

For a New Form of Forest Living in Future Literature

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Abstract

Building on Arjun Appadurai's scheme of the imagined world of scapes, I propose an entry into his ethnoscape to foster a new form of forest living in literature. Appadurai's ethnoscape, just like his technoscape, can be physically present as different enterprises in different parts of the planet Earth but they all form one entity. Similarly, we may have forests in different parts of the world but they can be considered as one entity. I put forward the idea that in a new form of forest literature, we use acquired knowledge and experience but also devise new strategies. Thus, we will not repeat mistakes the Anthropocene has committed but use what it has achieved so far. In this paper, I refrain from using a messianic approach. Basing myself on the trend that 21st-century Literature is taking I suggest: first that Magic Realism be brought in; secondly, we retrieve Goddess Aranyani from the *Rig Veda* and the mood of experiencing the joys of expectancy from the Mullai forest found in Sangam literature; thirdly, as a new element, we weave in the principle of homeostasis in nature. As far as perspectives are concerned I recommend the cosmopolitan ones with strong undertones of the personal voice as used by the two recent Nobel Prize Winners for literature. I bring in Jojo Moyes's novel *The Giver of Stars* to support my plea for a new form of the forest living in literature.

Keywords: Appadurai, Aranyani, Sangam literature, homeostasis, Jojo Moyes

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The rainforest, she is solace ...

She brings me back to grounding

Shareefa Energy

My aim in this paper is to propose new sites of forest living within future literature. The concepts of island living and farm living are well-known, now I propose that in the future creative writers include forest living in their literary works. Through this strategy writers would be saying:

“Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is”

as the speaker in Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* does. They would thus arouse the consciousness of readers unaware of the climate crisis and appease those anxious about it. Innovation is meant to lead to progress. I suggest the forest space be first created, secondly, these sites be equipped with the achievements of the anthropocenes and thirdly creative writers may exploit and expand forest living according to their imagination. I put forward forest living not as a retreat into primitiveness but as a conscious choice built up to be made appropriate for future creative writing. I am taking forests as places of the highest form of cultural evolution. The

tradition of forest living can indeed be traced back to ancient times but it is a new form of forest living that is being taken up here. Buddhism favored forest living, Gautam Buddha being himself a forest dweller. From Abhayagiri it is learnt that the Theravada branch of Buddhism includes a forest tradition which can lead to a life of discipline and the attainment of enlightenment.

In Michael Ondaatje's novel *Anil's Ghost*, Anil Tissera, who had taken her brother's name during childhood, is an American citizen of Sri Lankan origin; she had responded to a call "for a forensic anthropologist to go to Sri Lanka." It had come from the Centre for Human Rights. Anil Tissera had been "chosen by the Geneva organization as the forensic specialist to be teamed" with a Sri Lankan archaeologist Sarath Diyasena, appointed by the government. Anil is on a seven-week project (12). Her task was to enquire into the frequent disappearance of some people in war-torn Sri Lanka. To help her Sarath takes her to meet his former teacher, the epigraphist Palipana, who has retreated into forest living, precisely in "the remaining structures of a forest monastery" (80). Palipana recommends Ananda, an artist, to Anil. Through this artist's production of his own wife's face and also through his own body posture while he is at work Anil gets all the information she needs to include in her own report at the end of her seven-week project. The civil war was raging. The narrator in Ondaatje's novel *Anil's Ghost* says:

Every side was killing and hiding the evidence. *Every side*. This is an unofficial war, no one wants to alienate the foreign powers. So, it's secret gangs and squads. Not like Central America. The government was not the only one doing the killing. You had, and still have, three camps of enemies-one in the north, two in the south-using weapons, propaganda, fear, sophisticated, posters, and censorship. Importing state-of-the-art weapons from the West or manufacturing homemade weapons. A couple of years ago people just started disappearing. (13)

Later Ondaatje's narrator takes the readers to Palipana who holds that the area is known as the Grove of Ascetics. While a meal is being prepared, Sarath has a rest and Anil walks to the well. Several times she draws cold water from the well and pours it on herself. The narrator adds: "She understood how wells could become sacred. They combined spare necessities and luxury. She would give away every earring she owned for an hour by a well. She repeated the mantra of gestures again and again (86). The emerging point is that the forest is an abode of peace contrasting with the hell-like reality where, as the hospital doors opened "a thousand bodies slid in as if caught in the nets of fishermen as if they had been mauled" (209).

