

# Postnational Literary Politics of Contemporary Anglophone Fiction of/from the East

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**Abstract:** With the popular idea of literary narrative undergoing a drastic change in recent times, contemporary Anglophone fiction aspires after a position in the still Eurocentric world literature beyond the evolving off-spins of the postcolonial, and concurrently meets the urgency of representation/self-representation by significantly subverting the longstanding East-West dichotomy as critiqued by Edward Said. Specifically, the post-9/11 geopolitical turmoil has seen a reflex proliferation of Anglophone fiction works by authors of/from the East that evolve a political stance of literary narratives. This literary politics is necessarily entangled with nagging glocal concerns while it also inherently confronts us-versus-them hegemonies both within domestic and across national frontiers. The dynamics of this politics owes mainly to the newly acquired postnational fluid identity of Anglophone fiction authors that offers a greater global consciousness — in abeyance of neo-nationalistic biases — about overarching power issues like post-political biopolitics, populism, neoliberal authoritarianism, historical amnesia etc. A corollary of this research is that the fiction critics of contemporary Anglophone works by authors of/from the East should look beyond exophonic ethicality and diasporic issues in order to appreciate how these authors, who cherish a postnational stance aiming at a wider readership in the West, contribute to contemporary world/global literature.

**Keywords:** Literary politics, Anglophone fiction, fictional representation, postnational, glocal concerns

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But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,  
When two strong men stand face to face, though they  
come from the ends of the earth!

—Rudyard Kipling, “The Ballad of East and West”,  
*Collected Poems*

“Until the lions have their own historians, the history of  
the hunt will always glorify the hunter.”

—Chinua Achebe, “The Art of Fiction”

A writer’s life is a highly vulnerable, almost naked activity.  
We don’t have to weep about that. The writer makes his  
choice and is stuck with it. But it is true to say that you are  
open to all the winds, some of them icy indeed. You are out

## 1. Introduction: Epistemic Contingencies of Fiction in Contemporary Times

The epigraphs, quoted from authors of both the East and the West, are strategically directed towards a new understanding of contemporary Anglophone fiction works that are produced in response to the urgency of postmillennial crises consequential upon the 2008 financial collapse and the prevalence of neo-liberal politics, the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and Western world’s so-called War on Terror led by the USA, climate catastrophes, recent Westward migration and mobility, grasp of globalisation, the politico-cultural weaponizing of populism, post-Brexit spectra, which according to Baumbach and Neumann, “have had, and continue to have, a deep impact on literary cultures across the Anglophone world” (3), and, of course, ongoing

on your own, out on a limb. You find no shelter, no protection — unless you lie — in which case of course you have constructed your own protection and, it could be argued, become a politician.

—Harold Pinter, “Art, Truth, and Politics,” Nobel Lecture

“We’re in a new world now. No one knows where they belong any more, neither humans nor animals.”

—Amitav Ghosh, *Gun Island*

pandemic (or post-pandemic?) politics/geopolitics<sup>i</sup>. Baumbach and Neumann attribute the “radically new contexts and predicaments for narratives” since the turn of the century to concomitant “[p]ervasive cultural, political, and technological changes. In this perplexing nexus of phenomena, as Eric Walberg’s *Postmodern Imperialism Geopolitics and the Great Games* reveals it, the non-West has often been rendered a locus of geopolitical tensions over several decades while most of the Eastern sovereigns still grapple with the economic, political and cultural legacies of Western colonialism and interventions of neo-imperialism<sup>ii</sup>. This glocal interlacing of human predicaments calls for the promotion of a unitary humanism nourished by divergent perspectives. Within territorialized expanses, the rise of neo-fascism and the perpetuation of illiberal suppressive governance in regions like Middle East and countries like India have also led to fragmentations and resurgences, often drawing on opposing interpretations of history. But given

