumerism as exemplified in Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* (2001; qtd. in Annesley 1)). Unrestrained by any ethical or legal constraints, the mercenary pursuits of the corporation⸻a Frankenstein begotten by globalisation⸻destroys lives, damages communities, and endangers the planet as a whole. "Employing the image of the unhealthy body to dramatise anxieties about consumer society, both *Fast Food Nation* and *Super Size Me* use the consumption of fast food as an emblem for a world bloated by greed and weighed down by materialism" (Annesley 1).

Globalisation, overlaid by technological advances of connectivity in communication and travel, creates an intricate matrix. It is at once deterritorialised and situated as exemplified by the transborder communication of geotagged information. The implications of the local have the potency to impel global impact. The integration through the global is fragmented by the reactionary national. Globalisation is, thus, a paradox of integration and fragmentation, the conjunctive and the disjunctive. As such, globalisation, spelling the end of the clash of civilisations and begetting a culture and society that is truly a

homogenised global entity in character, is far-fetched. The discussions of globalisation focus either on cultural uniformity or hybridisation driven by consumerism or examine the problematics of cultural fragmentation, rather than decipher the collapse of national cultures to precipitate the cosmopolitan world that the phenomenon was supposed to usher in.

The intersection of globalisation and literature, the former being primarily an economic and political phenomenon, has primarily been in a study of the production, circulation and consumption of literature as any other commodity in transnational markets. Literary studies need to engage with this elephant in the room espousing the phenomenon as legitimately and as naturally as modernism/postmodernism, Marxism or postcoloniality. The geopolitical structuring of postcoloniality served as an apt conceptual framework grounded in history to examine the trajectories of oppression and exploitation of colonialism. Remapped geopolitical frames, as discussed here, complement literary studies with a topical response to contemporary literature by engaging with globalisation thematically, ethically, symbolically, or as reflected in the narrative structure.

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