

Article

Vindicating Communism Against Postcolonialism and Postmodernism: Reimagining Class, Caste, and Gender Solidarities in Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014)

Debayudh Chatterjee 

Department of English, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, IL 61801, USA;
dc22@illinois.edu or debayudhc@gmail.com

Abstract

In *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014), Meena Kandasamy offers a searing retelling of the 1968 Kilvenmani Massacre, in which at least forty-four lower-caste agricultural workers, including women and children, were brutally murdered while mobilizing for better living conditions under the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Distinguishing her novel from earlier representations, Kandasamy employs a non-linear and self-reflexive narrative that satirically draws on multiple voices and genres. My paper argues that the novel's summoning of Kilvenmani's specters serves a dual function. First, it exposes the limits of Western postcolonial and postmodern academic discourses in the neoliberal era. Second, by resurrecting a foundational episode in post-colonial India's communist movement, it advances a case for reimagining communism as a credible alternative to intertwined structures of caste, class, and gender oppression. I demonstrate that Kandasamy accomplishes this through an inward critique of her own postmodern form deployed in *The Gypsy Goddess*, ultimately gesturing toward solidarities later articulated as Social Reproduction Theory.

Keywords: Indian English literature; Marxism; Dalit studies; social reproduction theory; communism; postmodernism; postcolonialism

And then these women said that if the men wanted their mothers and wives and sisters and daughters to live with some honour and dignity, they should stand by the Communists and continue to fight these rowdy landlords.

—Meena Kandasamy, *The Gypsy Goddess*, p. 117.

Intersectionality theory, however, shows us a world where race, gender, and other oppressions “intersect,” thereby producing a reality that is latticed—a sum total of different parts. [...] If, as intersectionality theory tells us, race and gender intersect like two streets, then surely they are two separate streets, each with its own specificities? What, then, is the logic of their intersection?

—Tithi Bhattacharya, *Mapping Social Reproduction Theory*, p. 17.



Received: 1 February 2026

Revised: 20 June 2026

Accepted: 23 June 2026

Published: 9 July 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the author.

Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland.

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the [Creative Commons Attribution \(CC BY\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license.

1. Introduction

If the Naxalite movement stands as one of the most searing indictments of post-colonial India's agrarian order, engulfing parts of West Bengal, undivided Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh, then the agrarian movement in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, occurring in the same time and culminating in the Kilvenmani Massacre of 1968, exposed the violent entrenchment of caste hierarchy and landlord power in the ostensibly

reformist decades after independence. This dreadful incident occurred on 25 December in the eponymous village of Kilvenmani, in Thanjavur district, when tensions between agricultural laborers and local landlords escalated during a wage dispute. Throughout the late 1960s, farmworkers in the region, many of them Dalits and women, began organizing under the banner of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) to demand higher pay, shorter working hours, and a share in the expanding profits of the Green Revolution¹. Landlords resisted these demands and employed strikebreakers, threats, and evictions to reassert control. On the night of the attack, a group of armed henchmen, patronized by the landlords, surrounded a hut where the laborers and their families had taken shelter, set it on fire, and prevented those trapped inside from escaping. Forty-four people were burned to death, including women, children, and elderly workers. Subsequent investigations and trials resulted in only limited convictions, and many of the landlords were eventually acquitted on appeal. After the High Court overturned their convictions, the chief accused, Gopalakrishna Naidu, was assassinated in 1980. Although the assailants were never apprehended, the killing offered closure, indicating how a cycle of revolutionary violence can emerge when structural impunity forecloses legal redress.

The memory of this massacre, continually invoked in labor movements, Dalit activism, and communist historiography, underscores the *longue durée* of caste oppression, class exploitation, and gender injustice within modern India's democratic institutions. At the massacre site, the foundation stone of the Keezhvenmani Monument was laid in 1969 by Jyoti Basu, then Deputy Chief Minister of West Bengal, under the leadership of the CPI (M). The monument consists of a black granite monolith with the names of the forty-four victims inscribed in Tamil and topped with the hammer and sickle, the international symbol of the communist movement. In 2006, the CPI (M) announced plans for a significantly larger memorial, inaugurated eight years later in 2014. This memorial, named Mani Mandapam, comprises forty-four granite pillars, each representing one of the victims, encircling a central structure that functions as both a museum and a site of commemoration. Each year, on December 25, Venmani Martyrs' Day is solemnly observed at this site, drawing left-wing leaders, anti-caste activists, and members of the broader public committed to preserving the memory of the massacre.

In the cultural discourse, Kilvenmani provided the basis for Indira Parthasarathy's 1977 Sahitya Akademi Award-winning novel *Kurudhippunal* (River of Blood). This text was subsequently translated into English, Hindi, Bengali, and Malayalam, among several other Indian languages, and was later adapted into the National Award-winning 1983 film Kann *Sivanthai Mann Sivakkum* (When Eyes Turn Red, the Soil Will Too), directed by Sreedhar Rajan. The traumatic memory of the massacre and the revolutionary reprisal against its chief perpetrator continued to circulate across numerous cultural forms, whether as central plot material or oblique allusion, in works such as the Tamil films *Aravindan* (1997), *Citizen* (2001), *Virumaandi* (2004), or the documentary *Ramiahvin Kudisai* (The Hut of Ramiah). In this regard, when Meena Kandasamy sought to revitalize public memory of the massacre in her 2014 anglophone novel *The Gypsy Goddess*, published in the same year as the inauguration of the Mani Mandapam, she was entering a well-established field of cultural remembrance.

Yet *The Gypsy Goddess* distinguishes itself from these earlier representations through Kandasamy's formal experimentation of the postmodern novel and her effort to articulate a renewed commitment to a new idiom of communist politics that is attentive to caste and gender, for an international readership. Through its fragmented, nonlinear, and heteroglossic narrative structure, the novel mounts a scathing critique not only of feudal hierarchies, capitalist predation, caste oppression, and gendered violence, but also, crucially, of the insular identity politics that sideline class in favor of culture-war frameworks manifested

in both popular and Western academic discourses through varied constellations like post-colonialism and postmodernism. By reading the novel closely, I demonstrate that *The Gypsy Goddess* anticipates a new paradigm of class-caste-gender solidarity in struggles against the global and national far right, resonating with the principles later popularized under the rubric of social reproduction theory by Marxist feminist scholars such as Tithi Bhat-tacharya and Nancy Fraser, among others, in 2017. In tracing how Kandasamy negotiates the specters of Kilvenmani through such formal innovations, I argue that the novel offers a polemically exigent template for political storytelling and resistance that is capable of confronting the intertwined crises of caste, capital, and authoritarianism that structure the contemporary moment.

