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**Narrating Nature, Remembering Place: The Role of
Personal Writings in Sheela Tomy's *Valli***

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Abstract: Diary entries, emails and messages have long served as significant narrative forms that provide deep insight into characters' feelings, thoughts, perspectives and experiences. Sheela Tomy's *Valli* employs these personal forms of writing to record everyday experiences, perceptions of the environment, reflections on socio-ecological transformations, and the evolving dynamics of interpersonal relationships. It introduces multiple perspectives, enabling a richer and more nuanced understanding of the ecological realities depicted in the novel. By foregrounding ecological concerns and experiential knowledge, the novel underscores the profound impact of environmental transformation on community life, cultural memory, and regional identity. Tessa inherits a diary left behind by her mother, Susan. Through the diary entries and emails, the novel transcends familial boundaries, weaving together the histories of migrant settlers and the Adivasi communities of Kalluvayal. As the diary progresses, Susan began writing about the Kalluvayal forest, the river, the indigenous Paniyar community, their songs — and their inevitable, tragic encounters with an encroaching modernity. Viewed through the lens of Erin James's Ecocritical Narratology, these epistolary forms emerge as powerful narrative devices that shape environmental perception and cultivate ecological consciousness. By intertwining personal memory with ecological experience, *Valli* demonstrates the capacity of narrative to preserve environmental histories, foster empathy, and deepen readers' awareness of the intricate connections between human lives and the natural world.

Keywords: *Personal Writings, Econarratology, Environmental Documentation, Ecological Consciousness, Private Memory, Cultural Memory, Textual Memory, Story World*

Literary representations of nature have often been analysed in terms of landscape description, rural imagery, eco- symbolism and representations of human–nature relationships. Contemporary environmental fiction, however, moves beyond the traditional perception of nature as a mere setting for human stories. As landscape can become an active participant in the production of memory, identity and history, Sheela Tomy's *Valli* serves as a significant example of such writing. Sheela Tomy occupies a significant position in contemporary Malayalam literature through her sustained exploration of ecology, landscape, migration, memory, indigeneity, gender, and socio-cultural transformation. Her debut novel, *Valli*, originally written in Malayalam and published in 2019, received significant critical attention for its intricate representation of the ecological and cultural world of Kalluvayal. The novel was translated into English by Jayasree Kalathil, thereby extending Tomy's ecological and cultural concerns to a wider readership, facilitating critical engagement with the novel within broader discourses of ecocriticism, environmental humanities, indigenous representation, and ecological memory. Set primarily in Kalluvayal in the Wayanad region of Kerala, a forested region of the Western Ghats, *Valli* brings together the interconnected histories, experiences, and relationships of the migrant settlers and indigenous communities whose lives are deeply embedded in the landscape. Nature is represented not merely as scenery but as an integral component of community identity and cultural memory. Rather than presenting the history of Kalluvayal through a conventional linear narrator, Tomy constructs the story through a collection of narrative forms, prominently including diary entries and emails. Viewed from an ecocritical perspective, the environment in *Valli* is not simply described; it is remembered, narrated and archived. Forests, rivers, trees, animals and indigenous practices become part of characters' textual memory. The diary entries and emails function as repositories of environmental knowledge, recording memories of landscapes, traditional practices, and ways of life that are threatened by ecological and social change. Through these personal narratives, the novel preserves experiences that might otherwise be forgotten. This article therefore examines how diary entries and emails function in *Valli* as ecological narrative strategies that connect individual memory and environmental history, private correspondence and collective experience, and human identity and place. Erin James's concept of econarratology provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding these processes.

