POSTCOLONIAL
AND
TRANSNATIONAL
FEMINISMS

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Posthumanism, Cyberculture & Postcolonialism in Manjula Padmanabhan's «Harvest»

Abstract

Cyberculture's influence in our lives and its possible threat to human physical identity is well documented in Harvest. American Virgil, posing as Ginni, seduces and controls the Prakash family. He uses gadgets like the "Contact Module" or the "Video Couch" to disperse identity through "cybernetic circuits". Both the receiver and the donor assume new identities in the digital arena. Harvest highlights important questions about "digitization" of identities and separation from the physical form. Can a body "vacated" of its owner be claimed by another? How is identity determined if cyberspace can disguise one's gender, class or race to divest them of their unique markers? Problematization of identity in cyberspace is pivotal to the discourse of postcolonialism. For marginalized bodies identity politics and suffering is rooted in the physical body. In *Harvest*, first world exploits the third world via wireless communication and unlimited money. Jaya sustains a postcolonial resistance to such capitalist domination. She claims her body, evocative of her dignity, through the corporeal limitation of death − the postcolonial Other's triumph in the colonizer's world of coercion and control.

Keywords: posthuman, cyberculture, postcolonialism, body, identity

The "body" gains centre stage in Manjula Padmanabhan's dystopic, futuristic play *Harvest*. The play distinguishes between the impoverished but healthy donor body of the Third World and the wealthy but ailing First World body. The variegated distinctions also include, inter alia, the differences between the male and the female body, the aged and the young body and real and the virtual body. It is the last dichotomy that will be a major

focus of study in this paper, against a backdrop of economic disparity, globalized commoditization of Third World organ sales and mutation of individual identity in the digital age.

Padmanabhan's play has been analyzed earlier in the context of economic relations between the Third and First World participants that triggers the phenomenon of organ sales[1]. However, the play has hardly been examined in the wake of the phenomenon of *cyberculture* that pervades through the text and problematizes the issue of corporeality as a manifestation of identity. It highlights the reach of new media in blurring the boundaries of the self and technology so much that human identity is in a state of crisis. In this paper, an attempt has been made to read Padmanabhan's play as a work that foregrounds the advent of the "posthuman" and, at the same time, portrays situations that try to resist it. Its characters aspire to transcend the limitations of their physical form and anthropocentricity. The receivers wish to "live forever" via gadgets or agencies that will procure "fresh bodies". At the same time, the donors escape their corporeality by means of technology induced simulations of dream like states of fantasy that seduce them to willingly sell their physical bodies and their identities to be housed in by "enhanced" First World capitalist buyers, in an unequal trade.

«Harvest»: The Play

Padmanabhan's play, *Harvest*, written in 1997, has a futuristic setting in a Bombay of the year 2010 against a backdrop that assumes that all debates over the legal, moral and ethical validity of organ sales and transplants have been resolved and that the market for sale of organs has been fully institutionalized. The fictional transnational corporation in the play, viz. "InterPlanta Services", that performs these procedures is an embodiment of the increasing proliferation of global capitalism.

The play highlights the unequal relations between the wealthy First World populations and their impoverished Third World counterparts. The lure of a better lifestyle seduces the

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[1] See Shital Pravinchandra, Body Markets: The Technologies of Global Capitalism and Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest*. In Ericka Hoagland & Reema Sarwal (eds.) (2010). *Science Fiction, Imperialism, and the Third World: Essays on Postcolonial Literature and Film*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland Press, 87-98.

donor Prakash family to enter into an ethically questionable transaction of organ sales. The First World receiver, Virgil, in the guise of Ginni, appropriates their dignity, pride and identity with the inducement of rewarding the poor family with "quick money". Padmanabhan registers a protest against this practice. The insistence of Jaya, Om's wife, on physical touch and contact with the First World receiver upsets this hegemonic construct. She prefers to die with dignity than to live ignobly by sacrificing her identity, rooted in her Third World body.

The play aims to bring forth the pivotal role played by technology in tempting the Third World donors into compliance. For this, the play uses sci-fi gadgets and a futuristic, dystopic setting. It is via one such gadget, viz. the "Contact Module", that we see Ginni visible only through a screen suspended from the ceiling but never in her physical form on the stage.