that the case with the manufacturing of post-truth perspectives is often critically broached by scholars and media vigilantes in the West<sup>iii</sup>, shouldn't we logically apprehend that the East is no less prone to post-truth era's machinations at the helm of populist and hegemonic governments that need to be counterpoised by the exponents of culture, e.g., novelists? Hence, Anglophone fiction authors of/from the East are also faced with the questions of representation/self-representation of truth against its indeterminate simulations by power while because of their circumstances precipitated by power — at least in the Foucauldian underpinning of discourse control systems, and because of their ideological stances in the Chomskian definition of an intellectual, these authors find themselves in a position beyond or above national identities that more than before require citizens to conform to populist or authoritarian versions of history and truths. Sometimes their fiction develops around a personal-to-political thread. But above all, these authors materialize their fiction on two fronts: (1) dissension with power, and (2) cosmopolitan imaginings. Both the fronts distinctively and/or correlatively exhibit a postnational stance of narrativization that not only arises from but also results in an ideological dissociation with prevailing nationalist/neo-nationalist machinations in their home and host countries. Their postnationality takes on a more disinterested compliance with time and space than Rushdie's realization — contrary to the opening sentence of L.P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between*: "The past is foreign country" — that the present is rather "foreign, and that the past is home albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time" ("Imaginary Homelands," 9).

For Anglophone authors, it is the ongoing clash of truths, rather than the clash of civilizations, where we find the dynamics of contemporary fiction. And this clash occurs both within national geographic boundaries and globalized international transactions that often pose glocal concerns. Simultaneously, the ubiquity of neoliberalism as "the socio-cultural dominant of our contemporary moment" beyond its "entrepreneurial, profit-maximizing, cost-benefit rationalization" of human life (Huehls, "Preface" ix, *Italic* original) urges that Anglophone fiction authors align their thoughts with the burgeoning "global literature" that has its roots in the conglomerate of themes under postcolonial literary studies (De Loughry 2; Gunn 18; O'Brien and Szeman 605). And such politico-cultural entanglements have already been figured out (Walonen 12). However, as far as representation is the first concern of Anglophone novelists, the post-truth variants of the present times pop up as the bricks of demarcation fabricated by power politics.

In this age of untruth and disinformation, what cannot be edited or altered once it reaches its culmination at the hands of audience is a published fiction work. There are pro-truth exponents whom Rushdie calls "the defenders of the real" against disinformation with an ideological humanistic view to reaching at a blissful consensus" of the past times by constructing "between the writer and the reader, an understanding about what is real" (*ibid*). Chorused with the thoughts of Rushdie who has also "challenged the novel's traditional relation to nationhood and identity" (Morrison 5) are Roy's musings on the role of fiction and its writer in the

time of fake news that she delivered as the 2020 Clark Lecture at Trinity College, Cambridge. In this lecture recently anthologized in *Azadi*, Roy aligns both her *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* with her heart-wrenching concerns about the wrongs her country is doing, especially the ongoing pogroms<sup>iv</sup> against minority Muslims across the mainland and Kashmir. Her politics evidently negates Huehls's allegation of contemporary for their overt reluctance "to critique the injustice and inequality" in contemporary human scene ("Preface", x). In fact, the postnational authorial stance as considered in this research entails a concern for humanity more than ever.

## 2. Anglophone Authors' Postnational Stance: An Ontological Analysis

Postnationalism mainly being an embryonic political concept requires a distinct space of cultural theorization to justify the author's willful suspension of national identity for the sake of addressing shared glocal concerns in writing. Initially capitalizing on Habermas' transformational theory of 'postnational constellation' for "changed conditions" (81) in the European context, Balibar's idea of a postnational amalgamation beyond liberationist promises for citizenship (10) and James's "new possibilities" in postnationalism (292), we can proceed that among the changing configurations of glocally acclaimed Anglophone fiction authors' identities under globalized conditions, their postnational positionality comes out to be the most useful to our contextual reading of their fiction with a parallel awareness of the politics of their writing from both intellectual and ideological perspectives. These varied theoretical approaches to postnationalism cogently help position instrumental contemporary Anglophone fiction authors out of the trite cultural categories — diaspora, hybridity, transnationalism, multiculturalism, and even cosmopolitanism in a more timely status comprehensive of all or most of these definitions, because their fiction works reveal a kind of politics of representation/self-representation that only a feeling of timely urgency induces. In fact, the study of Anglophone literatures in today's freer "mobility of culture" engenders "processes of hybridization and transculturation" and materializes upon "a necessary and growing scepticism with regard to national or regional concepts of literature" as the cases of various canonized authors imply (Middeke, et al. 168). Besides, in their opinion pieces and interviews, which function as paratexts, the contemporary Anglophone fiction authors exhibit an intellectual and ideological activism in the face of diverse glocal issues like geopolitics (both critical and popular), post-political biopolitics, populism, neoliberal authoritarianism, historical amnesia etc. Fiction, says Roy, registers all these phenomena as "a universe of infinite complexity" ("The Graveyard Talks Back," 168). Some manifestations of this activism can be pointed out by the range of Khalid Hosseini's fiction and public writings, both Mohsin Hamid's as well as Aravind Adiga's local-to-global interface of tensions, Arab and Turkish women authors' revealing fiction works (Elif Shafak, in particular), and, of course, Arundhati Roy's treatment of what is/has been suppressed by power and media.