Erin James is a prominent scholar in the field of ecocriticism and environmental literary studies, particularly recognised for developing the concept of econarratology, which brings together narratological and ecocritical approaches to examine the relationship between narrative and the nonhuman world. James' influential work *The Storyworld Accord: Econarratology and Postcolonial Narratives* brings narratological attention to how storyworlds are constructed through relationships among space, time, subjectivity, and environment. Applying this framework to *Valli* reveals how the

novel's narrative forms actively shape the reader's perception of Kalluvayal as an ecological and cultural world. The title *Valli* itself is suggestive in this context. The word carries multiple meanings, including associations with the vine, earth, young woman and wages- a measure of paddy given as wages- and these highlight the conflict that arises when the ecosystem, people and their way of living face an existential crisis. These meanings reinforce the novel's central concern with interconnectedness, showing that nature, labour, gender, land and human existence are interrelated rather than isolated categories.

Valli establishes a significant relationship between environmental change and generational memory. A landscape remembered by one generation as abundant and vibrant survives for the next primarily through fragmented recollections, narratives, and documentary traces.

The Diary as an Archive of Ecological Memory

The novel opens with Unniyachi's letter to Tessa, in which she reveals that the novel came into being only because Tessa entrusted her with Susan's diary, with the earnest desire to write a novel about Kalluvayal. Unniyachi's role as the narrator is revealed only towards the end of the novel, creating a striking narrative twist. In effect, the novel itself emerges from Susan's diary, with her entries woven into the larger narrative. As Tessa reads the diary in the novel, Susan's entries provide access to her experiences, perceptions, memories, and her intimate relationship with Kalluvayal and its inhabitants. The diary therefore becomes more than a record of personal experience; it serves as a textual repository through which individual and collective memories are preserved and transmitted. The novel concludes with a Facebook post by Unniyachi, which functions as an epilogue and retrospectively discloses her identity as the narrator. This delayed disclosure is an effective narrative strategy, as it encourages readers to reconsider the preceding narrative in the light of Unniyachi's final disclosure. Even in the opening letter, the interconnections among Susan, Kalluvayal, and its people are already suggested. Thus, the diary and epistolary forms work together to establish a network of relationships among memory, place, people, and storytelling.

Dear Tessa,

This is destiny. If I had not run into you at the airport while on my way to London, this book would not have happened. I am only the conduit to realize your dream of turning Susan's diary into a novel. It is Susan who has written this, not me. From the moment I started reading the diary you entrusted to me, Susan began to occupy my mind like a forest that eventually grows large enough to cover the whole earth. I was caught up, inextricably, in the eventualities of her stories, unable to distinguish truth from myth.

Everything that was in Susan's Kalluvayal, and some of what was not, is in this book. I have included, without making changes or omissions, the messages that Susan sent you, and excerpts from her diary...

Every land has darkness that illuminates it more than the brightness of light- the realities of those who cannot speak, their pain, their forests, rivers, wind, fragrances, why, even the gods that were stolen from them. (i)

The story of Kalvayal thus emerges as a record of shifting human-land relationships, foregrounding the interconnectedness of ecological transformations and social histories. By bringing together migrant settlers, indigenous communities, landowners, and other social groups, the novel exposes the complex intersections between environmental exploitation, social hierarchies, and unequal access to land and resources. The landscape of Kalluvayal becomes a site where ecological transformation and social change are simultaneously enacted and remembered.

Susan's diary, left for her daughter Tessa, creates an intimate textual relationship between mother and daughter. It creates an impression of authenticity because Susan's diary appears to be a direct record of lived experience. Since Susan's diary is a space in which she records her emotions, memories, experiences and observations, it transcends personal self-documentation, becoming a textual record of place, its people, and its changing ecological realities. Thus, the author uses Susan's personal intimacy with the diary to construct a much larger narrative. Kalluvayal enters the diary through memories of the forest, river, people, indigenous communities, songs, ecological changes and evolving social relations. The diary consequently becomes an archive of a world that is gradually transforming. The personal document becomes a form of environmental documentation.

I, Susan.

A childhood spent in Kalluvayal, amidst forest people and forest myths more astonishing than fairy tales, listening to stories of rivers, mist and earth, to secrets of the forest in which truth and lies, history and imagination, beliefs and superstitions mingled inseparably together.

