Keynote Address
Nostalgia, Wonder and Terror: An Examination of Differing and Distancing Landscapes in Literature and Arts

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When Achilles sent his first arrow, the Greek soil of Trojan was not ripe for creating a land of flowers emanating beautiful smell. The land was dry and sordid. Many times, in the legends, we find constant escapes of the heroes to unknown land and *The Odyssey* has a number of instances that constitute the pre-landscape conditions. Before the landscapes, I ask myself, what was the land? How different it was both in terms of our perception and knowledge? How different was the land as of now and how fascinating and crude that appeared before the onlookers? How perceptible it was when the great writers of legends saw them? And how different was it when it appeared in their dreams?

Homer, as we know, perhaps was the first writer who canvassed a big battle in his mind that could ever take place in a land, which later would turn into not one but several landscapes in Western literature. The Trojan War was perhaps the first war ever fought anticipating many nations and later nationalisms. If in the West, Trojan War was the one that gave us the idea of the land and its surroundings, in the East, the Classics of course, had the power to locate the landscape before the wars that were fought on the land. Both in *Mahabbharat*, *Ramayan* and in *Chilappathikaram*, we have references of landscapes, where some women used to go for a small sojourn, departing from their courts accompanied by fellow women. It was in those landscapes, gardens surrounding them, that love and romance flourished. Later, much later, the drive toward bigger lands where war is staged began. Kurukshetra, the land where the great *Mahabharat* war was supposed to have been fought, it should be remembered here, carried memories of several landscapes before its beginning. In other words, inside the Kurukshetra, we had many landscapes.

One cannot probably guess since when landscapes became part of human imagination. But one can definitely assume that landscapes were the spaces/places where one used to look at with

wonder since time immemorial. The classical times and the Greco-Roman civilizations had provided different facets of landscapes connected to the expansion of empires and furthermore, to resist their enemies. The lengthy songs in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* give us graphic illustrations of the same. With Christendom, landscapes began to change a lot with respect to the great exodus that followed after that and in some sense before that also. The Jews were the first to wander all over the globe for trade and transaction, thus exploring the landscapes and later settling on their fringes. The terrible attitude nurtured against the Jews by many religions made them parochial and never allowed them to inhabit the landscapes. The Wandering Jew, therefore, always settled on the peripheries of landscapes. This Jew, later in the 20th century was crucified to maximum, annihilated in the concentration camps and much later in our time, is still hunted and haunted by religious fanaticisms. However, it should not be forgotten that their tales always became part of literature. Right from the Renaissance depiction of Jews by Shakespeare and Marlowe in *Merchant of Venice* and *Edward II* to the powerful depiction of them by Eugene Sue in *The Wandering Jew* and later in the novel by Stefan Heyn.

What separated the Classical times from the later period is not just periodization as the great historian of the Annales school Jacques Le Joff said, but the collective identity based on myths, and more particularly on myths of origin, the prestige of the leading families that is expressed by genealogies, and the technical knowledge that is transmitted by practical formulas that are deeply imbued with religious magic" (58). The Roman poet, Virgil described the Arcadia as the home of pastoral simplicity. The early landscapes in literature, no doubt owed a lot of things to this pastoral culture spread across many lands and island in the world. In such an Arcadia as depicted in Classical literature, we find the harmonious balancing of nature. The pastoral landscapes have been percolating into poetry, drama and other sub-genres, if not in novel properly, since a long time. Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Milton's *Comus*, Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* and the burlesques written by John Gay had all the pastoral elements. The same pastoral underwent significant changes in the late eighteenth century, where writers giving importance to its notations began to think and construct anti-pastoral poetry depicting landscapes. But this did not mean that the pastoral did

not thrive for a long time. Again, we come across the swinging of the pendulum back to the Classical times. The need to preserve the Classical values began to get debated over the centuries and I think, this aspect significantly affected the culture of landscapes in literature. What primarily constituted the interest for the idyllic landscapes are the innocence of nature and beauty (even though not in an aesthetic sense) related to that. The idyllic landscapes had a long continuation in literatures all over the globe for a long time. I must admit here that the Industrial revolution or the later Romanticism that followed it could not completely alter the scope and space of idyllic landscapes. The real concept of the landscapes as spaces of vast swathes of land, however, started with the late seventeenth century. Parts of the globe whose nations have the land began to imagine the vast swathes of land to be a part of their imagination. This imagination, I must admit, is not a teleological one. On the other hand, this imagination constituted ideas of expansion, migration and cohabitation. After the Renaissance, the revival of Classical literature added to such imagination by turning its eyes to the Greco-Roman times and later to the fundamental question of making the land an important place for survival. One can find the urge to be in such landscapes in the writings of Alexander Pope and a few others.