To encapsulate the genesis of an authorial postnational identity — beyond postcolonial lingua-cultural conceptualizations, we have to prize the Anglophone author's ideological position vis-à-vis power and its multimodal practices. This position politicizes writing not to the empire but to the world and undermines neo-nationalist majoritarianism and neo-fascist developments, we can find in Arundhati Roy's case. From Hernández i Martí's perspective on deterritorialized glocal transactions, this postnationality is culturally and politically conditioned by a fluidity that can be exemplified by the American born British-Libyan writer Hisham Matar's fiction politics. His roving and fluid attachments to places like Libya, Nairobi, Cairo, Rome, London, Paris, and Manhattan lead him back to his ancestral place, Libya, even though in answer to the question "Where are you from?", he "unfazed and free of the usual agitation, would casually reply, "New York" (Matar 5). A fluidity of identity is recorded, in a more paradoxical vibe, in Rabih Alameddine's 2001 novel *I, the Divine*, where Sarah, born to a Lebanese father and an American mother, ponders her puzzling identity: "Whenever she is in Beirut, home is New York. Whenever she is in New York, home is Beirut. Home is never where she is, but where she is not" (99). The Iranian-American writer and professor of English literature Azar Nafisi - now an exile in the USA - wrote *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (2003) to recount her personal observations of the post-revolution totalitarian theocracy of Iran. In the Epilogue, she declares: "I left Iran, but Iran did not leave me" (Nafisi 341). Clearly Nafisi, who seems to think Western literature to be "redemptive and productive of the kinds of intellectual and physical freedoms denied to Iranian women" (Blumenthal 253), contravenes the collective politico-cultural aspirations of her nationality in the common fashion of most diasporic authors who, in Blumenthal's words, "traverse national boundaries, but also ideological boundaries" while "[t]heir texts uncover new ideological homelands, or intellectual and oral regions in which they locate evolving political, theological, and social beliefs" (Blumenthal 252). These symmetrical yet ideologically distinct viable instances of looking back at native countries from a critical perspective, as also corroborated by Janice Ho's research, is shared by a great number of Anglophonic fiction authors of/from the East in one way or another.

### 3. East-West Discourse Leverage through Postnational Stance: Orientalism in Recession

Referring to Rosendahl Thomsen's analysis of how the locally and globally oriented Anglophone writers get canonized in the ever expanding contours of world literature, we can logically assert that postnational authorial stance has come to substantially dilute Orientalism as the world understands it from Said's groundbreaking discovery as "a cultural and a political fact" (*Orientalism* 13) which resurfaces in the sphere of global politico-cultural transactions (Klein; Sa'di; Metres). Again if we take 9/11, which marks the big bang of "a new history" for humanity (Redfield 17), as an epicenter of new literary developments according to R.B., the East with Muslims in particular has been under a grueling test to speak out its equal measure of empathy and cooperation in facing the realities that the West

with the US authors and media personalities in particular have addressed in their own fashions. Däwes's estimation — in her 2011 book *Ground Zero Fiction* — of 231 novels in print from around the world 162 coming from U.S.-American novelists (6) testifies to the urgency of Eastern author's participation in what Franklin calls "a distinct genre, despite their diversity". Surprisingly it has also paved the way for the proliferation of Anglophone Arab Literature exercising unprecedented narrative courage (Maleh 1; Hout 11; Gana 2).