Identity in a Posthuman World

Padmanabhan's play is a postcolonial and posthumanist protest against the ominous future in which man has no place. The "technologized" body aims to displace the corporeal self. It marks the redistribution of the positions of self and non-self, equilibrium and non-equilibrium, body and consciousness. *Harvest* needs to be contextualized in the hypotheses of posthumanism rooted in the changing concepts of the western self.

Identity in the play is problematized across many levels. The blonde, light skinned "youth goddess" (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 217) is a manifestation of Virgil, the aged, diseased American male who has worked through four bodies in fifty years. The hint at the desire for a more "perfect" body is explicit here. Padmanabhan takes a dig at popular stereotypes of western consumerist culture that exploits our desires to acquire physical features and personality traits popularized and commoditized by media and technology. The blonde haired Ginni's querulous, nasal twang or Virgil's "cigarette commercial", smooth and sexy accent are reminiscent of Marilyn Monroe or John Wayne. The ideology of posthumanism is the craving for eradication of limitations, imperfections and dispersal

of the "self" via bioscience. However, its precursor can definitely be traced back to the narratives of self-transformation in American culture.

Danielle Dick McGeough[2], in her essay, refers to Cressida Heyes' analysis of these narratives as a byproduct of the contemporary western culture that «desperately tries to contain the adolescent, female body through exercise, plastic surgery, cosmetic creams and other forms of discipline and control»[3]. But globalization and capitalistic forces have taken this obsession with body alteration into the age of technology. Identity is now embodied in a new discourse – "cyborgology".

Cyborgology, as the critics, such as, Chris Hables Gray, Steven Mentor and Heidi J. Figueroa-Sarriera call it, aims at describing «intimate human-machine relationships» (Zylinska 2002, p. 34). Over the past two decades, high-tech companies in Japan, USA and other parts of the World have been trying to develop *humanoid robots* that can emulate our way of living right down to our bodily functions and physical appearance. The aim is to create an external agent on which the "human" can be imposed − *a simulated man as well his replacement in the digital future.*

Cyberculture provides clues to the proliferation of globalization and technology that the First World uses to dominate in transactions with the Third World. I have tried to relate the gadgets mentioned in the play to the «cybernetic circuits» (Nayar 2010, p. 8) that help subjectivity to be divorced from identity. «Subjectivity», Nayar states, «and identity are no longer rooted in the body» (8). In the posthuman state, it is spread throughout the cybernetic circuit. The "Contact Module", performs an integral role in obscuring the actual physical existence of Ginni, while concurrently enabling her to monitor the daily activities of Om and his family members. It allows her to maintain her distance from the unsanitary conditions of the site of colonization (or production) i.e. the home of the Prakash family.

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[2] Danielle Dick McGeough, Twilight and Transformations of Flesh: Reading the Body in Contemporary Youth Culture". In Melissa A. Click, Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz (eds.) (2010). *Bitten by Twilight. Youth Culture, Media, and the Vampire Franchise*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 87-102.

[3] Cressida J. Heyes (2007). *Self-transformations: Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies*. New York: Oxford UP.

Cybercultures & "Extensions Of Man"

 The Encyclopedia of New Media defines *cybercultures a*s «cultures formed in or associated with online social spaces» (Kendall sage-ereference.com). Pramod K. Nayar, in his book titled *An Introduction to New Media and Cybercultures,* defines cybercultures as a system that «includes the networked, electronic and wired cultures of the last three decades of the twentieth century» (Nayar 2010, p. 2). He argues that, in the digital world, the questions relating to race, gender, and identity cannot be dismissed as being lost in the virtual world. Technology, therefore, cannot be studied in isolation.

«Cybercultures», according to Nayar, «are driven by material considerations of profit and power, and affect people in their real lives» (Nayar 2010, p. 5). Capital is one such consideration that creates and controls cyberculture. It determines the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services in the global market and is also a mechanism for control. The invention of modern gadgets like the computer, mobile, internet and wireless communication has further broadened the horizon of globalization.

Marshall McLuhan, while writing his book, *Understanding the Media: The Extensions of Man,* in the 1960s, realized that, after three thousand years of explosion, «by means of fragmentary and mechanical technologies» (McLuhan 1994, p. 1), the world began to implode bringing together many geographical locations, nations and identities. This was the embodiment of his idea of an «electrically concentrated village».