The first landscape paintings came from France in the seventeenth century and most of these paintings owed a lot to the Roman landscapes. The significant impact of the Roman landscapes on European painters, needless to say, showed their interest in the Roman civilization, culture and attitudes. In the Neo- Classical times, taste was an important aspect that seeped in the landscape paintings. The presence of several European painters in Rome during the seventeenth century significantly contributed to the development of the landscape paintings genre. Albrecht Durer drew many landscape paintings, starting with his 1521 views of the lower hills. In Annibale Caracci's *The Sacrifice of Abraham*, we find the religious tensions mixed with the ideas of art. As the seventeenth century was not free from several religious persecutions and divisions, the landscape in literature and in arts also became a conscious or unconscious depiction of such things. In the painting of Caracci, the centerpiece is a tree precariously growing at the edge of a precipitous bluff, with its twisted roots laid bare by erosion. The artist gives attention to the haze surrounding the low mountains in the

distance and to the white clouds floating over the horizon. The scene of Abraham about to bring down the dagger around the neck of Isaac is unobtrusively lodged in the top left corner. This painting, undoubtedly, gave a larger dimension to the Biblical tale and related it to the wider dimensions of human landscape stating that sacrifices are not just tales of the canon, but of the landscapes. Jan Both, one of the important Italianate of the Dutch landscapists, painted a number of golden light pictures, which highlighted the Mediterranean Europe more than the religiously ridden and striven European lands.

The Flemish landscape painters, on the other hand, started viewing the landscapes as an engagement with a separate reality, the reality of mind, which again is a matter of contention for the modern art historians. Paul Biril and Peter Paul Rubens evolved their styles from Mannerist painters such as Bruegel. Peter Brrugel's *A Forest at Dawn with a Deer Hunt*, thus attracted the early imagination of several literary writes who wanted to depict a forest in words. In this painting, we see not a dense forest, but a thick one, wherein the European hunter feels like meandering in search of deer. Though the painting has the motif to talk about the deer hunt, not a single deer can be seen in the painting. On the other hand, we find in the brown and dark colored canvas, the dense trees and an uprooted tree from the hedge of the soil. Both in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, Samuel Richardson invites us along with his usual themes of adventure, virtue and attitude. When novel began as a new genre in the West in the eighteenth century, most of the novelists had the landscape paintings in their minds to steer their literary imagination. The novel took the motif of journey, a fact rarely explored by the literary historians and theorists in our time from the landscape paintings.

Aelbert Cyup's *Herdsmen with Cows* is a powerful painting that invites our attention to the simplicity of nature, which later became a contested theme for the later Romanticists. The Dutch countryside shown in the painting is absolutely enriching and serene. The employment of light and shadow in this painting is noteworthy. Over the foreground ridge, distant mountains can be seen beyond a meandering river glimpsed through the glowing mist. Connecting this painting to the journey of Joseph Andrews would look pervasive for some of you. Joseph's journey to London

exemplifies the journey through several landscapes and thick roads populated with bandits and thieves and Parson Adams, his sole companion internalizes the serenity of these landscapes. But in the eighteenth century, the real dimension of landscapes began to change with respect to colour and perspective in Western painting. One never can forget the paintings of Thomas Gainsborough's *The Wooden Landscape with a Peasant Sitting* anticipated the major landscape paintings of Turner and the Romanticism of the nineteenth century. In this painting, which attracted Turner as well as the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and others, we see the tree canopies and clouds and a peasant sitting alone. It is significant to note that the face of the peasant is not very prominent in this painting. The figure is a bit distanced and in the background a house or church can be seen indistinctively. John Constable's *The Cenotaph to the Memory of Joshua Reynolds* is a remarkable painting which brought to the surface the serenity of the country estate with a beautiful deer looking at us in the foreground. This painting attracted Shelley very much. This painting articulated the desire of the landscape as far as the 18 th century women were concerned traveling in a coach, looking at the sprawled landscape where they wanted to migrate. Landscapes, thus provided a new imaginative realm for the eighteenth-century women, particularly the aristocratic women travelers in the coach, to express their desire for migration and stay. In some sense, they brought a discourse to their stultified space inside houses as domestic women. It also must be remembered that landscape literature began to challenge the male centric notions of women's views and gave a wide platform for their survival.