The 2019 Booker-shortlisted British-Turkish novelist Elif Shafak, now in self-imposed exile for fear of arrest and prosecution and author of seventeen books including eleven novels, claims to have felt this urgency quite early in life as she avows in her speech on Ted that through writing fiction has she has been able to trespass cultural walls ("The politics of fiction") that echoes Maya Angelou's acknowledged aim of writing "to get a message across." Shafak believes in the potential of storytelling as an anathema to the racial and xenophobic barriers to dialogue and understanding that eliminate the notion of "The Other" ("A Conversation with Elif Shafak"). Referring to the dangers of revealing what has so far been suppressed with questions of ethics, Shafak, in an interview with Adams, declares her confidence in writing: "There is a thin line between fact and fiction for us." As her opinions indicate, Shafak tends to eliminate the long-cherished distinction between the roles of history, media and literature in shaping human consciousness about reality. Earlier in the same year, in the interview with Vikas S. Shah, she terms her choice of writing as "an existential need" ("A Conversation with Elif Shafak"). Born in France and raised in Turkey, she chose her postnational identity over a sense of belonging to her motherland and vowed to partake in the "battlefield" of culture which, she thinks, should have been "the strongest bridge humanity has built to connect with each other across all borders" (ibid).

This "battlefield" of culture has much to do with today's geopolitics — both in its critical form encompassing history and in its popular mode comprising ahistorical representation of ongoing ideological rows, diplomatic or military conflicts and glocal crises. For geopolitical participation to fructify, the East cannot help cultural representation in world literature because "an effective role and presence in the world today needs to be presented in the context of world literature," says Franke (113) while Gálik regards the postmillennial rise of world literature as "a humanistic response to the increasingly intense racial, class, and cultural conflicts we witness in the world today" (158).

In her appreciation of Asian-Anglophone fiction's repudiation of the tag "inscrutable Oriental" concocted by the West, as in the works of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Jack Kerouac, and Gary Snyder, that "persists in contemporary literary fiction", Hu pins down the employment of narrative voices to overturn enduring stereotypes of the Asian personality in the West. The West as the open-hearted consumer of the East's literary production is made evident by Ahmad who claims the self-sufficiency of Anglophonic Indian (or Indian English) authors in terms of "a foreign

audience” even if there is literally no Indian reader of their works in English.

Just as Moore finds the “zeitgeist of the twenty-first century” as “understandably infused with a sense of urgency” (1), this research points to the urgency of fiction and literary politics of the East, exerting a positivist outlook on the production of Anglophone fiction whose readership mainly constitutes the West and in doing so, it precludes accusatory critics like Fitzpatrick who has figured out ‘New Orientalism’ in the fiction works of contemporary Muslim authors or Rachel Blumenthal who thinks the diasporic Muslim authors, through their texts, actually search for “an ideological homeland” in the West by making a “strategic use of the Western literary canon” (252). With a bit of contradiction, this research refers to the proponents of postnational intellectuality. “We need to think ourselves beyond the nation,” declared Appadurai as he opened his 1993 essay “Patriotism and Its Futures” in which he mentions “postnational formations” to account for the increasing number of mobile populations comprising refugees, transnational intellectuals, scientists, and so on. Appadurai’s view disconnects diasporic people on the ground that they are no longer defined by conventionally held spatial boundary and territorial sovereignty (Appadurai 411–429). Consistent with Appadurai’s observation, Hassan lists migration, exile, naturalization, denaturalization, citizenship laws, and mixed marriages that “make it very difficult in some cases to determine the nationality of authors or the parameters of a national canon” (9-10). In this increasingly globalised world, Schoene ponders in his book *The Cosmopolitan Novel* after the fashion of Benedict Anderson, whether the contemporary novel “may already have begun to adapt and renew itself by imagining the world instead of the nation” (12). Morrison thinks contemporary fiction works “locate themselves in the interstices – the spaces between national cultures, genders and histories” (7). De Loughry, in his edited work titled *The Global Novel and Capitalism in Crisis*, identifies “a critical transition from postcolonial concerns and theories to world-systemic ones” with his central argument that “this shift is due to the urgency and global scope of contemporary economic and ecological crises that exceed national or postcolonial paradigms” (11).

An empirical understanding of the East-West synergies with “spiritual detachment and generosity necessary for true vision,” as Said suggests in his 1978 critical masterpiece (259), is manifest in this fiction’s cosmopolitan perspectives on glocal issues. The glocalised broader practice of rethinking and representation in fiction is, in Menon’s term, a “postnational politics ‘over’ the nation” (329) that occurs across national borders on a counter-hegemonic agenda. But discoursing across national borders to reach audiences of other nationalities does not violate national exclusivity, as postnational and national share an inextricable coexistence (Nunn 10; Wanning 108).