McLuhan described it as the point where the human body transcends space and approaches: «The final phase of the extensions of man − the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society, much as we have already extended our nerves and our senses by various media» (McLuhan 1994, p. 11).

Joanna Zylinska, editor of *The Cyborg Experiments: The Extensions of the Body in the Media Age* notes that McLuhan's vision of a "global village" is susceptible to the postmodern forces of fragmentation. She asserts that

our position in the world, our self-perception, sense of belonging, and identification with other species and life forms" has been influenced by these forces. She argues that McLuhan's

description of technology as the "extension of man" blurs the lines that demarcate the internal and external differences that separate man from his technological inventions [Zylinska 2002, p. 2].

McLuhan's portrayal of technology is, however, echoed in cyberculture studies in which virtual worlds have been identified as "enabling the user to transcend geography and the body" (Nayar 2010, p. 8). Disembodiment gives a superior platform to the rational faculties of man and subverts the physical limitations of the body. Cyber and digital artists like Stelarc have made insightful discoveries in the arena of disembodiment and bodily transcendence. Limitations such as disease, ageing or degeneration can be superseded by technological prosthesis. This gives birth to a superior body – the posthuman.

Nayar, however, is quick to add a caveat to this aspiration of the posthuman buoyed by the possibilities of technoculture. He emphasizes on the problems of such subversion of the limitations of physical form to embrace a disembodied existence. He observes that for the marginalized and subaltern sections of society, the sites of resistance and justice need to be situated within the body and are tenuous if placed within a disembodied and abstract "consciousness" (*ibid.*).

The protest against the lure of an "improved", abstract consciousness and staunch loyalty to the embodied form is initially mirrored in the character of Jeetu, Om's brother. He is introduced as a male prostitute, about the same age as his brother Om, but bearing a more easy-going persona. He is described as being conscious of his body. This is in stark contrast with Om's description as «nervy and thin» and with an «anxious expression» (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 217).

The donors of the Prakash family i.e. Om's mother, referred to as "Ma", Om's wife Jaya, and Om are all described as malnourished, unkempt and physically unimpressive. The instinctive desire for them, particularly, Om and his mother, to be rid of these bodies is palpable. Jaya is described as «thin and haggard, she looks older than her nineteen years» while Ma is «stooped, scrawny and crabby» (*ibid.*). Jeetu's active resistance against "InterPlanta" and its insidious objectives is evident when he fails to turn up at the First briefing by the agency's guards to the Prakash family. At Jaya's pleading to return

home and register himself with the agency he clarifies his stance, "I don't mind being bought – but I won't be owned" (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 227). His corporeality is a site of resistance against the imperialistic order and pervasive reach of technoglobal gadgetry that aims to obliterate all impediments to its rule and diktat.

The Posthuman Body in Literature & Film

Throughout the last few decades of the XIX century, novels and short stories have showcased discourses of technology that have contributed to shaping the idea of the "posthuman condition" in the West. Novels, such as, H.G. Wells' *Time Machine* (1895), William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2004) are paradigmatic texts exploring patterns of mutation, virtuality, and bioengineering. These novels articulate the "western self's" undaunted desire for the perfect "Other", implying critical and even ironic gestures that question the propagation of a "new" human condition or the idea of absolute boundaries of the human. Works of literature such as the above have a distinctly dystopian outlook.

Ralph Pordzik, in his essay, *The posthuman future of man: anthropocentrism and the other of technology in Anglo-American science fiction,* recounts the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, who envisioned the "Other" as a dimension of radical alterity that resists identification or assimilation. Pordzik observes that these novels may thus be considered as fictional sites where the subject's unlimited desire for the Other can be articulated. A desire that originates not so much in the individual writer or text as in the cultural matrix itself, in the symbolic order that determines humans through their desire for otherness, for overstepping the given limitations. In plain language, the self or the subject responds to the diversity of symbolic patterns and images pervading culture and society at a given time. The patterns and types of artificial extension (or "prosthetic supplementation") governing many technoscientific discourses that currently epitomize human desire for wholeness and integrity. Framing many of our posthuman fantasies, this other of technology permanently impels us to know, to direct and control, to transform and modify, without ever strictly defining the limits we may arrive at in our hunger for

completeness. Constrained by physical incapacitation and/or death, the human species wishes to change from its assigned mode of being to become what its best machines already are.