Set against the principles of scientific rationalism and progress, the intellectual movement of Romanticism attempted to reinvent nature based on some principles. These principles, mostly philosophical, propagated by Schiller, Schiller and Immanuel Kant found their expression in the way the human subject looked at nature. Nature, no more turned out to be a space where man inhabits, on the contrary what she/ he recreates. The best poetry of William Wordsworth was written when he was twenty years old. He never abandoned the vocabulary of the picturesque viewing and judging when he wrote:

While here I stand, not only with the sense

Of pleasant pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts

That in this moment there is life and food

For Future years. (*Collected Poems*, 78)

"Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" was the birth of a new Romantic subject, which changed the ways of human perception. On the one hand, we see the young poet describing nature and landscape plainly; on the other hand, we see him distancing him from the past of nostalgia. Caspar David Friedrich's *The Wanderer above a Sea of Fog* situates the realm of the nineteenth century traveler as internalized earlier by Wordsworth. As the painting depicts clearly the alienation of man from nature by urban dwellers of the industrial cities, the Romantic poets, in their attitude offered a strong critique of the industrial cities that came into existence.

The ineffable character of sensory experience and the effusion of utterance constitute the challenging parameters of Coleridge's landscape. As Friedrich Schlegel says, "one cannot speak of poetry except in the language of poetry" (qtd. in Colley) seems to be the crux of Coleridge's peregrinations into the wild world of landscapes. Between 1784 and 1805, Coleridge used to walk profusely in the countryside capturing images, sights and talking to the peasants and farmers. Unlike Wordsworth, he saw this landscape as a constantly transforming one. Ann C. Colley is right when she says that "the feet registered the spatial measurement of the landscape" (17). Coleridge's poetry fused the eighteenth-century traditions of retrieving a personal consistency endangered in his daily life. His differences from Wordsworth apart, his walks inaugurated the idea that landscapes need not just to be seen from somewhere, but to be explored. Much of his landscape descriptions, I strongly contend, are attempts to control his instable authority. The Romantics, thus challenged the way to perceive the landscape, in poetry, letters and in practice. But one question still needs to be answered. Did they free the people around, particularly the peasants and the working class with their poetry? Did Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and others liberate the readers and those around into the

landscapes? This question, perhaps not answerable in their times, can be seen in the internalized ruminations of the French thinker Jean Jacques Rousseau in the late eighteenth century.

In *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, Rousseau gives us moments of palpitations of ecstasy and energy of the landscapes. Rousseau's attempts can be seen as an extension of Coleridge's and it was he who probed into the inner depths of the Self in the Western philosophy for the first time more than his companions. In the Fifth Walk, Rousseau tells us: "But it must be admitted that this happened much more easily and agreeably in a fertile and lonely island, naturally circumscribed and cut off from the rest of the world, where I saw nothing but images of delight, where there was nothing to recall painful memories, where the company of the few people who lived there was attractive and pleasing without being interested enough to absorb all my attention, and where I could devote the whole day without care or hindrance to the pastimes of my choice or to the most blissful indolence"(91). Here we find the intense interiorization of the Subject. Slowly, Rousseau develops a distaste toward the mankind and he writes: "I know that mankind will never let me return to this happy sanctuary, where they will not allow me to remain" (91). Thus, we see how the thinkers began to drive away from the landscape as haven to the interior landscape, which turned the philosophical rumination of the eighteenth century. It must be remembered here that landscape from the idea of nostalgia was turning into a space of investigation with Rousseau. There are several histories of the landscape and the inhabiting - in the constant travels—by Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche and many others. This transformation of landscape is best outlined by Raymond Williams's powerful book *The Country and the City*. Williams argues that the stabilization of the pastoral form in English, especially in the construction of the golden age of English pastoral between the sixteenth and the eighteen centuries, involved, both in creative and scholarly glosses, several layers of erasure. Permanent and idyllic country life, often portrayed with the twinge of longing, erased a multitude of changes in English history and thus effectively mystified the consolidation of the forces of capitalist agriculture.