Years later, old characters from those stories began to come back to me. By then, I had misplaced my deep blue sky... The city gazed back at me, impassive, the roads shrouded in desperation, waiting to be filled again with activity. The grey light told me: Get up, Susan. Write it all down before the forest within you burns down to ashes. And so, holding my aching cells together, anxiously, nervously, I began to write. The Book

of Forest. I began to write for the forest that is on fire, for the people who have no voice, for the language that has no script... (13)

The progression from private memory to place-based memory, which evolves into collective memory, and ultimately assumes the form of ecological memory, demonstrates how individual recollection becomes embedded within the shared cultural, social, spatial, and environmental histories of a place. In *The Storyworld Accord*, James bridges narratological and ecocritical approaches by exploring how story worlds are shaped through the interconnected dimensions of environment, subjectivity, spirituality, and spatiality. The narrative form positions nature as an integral component of the story world. The forest acquires narrative significance as a dynamic presence that shapes the characters' lives while simultaneously bearing the traces of ecological and social change. In *Valli* the forest is not represented as a passive setting but as an active narrative presence that participates in the formation of human experiences and the unfolding of events. Kalluvayal functions not merely as a geographical backdrop but emerges as a dynamic and constitutive presence within the narrative. The environment acquires significant narrative agency, becoming an integral force in shaping the development and meaning of the story.

In *Valli*, the story world is shaped by the diverse perspectives of its characters, each offering a distinct understanding of events, landscapes, and lived experiences. These multiple viewpoints create a layered, polyphonic narrative, allowing readers to see the novel's social, cultural, and ecological domains from different angles. The concept of the story world encourages readers to engage deeply with the characters by exploring where they live, what they do, what they fear, what they remember, and what they value. The novel traces the lives of several generations whose experiences are deeply connected to the land. The story begins with Thommichan and Sara, who move to Kalluvayal, and gradually follows the lives of their daughter Susan and granddaughter Tessa. Each generation experiences the landscape differently, reflecting the changing relationship between people and their environment. Through Susan's memories and reflections, Tessa discovers how individual experiences are intertwined with the changing landscape and the collective life of Kalluvayal. The diary thus becomes a means of connecting different generations, and it allows Tessa to reconstruct her family's past and develop a deeper understanding of the place they have inherited. Kalluvayal itself undergoes significant change as its human communities change. The forest encountered by earlier generations is not necessarily the same forest inherited by those who come later. Economic development, migration, exploitation of natural resources, changing land relations, and the gradual transformation of indigenous life reshape the ecological and cultural character of the region. In this sense, *Valli* presents the story world not as a fixed setting but as a dynamic and evolving space, shaped by memory, human relationships, history, and the interaction between people and environment.

10 May 2017

Spitting out the red juice of the paan she was chewing, the woman herded the ducks to the big canal at the crack of dawn. She cooed to them and chatted with them as they walked across the mist-covered fields. She was always dressed in a chequered lungi and a white chatta, with a white cotton thorthu covering her head like a nun's wimple. A gaggle of Kalluvayal's children followed the fan-pleat of her lungi tucked in at the small of her back. It was these children that gave her the name Umminithara-Ummuni at the Duck.

Each morning, after bathing in the big canal, Umminithara would pant up the slope to the first house on the riverbank, its front yard littered with leaves fallen overnight. A few of the ducks would quack their way in after her. By the time she began sweeping the yard with the broom dozing by the side of the hen coop, toddy tapper Chandran would walk down the lane. From this side of the low wall, one could only see the brimming pots on his head, as though they were sliding along down the lane on their own. Every morning, he would give her a mugful of the dawn-fresh toddy. When Umminithara drank the toddy, wiped her mouth, and sat down leaning against the wall of the firewood shed, the lizards hiding in the coconut husks and the piebald dog snoozing in the wood pile would smile with her. (107)