Hollywood blockbusters like *Iron Man, Transformers,* and *The Matrix* announce the end of man in their celebration of the body made perfect or left behind, their dream of the dissolution of self through computer technology, bioscience, or the intersection of consumerism and the new digital environment. These films are all "posthumanist" in their abandoning of the established western matrix of autonomy, consciousness, and self-direction. The three novels mentioned earlier and many others like them explore patterns of mutation and virtuality afforded by technological means[4]. Each modifies "man" to make him appear as a superhuman being, as an agent of nature «that should be overcome»[5]. In short, they provide new images and new terms of human evolution, and examine transitory stages in the development of human intelligence.

Cyborgs & The Future

Cyberpunk is a literary expression of posthumanism, as it champions the view that the limits of the body can be transcended. It sees facets of human life such as ageing, decay and disability as disappearing through technological means. The obsolescence of the body seems imminent in all cyberpunk. According to Pramod Nayar, «cyberpunk works to convey a new taxonomy of the human, proposing a human that is perpetually a *cyborg»* (Nayar 2010, p. 37).

Donna Haraway's essay *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century* envisions a future, in the late XX century, when every man is a cyborg. «This cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics». She

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[4] The term "parasitic" is derived from French philosopher Michel Serres' concept of social change. Serres argues that a minority, by acting like a parasite (by being "pests"), can introduce unpredictable change and thus become a major "player" in society − a metaphoric pattern clearly recognizable in Atwood's Oryx and Crake. For more information, see Michel Serres. (1980). *Le Parasite*. Paris: Grasset.

[5] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None,* trans. by R.J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin 1961, p. 65.

comments that western science and politics has a tradition that is rooted in «racist, male-dominated capitalism», the channeling of nature for cultural productions and the practice of «reproduction of self from the reflection of the other». In this tradition, the two warring factions, the body and the machine, have been in conflict for a long time. Haraway also observes that cyborgs have no ancestors in a post-gender world. They have «no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labor, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity».

Harvest: Resistance to Posthumanism

Harvest addresses this notion in the image of Ginni. In Act III scene 2, Virgil's voice reaches Jaya. He is the actual First world receiver, willing to pay for the youthful bodies of hapless Third-World donors. Jaya is filled with terror at the disembodied voice from the whirring, ablaze Contact Module. When Jaya asks about Ginni, Virgil explains that she was a «Nothing. Nobody. A computer-animated wet dream» (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 245). Ginni, the young, beautiful woman is a manifestation of Virgil's machinations to seduce his desired target. She's a primitive form of cyborg having no links to the human world of physical boundaries or wholeness. Throughout the play, we see her face and hear her querulous voice prompting Ma to call her an angel. The gifts that she has bestowed upon the Prakash family seem nothing short of miracles to them. She always appears to be out of their reach since her location affords her geographical distance. Even her transient image is untouchable as the Contact Module swings away every time a donor, be it Jeetu or Jaya, tries to touch it. Keeping in mind Haraway's myth of the cyborg, Ginni fulfills her prophecies of a human-animal (organism) and machine coupling, having its base in the overthrowing of the established relations between nature and culture.

In the preceding scene, Act III scene 1, we watch the InterPlanta guards mistake Jeetu for Om and take him away, only to bring him back swathed in bandages. It is a horrible realization of the separation of identity from the human body. His clothes, white on white,

and his face and head covered in bandages give him the likeness of an unnamed machine, a faceless entity. He has been transformed into an individual cyborg with implants in place of eyes and a visor across them, a posthuman body that is first disembodied and then re-embodied enabling his transition into another consumer body. Ginni's images are transmitted directly into Jeetu's brain and he is completely entranced by her. Ironically, it is only by turning Jeetu into a likeness of her own machinic self that Ginni, the virtual projection, has been able to appear in her full avatar to him. She beams images of her "body" into Jeetu's brain so that he is mesmerized into agreeing to further extraction of organs from his own corporeal body. The body that Ginni shows off to Jeetu is nothing but a digital projection, a virtual incarnation of the desires of the flesh. It is almost a mockery of the physical form and its locational limitations.