2. Writing in English, Writing Against Caste: Resisting Western Academic Postcolonialism

Born in 1984 in Tamil Nadu, Meena Kandasamy was the child of an inter-caste marriage. Although both of her parents are university professors, her mother, a world-renowned mathematician, belongs to the lower-caste Sudra community, while her father, a respected Tamil scholar, comes from the *Andi Pandaram*, a nomadic tribal group. As Maryam Mirza observes, Kandasamy herself has repeatedly complicated her caste identification. In a 2011 interview, Kandasamy noted that she adopted the label “Dalit” because it was inevitably imposed upon her, and she sought to reclaim it (Stancati 2011, quoted in [Mirza 2023](#), p. 194). A few years later, in a lengthy Facebook post, Kandasamy clarified that she comes from what she calls a “mixed-caste” family background and that she prefers not to align herself with any caste, invoking Ambedkar’s vision of annihilation of caste to explain this refusal (Kandasamy 2014b, quoted in [Mirza 2023](#), pp. 194–95). In that same post, she explained that her occasional self-description as Dalit functions less as a claim to a fixed caste location than as a way of positioning herself outside the caste hierarchy altogether, of signaling how those with similarly mixed origins remain uncategorizable within taxonomies of caste (Kandasamy 2014b, quoted in [Mirza 2023](#), p. 195). Mirza underscores that Kandasamy is acutely aware of how her upbringing affords her forms of cultural capital unavailable to the Dalit peasants represented in *The Gypsy Goddess* (Kandasamy 2014b, quoted in [Mirza 2023](#), p. 195). Simultaneously, she has framed the novel as an intensely personal undertaking. Her father’s *Andi Pandaram* background and his experience at “the receiving end of the caste system” deeply inform her literary preoccupations (Kandasamy 2014b, quoted in [Mirza 2023](#), p. 195). As she explained in a public talk, writing the novel helped her reconnect with her roots in Tanjore and grapple with her father’s desire to escape that environment (London School of Economics 2014, quoted in [Mirza 2023](#), p. 195).

Kandasamy followed in her parents’ footsteps in pursuing higher education, completing a PhD in sociolinguistics at Anna University in 2010. This training in the humanities simultaneously distances her from the everyday realities of many Dalit communities deprived of education and equips her with the intellectual tools to narrate the Dalit experience to an international audience of scholars, writers, and artists. As Mirza highlights, Kandasamy identifies herself primarily as an “Indian writer in English” and argues that, given her educational and class background, English is the logical medium through which she can “make that kind of noise” (Kandasamy 2014b, quoted in [Mirza 2023](#), p. 195). Her representation of the Kilvenmani massacre does not claim an equivalence between her own life and the caste oppression suffered by the Dalit laborers she depicts, nor does she presume to speak on their behalf. Instead, she foregrounds the distance between their resistant practices and her own, even acknowledging the limits of narrative itself when confronting forms of violence that exceed representation, particularly the gendered brutality inflicted on Dalit women during the massacre, which she describes as “so savage that they

cannot even be written down” (Kandasamy 2014a, 95, quoted in [Mirza 2023](#), p. 195). This awareness of both the disruptive potential of Indian Anglophone fiction and its structural limitations endows *The Gypsy Goddess* with a self-reflexive voice that at once critiques and reasserts the possibilities of literary resistance.

Toral Jatin Gajarawala’s reading of the novel emphasizes that Kandasamy throws light on two central problems, “the reconstruction of the tragedy of Kilvenmani and the failures of the genre of the novel” ([Gajarawala 2020](#), p. 45). I posit that while Kandasamy seeks recourse in the self-critical form of the postmodern novel to offer an empathetic view of communist activism in the events before and after the massacre, she attributes the “failure” of this genre to the ways in which the politically neutered postcolonial academia of the West absorbs dissent. This, however, is not to suggest that postcolonial discourse is monolithic; it comprises multiple, often conflicting, streams of thought. Rather, it must be clarified that Kandasamy’s critique targets a specific strand of Western academic postcolonialism that emerged in the 1990s and privileged sectarian identity politics over anti-capitalist class struggle, ultimately intersecting with the neo-imperialist project. Furthermore, within the Indian context, this particular strand continues to exert a dominant institutional presence across both literary and academic spheres.

Therefore, right at the outset of the fourth chapter, she uses her characteristic tongue-in-cheek tone, laced with expletives, to sarcastically indict the postcolonial critics who seemingly profit from building their careers on the study of structural violence. This chapter takes the form of a questionnaire, in which the author clarifies the novel’s methodology and structure to warn that the reader might be lost or overwhelmed by the obscurity of her non-linear format and the intrusion of multiple voices into the narrative:

The reader will be lost in such an alphabet soup. [...] A reader cannot challenge what she does not comprehend. Beyond history lessons, she will find herself gravitating towards twisted tales. Hence, this rabble-rousing. Hence, this trouble-making. *This craving for unintelligibility is a curse upon the postcolonial reader who seeks me out.* And I write for my readers. ([Kandasamy 2016](#); p. 70, *Emphasis mine*)

This passage mounts a direct critique of the interpretive habits of the postcolonial reader, who is trained to expect legibility, coherence, and familiar political frameworks but is unprepared to confront the intersecting hierarchies of class, caste, and gender as the organizing principles of everyday life in Indian society. When Kandasamy writes that the reader will be “lost in such an alphabet soup,” she underscores both the linguistic density of the text as well as the epistemic shock produced when Dalit histories and Tamil sociopolitical vocabularies interrupt the expectations of a global Anglophone audience. Her claim that a reader “cannot challenge what she does not comprehend” serves as both an indictment and a theoretical proposition in the sense that political solidarity is impossible without epistemic labor, and that the reader’s inability to comprehend becomes a form of complicity. In this regard, the drift toward “twisted tales” instead of “history lessons” suggests the postcolonial reader’s appetite for exoticized suffering where violence is consumed as narrative spectacle rather than understood as structural oppression. Therefore, the novel’s “rabble-rousing” and “troublemaking” are not merely frivolous provocations but a way in which Kandasamy weaponizes opacity as a refusal to sanitize resistance, be it physical or literary, for cosmopolitan consumption. She calls out the “craving for unintelligibility” as “a curse upon the postcolonial reader who seeks me out,” precisely because the postcolonial literary market desires the very otherness it cannot interpret, approaching suffering as an esthetic object rather than a sociopolitical demand.