#### **4. Towards a Postnational Narratology with Political Implications:**

Mohsin Hamid (2015), the 2007 Booker winner for his celebrated transnational novel *The Reluctant*

*Fundamentalist*, deductively professes the inextricability of the fictionist’s politics: in his 2015 write-up: “Making up stories is an inherently political act.” Arundhati Roy, perhaps the most humane exponent of truth in the East now for her fiction and non-fiction combined, believes “fiction is uniquely positioned” to challenge fascism because it “has the capaciousness, the freedom and latitude, to hold out a universe of infinite complexity.” But she has “broken a boundary between fiction and nonfiction, collapsing the finery of literature with the unmoored rage of protest”, says Qureshi in his opinion piece. As Lewis documents, Roy professes both her fiction and nonfiction are “political” while the former is “a universe”, the latter comes forth as “an argument.” In this talk, she unequivocally underlines the authorial philosophy in “being political” and being “unpopular” at the expense of siding with the pro-fascist majority.

Therefore, referring back to the two fronts mentioned in this paper’s Introduction section, if ever a narratology of contemporary Anglophone fiction emerges, it should focus on how narrativized dissents constitute a politics of revival against dominant hegemonies, and also on cosmopolitan imaginings in fiction attempt to construct a world of shared glocal concerns. Firstly, we find authors from countries like India and regions like the Middle English whose narratives counterpoise post-truth era’s populism exercised by the governments or majoritarian quarters of their native countries, and, of course, resisting historical amnesia which, according to Chomsky (2009), both “undermines moral and intellectual integrity” and “lays the groundwork for crimes that still lie ahead.” This activity is channelized along the local-to-global literary ambassadorship. In defining the place of literature in the postnational era, Saldaña stresses its capacity to “reflect dialectical tensions between the universal and the local, the self and the other” as “literature has recovered much of the freedom that it had been deprived of by nationalist tendencies in the past” (306). Contemporary Anglophone fiction of this front responds “symbiotically with social and political movements” (Bentley 2). And secondly, there are hundreds of predominantly Anglophone authors as migrants and exiles whose fiction counteracts the Orientalist, xenophobic Euro-American perceptions about the East that have intensified multifariously following the 9/11 and stray terrorist attacks in several Western countries.

Now referring to the first front of Eastern authors, the postmillennial trend of literary representation has spurred a good many of them, who more often than not find themselves in disagreement with their populist or hegemonic or racist governments, to redirect fiction towards an inside-out politics of reconsidering national configuration. In this new millennium when “nations and nationalism persevere” against scholars’ persistent declarations of “their demise” (Saw 155), these authors increasingly engage themselves in the politics of fictionalizing what has trapped their peoples in the haze of postpolitical biopolitics in which, says the contemporary Slovenian philosopher Žižek, “the multiple dismotifs” that “merely administer and regulate individual bare life” and turn people into *homo sacer* and that, Žižek quoting Agamben, “in no way opposes the hegemonic

dismotifs but rather zealously executes all their [neo-normal democratic government's] injunctions controlling "the intimate details of his or her life" even where he or she is dubbed "a potential terrorist" (*Living in the End Times*, 417-418). Žižek's earlier understanding of contemporary glocal politics makes us convinced of why fiction — and other art forms too — should be taken as a potential stimulus of consciousness: "Today's predominant mode of politics is *post-political bio-politics*" devoid of "old ideological struggles" and rather focusing on "expert management and administration" under which "liberal tolerance towards others, the respect of otherness and openness towards it, is counterpointed by an obsessive fear of harassment" (*Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, 40-41). This category's most exponential author of the East must be Arundhati Roy who is constantly under threats from both the government and Hindu supremacists (Dasgupta; Subramanian). Dubbed "the conscience of India" by Mishra in Time's 2014 list of 100 most influential people, Roy asserts her "right to state" her "opinions and beliefs" (*My Seditious Heart*, 159). Her imperiled state is characteristic of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o metaphorical depiction of the author as the holder of the *pen* in "every absolutist state" in perpetual confrontation with "the holder of the *gun*" (9-10, *Italics* original).

