

Relational Ecologies and Decolonial Belonging in the Works of Olga Tokarczuk and Amitav Ghosh

Md Samiul Azim, Gazole Mahavidyalaya: Malda, West Bengal, India

ORCID: 0009-0001-1923-083X

Md Akidul Hoque, Gazole Mahavidyalaya: Malda, West Bengal, India

ORCID: 0009-0009-3066-1057

Farida Parvin, Gazole Mahavidyalaya: Malda, West Bengal, India

ORCID: 0009-0008-0289-5561

Abstract: This article investigates the literary cartographies forged by Olga Tokarczuk and Amitav Ghosh through a comparative analysis of their works, focusing on how mythscapes and memoryscapes engender relational ecologies and decolonial forms of belonging. Against the backdrop of ecological crisis, mass displacement, and epistemic fragmentation in the Anthropocene, both authors craft narrative terrains that unsettle Enlightenment historiography and anthropocentric paradigms. Drawing on posthumanist theory (Barad, Braidotti), multispecies ethics (Haraway, Tsing), and postcolonial ecocriticism (Huggan, Nixon), this study employs close textual analysis to examine how myth, memory, and more-than-human agency configure new forms of community. It combines close reading with comparative ecocritical methods and formal analysis, situating the texts within archival, historical, and affective registers to trace how narrative form mediates ecological knowledge. Tokarczuk's *Flights* and *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* interlace Polish folklore and ecofeminist motifs to challenge human sovereignty, while Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island* weave indigenous myths into narratives of environmental precarity and colonial displacement. These texts function as posthuman cartographies—maps of entangled life-worlds where human and nonhuman agencies co-constitute history, kinship, and place. Through fragmented aesthetics, polyvocal narration, and diasporic geographies, Tokarczuk and Ghosh resist the cartographic logics of empire, instead envisioning planetary solidarities rooted in relational ethics. This article argues that their literary forms do not merely reflect ecological entanglement but enact

it, generating speculative imaginaries for decolonial futures. By offering empirically grounded interventions into debates on posthuman ethics and decolonial memory, the article advances methodological and pedagogical frameworks for literary studies and suggests policy-relevant imaginaries for cultivating planetary solidarities. In reconfiguring the spatial, temporal, and ontological coordinates of belonging, their works provide crucial insights for re-imagining narrative ethics and global ecologies in a time of planetary instability.

Keywords: posthumanism, decolonial ecocriticism, mythscape, memoryscape, relational ecology, multispecies kinship

Introduction

Myth and memory have become reconceived in recent scholarship as dynamic cartographies of knowledge, linking past, place, and identity across time. Following Duncan Bell's account of the "mythscape" as a discursive realm where collective myths are continually forged and refashioned (Bell 2003), this paper reads Olga Tokarczuk and Amitav Ghosh as practitioners of narrative cartography. Likewise, memory studies scholars describe a *global memoryscape* in which recollections and narratives circulate through ever-complex, transnational networks (Phillips and Reyes 2011, 108–111). Together, mythscapes and memoryscapes serve as layered maps of cultural, ecological, and spiritual knowledge that can disrupt linear, Enlightenment histories. They encode alternative epistemologies – oral lore, ritual recollection, ancestral tales – that survive alongside official archives (Bell 2003, 63). In an era of ecological crisis and global migration, these cartographies matter profoundly: they shape how communities remember environmental losses and imagine future relations to land, species, and each other.

This study focuses on two globally influential authors – Polish novelist Olga Tokarczuk and Indian writer Amitav Ghosh – whose literatures vividly entwine myth and memory with posthumanist and ecological themes. Tokarczuk's works frequently blur the boundary between human and animal, or history and fairy tale, conjuring *animist* forests and eschewing human supremacy. Critics note that in *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* (2009), Tokarczuk "lets mythical figurations appear, such as the Fury and the Wolf, whereby the destructive powers of nature are unleashed" (Mortensen 2021, 227). Similarly, Ghosh's novels weave local mythologies and histories into narratives of climate and colonial

upheaval – for example, *The Hungry Tide* (2004) interlaces the Sundarbans legend of the goddess Bon Bibi as an environmental “green text” binding people to place (Soni 2022). Both authors respond to urgent contemporary contexts: intensifying climate change, ecological collapse, and massive displacement challenge conventional human-centered storytelling. As Ghosh himself warns, in the Anthropocene the old “calculus of probability” (gradual change and predictable causality) has become unsustainable, and Tokarczuk’s works likewise insist that our assumptions about nature and human agency be radically rethought.