Just as the events of the massacre unfold in a nonlinear manner throughout the novel, Kandasamy’s critique of postcolonial academia and readership is interspersed

in bits and pieces across the narrative. In the second chapter titled *The Title Misdeed*, Kandasamy writes:

Finally, if you want the phony and the polyphony, the hysterical and the polyhistorical, wait for the postcolonial version, where the dusky Old Woman of my story takes after the pale Janie of Zora Neale Hurston's. (p. 36)

As evident in this passage, Kandasamy continues her meta-commentary on the expectations imposed by postcolonial readership. By inviting the reader almost mockingly to "wait for the postcolonial version," she exposes the pressures on writers of color to produce narratives that conform to cosmopolitan tastes for hybridity, comparison, and multicultural resonance. The playful rhyme of "the phony and the polyphony, the hysterical and the polyhistorical" satirizes the academic vocabulary through which postcolonial literature is often consumed, a language borrowed from Mikhail Bakhtin that celebrates heteroglossia and layered histories but risks flattening the materiality of caste violence into esthetic categories.

At the same time, by drawing Hurston into her frame, Kandasamy critiques the postcolonial reader's proclivities for cross-cultural comparative analysis, hinting at how such comparisons are often driven by a hunger for "polyphony" rather than an engagement with historical and structural specificities. In her 1937 novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston utilizes the protagonist Janie Crawford's fair complexion and Caucasian phenotype to interrogate the intersections of colorism, bodily autonomy, and post-slavery racial trauma. Janie's "pale" skin and long, straight hair are inextricably linked to a lineage of systemic violence. While Kandasamy seems to acknowledge the resonances between oppressed women across geographies by comparing Janie with the Dalit women of her novel, she also exposes the reductive interpretive habits that global academia brings to Dalit narratives.

Despite being a postcolonial writer herself, Kandasamy's critique of the Western academic postcolonial discourse emerges from a longstanding Marxist suspicion of liberal identity politics. As early as 1994, when postcolonial studies gained momentum in Western academia, nearly in tandem with the ascendant logic of late capitalism under globalization, Arif Dirlik, in his article *The Postcolonial Aura*, interrogates the emergence and intellectual function of the field, emphasizing the historical and institutional conditions that enabled its rise. He provocatively asks, "When exactly... does the 'post-colonial' begin? ... When Third World intellectuals have arrived in First World academe" (Dirlik 1994, p. 329), suggesting that the concept is inseparable from the institutional and geographical positioning of its practitioners rather than from historical markers of decolonization. He further notes that "the popularity that the term postcolonial has achieved in the last few years has less to do with its rigorousness as a concept... than it does with the increased visibility of academic intellectuals of Third World origin as pacesetters in cultural criticism" (p. 330), highlighting that postcolonialism's currency owes more to social and professional dynamics than to analytical precision.

In this regard, Dirlik is particularly critical of postcolonialism's ideological effects, arguing that it risks complicity with global hegemony by diverting attention from urgent structural inequalities. In his words, "Postcolonial criticism has been silent about its own status as a possible ideological effect of a new world situation after colonialism [...] The complicity of postcolonialism in hegemony lies in its diversion of attention from contemporary problems of social, political, and cultural domination" (p. 331). Rather than functioning as a neutral descriptive category, he contends, "Postcolonial, rather than a description of anything, is a discourse that seeks to constitute the world in the self-image of intellectuals who view themselves [...] as postcolonial intellectuals" (p. 339). Furthermore, Dirlik argues that postcolonialism emerges as a paradoxical formation. Although it presents

itself as a critique of Western universalism, “the language of postcolonial discourse is the language of First World post-structuralism [...] a critique that starts off with a repudiation of universalistic pretensions ends up returning to another First World language” (p. 342). This reliance on theoretical idioms produced in metropolitan institutions enables postcolonial critics to mask their own ideological and institutional embeddedness. In this sense, postcolonial discourse “constitutes the world in the self-image of these intellectuals,” functioning less as an expression of marginality than as “newfound power” (p. 344). The result is a theoretical formation that, despite its stated allegiance to history, “ironically ends up not in an affirmation of historicity but in a self-referential, universalizing historicism” (p. 345). Consequently, by prioritizing cultural critique over material analysis, postcolonial theory often “throws the cover of culture over material relationships” (p. 347), thereby diverting attention from capitalism’s structural inequalities toward the more abstract criticism of Eurocentric ideology. Through these reflections, Dirlik frames postcolonial studies as both a product and a perpetuator of academic and ideological positioning that can inadvertently re-center elites while obscuring the lived material struggles of the formerly colonized.

Dirlik’s apprehensions about the evolution of postcolonial studies have proved true over time. More recent criticism has pointed out how postcolonial studies and post-colonial cultural texts have actually abetted the neoliberal and, subsequently, the technofeudal² populist right. In *Beyond Alterity: Contemporary Indian Fiction and the Neoliberal Script* (Jaising 2023), Shakti Jaising calls out that postcolonial scholarship has thrived for the past four decades by emphasizing the notion of ‘alterity’. Cultural texts from the global South have always been analyzed vis-à-vis their global North counterparts, with a focus on how ‘different’ they are. Even the recent spread of neoliberalism has been interpreted by scholars such as Wendy Brown as a continuation of that binary. According to these critics, if neoliberalism in the global North flourished through consent-driven ‘soft’ power, then the same phenomenon in the global South was coercively imposed through ‘hard’ power. By closely studying fiction and nonfiction, Jaising pushes back by arguing that “neoliberal capitalism has produced significant continuities in political and economic reality, subjectivity, and cultural representation across the North-South divide” (p. 2). To this end, she advances her conceptualization of the ‘neoliberal script’ that “plots the resolution to problems like poverty and inequality by ascribing agency to deregulated markets and private enterprise. The centrally planned state figures in this script as a shadow figure—a dystopian ‘other’ to the free market ideal” (p. 40). Publicized by global elites regardless of the North-South divide, this script functions as “an ideational sequence” meant to undermine possibilities of progressive state intervention. Jaising further asserts that the rise of Hindutva represents a mutation of this neoliberal logic. Rather than steering India “on the path to freedom from feudalism and poverty,” three decades of economic liberalization, she argues, “have deepened problems of poverty and inequality” (p. 65).

