

## **Return: A Manifesto for Placial Humanities**

To imbue life with meaning is fundamental in an otherwise restless and anguished existence, where theorization often emerges as a perceived saviour. Yet, the crises facing our hyper-industrialized society—such as the misrecognition of micro-identities, climate change, global terrorism, artificial intelligence, the epidemic of misinformation, and the alienation of labor—have paradoxically become victims of over-theorization. This tendency has, in turn, overshadowed alternative avenues of knowledge such as experience, intuition, and narrative.

The Humanities, or Human Sciences, are increasingly challenged not only in addressing these multifaceted crises but also in justifying their relevance in a world dominated by technological rationalism and consumerism. This paper explores these urgent dilemmas of human identity and the status of the Humanities, and proposes the paradigm of Placial Humanities as a plausible and sustainable response. By investigating the dynamic relationship between people and place, this approach seeks to reground both Humans and the Humanities in their immediate environments.

Drawing on the interdisciplinary strengths of Spatiality and Ecocriticism, the paper outlines a manifesto for Placial Humanities—an invitation to reclaim meaning, connection, and hope in an increasingly segmented world.

Keywords: Theorization, Narrative, Placial Humanities, Spatiality, Ecocriticism.

*The Condition of the Human and the Humanities Today*

21 The triumph of humans as the most dominant species on the planet spurred multitudes of  
22 intense avenues leading to serious discoordination on both intra and inter-species levels. Where,  
23 on the one hand, humans lost contact with their natural dwelling on the way to hyper-  
24 urbanization, they also threw upon themselves cut-throat competition and a system of nuclear  
25 families in total defiance to the core-essence of being—the interdependent and symbiotic milieu  
26 of existence. Besides the recent Corona pandemic, a global threat to humanity and a fallout of the  
27 ever-increasing intrusion into wildlife, deeper questions are revolving around the larger objective  
28 of the human race, its faulty model of vertical development, lack of clarity with regards to its  
29 micro identities and corrupt institutions of knowledge that have grown into business hubs and do  
30 not provide overall welfare. Therefore, it is imperative today to discuss these criticalities and  
31 bring forth some viable solutions for the sake of reinvention and sustenance of mankind.

32 The corporatization (read commodification) of higher education is dangerously degrading.  
33 Martha C. Nussbaum describes the crisis befallen Humanities as “the silent crisis” like cancer  
34 which remains unnoticed for a short period but does much damage to societies worldwide in the  
35 longer run (Nussbaum 1-2). Talking of the real purpose of education in general and especially  
36 humanities, Fish suggests that the core activity of a university is contemplation—an activity  
37 which, like virtue, has no end beyond itself (Fish). But the larger question arises: Can we remain  
38 immune to a world that insists on imposing an external yardstick to measure the value of  
39 humanities in terms of usability? That seems more like a rhetorical question since the answer is  
40 out there for everyone to see. We cannot “sell” humanities, Fish rightly argues, if by that we  
41 assume that it enjoys a unique place in the value chain.

42 Faced with such adversities, humanities are expanding its disciplinary horizon to fuse with other  
43 domains of knowledge. The exercises in research for interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary, and

44 transdisciplinarity in departments of Literature and others are pointers in the direction. Paul Jay  
45 calls this method of enhanced knowledge production and dissemination “engaged humanities”  
46 that wonderfully fuses distinct domains of knowledge to illuminate human life in ways that  
47 physical and even social sciences cannot (Jay 151). This discourse of “engaged humanities”,  
48 which we will refer to as “New Humanities”, exists in the space of the third culture that presents  
49 some radically new dimensions of understanding the physical, mental and emotional states of  
50 existence. It questions the basic assumptions of life and ways of thinking as well. The project of  
51 New Humanities that will be discussed in the paper does a two-fold job—critical and  
52 constructive. On the one hand, it describes the crisis of the times and then also provides some  
53 insightful prescriptions for revamping.

#### 54 **1. The Crisis in Human Condition**

55 Humans reinvent themselves more than any other species on the planet. Unlike other  
56 biological competitors, we have the longest span of learning, which suggests that in addition to  
57 our genetics, we are largely designed in terms of our cultural DNA. Berry suggests that the  
58 historical task of our times is to “reinvent the human”, with critical insights on species levels  
59 within the community of their dwelling “by means of story and shared dream experience” (Berry  
60 159). And these challenges today appear to be beyond the capacity and competence of the  
61 existing paradigm of understanding, and therefore the latter needs a significant shift.