In light of this crisis, mythscapes and memoryscapes offer new ways of (re) mapping reality. This paper probes how Tokarczuk and Ghosh employ myth and memory to challenge Enlightenment humanism, linear history, and nationalist narratives. In what ways do their stories constitute posthuman cartographies – stories that map relational networks of humans, nonhuman beings, and landscapes? How do nonhuman agents and ecospiritual ontologies (spirits, cosmic forces, animal protagonists) reconfigure community, kinship, and belonging? And crucially, how do these literary practices resist or rework Eurocentric epistemologies and colonial worldviews? These questions address the urgent need for new narrative forms in an age of “everything change” – times when existential threats like climate disasters and pandemics reveal the limits of anthropocentric histories and fixed borders (Neumann 2019, 91).

To frame this inquiry, we draw on a range of interdisciplinary theories. Critical posthumanism and new materialism (Barad 2007; Braidotti 2013) remind us to decentre the human subject and to recognize the entanglement of all bodies and forces. For instance, Karen Barad reconceptualizes agency not as a property of isolated individuals but as “a dynamism of forces” in which entities emerge through mutual *intra-action* (Barad 2007, 141). Donna Haraway’s (2016) notion of multispecies kinship emphasizes *sym-poietic* (co-constructed) worlds where humans and others co-evolve. Anna Tsing’s (2015) account of “contamination” in global supply chains foregrounds unpredictable assemblages of life. Postcolonial ecocriticism (Huggan and Tiffin 2010; Nixon 2011) situates all this within histories of empire and development, insisting that we contest “Western ideologies of development” that have alienated people from land (Huggan and Tiffin 2010, 19). In Huggan and Tiffin’s words, postcolonial ecocriticism values the “non-instrumentality” of literature and its power to mobilize ethical awareness (Huggan and Tiffin 2010, 33). Our methodology is comparative literary analysis, inflected by these frameworks: we closely read selected works by Tokarczuk

and Ghosh, interpreting their use of myth and memory as generating relational ecologies and decolonial modes of belonging. In doing so, we seek to reveal how their narratives form cartographies that stretch beyond nationstate borders and anthropocentric subjectivity, and that open onto plural histories and lifeworlds.

Literature Review

This review synthesizes theoretical frameworks essential for analyzing how Tokarczuk and Ghosh employ mythic and mnemonic narratives to envision post-human and decolonial ecologies. Rather than surveying disconnected fields, we foreground concepts that directly enable a comparative reading of their literary “mythsapes” and “memoryscapes” as subversive cartographies.

Myth, Memory, and Subversive Cartography

The study of collective memory recognizes it as a contested site, a dynamic memory boom where narratives of the past are actively negotiated (Wertsch and Roediger 2008, 318). Pierre Nora’s (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire* and related work on “memoryscapes” (Phillips and Reyes 2011) understand these as performative cultural landscapes. Duncan Bell’s (2003) complementary notion of the “mythscape” is pivotal here, defining it as the temporal realm wherein communal myths, distinct from personal memory, are continuously articulated and contested. For Bell, myth functions as a more open-ended, symbolic narrative that can encode alternative visions of time, space, and community (Bell 2003, 299–301). This theoretical pairing is directly relevant to Tokarczuk and Ghosh, whose novels construct precisely such fluid narrative landscapes. Their mythsapes become vehicles for counter-histories and heterochronic perspectives that challenge linear, progressive time – a feature noted in subaltern and indigenous cosmologies (Trouillot 1995, 152). Thus, the contestation inherent in collective memory and myth is not a tangential issue but the very mechanism through which both authors destabilize anthropocentric historiography and map cyclical or layered temporalities.

The Posthuman and Decolonial Turn: A Theoretical Convergence

To understand the ecological vision in these reconfigured mythsapes, we engage posthumanist and new materialist thought, which dismantles human

exceptionalism. This trajectory developed through key interventions: Donna Haraway's early work on cyborgs and companion species (Haraway 2016, 97), which called for multispecies kinship; Jane Bennett's (2009) vital materialism, attributing agency to nonhuman matter; and Karen Barad's (2007) agential realism, which entangles matter and meaning. Rosi Braidotti synthesizes a posthuman subjectivity defined by embodied, relational networks (Braidotti 2006, 197). These ideas find practical resonance in Anna Tsing's (2015) ethnography of precarious, multispecies lifeways in capitalist ruins. However, applied uncritically, such frameworks risk universalizing and eliding colonial power structures. Therefore, our analysis deliberately aligns them with decolonial perspectives that assert the value of multiple ontologies and epistemologies (Mignolo and Escobar 2013, 71). This synthesis is crucial for reading Tokarczuk's Polish-European contexts and Ghosh's South Asian postcolonial settings, ensuring that their posthuman imaginations are grounded in specific historical and political ecologies.