Again synchronically, Roy's position is a reminder of Orwell's 1948 essay "Writers and Leviathan" in which he argues that in "an age of State control" writers must fulfill the imagination's need to resist "invasion" by politics that turns out to be a monstrous entity like Leviathan but in its compromised form (407-8). Her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) with its kaleidoscope onto Delhi and Kashmir, covers the past 20 or so years of Indian history, for the world to see what lies under the veneer of power and development, comes as a continuation of her subaltern saga, this time out of her sheer apprehensions of minority populaces in India. The Indo-Australian Aravind Adiga's Booker nominated debut novel, *The White Tiger* (2008) validates Roy's tension as "its unflattering portrait of India as a society racked by corruption and servitude has caused a storm in his homeland" (Jeffries) where people "lambasted it as a Western conspiracy." In interview with Lee Thomas, Adiga resents that his acerbic inside-out representation of social discrimination and exploitation has rendered him "a complete misfit" in India. But Adiga was preceded by Hamid whom the canonized Indian English novelist Anita Desai (2000) identifies, while reviewing his debut *Moth Smoke*, as the harbinger of a new era (*zamana*) of representational prose fiction for his unprecedented insight into exotic human experience. In the same trend we have the young Bangladeshi novelist Shazia Omar's debut *Like a Diamond in the Sky* (2009) that brings out the sentiment of a common Bangladeshi about corruption and deception by politicians from the moralist drug-addict Deen's perspective. Omar's phenomenological experimentation with fact-in-fiction originates from her a noble mission to optimistically dramatize addictions, mental illness, depression — all those taboo topics in the context of Bangladesh — so that "young people currently hooked on drugs will read this book and realize how dangerous their so-called-party scene is for their health and well-being" (Omar).

These authors and many others in their line of belief have resorted to Anglophone fiction for the representation of hitherto suppressed local issues to the global audience for arbitration. Their postnationalistic Anglophony takes on the condition of the lover who, even after being abandoned by the loved one, wields a sway over his/her soul through a representational symbol. The process works somewhat like the symbolic implications in the tattoos that the anti-conventionalist Zeliha, in Elif Shafak's 2007 novel *The Bastard of Istanbul*, etches in her parlor: "To strengthen vis-à-vis your antagonist you had to accept, welcome, and then transform it" — the whole process eventually empowering the abandoned lover. (73)

Postnationality reverses power relationships as the Anglophone author is entitled to discourse production and representation while hegemonic government is bent upon "manufacturing consent", to borrow Herman and Chomsky's 1988 groundbreaking title. Here the Indian novelist Roy's conceited declaration: "I don't want to become an interpreter of the east to *the* west" does not work its way well into the existing global literary reality involving the East. After all, the fiction works of the first stream function as a critic of power of which John Marx makes a comparative analysis: "many turn-of-the-twentieth-century novels critiqued imperial rule" and "many more recent novels critique neoliberal authority" (1). In his view, the former took "an administrative turn" to "forecast a world after European imperialism by identifying problems with empire's administrative strategies and by laying the conceptual foundation necessary to generate new schemes" while the latter, i.e., contemporary novels, "have inherited that legacy and continue to criticize existing policies in order to formulate best practices on a global scale" (ibid).

As for the second front of literary politics which is more expansive and dynamic now, Amitav Ghosh's latest novel *Gun Island* comes to the fore with its transnational connectivity of overshadowing myth, nagging climate concerns and Europe's politicized refugee crises. In an interview with Ghoshal, Ghosh admits that this novel "arose out of a sense of urgency" and that it directs the reader to "the world that we live in now." A definition of this world comes from the novel's high-spirited character Giacinta Schiavon, a world-renowned scholar and historian from Venice: "[T]he world of today presents all the symptoms of demonic possession," (*Gun Island*, 216) she tells Dinanath Dutta, the focalizing narrator, towards the end of the book. A sequel to his 2004 novel, *The Hungry Tide*, *Gun Island* takes Ghosh beyond national ties for the exploration of how myths interweaves itself miraculously into the threads of life across continents, cultures, and even across centuries until it converges on the Blue Boat of multinational refugees that has something to say "to the world's conscience" (GI, 199) for "an awakening happening around the world" at a moment "when everything changes ..." (GI, 284). The refugee boat "has become a symbol of everything that's going wrong with the world — inequality, climate change, capitalism, corruption, the arms-trade, the oil industry" (GI, 199) in Palash's view while the first-person narrator of the novel, Dinanath Datta aka Dinu recounts that the boat "represented the overturning of a centuries-old project that had been