62 Berry’s crisp presentation of the goals we are to achieve is very inclusive. Firstly, he suggests  
63 that since humans are endowed with the power of reason to shape and reshape our being, we  
64 must step out of the current state of impasse and do something about it. This change must be  
65 worked through cultures as the problem of “disenchantment of the world” is a universal

66 existential crisis. This reinvention of humans would then be in sync with the life systems along  
67 with the elixir, 'hope'. And all these goals may be delivered well through narratives and  
68 imaginative works. This kind of participation in the dream project of earth deserves immediate  
69 attention.

70 To suggest certain lacks, human psyche appears to be a "cognitive miser". With the least  
71 cognitive effort, it endeavors to negotiate the social world and define it. Labelling and  
72 stereotyping are some of the mind's effort-saving strategies as to what does not fit into its  
73 classification is termed an aberration. This "ubiquitous blur" is the defining feature of our times  
74 which is due to the contradictory state of being—the cognitive miser has a world appetite—a  
75 desire to satisfy the intellectual thirst but fails bitterly due to the dynamicity of life that exceeds  
76 the limits of rationality often. However, to draw a roadmap for achieving the goals of reinvention  
77 of humans, we need to first identify and assess the crisis to be able to draw attention to the  
78 elephant in the room. Now let us explore in depth the zones of crisis paralyzing the modern man  
79 and woman.

#### 80 A. Faulty Perception of the Self:

81 Since long there has been a negative understanding of human nature prevailing in the society  
82 that human beings are inherently selfish and evil beneath a thin layer of civilization. Many great  
83 thinkers of the Western tradition presented their different versions of the veneer theory of  
84 civilization. Rutger Bregman through his latest book, *Humankind: A Hopeful History* (2020)  
85 challenges this nocebo theory through the critique of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1951).  
86 Researching on real life *Lord of the Flies*—the shipwrecked boys from Ata, Burgman found that  
87 the boys civilized the terrain of their dwelling rather than turning themselves wild. But Since

88 Golding's book was published during the time of the second world war culminating in  
89 Auschwitz, where people were questioning the inherent goodness of human beings, his work  
90 provided an answer so creatively that he won the Noble Prize for being a realist par excellence  
91 (Burgman 24). Reading or watching such works makes people more aggressive and violent, since  
92 the kind of stories we read has a great impact on our world views. So, it is a pressing time for us  
93 to tell a different story to the world to have a different effect.

94 B. Alienation and Logocentric Society:

95 Almost a hundred years ago, Max Weber argued that too much rationalization in modern  
96 times has led to "disenchantment of the world". The Enlightenment movement that dominated  
97 Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, centred around the idea of reason, rationality, and logic as the primary  
98 source of knowledge. However, Bregman questions and dismantles the popular understanding  
99 that we humans are supreme beings because of our brains and power of intelligence. Since most  
100 of the skills we learn in life are from others and other animals like Chimpanzees and Orangutans  
101 are far better in spatial understanding and calculations. What makes us truly human is our  
102 "passion". The enlightenment philosophy, therefore, appears to be limiting as it does not account  
103 for the essential feature of human — emotions. The concept of alienation discussed by Karl  
104 Marx is even more crucial to understand today as the majority of individuals feel estranged from  
105 one's milieu, work or even self. And this estrangement is guided by either incomprehensibility or  
106 meaningless redundant activities of life. This lack of fulfilment in beings is also because of the  
107 faulty paradigm of their developmental model.

108 C. Unconscious Micro Identities:

109 Individuals can belong in concrete and abstract ways to a diverse group of things, from a  
110 specific group to the whole human species. Belongingness, however is not just about the  
111 construction of identities per se, but how these are valued and judged. The politics of belonging  
112 is “the dirty work of boundary maintenance” (N. Y. Davis 204). While on the one hand, identity  
113 does provide strength to character and pride, making us do things way beyond our self-centred  
114 lives for the people of “our” group, the elixir turns poisonous when directed towards the  
115 outsiders. The hope of peace in the contemporary world is indeed predicated on a clearer  
116 understanding of the pluralities of human identity and cultivating an appreciation of this  
117 fuzziness that works against a sharp distinction along one single hardened line of impenetrable  
118 division. Humankind as “consciousness of earth,” needs to establish a new paradigm of human  
119 relationship, intellectually and emotionally cutting across artificial borders as “neither the  
120 colourless vagueness of cosmopolitanism nor the fierce self-idolatry of nation-worship, is the  
121 goal of human history” (Tagore 5).