When Virgil communicates with Jaya through the Contact Module and coaxes her to look at him, she refuses by turning her face away. When she turns, a projection of Jeetu is standing before her. Padmanabhan defines this "apparition" in the following manner: «There is no longer any visor across his eyes, he looks completely healed. But his expression is unfamiliar and his haircut, the skimpy clothes he wears, the way he holds himself – all of these suggest a transformation that goes beyond mere well being (Padmanabhan 2011, pp. 244-245).

Even as the image of Jeetu speaks, the voice emanates from the Contact Module. Virgil tries to lure Jaya by using the body of Jeetu, by exploiting her desires for Jeetu. She argues that Jeetu is dead and so is his body. But Virgil asserts that he has a «casing» (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 246). This scenario once again raises the issue of the body as a manifestation of identity. In the era of contemporary social and critical theory, the notion of a stable, unified and coherent identity is rejected. Instead, modern age theory sees identity as a series of negotiations, differences and discourses. In a world where race, class, gender or sexuality are of importance to the adoption of the persona, cyberspace allows an individual to choose an identity, to masquerade, mimic and transcend bodily identities and interact with the world as somebody else. The individual's subjectivity exists in a dispersed state, where the boundaries of the self are no longer the body or the skin.

It is Jaya who finally launches a protest against this "fluidity" of identity. She rejects the "body" of Jeetu that Virgil has now occupied. She resists Virgil's advances and the claims of his desire for her. He insists that she has known the mouth that is now speaking to her or the body that will plant a child inside her. Jaya questions the voice emanating from Jeetu's body regarding the paternity of the child she will bear. Will the child be Virgil's because he has donated his sperm or will it be Jeetu's since the body is his? The problem of ownership and parentage is intimately entwined with the problem of identity. Jaya asserts that she wants the pain, the agony of childbirth even as Virgil proposes a painless procedure. The limitations and unappealing aspects of her bodily functions are what she embraces to escape the hegemony of the imperialistic Virgil. Her final resistance is symbolized in her decision to end her life if the InterPlanta guards try to break her door down and force her to comply. She has found a new way of winning − *winning by losing*. Jaya refuses to allow her womb to be treated as a laboratory for the First World colonizer for his experiments with self preservation and securing right to perpetuity.

Harvest: Resistance to Posthumanism − a Postcolonialist View

According to Elleke Boehmer, the colonized subject's body has been an object of the colonizer's fascination and repulsion (and, in effect, possession) in sexual, pseudo-scientific and political terms: «[T]he Other is cast as corporeal, carnal, untamed, instinctual, raw and therefore also open to mastery, available for use, for husbandry, for numbering, branding, cataloguing, description or possession» (quoted in Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, p. 203).

This explanation resonates deeply with Manjula Padmanabhan's critique of the commoditization of the healthy Third World body that, thanks to important discoveries in transplant medicine, has now virtually become a repository of spare parts for ailing bodies in the First World. Neo-imperialism in the current global context results in unequal relations of power between cultures or groups, albeit, it operates in more covert ways than its predecessor, European colonialism. The hegemony of neo-imperialism masquerades mostly as a form of aid, advice or support. Hence, it is far more invasive

and inimical than overt domination. It is as Virgil, the aged, male, First World receiver of Om's body, says, «We support poorer sections of the world, while gaining fresh bodies for ourselves» (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 246). The unequal relationship between the two worlds is starkly apparent.

*Harves*t is a postcolonial allegory that foregrounds the *mediascapes* and *technoscapes* by which poor countries become the outsourcing centres for body parts and labour in the First World. In the twenty first century, various other modes of exploiting the intellect and the labour of Third World nations are manifest in "social" institutions such as, BPO call centres, job outsourcing to Third World countries for First World IT and business firms, employment of women as "maids" for bonded labour in the middle east where their passports are snatched away from them − are some of the glaring instances of dehumanization of the body and the soul in the postcolonial world that Padmanabhan has critiqued in her play. They hark back to the slave trade practices of colonization.

As the play unfolds, Jaya and her mother-in-law, Ma, are awaiting Om's return from his job interview. Each has different expectations. Ma wants him to succeed, while Jaya, knowing what the job entails, hopes that he will be rejected. But Om returns to announce that he has been declared eligible for selling the rights to his body to an anonymous American buyer. His dilemma and anxiety regarding the signing of the contract reflects the interminable web of hope, despair and illusions that control and drive the choices of the ensnared Third World donor.