Postcolonial Ecocriticism as an Integrative Framework

Postcolonial ecocriticism explicitly bridges these theoretical currents, providing an integrated lens for our comparative analysis. As Huggan and Tiffin (2010) establish, it critiques "developmentalism" and the "slow violence" of environmental injustice disproportionately inflicted on marginalized communities (Nixon 2011, 45). Its core commitment is to examine how literary form performs ethical and political work, valuing narrative's "non-instrumentality" in awakening readers to socio-ecological entanglement (Huggan and Tiffin 2010, 33). This tradition directly situates Tokarczuk and Ghosh alongside figures like Arundhati Roy, who fuse aesthetic innovation with activism. It provides the critical apparatus to assess how each author's mythopoetic strategies serve as narrative resistance against anthropocentric and neo-colonial exploitation.

Existing Scholarship on Tokarczuk and Ghosh: Foundations and Gaps

Current analyses of the two authors, while insightful, remain siloed and highlight the need for the integrated approach proposed here. Tokarczuk's scholarship consistently notes her ecofeminist and posthumanist impulses. Michna (2020, 145) praises her "tender narrator" and the blurring of human-animal boundaries. Mortensen (2021, 227), for instance, demonstrates how *Drive Your*

Plow Over the Bones of the Dead uses mythic archetypes (e.g., the Fury) to frame nature's revenge, unsettling anthropocentrism. However, debates persist about potential romanticism or simplistic dichotomies in her approach (Falcon 2022, 19; Doğanay 2025, 82), tensions our analysis will engage. *Amitav Ghosh*: His work is central to debates on climate fiction. His critique in *The Great Derangement* (2016) of the modern novel's failure to address the climate crisis champions a return to non-Western, mythic storytelling modes (Ghosh 2016, 77). Analyses of novels like *The Hungry Tide*, *Gun Land* and *Jungle Nama* examine his use of indigenous myths (e.g., Bon Bibi) as "green texts" that encode conservation ethics and model human-nonhuman reciprocity (Jean-François et al. 2022, 24). Yet, scholars question the efficacy of his blend of realism and the speculative. Despite these rich discussions, a systematic comparative study linking Tokarczuk and Ghosh through the constitutive concepts of mythscapes and memoryscapes from a combined posthuman-decolonial perspective is absent. This article fills that gap. Building on Mortensen's (2021) and Soni's (2022, 489) insights, we rigorously apply the integrated framework outlined above to articulate how both authors, through their distinctive narrative strategies, chart new modes of belonging in a more-than-human world. In doing so, we remain attentive to critical debates about romanticization and the political risks of posthuman narratives, aiming for a nuanced account of their literary cartographies (Caracciolo 2020, 86).

Mythscapes and Memoryscapes: Temporal and Narrative Reworldings

Tokarczuk and Ghosh deploy mythic time and layered memory precisely to unsettle linear, Enlightenment chronologies and to open new "cartographies" of the past and future. Following Bell's formulation of the mythscape as the "temporally and spatially extended discursive realm", where collective myths are continuously forged and refashioned (Bell 2003, 72–73), both authors weave folkloric, religious, and ancestral narratives into their storytelling. Tokarczuk, for example, interlaces Polish folklore and a sense of deep time into novels like *Flights* and *Primeval and Other Times*, where episodes of contemporary history coexist with echoes of primeval rituals and spectral animal apparitions. She observes that myths never really happened but are always going on, persisting not only through the adventures of ancient heroes, but in the most popular stories of today (Anders 2021, 105). This insistence on myth as the "building material" of meaning (Tokarczuk 2019) allows Tokarczuk's narrators to collapse past

and present – in effect treating history as a *mythscape* in Bell’s sense – and to suggest that human destinies are entangled with inscrutable forces. Likewise, Ghosh frames regional legends within sprawling historical narratives. *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island*, for instance, juxtapose colonial-era chronicles of trade and migration with local myths of Bon Bibi or Manasa Devi, recasting seemingly coincidental events (a shipwreck, a snake bite, a refugee crossing) as part of long, mythologized circuits. As literary critic Paddaja Roy argues, in *Gun Island* Ghosh “employs the legend of Bandooki Sadagar or the Gun Merchant and connects it to the myth of Chand Sadagar to provide a narrative structure in *Gun Island*. Myths and legends are employed to build up a narrative platform for broaching the question of the Anthropocene”, by which the boundaries between mythic time and geological time blur (Roy 2024, 190). In this way, mythic events (a goddess’s vengeance, magical cures) operate on the same temporal plane as hurricanes, rising tides, and capitalist globalization.