The forest is also a store of knowledge. The kings of Sri Lanka from the 3rd to 15th century were described as Bodhisattvas. A Bodhisattva seeks an awakening. According to a research report from the education department of the University of Washington, it is said that the Bodhisattvas are "enlightened beings who have put off entering paradise in order to help others attain enlightenment."

Trees are sources of food, medicines, fuel, and building material; they prevent erosion and attract rain; they provide shelter, and fragrance and form a platform for spiritual exchange. Thus, it is unsurprising that trees are venerated and that 363 people were ready to face death to save the Khejeri tree in 1730 in a village thirty kilometers from Jodhpur, India. This action, later

through the Indian Chipko movement in the 1970s, became a world movement. Though it is believed that the Bishnois movement around the Khrjeri tree, was based on the preservation of the religious teachings of Guru Maharaj Jambajiz, their action could have been propelled by the fear of losing the economic support of their life also. Similarly, as Kurt Josef Waiter suggests, the Chipko movement is taken as based on economic and ecological principles.

My starting block in creating a setting for forest living in literature is Arjun Appadurai's ethnoscape (25). My point is that we must cast a net, as wide as possible, to englobe the planet. This move can be taken as part of the general tendency to strengthen our globality. It is clear that we can no longer be parochial and exoteric in matters related to climate crisis. The time has come for combined efforts to face a global threat. At the present moment, though there is an upsurge of ethnicity, nationalism, and right-wing movements, most countries are multicultural. Besides two or more international languages, be they English, Hindi, Chinese, Spanish, or French, have been established. Furthermore, human beings do have some common social elements, for example: the dress code, food items, the computer language, social media, cinema, interest in sports, and even space travel. So, I argue for the widest casting of the net that can lead to one global way of forest living with some reasonable allowances for personal or regional preferences.

Arjun Appadurai's Ethnoscape

Appadurai has already laid the foundation for a new world order consisting of five different imagined world landscapes. They are: first, the ethnoscaples in which displacement of people for different reasons are included. Secondly, the technoscaples in which technology that links multinational enterprises is included. Thirdly there are the financescaples in which global capital, currency markets, and stock exchanges are included. Fourthly there are the mediascaples in which electronic and the new media are included. Fifthly there are the ideoscaples in which official state ideologies and counter ones are included. Among Appadurai's imagined five world landscapes, it is his ethnoscaples that are of greatest interest for the setting up of a new form of forest living in literature. In his ethnoscape, people such as guest workers, tourists, holidaymakers, immigrants, and refugees move in; to this list the elders, now often referred to as seniors, that is people beyond the age of 65 or 70 depending on the local policy of the country in question may be added as they are people who will consume less and help in restoring nature.

All the people living in the imagined ethnoscape may be characters of the new forest living in literature. So, all the forests of the world could be taken as part of that ethnoscape. Today people move with their technology. In this way they can enter the forests and start constructive and modern ways of forest living; at the same time, they may keep on practicing their modes of belonging to their own particular ethnic group. A world effort in: first, not repeating mistakes committed by the Anthropocene; secondly in being realist

as far as retaining the positive achievements of humanity, and thirdly in seeking ways of reverting to some old ways of living that can heal our planet Earth to a certain degree. This world effort could be harnessed to create the forest scapes within the ethnoscape.

In Daniel Gustav Anderson's "Local coherence / global coherence," often, we are all provincial in our attitudes. We all develop strong feelings of admiration and even attachment to specific places in nature; these could be landscapes of our homeland or belonging to places we have visited; we carry these in our hearts. Daniel Gustav Anderson in his search for a methodology in Ecocriticism, refers to William Wordsworth's relationship with the Tintern Abbey landscape. He describes Wordsworth's attachment to the view of the Abbey as a "moment." He labels it as the "Tintern moment" and refers to it as a "local coherence." He argues that the "Tintern moment" can be felt in different spots and at different times. In post-colonial literature often writers, "bred" on English Romantic Poetry, make their narrators or speakers use such "Tintern moments" in their novels. For example, in R. K. Narayan's *The English Teacher* the protagonist recalls English romantic poetry while walking along a river or after his wife's death while meditating near the lake in the imagined Malgudi area in India. Thus, according to Anderson, local coherence could be turned into "global coherence." Instead of relating to a "singular unique and real place" I believe we could turn the place into space as argued by Anderson.