While nostalgia and wonder constituted the early elements of landscape in literature and in arts, with modernity and scientific rationality and with the emergence of the new empires, this began to change. The capitalist culture and the effective mechanisms of changing the land and agriculture, I would argue, changed the landscape with selfish interests. The tillers disappeared, those who were seen in the countryside fast moved into the cities, whose resonances can be seen in Victorian literature and in the novels of Charles Dickens. The first sound of the chopper appearing on the Italian country side in the First World War, made the shepherds and the flocks flee. As the War began to change its dimensions from the use of the animals to machines, the trenches, the fields, and other battle grounds began to turn into spaces of emptiness. A survey of the landscapes of the West and even of the East would give us the gory pictures of disappearances and bloodbaths. The rise of States and the emerging ideologies have distorted the space of communities reliant on honest labour. The Whites or the Aryans as colonial masters and detectors effectively erased every trace of the Black bodies from these landscapes. The literary language became "petrified" in some sense as the wonder of the landscape is far removed. One can see this reflected in the novels of Flaubert and later in Leo Tolstoy. Much later, in the Bloomsbury school, this disappearance of wonder was explicated by Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster. Idleness becomes a trope in their texts, marking the discursive limit where the protocols of desire break down in search of difference in mute world. In other words, this is the beginning of the rise of the "mental landscapes." In most of her fiction, Woolf tried to create these "mental landscapes/ spaces" to articulate the feminine and the desire. This mental landscape, which is continuing in a variety of ways, is part of both modern and postmodern phases of literary landscapes.

One must remember here that it is the enlightened modernity that paved the way for colonialism. The colonial agendas of the advanced nations had in them the idea not just to loot and plunder, but to shape the landscape and its inhabitants according to their desire. The wealth and tranquility of the landscape began to take a different shape as the colonies began to expand in many parts of the globe including India, Caribbean islands and in South Africa. The rootedness of the natives and the immense torment undertook by the Blacks have a lot to offer us in conjunction with

the postcolonial ways of looking at the landscapes. Attempting to analyze the postcolonial pastoral, Sarah Casteel argues that mere agendas of the British to create plantations the work places for the slaves did not produce the sense of domination, but the interlinking aspect of producing "rural England the ideal home" (*Second Arrivals*, 25-60). The construction of the rural England as the haven was the major agenda of the nineteenth century British political imagination. Needless to say, most of the nineteenth century narratives roamed around the same idea, which became a part of the late Romanticism in the British writing.

Here, I would like to theorize the literary landscape of modernism. Landscape as a totalizing system of inclusion falters at this precise moment of the capitalist greed and plantation economy, in the face of global migration through slavery and indenture. Modern landscapes, I argue, are the belated territories and the spaces of exclusion engineered by the colonial mentalities. This socio-political feature of the modern landscapes appears differently in the literatures of the West and the East. It is interesting to ask in this context that when Munshi Premchand, the progressive Hindi writer wrote *Godaan*, was he really looking at land or the landscape? The constant exploitation of the landless became part of the migration desire to the landscapes by many writers. Even Rabindranath Tagore understood this desire, though his concern with nature and landscapes were different. When cities like Manchester became the Industrial cities benefiting the needs of capitalist culture, in the undivided India, during colonialism, landscapes were used for hunting the wild animals by the colonial masters. The stories of Rudyard Kipling offer us many examples. In Africa, the landscapes were internally perceived for energizing their folklores and beliefs by writers like Amos Tutuola, but it was seriously plundered and looted by the European counterparts for creating their castles. Colonialism, I state, destabilized the wonder and nostalgia of landscapes. What we see in the paintings of Constable and Turner as "turbulent landscapes" of nature became the landscapes of terror in the hands of the colonial masters. The later stages of British colonialism and the two brutal partitions of the country have turned the imagination of literary and artistic landscapes a lot. Ritwick Ghatak's *Titash Ek Ti Nadir Naam* (*Titash, the Name of the River*) depicts such partitioned landscape in the

light of Bangladesh partition. The land and lives of women, no doubt, marked this movie as one of the prototypes of Indian feminist movies. While Ghatak was too occupied with landscapes for portraying the suffering of the poor, Satyajit Ray in his *Apu Trilogy* portrayed the rural landscape and suffering of the poor more descriptively. Both their languages were more literary than any other literary text.