In the same vein, as recent as 2025, Meera Nanda, in her book-length study *Postcolonial Theory and the Making of Hindu Nationalism: The Wages of Unreason* (Nanda 2025), argues that the Indian postcolonial scholar’s comprehensive rejection of Enlightenment modernity created the conceptual and moral space for the rise of the Hindu Right. Although these scholars are not politically aligned with Hindutva nationalism per se, their shared “total critique of modernity” (p. 3) has made them a “strange bedfellow” with the Indian far-right (p. 1). In Nanda’s opinion, both these intellectual enterprises agree on the necessity of dismantling the rational-secular state founded on Enlightenment principles, although their end goals are apparently different. Furthermore, this devastating convergence of postcolonial thought in India bears a strong resemblance, “in context and content, with the ‘conservative revolution’ that brought down the Weimar Republic in Germany before the Nazi takeover” (p. 2). Such varied failures of postcolonialism need to be read within the broader rubric

of Western academic and cultural postmodernism that flourished throughout the second half of the twentieth century, intensifying especially in the global post-socialist regime defined by the encroachment of neoliberal capitalism. As the next section will demonstrate, Kandasamy's engagement with postmodernism is more nuanced and subversive, as *The Gypsy Goddess* itself grapples with postmodernism in its form and structure.

3. "Fuck These Postmodern Writers": Critiquing and Reclaiming Postmodernism

Ahmad's (2011) article "On Postmodernism" offers a comprehensive Marxist critique of postmodern thought, situating it simultaneously in the domains of politics, academic theory, and Indian intellectual life. For Ahmad, postmodernism is neither a neutral cultural style nor a benign philosophical shift. It is, instead, a historically specific ideological formation emerging within advanced capitalist societies to displace Marxism, delegitimize class analysis, and fragment political struggle. His critique, therefore, unfolds on three interconnected levels. Firstly, the global political conjuncture that gave rise to postmodernism. Secondly, the academic institutionalization of poststructuralist theory. And last, but not least, its diffusion into Indian historiography and cultural studies.

Politically, Ahmad argues that postmodernism arose in the United States and France during a moment of Cold War prosperity, when capitalism appeared triumphant. The term itself, he notes, was initially crafted "specifically with the aim of debunking Marxism and the idea of class struggle as such" (p. 36). The ideological work of early postmodern sociology was to declare industrial labor obsolete and proclaim the ascendancy of a frictionless "information society," in which, as Ahmad summarizes, "the computer" functioned as the heroic symbol of a supposedly new, post-class order (p. 36). This philosophical narrative prepared the way for a broader political claim that capitalism had evolved beyond the contradictions Marx had identified. Thus, postmodern theorists announced that "postmodern capitalism had neither the production system nor the working class that Marx had written about," rendering Marxism "redundant" (pp. 36–37). French postmodernism, in Ahmad's opinion, though rhetorically different, was a consequence of the defeat of the 1968 uprisings and the retreat of the French Communist Party as "the upper crust of the French intelligentsia was now ready to turn away decisively from the working class movement" (p. 37). For Ahmad, French postmodernists dissolved the very possibility of collective revolutionary politics by replacing it with dispersed identity-based struggles, reducing dissent to a point where "resistance seems to be everywhere but nowhere in particular" (p. 44).

Such "displacement of the politics of Equality by the politics of Identity" (p. 44) also influenced Indian intellectual discourse. Like Dirlik, Ahmad argues that Indian intellectuals incorporated Western theoretical imports "as if they sprang from the very conditions of Indian life" (p. 38). More broadly, Indian postmodernists claim that modernization itself is illegitimate because rationality and science are "tainted by the colonizer's racist will to know," leading to the extreme declaration that "to break free of such collusions, we have to get rid of Reason itself" (p. 40). These observations offer a crucial entry point into understanding Kandasamy's bittersweet encounter with postmodernism in the form and content of *The Gypsy Goddess*. I argue that while Kandasamy borrows heavily from postmodern strategies of narration in the form of the novel, she subverts its content to articulate a sarcastic skepticism of that very discourse. Such treatment of postmodernism, on the one hand, marks a departure from traditional Marxist modes of representation vis-à-vis socialist realism. On the other hand, through these innovative techniques, Kandasamy fleshes out the contours of a new idiom of communism rooted in shared concerns of class, caste, and gender.

Herrero's (2019) reading of the novel argues that *The Gypsy Goddess* functions as a postmodern political weapon designed to confront the erasure of Dalit history. Herrero asserts that Kandasamy deliberately uses well-known postmodern strategies to subvert the conventions of the traditional realist novel, which she deems incapable of conveying the "unpalatable reality" of the 1968 Kilvenmani massacre (p. 70). In this regard, the novel's highly metafictional and self-conscious structure challenges the notion of monolithic, official history. By simultaneously creating a narrative and commenting on its creation, Herrero borrows from Linda Hutcheon to demonstrate that the novel undermines "universal or official... discourses" and stresses that different perspectives derive "different facts from the same events" (p. 72). Furthermore, in its capacity as a trauma novel, *The Gypsy Goddess* employs literary heteroglossia to accommodate a variety of narrative voices, genres, and non-linear forms, outlining the lingering horrors of the Kilvenmani Massacre. Such a polyphony counters the official "wish for unity, fixity, coherence, and reliability" that governs historical records (p. 77). Therefore, the novel's formal disruption of conventional storytelling methods and historiography forces the reader into a state of what Aniket Jaware defined as "ethical destitution" (p. 80), in turn reclaiming the tragic history of the wretched of the earth and demanding a renewed political and ethical consciousness.

In *Title Misdeed*, the second chapter of the first part of the novel, aptly titled *Background*, Kandasamy confronts the reader about her writing style:

Do you suspect a murder merely because of this fancy prose style? Do you want a puppet-show in place of all this meandering prose? Do you rue the fact that modernism and postmodernism have killed our storytelling traditions? I am willing to try everything to get this story across. So, here I am, pitching a tent under a tree, prop-ping up a blank screen, pulling out my puppets. (p. 29).

In this passage, she overtly foregrounds the artifice of narration, typical of postmodern narrative strategy. Addressing the reader directly, she anticipates a degree of skepticism about her "fancy prose style," asking whether traditional storytelling has been "killed" by modern and postmodern hegemonies. This metafictional self-awareness not only draws attention to the novel's constructed form but, more importantly, hints at how pre-modern Indian indigenous forms of storytelling have been displaced by this Western import. The rhetorical questions function as a postmodern technique of fragmentation, inviting the reader into a performative dialog rather than presenting a transparent, realist narrative. Furthermore, the passage marks the first of the many sections of the novel that reflect her sarcastic skepticism toward postmodernism as an ideological discourse. For instance, the exaggerated gestures of "pitching a tent under a tree, propping up a blank screen, pulling out my puppets" mock the lengths to which postmodern experimentation might go to convey narrative meaning. Kandasamy playfully caricatures the performative excess of postmodern self-consciousness, turning this postmodern literary device into a site of irony. Therefore, by juxtaposing the Indian indigenous performative art of the puppet show with the modern and postmodern task of storytelling, she underscores the enduring tension between global and local literary discourses and their efficacy in conveying stories of oppression and injustice.