122 D. Curtailed Existence—Lost Touch with Otherness:

123 The American psychologist Gordon Allport researched on the condition of apartheid in South  
124 Africa and found that it was not the lack of contact between blacks and white rather their  
125 mechanical and limited contact which was the cause of “racial differences”. Allport’s student  
126 Pettigrew carried forward this study on contact on different locales and found that contact works  
127 but real contact. Too little contact on the other hand, is dangerous. A diversified neighborhood is  
128 not immune to xenophobia; quite the reverse, it is more prone to prejudices since little  
129 knowledge is a dangerous thing. In the globalized world of ours, connected with technology and  
130 social media, prejudices and half-truths are more likely to circulate, and we are witnessing its  
131 ramifications.

132 In addition to the need for cooperation and contact on the human level, our species being also  
133 needs to retrieve its contact with the nonhuman. The central flaw of our times, it seems, has been  
134 the creation of this rift between human and nonhuman modes of being that has led to desouling.  
135 It is a shift from an organic economy to an extractive economy where modern centers of  
136 technology and commerce have sucked out renewable and non-renewable sources of energy for  
137 material gains. This process was initiated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and continues till today,  
138 collapsing our modern economy. Out of the vast storehouse of knowledge of human culture,  
139 history, science, religion, and philosophy, we need to now comprehend the crisis of our times and  
140 the promise of a new chapter in earth's history, of that of an Ecozoic era.

## 141 **2. The Crisis in Humanities**

142 The corporatization of higher education, however, seems to have endangered the humanities,  
143 which is measured on the yardstick of utility. The question then arises as to whether humanities  
144 are important because they foster valuable skills or because they constitute a body of knowledge  
145 to be preserved? Ikram Hili proposes that both are important. Since human beings need  
146 perspective as well as jobs (Hili 108). Humanities produce analytical skills, mastery of language,  
147 critical mind, aesthetic taste, and insights of history that might help to research in any field. It  
148 also helps to understand and engage with our society in a better way. But unfortunately, in  
149 today's times, we have our planet filled with technically trained people who though know how to  
150 make a profit but not how to make someone smile. With obtuse imagination, they are neither in a  
151 condition to challenge or criticize the government for its faulty policies nor can they accept  
152 different ways of thinking, thereby turning intolerant of others. Therefore, I will now discuss the  
153 diverse causes of crises in the discipline of humanities with a special focus on Literature to be  
154 able to save our planet from further degradation.

155 A. Flawed Understanding of Literature:

156 Literature, as one of the most crucial disciplines of humanities, has its standalone position of  
157 being also the most misunderstood. There originated two rival traditions with regards to  
158 Literature and Poetry, specifically during the period of the Classic Greeks and continue till today.  
159 The Platonic tradition, with reference to Plato's *Republic* (2007) considered Literature as a  
160 misinformed narrative that propagated false beliefs in people and made them irrational, whereas  
161 the Neoplatonic tradition extended from the later dialogues of Plato like *Ion* (2020) and  
162 *Symposium* (2003), exalted the position of Literature for great spiritual value. Aristotle, Plato's  
163 student, founded the middle ground, which can be called the humanistic tradition that pays  
164 respect to Literature for providing insights into human life and experiences. For him, it is neither  
165 trivial nor spiritual. What it begets is "reflective understanding" that is derived through  
166 translucency and extra-conceptual use of language that creates avenues for the immense  
167 possibility of creativity (Sayeed 21). Viktor Shklovsky's 1917 essay "Art as Device" makes a  
168 crucial argument with regards to the faulty parameters associated with Literature concerning its  
169 utility that completely debunks its aesthetic function. Shklovsky instead suggests that Literature  
170 works through connotations and not communicative urgency (Shklovsky 12). It is like strolling  
171 in the backdrop of other running discourses, which provides a "philosophical pause" to meditate  
172 upon the known but lesser understood beings in and around us.