For a place to be turned into space in a new form of forest living in literature, my own view is that we can and should build on the achievements of the Anthropocene. I agree that they have abused nature and the consequences are overtaking all our plans to remedy. However, I still insist on hope and the human power to devise new means to redress the situation. If the Anthropocenes have the power to conquer space, they can also have the power to heal the wounds they have caused.

This can be done by creating an awareness-loaded literature. Writers from different parts of the World have adopted perspectives about Marxist Literature, Feminist Literature, and Postcolonial Literature. So, a world of new form of forest living in literature that focuses on the forest space of the planet can be set up with ways of proceeding to build up a new form of forest space.

This new scape of forest living can be built along some specific lines. The ethnoscape and the technoscape that can be merged for the achievements of humanity must not be discarded. The suggested guidelines are that:

- (a) A paperless society must be the objective.
- (b) Solar energy could be fully exploited.
- (c) The multiple uses of trees in human society could be explored. In fact, human beings use wood at, all the stages of their life.
- (d) Living in communion with animals and showing respect and empathy towards them should be the norm.
- (e) Recognition to animals for their help should be given; for example, the information that Indian ducks are being introduced in South African plantations to clear the soil of

snails and insects. This information was declared on Berlin News. Forests can be created.

An interesting fact is that trees can thrive in almost all the regions that the human being can inhabit, so there is a likelihood that wherever the human being resides, it will be possible to have forests, at times using modern technology and agricultural science. The Mulai forest, named after Jadav 'Mulai' Payeng on the banks of the Brahmaputra, near Kokilamukh in Jorhat, Assam, shows that forests can be successfully created. Mulai had worked on a 200-hectare land. After the assigned period he stayed back and continued planting trees. Today the place has become a reserve in which rhinoceros, the Bengal tigers, elephants, deer, and different types of birds have found refuge among many trees and bamboo.

It is interesting to note that in Tamil literature Mullai is the land of the forest. It is a rich landscape of lakes, sandalwood, millet, and wild bees. It is also part of the Sangam landscape and love poetry. With such a land economic viability is quite possible and it also creates an expectancy of joy. My point is that all this can be created in reality and can foster creative writing in the forest living literature.

The Power of Trees

Professor Qing Li, a medical doctor and clinical professor at the Nippon Medical School in Tokyo, is a staunch believer in Shinrin-yoku, the forest bathing concept. In 2004, along with other scientists he founded the Forest Therapy Study Group. According to him: "immersion in green spaces can help to boost our immune systems, lower blood pressure and heart rate, aid sleep, improve mood and energy levels, lift depression, sharpen cognitive processes, and increase anti-cancer protein production" (37).

His group carried out an eight-year study of over 100,000 women in the USA. Those living in mostly green areas had a twelve percent lower death rate than those living with the least vegetation (37). Professor Qui confirms that the healing effects of tree bathing work through our five senses. Richard Powers' *The Overstory* (2018) is a contemporary novel that can be taken as a recommended narrative within the forest literature. It highlights the multiple ways in which human beings get involved with trees. It focuses on the interests and perspectives of nine main characters who come from different fields of life but are all connected with trees.

Magical Realism as a Tool for Writers of Forest Literature

To reinforce the notion that literature is one of the authentic mirrors of society I suggest the weaving of Magical Realism in the fabric of forest literature. I favor Magical Realism as it seems to have been the method most acceptable in the postmodern era and it is chosen by some successful 21st century fiction writers. It has become a modern method in fiction writing. Though it was first used by Frantz Roz in 1925 it has become a characteristic trait of modern fiction. The Colombian Gabriel Garcia Marquez and other Latin American writers as well as the Chilean Isabel Allende used it and won popular acclaim. Magical Realism is different from the supernatural and myth; it strikes readers as being natural. Often it is based on reality. Realism is present and the characters' fulfilled desires or wishes are superimposed, so Magical Realism is created. This strategy has been used previously. But now whenever, we are faced with calamity,

as it happens quite often with climate crisis, we wish our needs and desires to be granted. When it happens, it does seem magical.