In the partitioned country, the act of of remembering is compulsorily tied with the act of forgetting. In the stories of Sadat Hasan Manto, we see the city landscapes emerging as areas of seclusion and danger. Manto in his stories dismantles the notion of the urban space as a safe haven and instils in us the idea of danger and unpredictability. Ayesha Jelal looks at partition as "a defining moment that is neither beginning nor end" (24). David Gilmartin in his essay "Partition, Pakistan and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative" opens up the difficulty of articulating the history of "high history" and "popular violence." This dispossession of land and vulnerability are cited in a popular song:

> Oh dear kin, you have visited our home after a long time
>
> What shall I offer you here at my place?
>
> I have neither roof nor hearth
>
> Selling of all my possessions, are bereft of all savings
>
> I left my homeland because of partition. (*The Journal of Asian Studies*, 1068-95)

These lines mark not just the pain of leaving the rural landscapes and homes, but the tragedy of being nowhere without a landscape. A score of literature in the post-independent Indian writing deal with the issue of homelessness, which in some sense, is also the lack of landscapes. One cannot forget here the verse of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, the greatest Urdu poet who had several literary lives internalizes landscapes in pain and angst. Faiz tried to recreate the long-lost landscape in the form of love.

> Of the long days when I knew you could not come
>
> Don't ask if I thought of you or missed you very much.
>
> Your memory alone fills the wellspring of my mind

But it is not the same as your lips, your arms and your touch. (Benin)

The sense of modern loss is resurging in these lines. However, the real sense of terror emanating from the landscape, I argue, is the post-war phenomenon. In the Western literature, one can point out endless writings articulating this. Jerzy Kosinsky's controversial novel *The Painted Bird* portrays the life of a boy wandering among the barrels, trenches and the unknown forces during the time of the Holocaust. The Holocaust created landscapes of terror and aversion. When Auschwitz was declared as a museum for posterity, one never can forget the terror it perpetrated by murdering thousands of Jews all over the world. W.G. Sebald in *The Rings of Saturn* offers us the picture of a juxtaposition–the shoal of fish and the concentration camp at Bergen–Belsen. Highlighting the decay of the landscape, Sebald writes: "An idiosyncrasy peculiar to the herring is that, when dead, it begins to glow; this property, which resembles phosphorescence and is yet altogether different, peaks a few days after death and then ebbs away as the fish decays" (*The Rings of Saturn*, 58). By juxtaposing the human bodies and fish, Sebald highlights how the postmodern landscapes are constructed out of the modern photography.

The studded landscapes of ruin and destruction began to threaten the globe in many ways. Where exactly can one find space for travel is the question. Wim Wenders's movies throw open some of the powerful questions of such landscapes. Based on the melancholy life of a person taken from the novel *The Anxiety of the Goalie Before the Penalty Kick* by Peter Handke, Wenders translates such landscape into the post-War situation of man's existence. His *Kings of the Road* projects another long travel by two companions, who desire, never reach out the object of desire, in some Lacanian sense. One must never forget here T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men," who are spiritually void and the "the cactus land/ Here the stone images/ Are raised, here they receive/ The supplication of a dead man's hand/ Under the twinkle of a fading star" (Selected *Poems*, 76). Eliot's lines were the precursors of the post-War torn spaces, which created unassuming fear and dread of spaces in post-War Europe.

In 2001, when the twin towers of New York collapsed by the Taliban attack, the dimensions of the urban landscape began to change radically. This was the siren call for a new urban space, irretrievable from the past. Following this vernacular art appeared everywhere – on the walls, vehicles, houses and on tombstones. In Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, the survivor lawyer of 9/11 constructs a terrorized interior space, that turns out to be his landscape. In the weeks that followed September 11, 2001, the American writers were twisted in their imagination as even the thought of constructing a landscape disappeared. Fredric Jameson denounced the US media for orchestrating a "dissociation of sensibility" (297) through countless "unrealistic visuals" (297). Jean Baudrillard also accused the media of supervising the images of the event. Paul Auster in his later fictions changed the strategy of describing the American landscapes from the pedestrian and mapped spaces to the space of a new American man, full of fear, but not of dignity. Ethically and socially, I argue that 9/11 changed the human imagination of landscapes. The urban landscape becomes the spaces of inclusiveness and terror since 9/11.