Umminithara is carefully portrayed through Susan's diary- her dress, manners, behaviour, attitudes, and how others respond to her gradually contribute to a nuanced and multidimensional portrait of her character. The diary goes beyond describing Umminithara as an individual by placing her within the social and ecological world of Kalluvayal. The descriptions of the ducks, the toddy tapper Chandran, and Umminithara's act of drinking toddy further enrich this portrayal. These seemingly ordinary details situate Umminithara within the social, cultural, and political environment of Kalluvayal, foregrounding the interdependence between human experience and the surrounding landscape. Through such details, Susan's narration presents Umminithara not as an isolated individual but as a character embedded within a complex network of human, non-human, and environmental relationships. From an econarratological perspective, such details are particularly significant because they foreground the interconnectedness of human and non-human life and demonstrate how characterisation can emerge through relationships with the surrounding environment. This mode of characterisation resonates with Eric James's concept of ecocritical narration, which highlights the potential of personal writing for constructing character through everyday details, behaviours, interactions, and observations.

Alongside the detailed characterisation of individuals, the narrative's vivid representation of place is equally significant, particularly in the description of Kadoram School and Kadoram School Market. Kadoram School is more than an educational institution for Susan; it is a formative space of memory and experience that introduces her to the emotions and experiences associated with the land, earth, air, nature, longing, struggle, and fulfilment. The school thus becomes deeply intertwined with her memories and sense of place. The school and the market constitute important spaces of memory and lived experience, demonstrating how particular places become embedded in individual identities and shape people's physical, emotional, spiritual and ecological relationships with their surroundings.

17 May 2017

I see those times as if through a curtain of mist...Times when we listened to those stories without understanding their meaning. Equality- that was the first lesson taught at Kadoram School. And then so many more lessons, taught by the seed that loses itself to sprout, to leaf, to flower...

Lessons about earth, water, air...

About waiting, maturing, yielding, about toil and fulfilment, about failure and success, about resurrection...(145)

17 May 2017

Those days, after the Sunday Qurbana, the churchyard would get ready for the Kadoram School market. Baskets and containers would travel all the way across Gowdar's coffee plantations and Maniyan Chetty's rubber estate and come up the hill into churchyard...

After the communion and the confession of their sins, Christian matriarchs would assemble around the children. Fishing out coins and notes secreted inside waist folds and blouses, they would buy the baskets, the windows and the mats, the wild gooseberry and the honey. (137)

The description thus creates an immersive spatial experience in which the environment becomes an active component of the narrative.

When Susan records her life in the city in her diary, her descriptions differ markedly from those of Kalluvayal. In the urban landscape, she experiences a sense of detachment and alienation from the natural world, and she fails to perceive the environment as an interconnected part of her existence. Her diary entries bring out this sense of alienation and foreground the contrast between the two spaces and

the distinct experiences they offer her. Despite living in the city, Susan continually longs for the village, demonstrating her deep emotional and ecological connection with Kalluvayal. Her persistent yearning for the landscape is poignantly expressed through her diary entries, which become a medium for expressing her memories, longing, and reflections on place.

1 August 2017

The city is asleep. Writing this, sleepless and alone in Flat 707 in a twelve-storey building in a land with no forests, no rivers, no wind, I am aware of a loneliness more acute than death itself...

The Kabani in my heart is emaciated. In the nightmare of last night, I was by the river. Her desperate journey towards the east had stopped, and she had begun flowing backwards, disgruntled, to the mountaintop where she had taken birth. She turned into thin, silvery lines and disappeared. (227)

The detailed descriptions of material and ecological dimensions of place can be examined through the framework of econarratology, which explores how narratives represent relationships between human beings, non-human environments, and the spaces they inhabit. The depiction of Kadoram School and Market exemplifies this approach as the places are portrayed as dynamic and living environments shaped by the interactions among people, objects, visual and auditory experiences, and the surrounding landscape. The narrative's descriptive richness creates a strong sense of place-consciousness, enabling readers not merely to visualise the Kadoram school but to inhabit it imaginatively. In this sense, the description adopts an econarratological mode of storytelling, in which place is endowed with experiential, affective, and narrative significance. When place is created in a story, the physical attributes, emotional connections, and psychological perceptions of the characters are combined to impart individual meaning and value to the stories. Humanist geographers have discussed the importance of place in the realm of human experience and among them, Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph attempt to elucidate the sense of place in relation to human emotions, experiences and intentions. They have analysed the conceptual engagement between space and place as they are structured in human environmental experience, and it is found that a place can be seen as space that has meaning. According to Tuan, space is an open space, but may be marked off and defended against intruders (Space and Place 4). But "place" is more than just a location and can be described as a location created by human experiences. In fact, "place" exists as "space" that is filled with meanings and objectives by human experiences in this particular space. According to Tuan, a "place" does not exist without observable boundaries and is, besides, a visible expression of a specific time period (6). Representation

