

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.11042525

LITERATURE AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY FICTION IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

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Received: 11/11/2025

Accepted: 18/11/2025

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ABSTRACT

*This study critically examines how contemporary fiction serves as a dynamic instrument of social commentary amid the rise of global social justice movements. Addressing a scholarly gap, the research explores how modern narratives both reflect and intervene in sociopolitical discourse. The primary objective is to analyze how selected novels construct activist imaginaries and critique systemic inequities through intersectional lenses of race, gender, class, and environmental justice. Using qualitative critical discourse analysis, the study engages four English-language novels: *The Nickel Boys*, *Girl*, *Woman, Other*, *The Overstory*, and *The Ministry for the Future*, chosen for their thematic richness and cultural resonance. Drawing on Critical Race Theory, Intersectional Feminist Theory, Ecocriticism, and Postcolonial Criticism, the research decodes narrative strategies, symbolic forms, and activist aesthetics. Findings reveal that these works deploy innovative structures, nonlinear timelines, multiple narrators, and speculative futures to disrupt conventional storytelling and galvanize ethical reflection. Reception analysis highlights the role of digital communities and social media in amplifying literary activism and sustaining cultural critique. This study affirms contemporary fiction's relevance as a catalyst for public discourse and collective engagement with justice issues. Future research could expand to non-Western narratives, digital storytelling, and AI-generated literature to further explore fiction's emancipatory potential.*

KEYWORDS: Contemporary Fiction, Social Justice, Intersectionality, Narrative Resistance, Ecocriticism, Critical Race Theory, Feminist Literary Criticism, Postcolonial Discourse, Activist Aesthetics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has seen the re-emergence of social justice movements around the world to deal with structural inequalities (Walker & Pentaris, 2025), environmental degradation (Apostolopoulou, 2022), racial injustice (Song, 2023), and gender-based violence (Bohn & Levy, 2022). Social movements like Black Lives Matter, # MeToo, Extinction Rebellion, and Fridays for Future have significantly altered the way people discuss issues, emphasizing the need to transform the system to eradicate injustices (Nixon, 2011; Hooks, 1984). The movements have not only determined the policy discussions and protest cultures, but have also been reflected in artistic and literary outputs. Contemporary fiction and literature in general have turned into a crucial location of social structure exploration, critique, and reimagination, as well as collective futures (Elliott, 2021).

Literature can be used as a powerful means of making the invisible and long-term effects of sociopolitical and ecological crises visible, as Rob Nixon (2011) elaborates on his idea of slow violence. On the same note, bell hooks (1984) points out the role of cultural production, such as literature, as a point of resistance to hegemonic ideologies (Hooks, 1984). Fiction presents a distinctive space through which marginalized voices can express their experiences of oppression and, at the same time, promote understanding and communication across differences. In this regard, literary texts go beyond the aesthetic roles to serve as cultural critique and social agency. In an argument by Rita Felski (2015), literature is important in shaping such affective and ethical responses to the world, which in turn informs how readers perceive justice, identity, and belonging. Contemporary fiction has become an inseparable part of contemporary cultural research as it interferes with the construction of political consciousness through narrative, metaphor, and character.

In spite of this increasing overlap between literature and activism, there has been little scholarly interest in the role of contemporary fiction in sociopolitical resistance (Nuri, 2024). Much of literary criticism continues to focus on historical, canonical, or formally experimental texts, while overlooking how recent novels engage with activism, intersectionality, and environmental justice (Felski, 2015; Garrard, 2004).

This gap is particularly visible in the analysis of how fiction represents the entangled dimensions of race, gender, class, and ecology. Although theoretical frameworks such as Critical Race Theory and Intersectional Feminist Theory have gained traction in literary studies (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2000),

their application to post-2000 novels remains underdeveloped. There is an urgent need to assess how narrative strategies such as multiple perspectives, nonlinear timelines, and speculative realism enable fiction to critique systemic inequities and propose ethical imaginaries (Jameson, 2005; Berlant, 2011).

This study aims to fill the aforementioned gap by critically analyzing four contemporary English-language novels: *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead (2020), *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo (2019), *The Overstory* by Richard Powers (2018), and *The Ministry for the Future* by Kim Stanley Robinson (2020). These works have been selected for their thematic depth, representational diversity, and critical acclaim.

The key research objectives include

- To critically examine how these novels function as tools for social commentary and cultural resistance.
- To explore how they represent intersectional themes involving race, gender, class, and environmental degradation.
- To evaluate the narrative and formal techniques as activist aesthetics and speculative devices that these authors deploy to articulate sociopolitical critique and ethical vision.

By fulfilling these objectives, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of literature in the context of contemporary social justice movements.