This mythopoetic narrative strategy reframes colonial and national histories as incomplete maps. It challenges the “single, linear History” of nation-states by positing multiple, oft-contradictory temporal strands. Scholars have noted that such plural chronologies align with the posthuman predicament: Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that anthropogenic climate change “spells the collapse of the age-old humanist distinction between natural history and human history” (Chakrabarty 2009, 201). In effect, Tokarczuk’s and Ghosh’s novels enact this collapse by refusing strictly “human” chronology. For example, *Flights* interrupts biographical narrative with a short story about a Polish traveller’s body preserved in a Polish museum, drawing together medieval pilgrimage and modern medical research. Similarly, Ghosh’s *Ibis Trilogy* spans the Opium Wars to mid-19th-century diasporas, yet it is punctuated with chapters on starfish, banyan trees, and opium dens that evoke mythic cycles of decay and rebirth. These narrative juxtapositions create a *memoryscape* – a woven field of recollections and cultural imaginaries – that extends beyond any one community or era. The very term “*memoryscape*” suggests (by analogy with Bell’s *mythscape*) a terrain of memory: a fluid, multi-sited space where stories overlap. As Gülüm et al. note in a recent survey of memory studies, scholars have begun to move “from memory place to mnemonic space to planetary memory”, viewing memories and environments as “embedded, co-constitutive and co-constructed” (Gülüm et al. 2024, 364). Tokarczuk’s and Ghosh’s work exemplifies this shift: collective traumas (colonial violence, war, ecological disaster) are transposed into landscapes

and beings (rivers, mountains, animals) that themselves “remember” – or at least bear the imprint of – earlier ages.

Migratory geographies further complicate these temporal reworldings. Ghosh’s narratives often travel by sea and river, tracing the courses of human migration (indentured labourers across the Indian Ocean, refugees fleeing war-torn homelands, traders crossing the Atlantic). These oceanic currents carry myths and memories as much as goods, so that *Sea of Poppies* imagines the ocean itself as a locus of shared history and foreboding. In parallel, Tokarczuk’s *Flights* is structured as a series of journeys – through airports, along borders, between legal and magical realms – each disorienting the reader’s sense of time and place. In *Flights*, for instance, the recurring motif of the breath (a time-based physiological process) connects a medieval Magyar princess, an eighteenth-century Mongolian rider, and a modern-day philosopher, thus knitting together distant lands and epochs. Such fluid subjectivities dissolve rigid identities. Characters often “fall off the radar” of national narratives, as Tokarczuk (2019) herself puts it, traversing zones (both literal and imaginative) where linear history gives way to “the multiplicity of voices” (Novák 2024, 416).

Critically, this mythic-mnemonic approach is not without tensions. On the one hand, it offers a dehierarchizing temporality – an alternative to nationalist or capitalist one-way history. On the other, myths can be ambiguous carriers of ideology. Tokarczuk’s evocation of Slavic pagan myths, for example, risks being read as a nostalgic re-tribalization if not self-consciously contextualized and indeed, Tokarczuk often undercuts pure nostalgia with irony or contemporary skepticism. And while Ghosh’s insertion of local legends into global histories decouples world events from Eurocentric timelines, it may run the risk of “localizing” climate narratives in ways that obscure broader responsibility. Nevertheless, by foregrounding memoryscapes and mythic temporality, both writers unsettle easy chronologies and open spaces for remembering and re-imagining – laying the groundwork for the more explicitly ecological and posthuman turns in their work.

Relational Ecologies and Multispecies Kinship

The mythic and mnemonic strategies above prepare the ground for a second axis of Tokarczuk’s and Ghosh’s posthuman cartographies: relational ecologies and kinship that transcends the human. Both authors populate their narratives with vibrant nonhuman others – rivers, forests, animals, even pathogens – as agents,

interlocutors, or ancestral figures. In doing so, they enact the kind of multispecies entanglement that contemporary theorists like Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing advocate. As Haraway famously urges us to “make kin, not babies” (Haraway 2016, 103) – to reconfigure political community around cross-species caregiving and responsibility – Tokarczuk and Ghosh similarly construct literary worlds where human characters must acknowledge their debts to the more-than-human.

Tokarczuk’s fiction repeatedly insists on animistic reciprocity. In *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*, the protagonist, a rural astrologer, becomes an eco-feminist outcast precisely by treating animals as moral subjects: she speaks of wolves and deer as her “clients” and argues that the murdered victims she avenges are in fact the “beatified” animals wronged by hunters. This radical personification is underscored by justice folklore (the Great Goddess atop the hill) and a haunting murder mystery that is resolved only by understanding animal vengeance as a meaningful narrative. In *Primeval and Other Times*, the female boar¹ is charged with communal meaning: its presence and disappearance structure collective memory, ritual expectation, and the local language of love and loss. Although Tokarczuk’s boar is land-anchored and culturally distinct from oceanic cosmologies, this land-based animacy converges thematically with the conceptual move Elizabeth DeLoughrey describes as sea ontologies, where the ocean becomes origins, ancestor, matter, as well as kin (DeLoughrey 2015, 2). Though DeLoughrey’s context is Afrofuturism, her formulation captures Tokarczuk’s ethos: nature is not a backdrop but a family of ancestors and siblings.