of place in *Valli* functions as a priori representation that underlies all outer intuitions and outer appearances.

Kalluvayal and the people Susan loves are presented as intricately interconnected throughout the narrative. One inevitably leads to the other: whenever she describes a particular place, the people associated with it emerge within her recollection; conversely, when she remembers a person, her memories naturally lead back to the landscape that shaped their lives and relationships. The narrative thus dissolves the boundaries between people and place, memory and landscape, and human experience and the natural environment. This seamless movement between people and place lends the narrative considerable emotional and ecological depth, making Kalluvayal inseparable from the memories, identities, and relationships of those who belong to it.

17 August 2017

If the last drop of dew at the tip of the last leaf on the last tree in the last forest is still in Kalluvayal, I would call it James. ..You will see, Tessa, the manjadi tree in the northern yard that drops blood-red seeds all around it. Little Susan had a whole collection of them. And now, my memories and dreams scatter like those manjadi seeds. How I wish I could see, one more time, Sarammachi chasing me, a tamarind switch in hand...(255)

Ecofeminist perspectives also permeate Susan's diary entries throughout, revealing the intricate relationship between gender, nature, labour, care, and environmental exploitation. The diary therefore functions as a space where ecological concerns and women's experiences converge. By foregrounding the intricate relationship between women's lives and the natural environment, the narrative invites an ecofeminist reading, situating Susan's experiences within a broader critique of the interconnected forms of exploitation, marginalisation, and domination of both women and nature.

19 August 2017

If a time comes when all the storytellers are women, do you know what we would write about? We would write about forests, not palaces. We would write about arbours where men and women live together. And about oceans where men and women row boats together, fill fishing nets together, about heights we would scale together and the flags we would plant on top of the peaks we would conquer together.

It would be about love that we write.

Bellammayi, who planted Parijatham, jasmine, rose, dahlia, marigold, chethi, and many other flowers in a riot of colours in the yard, shaped them, supported them, picked pests

off them, was herself a garden. In the month of Chingam, the slopes of Thambrankunnu would turn into a sea of yellow, and in those days, Bellammayi had the fragrance of marigolds. (278-279)

Susan continues to reflect on Sarammachi, who gave the forest bordering Kalluvayal its evocative name, the “Forest of Fragrances” (279), thereby inscribing her presence within the landscape itself. Following the departure of Bellammayi and Sarammachi, Susan perceives not merely the loss of their physical presence but also the disappearance of the fragrance associated with the forest and, symbolically, the fragrance of her adolescence. Susan recognises the depth of her loneliness and the emotional void their absence has created. Thereafter, her life is characterised by a persistent desire for companionship, as she continually seeks relationships and attachments that might compensate for the absence left by these significant figures. Thereafter, Susan turns her attention to Unniyachi, the woman whom she believes will eventually enter her life and take possession of her. Her reflections on Unniyachi reveal Susan’s apprehension, longing, uncertainty, and self-recognition. “And what was I hoping to find her? My beloved? My reflection?”(279). These questions suggest that her expectation of Unniyachi extends beyond her desire for companionship. She appears to seek in her a figure who might both fulfil the emotional longing and mirror aspects of her own identity. Unniyachi thus becomes associated with Susan’s continuing search for connection and for the presence that might fill the emotional void left by earlier losses.