The initial reaction of Om's mother upon hearing of his prospect of wealth and prosperity is one of astonishment. As her early wonderment wanes, her curiosity is triggered particularly amazed at the possibility of earning a fortune without practically doing any work.

As the play proceeds, we see Ma's bewilderment giving way to smugness as she adapts perfectly to the abrupt improvement in their lifestyles and creature comforts. She dismisses Om's compunction as she settles into her newfound life of comfort and pleasure. The technological device like the VideoCouch is the perfect portal where she prefers to settle herself and watch one of 750 channels. It is a self-sufficient unit and she doesn't even worry about food or digestion. Helen Gilbert describes the device as a «sarcophagus […] being something of a cross between a dialysis machine and an

entertainment unit, though its features are comically exaggerated to enhance the text's critique of rampant materialism» (Gilbert & Tompkins 1996, p. 215). Mirroring Nayar's idea of identity being dispersed through "cybernetic circuits", Ma transforms into an "individual cyborg". She is eager to overcome the limitations of her physical form. In her rejection of familiarity with her family's problems – the selling of Om's organs, the taking away of Jeetu and his return with implants instead of eyes etc., and her emphatic statement «I'm through caring about anybody» (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 242) − she signals the gradual displacement of her identity as a member of the Prakash family – as Ma.

In Shital Pravinchandra's essay, *Body Markets: The Technologies of Global Capitalism and Manjula Padmanabhan's «Harvest»*, she presents the study of Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff into the factors that lure the impoverished populations of the Third World into selling their organs reveal that the lure of wealth with little or no hard work acts as the prime mover behind such transactions. The Comaroffs explore the transformation in the social aspirations of the labouring poor to understand the attractiveness of the inducement. They argue that such transformation in today's world is engendered by couching capitalism in superlatives and presenting the same to the labouring Third World poor as «a gospel of salvation; a[s] a capitalism that, if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity wholly to transform the universe of the marginalized and the disempowered» (quoted in Pravinchandra 2010, p. 94). The Comaroffs give the term «occult economies» to describe the various commercial inducements that seduce the Third World poor. These economies portray the fantasy of «accruing wealth from nothing» (quoted in Pravinchandra 2010, p. 94).

It has often been argued that socio-medical constructions of infectious diseases, in particular, characterize a certain group as responsible for "defiling" the western humanity. Disease is considered "natural" when inhabiting the body of the "uncivilized" other, but "unnatural" when communicated from the colonized to the colonizer. In sharp contrast, in *Harvest*, there is an inversion of this trope as the incidence of disease and ailment for the most part, is associated with the "civilized" colonizer.

Padmanabhan, in her play, underscores the invasive, controlling and voyeuristic role played by gadgets in our lives in the twenty first century. In the first scene, after Om's return with news of his new "job", InterPlanta representatives walk into his home

unannounced and set up a "Contact Module", a device which is described by the playwright as «a white, faceted globe» (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 221) and which hangs from the ceiling. The device enables Ginni, to establish contact with the donor family.

The Contact Module allows the First World receiver's body to stay away from the site of colonization. The Third World body is the promise of good health and an extended life span to the sick First World receiver. Yet, paradoxically, the same is also the cause for deep anxiety in the First World owner. For, in the perception of the First World receiver, the donor body is extremely vulnerable to disease and the environment he lives in is highly infectious. Thus, in *Harvest,* Virgil, after he reveals himself and his true intentions, while coaxing Jaya through the Contact Module to be artificially inseminated, expresses his reluctance at Jaya's insistence on physical contact: «Zhaya I'd love to travel to be with you, but I can't…The environment you live in is too polluted for me Zhaya» (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 247).

Virgil's reluctance to face Jaya in person has its genesis in his imagined unhygienic lifestyle of the intended prey that makes him heavily dependent on the technology and its invasive characteristics. The Contact Module in the play carries the dual symbolism of the notion of globalization and a deliberately distant and voyeuristic relationship between the donor Om and the Prakash family and the First World receiver Virgil masquerading as Ginni. Thus, the Contact Module serves two important functions, firstly, by allowing Ginni to communicate with and interrupt the lives of the donors without having to occupy the same geographic location where they live. Secondly, the Contact Module serves to function as the "all seeing eye" that supervises their daily habits to ensure a healthy "harvest" of organs for the receiver. The surveillance and domination exercised by the Contact Module is rendered even more suffocating and sinister by the fact that it is a one way medium of interaction. Only the receiver can operate it at will. Om's family has no way of knowing when Ginni will visit them next.