173 B. Gap between Theory and Praxis:

174 Bell Hooks talks of the unfortunate condition of education institutes where there is a divorce  
175 between what we read and how we live. It makes the process of learning boring, less valuable,  
176 and not worthy. She instead suggests a revolutionary state of learning with regards to the

177 classroom that remains “the most radical space of possibility in the academy” (Teaching to  
178 Transgress 12). But there are challenges in every field, including domination in the field of  
179 theory. Certain sections of work are given privilege over others that are dismissed as being naïve  
180 and unworthy of theorization. The privileged works are often jargonistic and difficult to read,  
181 with abstract ideas that remain useless in practical usage. The theory here appears to be instead a  
182 kind of hurdle, an elitist, narcissistic hurdle in bringing about change in society. Therefore, the  
183 gap between theory and praxis should be minimized to bring in the real potential of theories in  
184 the workings of the world. A text, after all, is not merely a spectacle but a catalyst that feeds on  
185 reader's imagination to bring positive changes in society. As Toni Cade Bambara, the Latin  
186 American author, writes that the job of the writer is to make the revolution irresistible (Bambara  
187 18). Literature does not make revolution, but it can make revolution irresistible. By providing a  
188 world of make-belief with alternative models of existence that ensure liberty, equality and  
189 fraternity, it paves a wonderful way to practice freedom before it is actualized in the real world.

### 190 C. Postmodern Skepticism:

191 The hermeneutics of suspicion that began with the sceptic movement of Postmodernism in  
192 diverse fields of knowledge soon turned nihilistic and visionless. The American philosopher  
193 William James instead proposed the epithet “The Will to Believe” as a corrective measure  
194 against Bertrand Russel’s phrase “The Will to Doubt”. Jean Francois Lyotard, in his work *The*  
195 *Postmodern Condition*, defines it as an “incredulity towards metanarrative” (Lyotard xxiv). But  
196 since we have crises of global order around us like climate change, and war crimes, that needs  
197 serious interventions, so we need to think in terms of metanarrative. The time is now ripe,  
198 therefore, to bring into focus this larger horizon again that seems to have eclipsed under the  
199 enormity of smaller concerns. And we need to ask ourselves whether we are ready to take a

200 position beyond reality—within the realms of possibilities? We need to come out of this  
201 condition of postmodern vertigo to reorient our society.

## 202 Placial Humanities: A Post Theoretical Perspective

203 One of the greatest challenges of the postmodern epoch is hyper-individuality and decline in  
204 the experience of community—an organic nexus of active relations. This absolutist discourse of  
205 individual identity seems to have forgotten the crucial link between different components of  
206 communion that is important for the formation of the self itself. Violence in the name of identity,  
207 as already discussed in the previous section, is a highly misunderstood phenomenon where  
208 sectarian activists want the targeted people to ignore all other linkages that could moderate their  
209 loyalty to a marked “herd” that is seen as inevitably unique and belligerent. The proliferation of  
210 identity-related violence all over the world is a dangerous example of this politicization of  
211 identities. However, it is not to question the role of identity or its uniqueness, but rather to  
212 expose the deterministic tone of cultural theories that leaves no room for heterogeneity. The Jain  
213 doctrine of *Anekantavada* is helpful here in understanding which suggests that ultimate truth and  
214 reality are complex and multifaceted, and no one side can describe the whole nature of existence.  
215 It is good to therefore begin with the belief that identity is not a closed category. And the best  
216 way to deal with identity politics is to dismantle its essentialist definition from within and  
217 provide alternative truths of differences.

218 We need to differentiate here between two categories of identities: ideological and organic.  
219 Ideological identities, in short, are constructions based on rhetoric and ideation. For example,  
220 nation, gender, race, religion etc. The binaries created in these domains have outlived their  
221 usefulness, and we are now experiencing hyphenated identities. For example, androgyny,

222 LGBTQ, colourful identities like African-American etc. Organic identities, on the other hand, are  
223 non-rhetorical that cannot be hyphenated as such, and will remain for longer. For example,  
224 planetary identity, cultural identity and placial identity—that is based on the mutual connection  
225 between people and their dwelling. It should, however be acknowledged as provisional but  
226 progressive since it can help in building connections between people on a wider scale. For this  
227 study, we shall be using “Placial Identity” as strategic essentialism to expose the constructedness  
228 of politicized identities to propose solutions for major conflicts in the world. The goal of this  
229 paper is to propose the paradigm of Placial Humanities as crucial and progressive for  
230 approaching Literature and human identity.