Ghosh, too, foregrounds multispecies relationships, often in explicitly aquatic contexts. *The Hungry Tide* is set in the Sundarbans, a vast mangrove estuary teeming with tigers, dolphins, crocodiles, and leeches, where human survival depends on reading animal signs. Here, the Bon Bibi myth – a tale of a forest goddess who serves as protector of both human and animal worlds – becomes a ritual of co-belonging. The novel’s outsiders (a science translator, a refugee) must learn from local oral parables and ecological wisdom to navigate the

1 Both the terrestrial and the marine accounts displace human exceptionalism by making nonhuman bodies sites of ancestry and ethical relation. This comparison does not imply direct influence or historical continuity between Tokarczuk and Afrofuturist thought; rather, it highlights a convergent narrative strategy in which nonhuman figures (the boar; the ocean) are enlisted to reconfigure kinship and responsibility beyond the strictly human.

treacherous waters; failing to do so leads to calamity. As critics have observed, Ghosh thus “cuts through simplistic ideas of human-nonhuman relations”, depicting a world where community is literally shared by multiple species (Smith 2018). In *Gun Island*, the slippage between human and nonhuman is even more literal: the demonic snake of legend, pursued by a Western-educated protagonist, comes to embody both climate change (a flooding storm) and the forgotten dignity of displaced creatures. The protagonist’s encounters with coastal fishermen, venomous cobras, and an elderly matron grounded in folklore ultimately form a chain of kinship that spans across human and animal lives.

These narratives align with a growing scholarship on multispecies ethnography and relationality. Scholars like Anna Tsing (2015) emphasize that in a world of disrupted ecosystems, life appears as “assemblages” of multiple species co-evolving in precarious habitats. Tokarczuk and Ghosh dramatize just such assemblages: whether it is in the mangrove’s flux or the Polish moors’ ruins, human agency is shown to be enmeshed with animal agency. For instance, Ghosh’s portrayal of the Gangetic River dolphins (the “divyachari”) and the endangered rhesus macaques treats them not as mere symbols but as community-members whose fortunes are yoked to human folly and colonial histories. This invites a Harawayan reading: kinship here is a way of understanding species boundaries not as fixed but as permeable and political, requiring humans to “stay with the trouble” of Earth’s contingent ecology (Haraway 2008, 150).

Relational ecologies also manifest in oceanic imaginaries. Oceans in Ghosh’s novels are not empty highways but living membranes of memory. The sea carries the ghosts of indentured laborers, the sounds of ritual songs, and the rising pangs of climate change. One of Ghosh’s characters remarks that goddesses and oceanic storms share something – the “incredible connections” between the human and the terrestrial (Roy 2024). In this sense, Ghosh’s work exemplifies what some call oceanic thinking or critical kinship with the sea: recognizing that the ocean is a co-agent in history. The study of oceanic fiction suggests that attending to the fluid space of the deep can transform our very sense of self (DeLoughrey et al. 2015, 120). Tokarczuk’s attention is less explicitly marine, but she too revives the uncanny power of place-based ecologies. Her characters often dissolve into the chaotic communication of weather, plants, and geologic time. In one passage of *Flights*, for example, the narrator muses on the common body burden shared by all travelling humans – from nineteenth-century balloons to modern airplanes – as if the atmosphere itself is a collaborator in human mobility.

Some postcolonial ecocritics have warned that enchanted portrayals of the nonhuman may only serve to exoticize otherness and help the pueblo shake off anthropocentrism. However, in both Tokarczuk and Ghosh, enchantment is linked to an ethical responsibility rather than the escapist romanticism of traditional folklore. For example, in *Bon Bibi's* sanctuary, it is a solemn pact: humans who exploit the Sundarbans must respect its spirits. Similarly, Tokarczuk's old astrologer in *Drive Your Plow* does not romanticize wolves; instead, she condemns humanity's cruelty toward them. Plumwood's emphasis on mutual constraint echoes perfection because relations among creatures are conceptually and existentially limiting (Plumwood 2002, 23). By embracing muteness in messy ambivalence rather than crystal-clear centrism, Tokarczuk and Ghosh demonstrate what belonging can mean through reciprocal responsibilities that encompass humans, animals, plants, and geological forms.

Decolonial Belonging and Posthuman Cartographies

Finally, Tokarczuk and Ghosh locate these mythic-memory and multispecies strands within a decolonial imagination of belonging. Their works contest Eurocentric cartography – both intellectual and literal – by mapping the world from subaltern and transnational vantage points. In doing so, they enact a form of posthuman cartography: one that is relational (built from interdependencies) and decolonial (in that it subverts imperial epistemes).