By the opening of Act II of the play, two months have passed. Om is worried that they are late for lunch. «You know how [Ginni] hates it when we're late to eat» (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 228), Om says worriedly. The Contact Module has facilitated a permanent structure of supervision within their home. The gadget inculcates an environment of

discipline and order by coercing the donors to amend their behaviour thereby creating optimal sites for the extraction of healthy organs.

The curtain lifts again to show that the Prakash family has been richly compensated as Ginni has upgraded their modest home with modern gadgets and utilities. She tells them: «get to give you things you'd never get in your lifetime, and you get to give me, well […] maybe my life» (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 230). Her words are a stark reminder of the inequalities in their transaction. Ginni is providing gifts and "things" while the donors are giving her their lives.

In the final scene Jaya is alone on the stage. Virgil's distant, unfamiliar voice can be heard from the Contact Module. But she refuses to listen to him unless he risks leaving his bubble like, "disease free" environment and comes to her in person. Her conditions are absolute and no amount of coaxing or threatening affects her. Virgil sends his InterPlanta workers to break down her door. Jaya, however, has discovered a new definition for winning − w*inning by losing* (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 248). She announces to Virgil that she plans to reclaim the «only thing [she] ha[s] which is still [her] own: [her] death» (Padmanabhan 2011, p. 248). «I'm holding a piece of glass against my throat», she warns him. The play ends on this note. To her, there is victory even in "death" – that the first world receivers like Virgil are so desperate to avert.

Sunil Sethi has described *Harvest* as a «modern morality play» in which Padmanabhan questions the limits of poverty, material ambition and individual dignity (Sethi 1997, p. 98). Om Prakash's "Faustian Pact" with the "InterPlanta organ transplant services" focuses on the compulsions of a society seduced by the promise of wealth so as to induce its members to sell their body parts for material profit. As the narrative progresses, the full horrors of this kind of trade are suggested not only by the gradual disintegration of the donor body but also by the complete breakdown of the Prakash family as a social unit. "Ma's" (Om's mother) bizarre retreat into the media-controlled oblivion of her "Super Deluxe Video Couch" with innumerable channels represents a slightly more palatable future than Om's groveling capitulation to the InterPlanta worldview, or his brother Jeetu's eventual disappearance into the abyss of the organ bazaar. In their hollow quest for affluence, all have betrayed family members and/or lovers and, perhaps more critically, they have "compromised their humanity". Only Om's wife, Jaya, refuses to be

taken in by the glittering illusions of Western-style capitalism. Her lone stand against exploitation suggests a glimmer of hope in an otherwise bleak vision of human society at the beginning of the twenty first century.

Conclusion

The Posthuman is associated with an ever growing sensorium of experiences, impressions, and informational data. It suggests the extension of the human through technological, surgical, medical and digital means. In *Harvest*, the body loses traction as a site of subjectivity and is converted into a "technobody". The play explores the concept of "body entrapment" or "body possession" and this problematizes the question of identity. It makes us ponder whether the "I" will remain intact if the person is transplanted into a new body.

Harvest reflects as to how cyberculture, as an agent of capitalism, hastens the posthuman era via the socio-political act of *body modification* and seeks to redefine the role, ability, identity and agency of the human body. As a tool of globalization and postcolonialism, cyberculture is rendered further problematic since the suffering, politics and identity of the Other needs to be fixed in the body and cannot be a disembodied entity. Only Jaya, of all the other characters, holds out against InterPlanta Services, a capitalist parasite, and resists disembodiment. She continues to exercise ownership over her own life through control of her body and threatens to take her life rather than face a life of exploitation. Her identity and its agency become affixed within the visceral body and touch. Being a marginalized subject owing to her race and gender, she uses her body as a site of resistance and triumphs over the aggression of imperial hegemony and techno-global gadgetry without compromising her humanity.

POSTCOLONIAL AND TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISMS

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