### 231 Redefining the Notion of Place

232 In the *longue duree*, the place talk stood behind the garb, sometimes of space and sometimes  
233 of time. However, space and place are neither synonyms nor antonyms. Place includes the  
234 geometrical and topographical qualities of the space, and along with it, the experiential  
235 dimension is included as well. Place, therefore, is associatively thick in comparison to space  
236 which is thin. Buell writes: “World history is a history of space becoming place” (63). It is only  
237 through associations and experiences that a three-dimensional concrete space takes on an identity  
238 of its own and becomes a historic entity called the place.

239 The most proper way to approach the “place” is through the body—the situated being and not  
240 the generality of the space. But the problem with the modern and enlightenment philosophy, as  
241 already discussed, was that all aspects of life and experiences were considered subordinate to  
242 mind and intellect. The body was left out of this. For philosophers like Descartes, even sense  
243 perceptions became important only because of their value to the mind. Thus, thoughts were

244 privileged over the body. In fact, what we are trying to bring to the fore is not something new  
245 through this paper but something which is the oldest of existence—the body that has been  
246 overlooked for so long in the understanding of place. There appears to be a special bond between  
247 bodies and place. As Casey suggests: “Sensible bodies are implaced entities” (Casey 204).

#### 248 The Placial Turn in the Domain of Spatiality

249 During the heydays of modernism, the notion of time and history with teleological order was  
250 dominant. The temporal dimension was used as an instrument to understand the human psyche  
251 with works like *In Search of Lost Time* (1913) by Marcel Proust and Henri Bergson’s philosophy  
252 of time and memory. In the postmodern times, there was an increased interest in space not in  
253 spite of but in addition to time. Foucault wrote in his article “Of Other Spaces” (1984): “The  
254 present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. . .” (Foucault 1). From the period  
255 between 1880 to 1960—scholars in the field of religion, history and psychology reflected on our  
256 nature as beings situated in space. This developing field essentially came due to the shift in  
257 public conversations regarding—civil engineering, urban planning and foresting etc. It was also a  
258 shift in the focus from elite groups to commoners—where spatial practices were an important  
259 part of their everyday life and community formation. Public intellectuals, legal scholars,  
260 philosophers, urban historians, journalists, and religious scholars combed through historical  
261 records, proposed theories of spatial experience, and promoted the terminologies like  
262 “commons,” “palimpsest,” and “pseudoenvironment,” attempting to coin a universal language for  
263 describing spatial experiences of communities. Following them, the literary scholars, art  
264 historians and social scientists drew on ethnographic data to chart the worldview of commoners  
265 regarding their relationship with the land.

## 266 Scooping the Notion of Place through Ecocriticism

267 In the 1980s, when environmental concerns occupied the center stage, they also took hold in  
268 the literary and cultural arena. The early pioneers of the movement understood the need to  
269 develop an alliance of the critics, writers, and activists to create environmental literacy and an  
270 overlapping discipline like Ecocriticism. One of the major differences between Ecocriticism and  
271 other theories like race, Feminism and sexuality studies was in the idea of agency. One can speak  
272 as an environmentalist but not as environment or nature endowed with a consciousness.  
273 Philosopher Thomas Nagel asked a similar rhetorical question in the context of a bat: “How do  
274 we know what it is like to be a bat?” (Nagel 439). But the matter of fact is we can’t. There are  
275 limitations to human understanding and the possibility of objectivism. We can, at best, speak of  
276 the environment from our understanding of it as a part of the “biotic community” and humans as  
277 ecologically embedded. And it is because of this agency issue that this domain remained  
278 neglected for a long time.

279 Though the term “ecocriticism” was first coined in the late 1970s by William Rueckert in his  
280 essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism”, it has been in literary practice  
281 since the very beginning. In the US, at least in the modern landscape, it goes back to the 1920s  
282 when Norman Foerster’s *Nature in American Literature* (1923) inaugurated the new discipline in  
283 American literature. Some even argue that it goes back to Emerson’s *Nature* (1836), the first  
284 canonical work that “unfolds a theory of nature with special reference to poetics” (Buell 13).  
285 There are many books available in the field, but Buell points out two important ones—*The*  
286 *Machine and the Garden* (1964) by Leo Marx and in British Studies, Raymond Williams’ *The*  
287 *Country and the City* (1973). They both focused on the contrast between the native attitude  
288 towards nature versus those of capitalists/colonialists in urban or industrial spaces. Ecocriticism,

289 therefore, developed itself as an interconnecting practice in diverse quarters of the world rather  
290 than a full-fledged project.