This mounting sarcasm against postmodernism reaches a climax at the end of this chapter when she unequivocally declares, "Now, you can forget all about this and move on to the novel. Fuck these postmodern writers" (p. 46). The profanity is not merely an aside, but a tongue-in-cheek repudiation of the trope she has just performed. The novel dramatizes its own impatience with postmodern self-indulgence at the very moment it enacts it. Such rhetorical whiplash transforms her literary devices into self-reflexive critiques. By mocking the postmodern tendency to treat textual play as an end in itself, the novel implicitly contrasts it with the gravity of caste violence and agrarian exploitation that

the novel is about to recount. Kandasamy's repudiation of postmodernism is not confined to narrative strategies in literature but extends to sections of academia that flourish by lionizing such innovations. For instance, this passage from the sixth chapter, *Oath of Loyalty*, compiled in *Breeding Ground*, the second part of the novel, is of importance. As she describes the mounting tension between Gopalakrishna Naidu, the landlord president of the Paddy Producers' Association, and the struggling farmers, she digresses:

I am telling a story so that a story gets told, not with the intention that somebody, somewhere, is going to be awarded a PhD for studying the postmodern perversions of this novel. If you want to learn who was boozing that morning, who were the two lovers who stayed away from the village meeting for a secret rendezvous, or which was the one family that had switched its loyalty to Gopalakrishna Naidu, you won't find that information here. (p. 118, *Emphasis mine*).

Once again, Kandasamy seeks refuge in the postmodern strategy of metanarrative foregrounding to draw attention to the act of storytelling instead of allowing the story to disappear behind realist transparency. By refusing to efface the narrative frame, she echoes the postmodern impulse to undermine the illusion of an objective, omniscient narrator. However, she immediately transforms this literary device into overt mockery. To convey her irritation with academic postmodernism, she uses a relatively strong word, "perversions," to inject sarcasm that delegitimizes postmodern methods as pretentious distortions rather than analytic tools. Kandasamy's derision is more than apparent here. By calling out academia's fetishization of textual difficulty for institutional advancement, such as obtaining a PhD, she foregrounds the scholar's inability to confront material suffering. In this light, she weaponizes postmodern self-awareness by turning it inward to expose the vanity and distance of academic discourse from lived struggle. This ongoing critique comes to a full circle in the opening section of her Epilog:

Before this text is wrapped up and the book is mercilessly put down for being postmodern, here is a parting dose of Derrida: 'The book is the labyrinth. You think you have left it, you are plunged into it. You have no chance to get away. You must destroy the work. You cannot resolve yourself to do so. I notice the slow but sure rise of your anguish. Wall after wall. Who waits for you at the end? No one. . .'

This direct address startles you. You. You, unable to leave a book. You, plunged in its text. You, seeking to destroy the work. You, you, you. Seduced into this labyrinth, with no means of escape, you prepare yourself for the immense task.

Wait. What if you don't want to take it up? What if you decry deconstruction? What if you believe Derrida is a fancy French philosopher whom only the snooty guys at university quote? I am with you. So are most of the others. We are in this together. We are the 99 per cent. Come and occupy the novel, dear reader. (p. 259, *Emphasis mine*).

As evident in this passage, Kandasamy pushes the postmodern techniques of self-reflexivity and metafiction to a performative extreme. By deliberately enacting the Derridean notion of the labyrinth, immersing the reader in a recursive textual structure, she foregrounds the reader's complicity in the construction of meaning. In continuity with all her previous encounters throughout the novel, the text immediately undercuts postmodern indulgence with blatant sarcasm. Once again, her mockery functions as a tirade against the academic fetishization of postmodern theory, exposing it as elitist, performative, and disconnected from lived realities. Nevertheless, what distinguishes this section in the context of my study is its counter invocation of "the 99 per cent," explicitly referring to the central slogan of the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement. By linking contemporary global

class struggles against economic inequality through this slogan to her text, she collapses the boundary between the reader's world and the narrative, transforming reading into an act of political participation.

The "99 per cent" is not an abstract demographic but a metaphorical coalition of marginalized subjects, inclusive of the rural poor, women, and lower-caste individuals, whose voices have historically been excluded from both capitalist literary and political representation. Kandasamy's clarion call to "Come and occupy the novel" extends this politics of solidarity into the formal structure of the novel itself. By envisioning the narrative as a site of collective intervention, she invites her readers to inhabit, critique, and co-construct the text rather than remain passive consumers. This act mirrors the principles of grassroots mobilization and shared struggle characteristic of communism, but it is filtered through a postmodern lens that emphasizes multiplicity, participation, and self-conscious mediation.

Evident throughout the novel, this double gesture of simultaneously reclaiming and refuting postmodernism marks a departure from the conventions of classical Marxist realism that typically relies on linear narration, transparent description, and representational clarity. Unlike Ahmad, who rejects postmodernism in favor of classical Marxism, Kandasamy appropriates the postmodern form only to expose its limits. The enduring tension between the frame-breaking narration and the contemptuous dismissal of "postmodern writers" signals her refusal to be categorized into either a purely realist or a purely postmodern esthetic. Thus, the novel demonstrates how Kandasamy subverts contemporary postmodern literary devices into sites of inward political critique by critiquing the very narrative idiom she momentarily adopts. As the next section of my article will demonstrate, Kandasamy mobilizes the content of her novel to reaffirm her faith in communism by charting out the terrain that later came to be identified as Social Reproduction Theory.

4. Red Salutes and Feminine Labor: Kandasamy's Communism Through the Lens of Social Reproduction

The combined failures of postcolonial and postmodern schools of thought in emancipating the proverbial "wretched of the earth" set the stage for a newer generation of writers, such as Meena Kandasamy, to redefine communism in both cultural and political praxis. *The Gypsy Goddess*, therefore, operates as a measured vindication of the activities of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) before and after the watershed moment of Kilvenmani. While Kandasamy admits the CPI(M)'s inability to develop into a significant force within a Tamil political landscape increasingly shaped by competing forms of populism, she does so with a marked sense of sympathy, carefully delineating the constraints the party faced both internally and externally. In her account, the most significant factor was the persistence of caste hierarchies, which generated deep fissures within the party's cadre base:

What did the party do? What could the party have done?