For both authors, decolonial belonging involves re-situating knowledge. Ghosh explicitly critiques the colonial roots of the climate crisis in *The Great Derangement* (2016): he argues that Western mastery projects (on land and sea) produced a “consensus trance” that rendered many people “worldless” – cut off from local ecological knowledges (Ghosh 2016). His fiction reflects the alternative: characters in *Sea of Poppies* or *River of Smoke* learn indigenous navigation and agro-ecological methods from bhagirathas or opium farmers, recognizing bonds cut by the empire. In *Hungry Tide*, the American biologist Piya rejects academic isolationism to embrace the incommensurable logic of Sundarbans villagers. This narrative valorizes a “mosaic” of knowledges: Islamic, Hindu, Adivasi, Western science, all informed by local memoryscapes. Tokarczuk similarly dissents from national origin stories. Her *Books of Jacob*, for instance, portrays early 19th-century Polish Jews as a diasporic cast of mercenaries, Karaite Jews, Sufi-influenced heretics, and peasant cultists, undermining any straightforward Polish nationalist myth. By focusing on characters

who traverse boundaries – the eponymous Jacob Frank himself claimed Messianic authority outside established Judaism – Tokarczuk suggests that identity is layered and unstable, owed to multiple cultures and eras. This migratory perspective resonates with Paul Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic,” or Arjun Appadurai’s (1990) concept of “diasporic” scape, which emphasize fluid exchange over bounded ethnicity. In short, both authors relocate belonging *subversively* – their maps are drawn not from capital cities but from ship routes, refugee paths, and ecological corridors.

This decolonial turn in narrative form is inseparable from the posthuman critique of Western dualisms. Tokarczuk and Ghosh both resist the legacy of “terra-centrism” by unsettling the very notion of a fixed human subject at the centre of meaning. They realize what Karen Barad calls an *agential realism*, in which phenomena arise through entangled intra-actions (Barad 2007, 26). Instead of viewing land and people as resources and subjects, their texts portray both as “phenomena” – ongoing performances of relationship. For example, the boundary between nature and history is never stable in these works. Rivers have voices and memories; homes are haunted by the future; technology (the aeroplane, the internet) can reveal the real as mythic. This perspectival fluidity is deeply compatible with Critical Posthumanism (Braidotti 2013, 50), which decouples the human from mastery and redefines agency as a distributed quality.

Both authors are also keenly aware that narrative space is political space. Ghosh’s postcolonial ecocriticism underlies his insistence that environmental crises disproportionately affect formerly colonized populations (Jindal et al. 2025, 318). His book *The Nutmeg’s Curse* asks readers to trace how colonial commodity chains (nutmeg, opium, fossil fuels) brought ecological violence into remote communities. By portraying, for instance, a Bengali boatman’s kinship with a ringed Pallas’s cat or a Sundarbans villager’s debt to Bon Bibi, Ghosh calls for *planetary solidarity* grounded in marginality, not in Euro-American futurism. Tokarczuk likewise has voiced (in lectures and interviews) a belief in a panhuman family of stories and myths that reaches beyond the nation-state (Lei 2024, 1758). Her embrace of Afro-Asiatic medieval lore (Zinkireses of Persia) and Native American legends (she cites Navajo ritual in *Flights*) gestures toward a cosmopolitan empathy that challenges both Eastern European nationalism and Western consumerism.

Notably, both writers reject nostalgic primitivism as much as they reject uncritical modernism. Tokarczuk’s characters are not exhorted to “return” to an imagined Golden Age of harmony; rather, they are shown struggling with contradictions (a hunter who preserves a unicorn’s horn but poisons wolves, a

communist collector who fetishizes Native American relics). Ghosh's postcolonial families do not idealize tradition; his Hindu priests sometimes clash with the very fishermen who also worship Hindu deities. These tensions reflect an acute awareness of conceptual flaws in romanticizing the past. As Rob Nixon observes, creating decolonial spaces requires "memories of the future" (Nixon 2011, 2) – stories that acknowledge oppression even as they reassert agency. Tokarczuk and Ghosh meet this challenge by constantly problematizing their own mythic imaginaries. The result is a literary cartography that is neither utopian nor despairing, but conditional: belonging emerges in dialogue with nonhuman others and suppressed histories, rather than as an idealized origin.

In sum, Tokarczuk and Ghosh mobilize mythic memory and multispecies networks to redraw the map of belonging along posthuman lines. Their works depict a world in which humans are never fully autonomous agents, but part of living webs that include gods, ghosts, and animals. Through this vision – grounded in migratory geographies, fluid subjectivities, and oceanic imaginaries – they articulate a form of decolonial belonging that is relational and regenerative. Like cartographers of a decentred Earth, they chart spaces of encounter: where myth becomes terrain, memory becomes soil, and kinship extends beyond the human.