291 The first wave of this green movement focused more on scientific literature. It considered the  
292 scientific method as a corrective to subjective understanding of place, culture and natural laws.  
293 Thus, the boundaries between the disciplines of humanities and sciences, and by extension  
294 natural and man-made environment (culture) were largely maintained. William Howarth's "Some  
295 Principles of Ecocriticism" (1996) discusses the principles of operation of the ecocritical  
296 movement in its initial days. The second wave however blurred the clear-cut disciplinary  
297 boundary between sciences and humanities. Likewise, the two kinds of environment—natural  
298 and built were seen not as separate but intertwined. So, the greatest achievement of the second  
299 wave was the very fact that it no longer saw humans and the environment as adversaries but  
300 rather brought forth their interdependent and mutually constitutive states.

301 The paradigm of Placial Humanities proposed through this paper builds upon the wisdom of  
302 these existing domains of Spatiality. However, it is an appropriation of these theories and  
303 movements since it dwells on an advanced understanding of the metabolic connection between  
304 humans and the land: the farmer gives something to the land, develops it by toiling or building  
305 on it, and the land lends itself to them. This paper therefore, journeys towards a new chapter in  
306 Earth's history which I call as "Ecozoic era" (that focuses on the human wholeness, mind and the  
307 body and the development of the place and vice versa) after the current Cenozoic era (that  
308 focused on mind primarily). Finally let us discuss the relevance of Placial Humanities by  
309 considering its characteristics in some details.

310 1. Place as a Repository of Culture:

311 Culture seems to be largely place-bound in the sense that it is formed through the  
312 experiences of our surroundings—the weather, climatic conditions, population distribution, soil  
313 conditions, ancestral practices, communication processes, etc. Raymond Williams, in his work,  
314 *Resources of Hope* (1989) talks about the importance of culture and place in our lives. He states  
315 that for individuals, as we grow up in a certain society, we are bound by its rules and “these rules  
316 cut very deep” which presents us with a certain worldview of both looking at the world and  
317 decoding it (Williams 21-22). We all have made advances since our previous generations in  
318 terms of externalities mainly, but we do share their worldview. Stuart Hall, in his work “New  
319 Cultures for Old” (1997), however, argues against the motion, talking about the changing  
320 scenario of cultural understanding as increasingly untenable in the light of hypermobility. The  
321 onset of mobility and technological innovation has no doubt changed the history of cultural  
322 borrowings among civilizations. The process of acculturation is rapid. Yet there are some unique  
323 elements which are specific to each civilization. So, in the Global world, we find an increased  
324 demand for the preservation of the local culture.

## 325 2. Useful Knowledge of the Indigenous Community:

326 Indigenous communities are mindful of the surroundings they have been living in for  
327 thousands of years. It is different from the life of the city and those sites of non-places  
328 manufactured globally and away from the local cultures. The idea of using indigenous  
329 knowledge for the prosperity of a community is revolutionary since it has the potential to present  
330 an alternative model to the profit-driven economy, which is thoroughly people-centric. The  
331 indigenous population is the real commander of their resources. If this succeeds, it could be an  
332 important tool on the path of “environmental democracy”, where we would have maximum  
333 participation of the indigenous community in the development of their surroundings. As Glissant

334 writes: “The highest point of knowledge is always a poetics” (140). Placial Humanities, by  
335 opening the arena of knowledge beyond the fixed technical terminologies, might find something  
336 revolutionary and worthwhile for the development of a community. It appears to be a disguised  
337 blessing.

### 338 3. Providing a Home to the Displaced:

339 Bell Hooks defines the “culture of belonging” as an intimate connection with one’s land along  
340 with an empathetic relationship with flora and fauna, animals and birds and all expressions of life  
341 around. In our century of restlessness, we yearn to find our place in this world: “to have a sense  
342 of homecoming, a sense of being wedded to a place” (Belonging 2). Gaston Bachelard, in his  
343 work *The Poetics of Space* (1964), shows us how the house—being a geometrical object first of  
344 angles and planes, is also a space of intimacy for its inhabitants. He is perhaps the first one to  
345 discover the humanness in the hallways of one’s dwelling: “our house is our corner of the world”  
346 (Bachelard 4). It is indeed our first universe in every sense of the word. No matter how affluent  
347 or meagre this space is. If one is willing to dream, a house is a beautiful and enriching  
348 experience. He argues that human imagination has the capacity to set limits to one’s shelter.  
349 Whenever there is an abode, imagination encloses itself within the four walls and creates the  
350 illusion of comfort and security. Thus, the house is experienced both in terms of its materiality  
351 and imagination. And these motionless memories comfort us in times of crisis, and we relive  
352 those “memories of protection” (Bachelard 6). Analyzing a lot of poetic houses presented by  
353 dreamy writers, Bachelard suggests that a house, more than a landscape, is also a “psychic state”  
354 (72). In fact, when children first dream over their canvas, it is the image of a house that comes to  
355 them and then the landscape around them. It is so because the house is the first universe of the  
356 child, and he has developed the greatest intimacy with it. Every child, no matter in what corner