The party had seen glorious days. But the red salute could only unite up to a certain point. Fault-lines began to appear along the issue of untouchability. People started choosing convenient options that kept their caste codes intact.

Some deserted the party because the Indian National Congress made no ideological demands of them. Others deserted the party because the DMK had emerged as a new alternative to the Congress. Even the black-shirted Self-Respecters who did not contest elections started treating communism as though it were nothing more than a superstition. In East Tanjore, the party was patronized only by the Pallars and Paraiyars and other outcastes. (p. 124).

In this passage, Kandasamy adopts a tone of mournful clarity, delineating the Communist Party's waning influence while simultaneously expressing unmistakable sympathy for its historical project. The rapid series of rhetorical questions signals not accusation but a lament of how the party was constrained by conditions far larger than its ideological commitment. By invoking the party's "glorious days," she frames communism as once capable of forging solidarities through the "red salute," along with underscoring the challenges of communist activism when confronted with enduring structures of caste. However, Kandasamy is not critical of the party's program per se, but more disappointed with the general public's refusal to transcend caste boundaries. By bringing together the CPI(M)'s reliance on ideological rigor with the "no ideological demands" of the Indian National Congress and the rising populist appeal of the DMK, in an elegiac tone, she frames the party's decline as a tragedy brought about not by political missteps alone but by a broader shift in consent among the electorate toward populist pragmatism and identity politics. However, the reduction in the party's base to "Pallars and Paraiyars and other outcastes" in East Tanjore lays bare the moral center of her sympathy. It is precisely the oppressed who remain loyal to the left, and Kandasamy's invocation of their steadfastness reads as both solidarity and sorrow.

Her second point of contention touches upon the longstanding painful duality that haunted all the communist parties in post-independent India. In other words, it is the debate between the dialectic tactical lines of whether to participate in parliamentary democracy or wage an armed revolution to overthrow the state apparatus violently:

The party had morphed itself to enjoy the charms of the parliamentary system, and it consoled its cadre that it was playing by the rules of this new game.

But also to fulfill its role as a revolutionary force among the proletariat for which it was originally intended, the party's local offices held public meetings everywhere. At Thevur and Tiruvarur. At Iluppur and Karuveli. At Avarani and Manjakkollai and Puducherry. At Sikkal too, where it had lost one of its most daring comrades.

The party continued to work among the people, the party continued to keep their spirits high. The party also provided protection. (pp. 125–26).

As is evident, Kandasamy sympathetically reviews the party's dual position to adapt to the pragmatic demands of parliamentary politics while still striving to preserve the revolutionary mission that originally defined it. She conveys neither condemnation nor cynicism, but hints at a reluctant transformation, a tactical compromise necessitated by a political landscape increasingly inhospitable to radical movements. The internal conflict is apparent. The party must reassure its cadre that electoral participation is not betrayal but strategy, even though the shift strains the party's ideological self-conception as a revolutionary enterprise. However, the parliamentary turn is never simply the pallbearer of the party's disputed legacy. The rhythmic catalog of several sites of grassroots activism across Tamil Nadu evokes a thriving geography of ongoing struggle. By naming Sikkal specifically as the site where the party "had lost one of its most daring comrades," Kandasamy highlights the martyrdom of communist cadres, reminding readers that the commitment to communism has been sustained through the sacrifice of several lives in standing up to capitalism and feudalism.

The Gypsy Goddess, therefore, is a sober acknowledgment of how revolutionary movements must navigate repression and survival. In their struggle to balance tactical political compromise with revolutionary vigilance, the party is still rooted among the marginalized even as historical currents push against it. It would be, however, incorrect to suggest that her engagement with communist politics in Tamil Nadu is, at best, a sympathetic critique. In several passages scattered throughout the novel, Kandasamy sings paeans

to the Communist Party, their dedication to the people, the challenges they face, and the sacrifices they must make:

The Communists know that the police have sworn to shoot them like dogs. They know the witch hunt that awaits them. They know the perils of the underground. They have to fight several forces: the landlords, the landlords' rowdies and henchmen, the police, the caste mentality that divides the working classes [...] They are proud of their comrades who have killed landlords and lived to tell the tale. They are happy that the people no longer run thirty miles at the sight of a police uniform. They compete with movements that talk of self-respect and movements that talk of charity. [...] They move against the politics of mercy and the politics of identity. [...] They explain the antagonism between the oppressed and the oppressing classes. It is not talk alone. They intervene when the landlords force a tenant farmer or a coolie laborer to place their black fingerprints on blank white paper. They want to ensure that the bright black grease of burnt hay and oil that slathers axle-rods of bullock carts can no longer be bartered for a man's freedom. The comrades promise a revolution they have never seen. They await a revolution that has been promised to them. They dream of red flags everywhere. (pp. 79–80).

In this passage, Kandasamy's rhetoric is charged with insistent repetition, underscoring both the Communists' clarity of vision and the precarity of their position. The anaphora "The Communists know..." functions almost as a catechism of revolutionary consciousness. It evokes a collective that is neither naïve nor deluded: these are militants who fully understand the lethal hostility directed at them by the police, the "witch hunt" awaiting them, and the "perils of the underground." The list of adversaries they must fight reveals the layered, intersecting structures of domination that the movement confronts. Kandasamy refuses to isolate class struggle from caste oppression or from the contradictions within the party apparatus itself. Instead, she presents a totalizing field of antagonism in which external brutality, entrenched social hierarchies, and internal fragmentation all coincide.

Furthermore, rather than moralizing or sanitizing the revolutionary violence that accompanies agrarian struggle, Kandasamy names it directly, situating such acts within a long history of retaliatory force mobilized by the oppressed against the feudal structures that endanger their survival. This pride is not bloodlust, but the heroism of the subaltern finally possessing the capacity to strike back. It is precisely for this reason that *The Gypsy Goddess*, unlike many other cultural productions on the Kilvenmani massacre, is neither a tragedy nor a dirge. It is an ode to the bravery of the actors of the struggles and their descendants, who did not hesitate to take the law into their own hands when the chief accused was acquitted. Therefore, she moves from the broad structural antagonism between "oppressed and oppressing classes" to the granular, embodied violence through which both domination and resistance against it are reproduced. Although she mentions what appears to be classic Marxist pedagogy, that the comrades "explain the antagonism" between classes, she immediately insists that their politics do not remain at the level of theory. "It is not talk alone," she states, signaling a crucial shift that communist praxis is grounded in direct intervention within the everyday circuits of exploitation. Within the bleak terrains of exploitation, the communists emerge as both guardians and dreamers.