Ever since the 9/11, all of us are on the throes of fear. This fear, I would say, is not the fear of the enemy, but the fear of multiple systems that obstruct our daily existence. After the brilliant fictions written by Mohsin Hamid, Don DeLillo and Paul Auster, we have the threat of the landscapes all over the globe, which might get destroyed by a variety of systems including the drones, airplanes and even by a virus of the pandemic. Where do the aborigines and adivasis go in this uneven world of ours? The visual song of the aborigines is well captured by the poet Haynes. The sense of embeddedness of the land is suggested here. The emotions are the results of inter-subjectivity. Emebeddedness, connections and rootedness are the hallmarks of the aboriginal writers and they show their relationship with the landscape. If land is the beginning of the human genealogies, one never can get separated from it. In the age of Anthropocene, where man is the creator of nature and natural causes, the literary landscapes, needless to say, are better drawn by the aboriginal writers. John Barrel's idea of the landlords looking at the land and the inhabitants far disappearing is the cause and effect of the Anthropocene literature. The literature from the Global South traces the individuals, families and

ancestors in connection with the landscapes. Simon J Ortiz articulates this in many of his poetry collections. Ortiz's poems, which belong to the genre of ethno-*poiesis* invoke the need to retrace the lost steps in the landscapes. Where did our ancestral memories disappear is a question addressed in these poems. The Irish poet Eavan Boland in "Witness" writes:

> What is a colony
> If not a brutal truth
> that when we speak
> the graves open
> And the dead walk? (Eavan)

In this powerful poem, the worn-down mountains imply a familiarity and fondness for the landscapes as the narrator has trodden the mountain paths many times in her life. While Boland's poem sets a pathetic tone of disappearances in the age of Anthropocene and landscapes, Linda Hogan in "The Sandhills" offers us another possibility of reconstructing landscapes with respect to the natural causes. She writes:

> The language of cranes
> We once were told
> Is the wind. The wind
> is their method,
> their current, their translated story
> of life they write across the sky. (Hogan)

The traces here are the "ancestral longing." The wind is the translator and arguer. I remember Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry in this context. Mahapatra in his luminous verse defied the rules of writing poetry just by adoring nature. In some sense, he was following Derek Walcott's footsteps of nativism. Walcott's "Sea is History" is a classic example to be remembered here. Mahapatra in "The Captive Air of Chandipur-on- Sea" recontextualizes the desire of the natives with a twinge of alienation.

However vague the past may be, Mahapatra tries to articulate the desire of "recapturing" every inch of movement in the ocean.

The human actions, thus, reshape landscapes and literary imaginations in our time. The new genre of fiction called "calciferous fiction" addresses the terrible consequence of climate change and landscapes. Though in its puberty, this fiction has immense possibility of suggesting the coming up of a new age. Next to this is the issue of Geo-trauma. Geo trauma is inflicted by human actions. In fact, by human brutality. Everything in the land shrinks. The history of colonization and slavery has uprooted the lands of many; then how can we have a cogent idea of landscapes? The poem "The Bend in the River" by Bob Crank begins with an observer looking at the glacial river. The woman is a glacial woman, who occupies the glacial time, which is far different from ours. The poem highlights the human and the non-human, the disappearance of all and many and the serious erosions and other questions, the river faces. As we know, the river banks were the primary sites of human civilization. This can be seen in the river's movements and the different cultures that thrived on the banks of Tapti, Ganga, Yamuna, Nile and even Godavari. If one looks at the cultures of landscapes, one never can separate the rivers that flowed close to many landscapes. One remembers here how the early modernity in America changed the course of lives as exemplified in the poetry of Hart Crane. Anthropocene and global cultures have the potential to change the landscapes in their own ways. Survival instincts are the basic questions. Stephen Baxter's novel *Evolution* has further accentuated this point by giving us the speculative ideas of the change of the landscapes. Baxter's collection reminds us of a dark dystopia of landscapes, far ahead than the terror, fear and dread associated with them. The plot becomes a site and the land becomes a national plan of bureaucratization. Nature transforms the wilderness. The Australian poet, John Kinsella has tried to look at this question by seriously changing the contours of the landscapes with colonization. Kinsella's poem "Idyllatry" brings into focus the pastoral ridden by the unassuming forces of colonization – "a tractor's roar underscores/ heavy going ground" (45). Can the aboriginal community be safe in their landscapes is the biggest challenge in our time. Wu Ming Yi's Taiwanese novel *The Man with the Compound Eyes*