Based on the objectives above, the study is guided by the following research questions

- How do contemporary novels critique dominant ideologies, such as racism, patriarchy, neoliberalism, and ecological neglect? (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Said, 1993)
- What narrative strategies (e.g., speculative fiction, polyvocal narration, intertextuality) do authors use to embed activist messages within their fiction? (Berlant, 2011; Robinson, 2020)
- How do readers and communities respond to such texts, especially about their alignment with broader movements such as climate activism and racial justice? (Palumbo-Liu, 2012; Monáe *et al.*, 2022).

These questions enable a multi-dimensional exploration of the literary, cultural, and political dynamics at play in activist fiction. This study is significant for both literary scholarship and cultural studies. It positions literature as an active agent in the construction and critique of social norms, rather than a passive mirror of society. In doing so, it builds on

the foundational work of Edward Said (1993) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999), who argued that literature operates within the same ideological battlegrounds as politics, law, and education. This study takes the principles of critical discourse analysis into narrative fiction to expand the scope of literary criticism to encompass new ethical, ecological, and intersectional styles of criticism. It shows that contemporary fiction is neither merely a place of representation, but also a place of resistance and reimagination; new worlds, identities, and solidarities are freely imagined.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As a method of critically analyzing contemporary fiction and its approach to activism, identity, and systemic injustice, this paper uses a combination of supportive theoretical perspectives. These are Critical Race Theory, Intersectional Feminist Theory, Ecocriticism, and Postcolonial Criticism. Collectively, these approaches give strong analytical means of interpreting sociopolitical aspects of literature and its potential to serve as a site of opposition and change.

2.1. Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) arose out of the legal field and has since been applied to the humanities, presenting a useful framework through which racial hierarchies can be observed in the cultural text and institutions (Tichavakunda, 2024). CRT maintains that racism is not always the result of personal prejudice, but is rather systemic and structural, and as such, functions through law, norm, and story (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In the context of literary criticism, CRT focuses on the importance of counter-narrative literature that breaks racial hegemonic ideologies and reclaims the voices of the Other.

The earliest contribution of intersectionality to CRT was made by Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), who underlines the intersection of race and gender as the source of distinct oppression experiences. Her observations are particularly relevant to such a novel as *The Nickel Boys*, in which the problem of systemic racial violence is described through the experience of young black men. CRT allows a tighter reading of such writings not only as accounts of individual trauma, but as critiques of the structure of racial injustice in history, law, and social systems.

2.2. Intersectional Feminist Theory

Intersectional Feminist Theory is an extension of CRT as it deals with the intersection of gender, class, race, and sexuality to create complex ways of

oppression (Esposito, 2024). Bell hooks (1984) insists that feminism should take into consideration the differences between women, especially those based on race and economic status, instead of assuming that there is a universal female experience. Judith Butler (1990) further undermines normative thinking on gender by taking up the concept of the performative of identity, and Patricia Hill Collins (2000) extends the concept of the matrix of domination as a way of describing interconnecting forms of power.

The framework is particularly applicable to *Girl, Woman, Other*, in which Evaristo (2019) intertwines the lives of Black British women and non-binary characters and demonstrates how the lived experience is shaped by multiple identities. With the help of intersectional feminism, the reader can examine how the literary form (e.g., fragmented narration, polyphonic voices) can be used to demonstrate the complexity of marginalization. These theories not only contribute to the unpacking of who or what is being represented, but also how and why.

2.3. Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is an analytical approach that allows studying how literature addresses ecological crises, environmental ethics, and planetary justice (Hebbar & Mallya, 2024). According to Lawrence Buell (2005), the role of literature in the creation of ecological consciousness is essential since literature dramatizes the degradation of nature and the imagination of environmentally sustainable futures. Greg Garrard (2004) describes how ecocriticism not only analyzes the human relationship with nature, but also the ideology behind the relationship.

Amitav Ghosh (2016) criticizes the unwillingness of the literary world to deal with the problem of climate change seriously, and new forms of narration are needed to reflect the massiveness and intricacy of the ecological breakdown. Most recently, Kathryn Yusoff (2018) has widened the territory of ecocritical language, suggesting that ecological injustice cannot be discussed separately from the history of colonization and extraction, as the latter produces geologies of race.

Such insights can be applied to the analysis of such novels as *The Overstory* and *The Ministry for the Future*, which employ storytelling to promote the idea of planetary interdependence and environmental justice. Ecocriticism makes it possible to think about trees, ecosystems, and planetary futures as not so much a background setting as actors in their own right.