Aesthetics of Relationality: Literary Form and Narrative Ethics

Tokarczuk's and Ghosh's novels deliberately make form serve as ethical praxis. Their fragmentation, polyphony, and hybridity are not stylistic flourishes but instruments of resistance to anthropocentric and colonial logics. As Rosi Braidotti argues, critical writing can "enact the visualization of ethical relationality" by acknowledging "the constitutive presence of otherness within and all around the self" (Braidotti 2002, 165). Tokarczuk's fiction exemplifies this approach: it refuses a single, authoritative perspective and instead layers multiple voices and timelines. In *Primeval and Other Times*, for example, Radomil Novák notes that "there is no single truth, no single perspective" – each character's viewpoint exists in contrapuntal relation to others (Novák 2024, 411).

Tokarczuk's (2010) famous "constellation novels" make this explicit. *Primeval and Other Times* comprises 84 short, fragmentary chapters. Novák observes that despite these digressions, the pieces coalesce into "a strict fugue" whose cantus firmus is a cosmogonic theme (Novák 419). Though the narrative "meander[s] and take[s] various diversions", its four fundamental themes (space, time, God,

people) constantly recur as counterpoints (Novák 2024, 416). In effect, readers must assemble disjointed vignettes “into a single pattern”, discovering “entire constellations in minor events” (Novák 2024, 427). This joining of fragments makes visible the interconnectedness of all things.

This strategy is equally striking in *Flights* (2017). La Torre Lagares (2020) describes *Flights* as “a work of art comprised of 116 vignettes freely interconnected by the sense of nomadism as creative act” (2). The novel deliberately abandons linear plot in favor of these mobile fragments, thereby “instilling and re-signifying the brokenness of the novel in the twenty-first century” (La Torre Lagares 2020, 2). Readers are compelled to piece together a kaleidoscope of impressions – a dying professor’s cosmology, a mysterious inscription, a beauty pageant – into a global mosaic of meaning. In so doing, *Flights* enacts Tokarczuk’s own credo that reality “can be viewed from many angles” and is never “merely realistic” (Tokarczuk 2019, 227).

Form and content thus intertwine as epistemological resistance in Tokarczuk’s work. Writing against the Enlightenment insistence on singular truth, her fragmented style “resist[s] the gravitational pull of the master signifier” (Braidotti 2002, 165). By shattering narrative coherence, she loosens the “despotic grip of language” (Braidotti 2002, 165), forcing readers to confront uncertainty and plurality. Her novels refuse neat closure and instead overflow with wonder and dissent. As one reviewer puts it, Tokarczuk reminds us that we intuitively perceive a world “full of secrets” and “impenetrable” facets (Novák 2024, 110). In this way, fragmentation and multiplicity become ethical gestures: by collapsing conventional boundaries between subjects, it situates the reader within an ontologically entangled web.

Ghosh’s narratives enact similar moves in a different idiom. His novels routinely situate diverse chronologies and genres in dialogue. *Gun Island*, for instance, interleaves a Bengali snake-goddess legend with Kolkata’s colonial past and a contemporary climate refugee’s journey (Ghosh 2019). Roy observes that Ghosh’s use of myth provides “a space to explore identity in the context of eco-precarity”, by giving nature and legend a kind of agency (Roy 2024, 190). Likewise, *The Hungry Tide* (2004) alternates between an American scientist, a Bengali translator, and the goddess Bon Bibi, juxtaposing marine biology with folklore. No single epistemology dominates; instead, science, history, and myth coexist in a continuum that subverts strict modernist causality.

Ghosh also weaves linguistic plurality into his form. Murshed Haider Choudhury notes that in *River of Smoke* “the language of the novel shifts to Chinese-English or pidgin” as the story moves into China (Ghosh 2011, 5). In *Sea of*

Poppies (2008), Indian dialects, French Creole, and English intermingle without translation. Ghosh even dramatizes translation failures – in a letter from *River of Smoke*, a character scolds a correspondent for rendering the French bâton-à-foc literally as “foc-stick”, correcting that the English should be “jib-boom” (Choudhury 2019, 6). These heteroglossic details evoke colonial contact zones and underscore that no single language can enclose reality, reflecting Bakhtinian heteroglossia and a decolonial scepticism of monolingual norms.

By such means, both authors enact what Ilaś calls counter-hegemonic storytelling – narratives that foreground “marginalized voices”, both human and nonhuman (9) to challenge extractivist ideologies. The result is an ethics of attentiveness and kinship: humans are never the sole protagonists, but are entwined with animals, spirits, and landscapes. Critics might worry that extreme fragmentation could alienate readers or weaken empathy. Yet in the posthuman frame this disruption is precisely the point. These novels do not offer tidy closure but gesture toward ongoing processes. As Nixon (2011) warns, true violence is often “incremental and out of sight” (2); only by unsettling narrative conventions can literature render that slow violence visible. In aligning form with ethical intent, Tokarczuk and Ghosh compel readers into co-creative world-making. Their polyvocal, time-shifting narratives are not just stylistically innovative – they are models of living-with, of re-imagining community in an age of interconnected crises.