has descriptions of unstable and mobile trash island, to be precise the Pacific garbage vortex. The artificial landmasses of the congealed plastic and the other non-biodegradable waste serve the image of the nomadic itinerary. It must be remembered here that associated with the literary landscapes, there is a big history and culture of the nomads. Similar concerns are voiced by the American novelist Rick Bass in *The Hermit's Story*, where we have the issues of Ann, who disturbingly tells the narrative of difficulty as the nature turns out to be too calamitous for Gray Owl and a set of other inhabitants. The gleaming ribs of Ann's buried dogs symbolize the pathetic side of the post-industrial landscape, where one is forced to adjust with super calamities and modalities of survival.

The recent scholarship on waterscape has immensely helped many writers across the world to give attention to the changing parameters of the landscape in relation to water. If at all a next world war occurs, one should not be in any illusion that it would be based on the idea of sharing water between the continents and some countries. Asif Aslam Farukkhi's dystopic story "Stealing the Sea" (originally published with the title "Samandar ki Chor") offers us a powerful picture of the dread of those who live in the coastal belt as their ocean disappears one day. Where the ocean disappeared, a "huge crater" (17) appears, which systematically affects the lives of the milkman, peddlers, street vendors and a few others. E. Swyngedouw elaborates this idea further to foreground that the fluidity of water is more than everything that affects the landscape and hence water is not just something that is constantly in flux, but the greatest constituent of land and lives that perpetually moves through "physical geographies, but also cultural, social and symbolic landscapes" (77). Landscapes, it must be noted, change their contours with respect to the ways in which water overpower the space, which ultimately becomes a concern with everyone in the global time. The global catastrophe related to the waterscape is a deepening threat to landscapes all over the planet.

I would like to conclude this lecture by glancing at some of the serious apprehensions I have been keeping in mind for some time. We have seen how landscapes in the evolutionary history of human beings and in the literary history of this planet have been transforming, translating and playing the role of inclusion and exclusion of the humans and other inhabitants. The wide array of literatures

in the Global South – particularly from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan have been marking the landscapes in our turbulent times. We live in an age of fanaticism, technological control, surveillance and other horrific conditions. While the blanket of fear upon us is too hazy to get removed, we are into an age of AI (Artificial Intelligence) wherein the machine, which is infused with the same passions and movements control the labour of the humans. Artificial intelligence operates with algorithms and a sarsen of spurious data. You have a set of equipment and the target here. Artificial Intelligence will produce grids of intelligibility related to affect and super control. In this age of artificial intelligence, when the robot walks on the landscape or rather enters the landscape, will it have the power to reorient the glory of what we had seen in the golden days of the human landscapes? How will a robot converse with a shepherd like Comus of John Milton? How can a robotic intelligent human talk to a woodpecker, a cow or to a rabbit? What would be the ontological status of the AI interventions in the landscapes and how would that appear in literatures?

Apart from the above questions I raised the real challenge before us: would AI create landscapes of its own? If so, how can a writer, thinker and philosopher inhabit such landscapes? The META, which is already there in our WhatsApp and Facebook, has already tracked all our movements. The ChatGPT, which is another form of information is ready to produce a landscape needed in its own way. Regarding the AI images, Melanie Mitchell argues, "It's hard not to be dazzled, but may be a bit stunned, that a machine can take in images in the form of raw pixels and produce such accurate captions" (270). The towering landscapes in our time, created and re-created, are going to change their parameters. AI invades the landscape of literary imagination. The time has come that our writers need to be aware of the machine colonization of human mind. AI can never recreate the landscape in its physicality, but it can reconstruct something for our satisfaction, or for its own satisfaction. Where would our birds flow? Where would our hyenas, tigers and antelopes disappear? Into which skies do the birds fly? If the Mephistopheles entered into a contract with Dr. Faustus, in the age of AI our literary landscapes would be places of terrible inhabitations. We are at the fringe of an emotional collapse. From the barren strings of making ourselves rise, would we step

into another imagination when our poetry, novels and plays be written by the AI? Only time will answer this. Till then, we are into the layers of imagination of mutual coexistence, turbulence and romance of our landscapes – both physical as well as those provided by literatures all over the globe.

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