Personal Correspondence and Dialogic Narrative

The novel incorporates a range of epistolary exchanges and written communications, including the emails and messages exchanged between Tessa and Susan, Valyappachan and Tessa, Susan and Shyam, Sara and Father Felix and among others. While the diary entries provide retrospective continuity, the emails and messages introduce a more distinctly dialogic and relational dimension to the narrative. Whereas Susan’s diary primarily articulates her consciousness through the acts of recollection and self-reflection, the emails in the novel are grounded in an implicit exchange between two or more consciousnesses. In *Valli*, epistolary exchanges function as a medium through which individual experiences, memories, emotions, and perceptions are communicated, negotiated, and reinterpreted. The correspondence between Susan and Tessa is especially significant because it complicates the relationship between past and present. Tessa does not simply receive Susan’s memories passively; this helps to create an implied conversation between generations.

Kuttan,

Oh, the smells of childhood, and the tastes! When I think of Annakutty ammamma, a handful of moringa flowers fall into my mind. At the edge of the eastern yard in Anjilikunnil, there were three or four moringa trees, prettily swinging in the wind and looking into the kitchen. When they flowered, Ammamma would spread a cloth under the trees and a greedy wind would steal into the yard to drop a shower of flowers onto the white cloth. She would cook them in oil flavoured with spluttering mustard seeds along with black pepper, salt, turmeric and some grated coconut, to be eaten with a plate of hot rice served on top of tender leaves of moringa.(85)

Mama,

I miss the dosa you make! My attempt at dosa-making was a failure today too. I'll WhatsApp you the weird picture... Tessa (86)

These communications establish a continuing dialogue across generational and geographical distances, enabling Tessa to access memories, experiences, and perspectives that would otherwise remain beyond her immediate experience.

Tessa,

I have been searching for the whistling bird hiding in the branches.

I wonder if the firefly tree by the bank of the river will wait until you get here, whether the arbour, bursting with butterflies, will still be here... There will be a bird, a little bird with grey-brown feathers, hiding in the greenery. Listen for it... Listen for its song as it wafts in from somewhere out there...

‘ChaKKIKKOchamme, chaKKAKKUppundo..’ Mama (46)

Just as Tessa gains insight into Susan's intricate relationship with the natural world through her reading of the diary, the letters and emails further illuminate the depth of her understanding of the profound ecological consciousness that shaped her mother's life. Through these epistolary narratives, Tessa comes to recognise the extent to which Susan's emotional experiences, memories, and relationships are inseparably intertwined with nature. The letters and messages thus complement the retrospective dimensions of the diary by revealing, from a more relational and dialogic perspective, the depth of Susan's attachment to the landscape and her enduring sense of belonging to the natural world.

The novel introduces a diverse and multifaceted cast of characters, each contributing distinct perspectives, experiences, and dimensions to the narrative. Through their varied identities and relationships, these characters enrich the text, adding complexity, depth, and nuance to the unfolding story. The narrative also includes Sara's letter to Father Felix Mullakkatil, in which she seeks his assistance in reaching Kalluvayal, as she fears that she is being followed by someone. This letter introduces an element of urgency and suspense while simultaneously revealing Sara's vulnerability and her search for security and support. In response to Sara's letter, Father Felix writes back, offering her reassurance and emotional support. His response becomes a source of comfort and relief for Sara, demonstrating how epistolary communication functions as a means of emotional sustenance during moments of fear and insecurity. Father Felix's response thus becomes more than a reply to Sara's immediate concerns; it functions as an expression of care and solidarity. In response to Sara's letter, Father Felix writes to her with words of reassurance and support, providing her with a much-needed sense of comfort and security. His letter serves as an important source of emotional relief and reassurance at a moment marked by fear and uncertainty. The exchange also underscores the affective potential of epistolary communication, through which distance is momentarily overcome and emotional solidarity is established. Thus, the letters and messages in *Valli* transcend their function as mere supplementary narrative but as significant textual spaces through which relationships are established, memories are transmitted, anxieties are articulated, and significant information is revealed. The epistolary mode consequently contributes to the novel's polyphonic narrative structure, bringing multiple voices, perspectives and experiences into the narrative and connecting individuals across physical, temporal, and emotional distances.