In Kandasamy's account, these communists are not simply a bunch of upper-caste bourgeois men reveling in the romantic utopia of an impending revolution. The party is equally comprising Dalit proletariat women who are at the forefront:

The protests also take dramatic forms. Now a landlord has finished off their charismatic leader and the people do not know what became of his body. This

time they have not been given jobs, and outside labor has been employed. This time a landlord cheats them out of their rightful wages. This time a landlord has instructed the shopkeepers not to sell anything to the people of the cheri. This time, in protest, they plan a funeral for the landlord. ‘They prepare his pyre, they lament his effigy corpse on its final farewell. The women beat their breasts and break their bangles. They sing the dirges of disgust, they mourn a monster, who, being alive, understands what awaits him after death. They curse, and it is written in their blood that their curses will come true. They call upon death to visit him at the earliest and, sometimes, the Buffalo Rider keeps his appointment.

When women take to protest, there is no looking back. (pp. 81–82).

Kandasamy places Dalit women at the very center of insurgent creativity, dwelling on their actions and drawing from Tamil mourning traditions to show how gendered practices of grief are repurposed into collective dissent. These women weaponize their culturally prescribed roles so that their mourning becomes accusation, and their lamentation becomes political speech. They embody the most transformative political energy in the struggle, and their entry into public dissent marks an irreversible turning point, a moment when protest ceases to be symbolic and becomes unstoppable. Once Dalit women mobilize, the moral and emotional force they unleash exceeds all attempts at repression.

In this regard, the *Gypsy Goddess* has been subjected to interpretations that analyze intersectionality by focusing on how the novel depicts the double burden of oppression faced by Dalit women. For instance, by relying on the way caste and gender hierarchies combine to create a unique and intensified form of marginalization, S Maria Bridget Jenita and Matha Karunakar, in a recent article, highlight that Dalit women in the novel are subjected to both sexism and casteism. The writers argue that Kandasamy’s inclusion of these brutal depictions is a “deliberate political choice” (Jenitta and Karunakar 2025, p. 89), operating as a “feminist critique of both caste oppression and patriarchy” (p. 89). By centering the experiences of Dalit women, the novel demonstrates that caste violence “cannot be fully understood without also considering the role of gender”. Jenitta and Karunakar argue that “Kandasamy’s portrayal of this intersectional oppression highlights the ways in which caste and gender are intertwined, with Dalit women bearing the brunt of both forms of oppression and discrimination” (p. 88). Quite conveniently, in a manner symptomatic of postmodern critical trends that displace equality in favor of identity, these critics overlook the question of class, advancing an archaic theoretical framework of intersectionality that the novel seemingly attacks at its core. The rest of this section argues that Kandasamy replaces this by envisioning a more comprehensive idiom of Marxist solidarity, as propagated by Social Reproduction theorists.

In her “Introduction: Mapping Social Reproduction Theory,” Tithi Bhattacharya extends Marxist analysis by foregrounding the invisible infrastructures of labor that sustain capitalist production. The article explores how capitalism disavows the immense amount of unwaged domestic, emotional, and communal work that enables workers to present themselves daily at the point of production, revealing the capitalist dependence on a vastly expanded social terrain that it simultaneously exploits and obscures. Equally significant is Bhattacharya’s insistence that relations of oppression, be they gendered, racial, or sexual, are not peripheral distortions but structural components of capitalist social relations as these “questions of oppression. . . as structurally relational to, and hence shaped by, capitalist production” (Bhattacharya 2017, p. 3). Thus, Social Reproduction Theory rejects models that treat racism, sexism, and other forms of domination as add-ons to class analysis, insisting instead on their co-production within the dynamics of labor exploitation and social reproduction. Drawing on the work of Cinzia Arruzza, she underscores that gender and class “intertwine in capitalist production,” challenging frameworks that attempt to

rank or hierarchize different axes of oppression (p. 5). Therefore, by situating exploitation within the very processes that reproduce labor power, Social Reproduction Theory offers a unified, materially grounded theory of capitalist totality that clarifies why the struggles over wages, care work, migration, household labor, and racialized dispossession must be understood as interconnected fronts in the broader contest over the reproduction of life under capitalism.

This emphasis on totality leads Bhattacharya to critique intersectionality's underlying logic even while she recognizes the empirical richness of such scholarship. As she notes, the problem arises when oppression is understood through a "social Newtonian" model of discrete parts "colliding, intersecting, or interlocking to produce a combined. . . whole" (p. 17). Such a model, she contends, misrepresents the structural unity of capitalism by reducing oppression to the mechanical overlap of independent mechanisms rather than viewing it as emerging from the same social relations that organize labor and reproduction. Consequently, in their 2019 manifesto, *Feminism for the 99%*, Bhattacharya, in collaboration with Cinzia Arruzza and Nancy Fraser, recuperate Social Reproduction Theory as a new, militant arena for class struggle. "From the strike wave of teachers in the United States to the struggle against water privatization in Ireland to the strikes of Dalit sanitation workers in India," they identify all these movements to be "led and powered by women," as the "workers are revolting against capital's assault on social reproduction" (Arruzza et al. 2019, p. 9). Furthermore, "the true aim of social reproduction struggles is to establish the primacy of people-making over profit-making" as these movements are "never about bread alone," indicating why "a feminism for the 99 percent incarnates and fosters the struggle for bread and roses" (pp. 72–73). Thus, their political scope is broad, encompassing not only demands for public services like childcare and elder care, but also a series of diverse grassroots movements that fight for essential resources (housing, healthcare, food security, universal basic income), better labor rights for marginalized workers (migrants, domestic workers, public employees, and those in privatized care sectors), and systemic changes to working conditions, such as a shorter work week and comprehensive paid leave (pp. 79–80).

In this regard, in the fourth chapter, titled *Seasons of Violence*, of the second part of the novel, Kandasamy devotes an entire section discussing how women's participation defines the movement in its entirety, more specifically, how the battle for Dalit proletariat women's issues is intrinsically connected to the larger war against the feudal capitalist institutions of power:

When women take to protest, there is no looking back. This time it is the tractors. This time it is a Polydol death. This time it is a disappearance. This time it is a strike for higher wages. This time it is the demand for punishment for a rapist—the issues come and go and come again. Some-times their demands are related to women alone, like when they demanded daily wages instead of the weekly wage for women. Or when they demanded their right to take breaks to attend to their infants, because babies left under the shade of trees cried to their death in their makeshift sari cradles, or rolled over and drowned in the mud. Most of the time, they fight for everybody. (p. 75).