357 of the world, always draws a home first. In a world where displacement is rampant, Placial  
358 Humanities is helpful in providing a sense of home and comfort to the displaced. It also makes us  
359 more sensitive to appreciate the value of a home and not deny it to anyone since it is the basis for  
360 violence and conflicts in the world.

361 4. Placial Identity as a Source of Resistance:

362 Deleuze and Guattari, in “Treatise on Nomadology—The War Machine” (1987), present a  
363 sharp distinction between the state apparatus and the war machine. To them, the war machine is  
364 the nomadic or primitive people, closer to nature, who are often unorganized yet highly capable  
365 in their capacities: “Pack, bands, are groups of the rhizome type, as opposed to the arborescent  
366 type that centers around organs of power” (Deleuze and Guattari 358). Unlike the state that  
367 divides into a sharp binary, the governor and the governed, thereby bifurcating the powerful and  
368 the powerless, the war machine has no such well-defined categories. Power is maintained  
369 through deed and faith in the chieftain that keeps on changing. Moreover, the nomadic space is a  
370 space of experimentation. No one model is formalized because they want to remain closer to  
371 nature, which is dynamic. The connection of nomads to the land is direct, with no mediation  
372 through state apparatuses. Thus, their indigeneity in terms of their placial identity is a  
373 countermeasure to the controls of state power. It is not to deny the importance of state power or  
374 its usefulness but rather to remind it of human values and remain sensitive towards nature  
375 because what is happening in the name of blind patriotism is that instead of the state serving the  
376 people, the people are worshipping it and the nation has turned into a fetish into the hands of  
377 power mongers.

378 5. Placial Humanities for Conflict Resolution and Peace Making:

379       Regarding the relation between cultures, Glissant writes in *Poetics of Relation* (1997): “A  
380 culture is what remains after states have passed away or what precedes them of necessity.  
381 Cultures can be shared when states have been in confrontation. The limits—the frontiers of a state  
382 can be grasped, but a culture’s cannot” (Glissant 165). Often in any kind of peace agreement, one  
383 needs to address the collective identity of people, rising above their divisions into smaller groups  
384 based on rhetorical and ideational identities like national identity, race or gender identity. Placial  
385 identity derives from the organic source of land and nature and therefore is non-discriminating  
386 and inclusive. It can help bring geographically closer cultures together. As Atal Bihari Vajpayee,  
387 the late Indian Prime Minister, once said with regards to India and Pakistan: “You can change  
388 history, but not geography. You can change friends, but not neighbours” (“You Can Change  
389 Friends”).

#### 390 Conclusion

391       Finally, to conclude, in an era marred by placelessness, Placial Humanities constitute some  
392 kind of a map, where they create mental images of the places they describe, tell stories that takes  
393 place in them, sculpt characters associated with them and thereby give those places life and  
394 meaning. As the paper demonstrated, place, an experiential terrain of belonging, is important in  
395 the construction of organic human identity. Since there exists a symbiotic relationship between  
396 the human body and place, wherein the body gives meaning to the place by working on it even as  
397 it derives its selfhood through the process of internalization, which becomes an important site for  
398 the creation of the home itself. The paper outlines a manifesto of Placial Humanities, taking into  
399 account the wisdom of two distinct but interdependent domains of knowledge—Spatiality and  
400 Ecocriticism. Where the former suggests the need to include place to make time-centered history

401 more intelligible and wholesome, and the latter establishes a crucial link between humans and  
402 ecology.