In a letter from Thomas to Tess, the former educates his granddaughter in a genteel way about the necessity of striking a symbiotic balance with nature.

It pleases me to see lakes and green hills in the photos you send me on WhatsApp, to know that the people there are protecting nature. See, our indigenous people, the *Adivasis*, were also nature's guards. They never poisoned the waterways to catch fish, and yet their bamboo baskets brimmed with vaala, kuruva, snakehead, catfish and whitespot. They only took just enough honey and left the rest for the bees, just enough fruits and jungle roots to survive. They lived in bamboo huts. Then the migrants arrived from the lowlands, and everything changed. It is the abode of the gods themselves that is ruined when forests are destroyed, the sanctuary of countless creatures. What's once gone does not return, my dearest (96).

At the line-by-line level, the writing is remarkably evocative, a kind of succinct, gentle-but-firm cautionary note. Tomy demonstrates considerable versatility, moving beyond this mode of expression to employ markedly different narrative and stylistic registers. The lyrical description, introspective reflection, dialogic narration, and more expansive modes of storytelling enrich the texture of the novel and enable its ecological concerns to be articulated through multiple aesthetic forms.

In an email to Susan, Shyam remarks that she is “still in the forest” (371), suggesting that her attachment to the natural world extends beyond her physical presence and points to her enduring psychological and emotional attachment to the natural world. Susan’s response is particularly creative and emotionally evocative, as she articulates her engagement with the forest into a poetic mode of self-expression.

Shyam,

...And your money. I don’t need it. I’m a forest creature, a dreamer as you say. My needs are limited.

I know I have failed us. But you forgot that the love you say was smothered in fog could have been resurrected, rekindled, with a single smile, an embrace, a glance. Perhaps this, too, is the romantic notion of a dreamer...

...Still, love tiptoed between us with no songs on its lips. Barren trees unable to bloom hung swings from their branches for us, and songbirds chattered even though they had forgotten their tunes. We just could not see, could not hear. Was I waiting for a spring that was yet to come? There was a time when, if I had a hundred eyes, I would have wanted to see you with all of them. You must know that... (372)

Susan’s words draw upon images, sensations, and experiences associated with nature to articulate her thoughts and feelings. Every emotional response acquires an ecological dimension, as Susan’s feelings are mediated through her encounters with the landscape and its transformations. The diary entries, messages, and emails are deeply embedded in her relationship with the natural environment, the forest of Kalluvayal. Nature functions not merely as a geographical backdrop but as an integral component of her emotional and experiential world. Her memories, loneliness, anxieties, joys, loss, relationships, and moments of introspection are repeatedly articulated through images and experiences drawn from the forest.

The forest becomes a language through which people of Kalluvayal communicate emotions that may otherwise remain difficult to articulate. Such an interrelationship between human experience and

the more-than-human world is particularly significant for reading *Valli*. In accordance with Erin James's concept of econarratology, the novel *Valli* demonstrates how narrative forms represent the interconnectedness of human consciousness, experience, and the nonhuman environment, presenting the forest not merely as a backdrop but as an active presence in the formation and expression of memory, emotion, response, and identity. *Valli* suggests that environmental destruction entails more than the loss of physical landscapes; it also threatens the memories, histories, cultural practices and forms of knowledge situated within those landscapes. Within this context, writing becomes an act of resistance to ecological and cultural forgetting. Susan's diary operates as a textual repository that preserves experiences that might otherwise be lost to time, while Tessa's reading transforms inherited memory into an interpretive process through which the ecological history of Kalluvayal is reconstructed. Literature thereby becomes a medium of ecological remembrance and cultural continuity through which lost or threatened landscapes can be remembered, reimagined, and ethically encountered. *Valli* thus positions literary remembrance as an ethical response to environmental loss, enabling readers to imaginatively encounter histories and landscapes that extend beyond their immediate lived experiences.

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