For some well-known examples of Magical Realism woven narratives, we can refer to the Norwegian author Jostein Gaarder's *Through a Glass, Darkly*, and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni uses several devices to build magic realism in her collection of short stories *Arranged Marriage*. In *Clothes*, from that collection, she uses a mirror, and in *A Perfect Life*, it is the sudden unexplained appearance and disappearance of a small boy named Krishna. Amitav Gosh uses a vision of a ship in the *Sea of Poppies*. In fact, the range of real objects that can be evocative of Magic is innumerable. One has only to let the imagination roam freely. Animals too are used. Neel Mukherji uses one in part III of *A State of Freedom*, in which a formerly brutalized bear comes to comfort its owner. The character had lost all his hard-earned money but it was earned while torturing the animal and turning it into a dancing bear. So, I recommend the use of modern technology and the weaving of Magical Realism to create a new form of Forest living in Future Literature.

However, to give further depth to the Forest living literature I also recommend a look at the cultural and literary past from a literary perspective. Forests have had great importance in Asian and Western myths and legends. As a result, it can be fruitfully used in conjunction with modern cultural life.

Aranyani, the Goddess of Forests

I refer to Aranyani, the goddess of the forests and the animals found in Hindu mythology. It is believed that when Parvati, the consort of Shiv, wished for the most beautiful girl bestowed with the nine divine gifts, it was Aranyani, coming from a tree, who appeared in front of her. It is also held that one of the most descriptive hymns of the *Rig Veda* is dedicated to Aranyani. Celebrations of Aranyani can foster creativity in multiple forms in literature.

Homeostasis

To increase the possibility of a flourishing population living in lush forests I bring in the element of homeostasis. It is held that plants thrive when they are planted rather close to one another. Human beings too learn from each other but more so when it comes to settling down in new lands. We used to argue that diasporans are rhizomatic, for they settle down in groups. Immigrants call other members of their community to join them. Now we see many diasporic novelists, from Anita Desai to Abdulrazak Gurnah show that immigrants behave like transplanted plants. They learn how to balance their ways of belonging and being, from earlier diasporans of their community, until they become adept at navigating their hybridity. **Antonio**

Cuadrado-Fernandez

Cuadrado-Fernandez in *Mind, Body and Environment in Indigenous Anglophone Writing: Poetic Intervention for a New Modernity* explores the interrelations of the mind, body, and environment. He recalls that: in the Aristotelian concept the world was a closed universe; in the 16th and 17th the reductive Cartesian dualism and Newtonian physics saw the world as a machine; for Marxists, it was a place for market capitalism. In addition, he says that Modernity presented non-Western world views as, backward (121-130). But at this point, I would like to

point out that T.S. Eliot at the end of *The Waste Land* did recommend a turn to Indian philosophy as some American transcendentalists like Ralf Waldo Emerson did. Today Postmodernism acknowledges the ‘Other’. Cuadrado-Fernandez in his endeavor to bridge the gap between human beings and nature, brings forth the Blend theory to describe the strategy used by readers when dealing with metaphors. He holds that they cross over from one field to another using an embodied perception to grasp a metaphorical meaning. In other words, we cross borders using our senses to understand the world around us. So, for Cuadrado-Fernandez, an embodiment takes place and he moves to an analysis of poems by Romaine Moreton and Sharif Elmusa, both indigenous poets, respectively from Australia and Palestine to support his argument.

He concludes that when we read and understand through our senses we can reach an Oneness with the land. He recommends reading indigenous writers for their texts contain time memorial knowledge and ways of relating to Nature. When indigenous writers from different parts of the world are made to collaborate, an interconnected globalization would take place. Appadurai’s ethnoscape would emerge propelling new forest living.

Jojo Moyes’s *The Giver of Stars*

To support my urge for forest living literature I bring in Jojo Moyes’s novel *The Giver of Stars* set in mid 1930s. It is based on a true story. In this novel, Alice an English girl, marries Bennett, an American mine owner in rural Kentucky, to escape from a stifling life in England. However, she soon finds that she is trapped in a loveless marriage and is dominated by an overbearing father-in-law. When she hears about Eleanor Roosevelt’s project of a travelling library she is ready to volunteer. She becomes a horseback riding librarian. She rides through mountainous regions four times a week. She endures racism, sexism, and all the drawbacks of rural life but in the end, she is happy about “changing people’s lives word by word” (345).

Hence, I believe that a new form of forest living can be created; its society can be represented in literature and it can infuse new blood in forest literature as well as help human beings to cope with the climate threat.

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