essential to the shaping of Europe” (GI, 279). It is not surprising that Marx urges critics to “interpret English-language fiction from around the globe as a resource for understanding what it takes to administer global affairs” (10). Earlier, Hosseini’s humanistic representation of today’s hotly debated dislocation, migration and refugee crisis through his oeuvre corroborates the force of fiction works that instill the plights of stereotypes into the cognizance of Euro-American hosts and adversaries when the world really needs to know about refugee experience. Appointed a UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador in 2006, Hosseini has universalized all his personal experience, in minute details, of escaping the valley of torture and death to a world of light and hope, that is, the USA – the country that entitles him to vouch for millions of his likes seeking asylum in the West. Closely following his footprints are the Pulitzer winning Vietnamese-American novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen (*The Sympathizer* and *The Refugees*), the Afghan-born American journo-novelist Atia Abawi (*A Land Of Permanent Goodbyes*), Arab-born Canadian Sharon Bala (*The Boat People*), the Sudanese-Scott novelist Leila Aboulela (*Minaret*), Iranian-American Dina Nayeri (*The Ungrateful Refugee*). And more recently, of course, Aravind Adiga’s novel *Amnesty* (2020) joins the wider canvass of migration and refugee crises depicted by the fiction works of Khalid Hosseini’s oeuvre and Mohsin Hamid’s timely *Exit West* (2017). The production and reception of all these Anglophone fiction works over the two decades or more are amenable to the fluid postnational positionality of the authors of/from the East.

## 5. Conclusion

The optimism that we should acknowledge for the postmillennial proliferation of Anglophone fiction by authors of/from the East springs from the sway literature can have over people — a reference can be made to the dynamics of literary in USA-USSR bipolar politics spanning the late 1930s through the 1940s to the end of the Cold War, as White documents in his 2019 compendious history book. The urgency of representation/self-representation by the East being no less intense today, Anglophone authors of/from this region have formulated a literary politics with a postnational stance that not only obviates cultural imperialism’s mission, quoting Said, “to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging” (*Culture and Imperialism*, xiii) but also addresses glocal issues – both of which constitute an exceptional enterprise worthy of acclamation in the sphere of world literature that is “poised between the local and the global, the cosmopolitan ideal of universality and the national basis of literary and cultural activities” (Longxi 182). As the East contributes to what Mufti calls “the transformation of literature into a world-encompassing reality” (x), it has also become an equal partaker of the revitalization project of world literature at a time “when an expressed desire for joint humanity appears all the more urgent because of its fading possibility” (Tsu 161). With political implications in focus, this research appreciates the new legacy of Anglophone fiction which is “partially directed at an English-speaking readership located elsewhere” (Gopal 22). This paper also encourages further research endeavours on the multimodal dynamism of the

East’s Anglophone literary politics — probing into individual or multiple authors and their fiction works.

## 6. Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> In the recent growth of anticipatory analyses converging on an unprecedented overhauling of domestic politics and geopolitics (Nye; Ghani), there are fears that “the pandemic has largely augmented existing trends [of government surveillance], leading to “democratic erosion” and unbound “autocratization” (Greitens 1; Chang; Huang) because “this new era of surveillance,” Munro and Cave observe, has already shown its “potential to permanently shift power from citizens to the state and, in doing so, entrench global trends towards a more illiberal world.” Among various implications of this new order is “the rise of racial discrimination in the two largest democracies of the world—the United States and India,” as Kipgen explains it. In this globalised backdrop, Bohjalian envisions post-pandemic literature after the post-9/11 boom of fiction works by Western and Eastern authors, while there is a potential for Anglophone authors to partake in this new proliferation (Spinney; Ghosh)

<sup>ii</sup> See also: Chandra Chari, editor. *War, Peace and Hegemony in a Globalized World The changing balance of power in the twenty-first century*, UK and USA: Routledge, 2008.

<sup>iii</sup> The proliferation of post-truth in various twists of facts and its impact on popular imaginations over political and economic, and more recently, pandemic issues are given detailed analyses by many op-ed writers. See, for example, the writings of Maheshwari 2016, Kelly 2016, Gray 2017, Malik 2017, Anderson and Rainie 2017, Graham 2019, Starbird 2020, Pennycook and Rand 2020, and Klintman 2020.

<sup>iv</sup> Unfortunately yet surprisingly Roy’s so far politically unheeded concern about pogroms against Muslim minority has materialized to global attention on the occasion of President Donald Trump’s visit to Delhi. In her opinion piece “What Happened in Delhi Was a Pogrom,” Kamdar writes: “In all these cases, mobs targeting a single religious group were allowed to run riot, unchecked by police. This is the definition of a program.”

<sup>v</sup> See: Agamben, Giorgio. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford: Stanford University Press. Print.

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