In this passage, Kandasamy foregrounds women's militancy through activism that blur the boundary between production and reproduction, precisely the boundary that Social Reproduction Theory seeks to dismantle. The women's demands for "daily wages instead of the weekly wage for women" and for breaks "to attend to their infants" expose what Tithi Bhattacharya describes as capitalism's systemic reliance on unwaged life-making labor that is simultaneously "naturalized into nonexistence" (p. 2). Their fight is not only for better wages but for the conditions necessary to reproduce themselves and their children

that, under capitalism, remain structurally subordinated to the extraction of surplus value. The chilling detail that “babies left under the shade of trees cried to their death. . . or rolled over and drowned in the mud” underscores the deadly consequences of what Nancy Fraser calls capitalism’s “generalized crisis of social reproduction,” in which the system’s drive for “unlimited accumulation” undermines the very processes that sustain life (Quoted in Bhattacharya, p. 12). Ergo, Kandasamy’s depiction resonates with Bhattacharya’s argument that struggles over care, survival, and bodily integrity are not peripheral “women’s issues” but central arenas of class struggle, because they arise from the material contradiction between the capitalist need for labor power and its refusal to bear the cost of producing and renewing that labor.

Thus, when the narrator insists that “most of the time, they fight for everybody,” the novel articulates what Social Reproduction Theory embodies: that women’s struggles rooted in reproductive labor have universal significance, revealing the capitalist totality in which oppression and exploitation are co-produced and against which collective resistance must be organized. In this light, the epigraph, with which my article opens, is of utmost importance. By explicitly mentioning that the “women said that if the men wanted their mothers and wives and sisters and daughters to live with some honour and dignity, they should stand by the Communists,” (p. 117) Kandasamy dramatizes how women’s dignity is inseparable from collective resistance through class struggle, aligning with Social Reproduction Theory’s argument that the reproduction of life cannot be disentangled from the political-economic structures that organize labor. This is how, in Kandasamy’s conjecture, the struggles for gender justice and class equity are inseparable from a broader idiom of regimented class struggle. The Communist Party she envisions is one that not only places the interests of the marginalized at the core of its agenda, but rather than being merely a vanguard, hands over its reins to a leadership comprising the marginalized.

5. Conclusions

My article has demonstrated that *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014) invokes the specters of Kilvenmani to intervene directly in the ongoing discursive battle between Marxist praxis and academic identity politics. To that end, Meena Kandasamy simultaneously critiques Western academic postcolonialism and deploys a subversive, postmodern metafictional form to advocate for a revival of communism along the lines of what was later theorized as Social Reproduction Theory. In this regard, the title, *The Gypsy Goddess*, reflects the novel’s political aims by establishing a chilling mythical precedent for historical atrocity while simultaneously asserting a feminist, communist, and anti-caste claim to justice. As a local Tamil legend goes, once upon a time, about seven or seventeen gypsy women (Kuravars) and their children were brutally murdered and burned to death. As a chilling parallel and powerful foreshadowing for the Kilvenmani massacre, according to the legend, the murdered women are elevated into a single, fierce cult goddess, Kurathi Amman (The Gypsy Goddess), who exacts retribution and justice on the unjust village. This crucial act of divine transformation speaks directly to the novel’s desire to give poetic justice and immortality to the victims who were denied justice by the legal system that acquitted their killers.

I choose to end my article with a brief analysis of the title and the myth embedded in the narrative, to conclude that Kandasamy’s notion of communism is not a detached, Western intellectual import but is firmly rooted in Indian soil, giving primacy to the local struggles of the most disenfranchised sections of the social order. It is a deeply ethical and historical necessity born directly from the experience of caste oppression and agrarian exploitation. The figure of Kurathi Amman embodies this vision by not being a theoretical abstraction, but a local deity of retribution. By making this local myth the

novel's foundation, Kandasamy orchestrates an organic totality of India's oppressions and the resistances against it.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ The Green Revolution in India refers to a period of agricultural transformation beginning in the mid-1960s, characterized by the introduction of High-Yielding Variety (HYV) seeds, modern irrigation methods, and chemical fertilizers. Spearheaded by agricultural scientists M.S. Swaminathan and Norman Borlaug, the initiative significantly increased food grain production, particularly wheat and rice, helping India achieve self-sufficiency and end its reliance on foreign food aid.
- ² Yanis Varoufakis, in his recent book, *Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism* (Varoufakis 2023), defines technofeudalism as a new economic epoch where "cloud capital" (algorithms and digital infrastructure) has largely replaced physical capital. Crucially, he argues that the market, which used to be the defining institution of capitalism, has been usurped by the digital fiefdom (e.g., Amazon), where private owners, or "cloudalists," dictate the rules of exchange and extract rent rather than competing for profit.

References

- Ahmad, Aijaz. 2011. On Postmodernism. *The Marxist* 27: 34–57.
- Arruzza, Cinzia, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser. 2019. *Feminism for the 99 Percent: A Manifesto*. London: Verso.
- Bhattacharya, Tithi, ed. 2017. *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*. London: Pluto Press.
- Dirlik, Arif. 1994. The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism. *Critical Inquiry* 20: 328–56. [CrossRef]
- Gajrawala, Toral Jatin. 2020. The Postman and the Tramp: Cynicism, Commitment, and the Aesthetics of Subaltern Futurity. *Cultural Critique* 108: 40–68. [CrossRef]
- Herrero, Dolores. 2019. Postmodernism and Politics in Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess*. *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 54: 70–83.
- Jaising, Shakti. 2023. *Beyond Alterity: Contemporary Indian Fiction and the Neoliberal Script*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Jenitta, S. Maria Bridget, and Martha Karunakar. 2025. Tales of Trauma and Memory in Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess* and Mari Selvaraj's *Pariyerum Perumal*. *ICFAI Journal of English Studies* 20: 82–97. [CrossRef]
- Kandasamy, Meena. 2016. *The Gypsy Goddess*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Mirza, Maryam. 2023. *Resistance and Its Discontents in South Asian Women's Fiction*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Nanda, Mira. 2025. *Postcolonial Theory and the Making of Hindu Nationalism: The Wages of Unreason*. London: Routledge.
- Varoufakis, Yanis. 2023. *Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism*. London: The Bodley Head.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.