403 The home was seen as the most nuanced of human creations, since in addition to the  
404 materiality, it was also accessed on the emotional and psychological levels. We see how  
405 therapeutic it is in the sense that it provides a person with a sense of belonging and security. It is  
406 our corner of the world, our first universe. And it does not matter how affluent or meagre a house  
407 is, as we create an illusion of comfort and security. Home is important for humans since it keeps  
408 a person integrated, protecting them from all difficult situations in life, as Bachelard calls it, a  
409 “large cradle,” which is essential for a person’s protective growth (Bachelard 7). We, therefore,  
410 need to grow more sensitive towards the refugees who have been robbed of their homes, towards  
411 an understanding that it should not be denied to anyone since it is the root cause of a lot of  
412 violence in the world.

413 Finally, as already mentioned regarding the role of literature, Anton Chekhov, the Russian  
414 writer, once said that a solution to a problem and the correct way of posing a problem are two  
415 separate things. And sometimes, the way we perceive a problem is itself part of the problem (qtd.  
416 in “The Politics of Fiction” 14:28-15:15). The role of literature or humanities is not so much to  
417 give solutions as to pose the problem in a correct way, which is often a powerful way of hinting  
418 at the solution itself. What I have already tried doing through this paper is addressing the  
419 paradigm and building a new one—Placial Humanities for our purpose.

420

421 Works Cited

- 422 Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate*  
423 *Places*. Translated by Maria Jolas, Beacon Press, 1964.
- 424 Bambara, Toni Cade. *Conversations with Toni Cade Bambara*, edited by Thabiti Lewis,  
425 University Press of Mississippi, 2017.
- 426 Berry, Thomas. *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*, Bell Tower, 1999.
- 427 Bregman, Rutger. *Humankind: A Hopeful History*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020.
- 428 Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary*  
429 *Imagination*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- 430 Casey, Edward S. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. University of California Press,  
431 1998.
- 432 Davis, Nira Yuval. "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging." *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 40, no.  
433 3, 2006, pp. 197-214.
- 434 *Dead Poets Society*. Directed by Peter Weir, Warner Bros. Picture. 1989.
- 435 Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.  
436 Translated by Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- 437 Fish, Stanley. "Stop Trying to Sell the Humanities." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 17 June,  
438 2018, [www.chronicle.com/article/stop-trying-to-sell-the-humanities/](http://www.chronicle.com/article/stop-trying-to-sell-the-humanities/). Accessed 20 Dec. 2019.
- 439 Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." Translated by Jay Miskowiec,  
440 *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuite*, October, 1984, pp. 1-9.

- 441 Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing, The University of Michigan  
442 Press, 1997.
- 443 Hall, Stuart. "New Cultures for Old." *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures, and*  
444 *Globalization*, edited by D. Massey and P. Jess, Oxford Publications, 1997.
- 445 Hili, Ikram. "We have Poetry/ So We Do Not Die of History." *Human and Social Studies*, vol. 6,  
446 no. 3, 2017, pp. 103-15.
- 447 Hooks, Bell. *Belonging: A Culture of Place*. Routledge, 2009.
- 448 ---. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge, 1994.
- 449 Jay, Paul. *The Humanities Crisis and the Future of Literary Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- 450 Lyotard, Jean Francois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester  
451 University Press, 1984.
- 452 Nagel, Thomas. "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?." *Philosophical Review*, vol. 83, no. 4, Duke  
453 University Press, October 1974, pp. 435-50. *PhilArchive*, doi: 10.2307/2183914.
- 454 Nussbaum, Martha. *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton University  
455 Press, 2010.
- 456 Plato, *Ion*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett, Classic Edition, 2020.
- 457 ---. *The Republic*. Penguin Classics, 2007.
- 458 ---. *The Symposium*. Translated by Christopher Gill, Penguin Classics, 2003.
- 459 Sayeed, Syed A. "The Cognitive Function of Literature." *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative*  
460 *Literature*, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, vol. 44, 2006-2007, pp. 21-36.

461 Shafak, Elif. "The Politics of Fiction." *YouTube*, uploaded by *TED Ideas Worth Spreading*, 19  
462 July 2010, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zq7QPnqLoUk&t=909s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zq7QPnqLoUk&t=909s).

463 Shklovsky, Viktor. "Art as Technique." *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, edited by L.  
464 T. Lemon & M.J. Reis, University of Nebraska Press, 1965, pp. 3-24.

465 Tagore, Rabindranath. *Nationalism*. Book Club of California, 1917.

466 Williams, Raymond. *Resources of Hope*, edited by Robin Gable, Verso, 1989.

467

468

469

470

471

472

473

474

475

476