Conclusion

Tokarczuk’s and Ghosh’s novels imaginatively reconfigure community, ethics, and identity beyond the confines of nationhood or human exceptionalism. Through mythic narratives and mnemonic geographies, they portray forms of life defined by relationality. In their worlds, a Silesian village and a Bengal delta can inhabit the same cosmos. Myth and memory serve not as safe retreats but as interfaces between cultures: in *The Books of Jacob*, Tokarczuk weaves Jewish, Muslim, and Christian cosmologies, while Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* centers Indian, African, and Chinese diasporas on a tea-trading ship. By entwining these local histories into global patterns, each author insists that all borders are porous and all stories interwoven.

These works advance several scholarly fields. *Flights* repeatedly figures mobility as an ethical and ontological condition, tracing how bodies in motion – whether dissected, preserved, or perpetually travelling – undo the fantasy of a stable,

sovereign human subject. First, in posthuman literary studies, they provide vivid instantiations of “becoming-with” and entanglement. Where theory alone can feel abstract, Tokarczuk’s and Ghosh’s novels ground posthuman ethics in concrete narratives. In *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*, the narrator’s uncompromising identification with hunted animals dramatizes posthuman “making kin” not as metaphor but as a risky, lawtransgressing practice that destabilizes human exceptionalism. Haraway’s call to “make kin” across species is dramatized in *Drive Your Plow*, and Barad’s notion of entangled agencies is palpable in Ghosh’s cosmologically scaled plots. Secondly, in decolonial ecocriticism, their texts resonate deeply. Both authors decentre Western epistemologies by elevating subaltern knowledges: Tokarczuk foregrounds Silesian folklore and Central European taboo histories, while Ghosh resurrects Indian legends and oral traditions. In doing so, they mirror Huggan and Tiffin’s argument that environmental criticism must integrate the postcolonial perspective. Thirdly, in transnational comparative literature, our analysis underscores the value of cross-cultural dialogue. Tokarczuk (Polish) and Ghosh (Indian) write in different languages and contexts, but their affinities suggest a truly *transcultural ecocriticism*. Comparing Slavic and South Asian narrative ecologies – both shaped by empire, migration, and shared environmental crises – opens new avenues for thinking about global literary networks and solidarity.

This study also points to future directions. One is to engage more deeply with indigenous and marginalized epistemologies. How might African, Latin American, or Pacific myth-scapes resonate with or diverge from those in Tokarczuk and Ghosh? Another is to bridge with plant/animal studies and multispecies ethnography, examining how literature can shape our perception of nonhuman others. For example, one could analyze how Tokarczuk’s tree narrators or Ghosh’s cetacean ports-influence readers’ ecological imaginations. Finally, scholars might map transnational literary ecologies more fully – for instance, tracing how Polish Romanticism or Russian cosmism influenced contemporary ecofiction, or vice versa. In all cases, the principles of posthuman relationality and decolonial critique will guide new comparative work.

Tokarczuk and Ghosh have shown that literature itself can become a catalyst for imagining alternative futures. By entwining myth, memory, and ecological awareness, their narratives prefigure communities that are simultaneously cosmopolitan and grounded in place, scientific and enchanted. *Flights* turns airports, trains, and anatomical cabinets into experimental maprooms of a deterritorialized planet, while *Drive Your Plow* re-enchants a marginal Polish borderland as a site where animals, weather and astrological forces co-author history. They help us envision a world in

which borders are permeable, nonhumans have voices, and diverse knowledges cohere in mutual respect. Their work thus contributes to a *transcultural* posthumanism – one rooted in many traditions and oriented toward collective survival in a time of planetary change. It remains for readers and scholars to heed their example: to continue weaving such storyscapes and cultivating the multilayered kinships they offer.

Ultimately, both authors highlight the interconnection between mythic memory and ecological instability in the lived realities of their characters. Ghosh's tides "give birth to the forest" only to erase all human boundaries overnight. At the same time, Tokarczuk insists that myths are not some forgotten relics of the past but rather "building materials" for the present. Their combined texts also propose a transformative narrative ethics that is sensitive to vulnerability and planetary interconnectedness. While Tokarczuk and Ghosh provide alternative imaginaries, they also urgently need decolonial modes of inhabiting the world through multispecies kinship, migratory geographies, and cosmological time. It is only fitting that their literary cartographies become acts of reorientation toward Earth's nonhuman entities and toward more inclusive futures of belonging.

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Received: 2025-07-21; reviewed 2025-10-19; accepted 2025-11-02

DOI doi.org/10.64867/pjes.25435981.25.112.1091