2.4. Postcolonial Criticism

Postcolonial Criticism questions the cultural, political, and psychological inheritances of colonialism in literature (Keen, 2022). The idea of cultural imperialism, as used by Edward Said (1993), explains how literature has been used in the past to help justify colonial authority through depicting colonized individuals as inferior or voiceless. In her work, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999) provokes the reader to think whether subalterns can speak in hegemonic discourses, and she focuses on the role of power in language, genre, and representation.

Pramod K. Nayar (2008) continues these thoughts and examines the way contemporary literature addresses the issues of diaspora, migration, and decolonial memory. The postcolonial theory is especially applicable in the case of *Girl, Woman, Other* and *The Nickel Boys*, as they focus more on racialized and diasporic identities formed under the influence of historical trauma and power relationships in the world (Pistikoudis, 2023; Aqeli, 2024). Using this framework, literature can be interpreted beyond being an aesthetic production to a place of ideological struggle: the histories of conquest, resistance, and survival are fought out there.

2.5. Justification of Framework

The combination of these four theoretical orientations facilitates the multi-dimensional criticism of modern fiction. Critical Race Theory shows the workings of race and systemic injustice through narrative structures. Intersectional Feminism draws our attention to the interrelationship between the social identities and the structures on which these identities are based. Ecocriticism foregrounds environmental ethics and challenges anthropocentric worldviews. Postcolonial Criticism deconstructs colonial ideologies and recovers marginalized histories.

A combination of these frameworks makes it apparent that literature can be an activist against dominant ideologies, can envision alternatives, and can provoke political actions (Spivak, 1999; Tsing, 2015). They provide an extensive interpretive framework to comprehend the role of fiction in the joint action of justice, identity, and ecological survival in the modern moment.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The current research employs a qualitative critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach to explore how modern fiction can be a place of social critique and political protest. CDA enables interpretation of

literary use of language, form, and symbolism to reveal ideological subcurrents and sociopolitical criticism within structural forms of narrative (Felski, 2015). The sociocultural and political influences under which meaning, identity, and power relationships are formed in the text are considered as part of CDA in literary studies beyond formal analysis.

It is specifically well-suited to the analysis of novels that are in direct contact with the current cross-racial justice movements, ecological fears, and identity considerations, and the intersection of them. With the help of the analysis of literary discourse as reflective and constitutive of the societal processes, this paper highlights the possibility of fiction as a cultural machine that can be used to criticize the dominant ideologies and envision the alternative (Hooks, 1984; Said, 1993).

3.2. Text Selection Criteria

Three criteria guided the selection of primary texts for this study

1. Language and Period: All novels were originally published in English and appeared in or after the year 2000, ensuring temporal relevance to contemporary sociopolitical and cultural dynamics.
2. Thematic Engagement: Each work engages deeply with issues central to this study: racial injustice, gender and sexual identity, systemic oppression, and ecological collapse reflecting the core concerns of social justice movements in the 21st century.
3. Cultural Significance: The selected novels have received critical acclaim and wide readership, making them culturally influential. Their visibility in public discourse and scholarly debate positions them as meaningful case studies for exploring literature's relationship to activism and ethical imagination.

3.3. Selected Novels

The following four novels were chosen for detailed analysis

- Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* (2020) presents a haunting narrative inspired by the real-life horrors of the Dozier School for Boys in Florida. Through the protagonist Elwood Curtis, Whitehead (2020) exposes the entrenched racism of state institutions and the brutality of carceral systems. The novel offers a poignant counter-narrative that aligns with Critical Race Theory by foregrounding the structural nature of anti-Black violence

(Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

- Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) weaves together twelve interconnected narratives exploring the lives of Black British women and non-binary individuals. Evaristo (2019) uses fragmented, non-punctuated prose and polyvocal narration to embody the intersectionality of identity. The novel exemplifies Intersectional Feminist Theory by depicting how gender, race, sexuality, and class converge in complex ways (Hooks, 1984; Butler, 1990; Collins, 2000).
- Richard Powers' *The Overstory* (2018) constructs a vast narrative landscape where human lives intersect with arboreal intelligence and ecological activism. Powers (2018) challenges anthropocentric narratives and illuminates interspecies entanglements and environmental ethics. The novel is rich for ecocritical analysis, articulating the philosophical shift toward ecological interdependence (Buell, 2005; Garrard, 2004; Yusoff, 2018).
- Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Ministry for the Future* (2020) imagines near-future global responses to climate catastrophe through a speculative blend of fiction and policy discourse. Robinson (2020) offers a multidimensional perspective on planetary governance, economic restructuring, and climate justice. The novel is deeply aligned with the goals of ecocriticism and speculative fiction as tools for activist futures (Ghosh, 2016; Jameson, 2005).

These four texts span diverse formal strategies and sociopolitical concerns, offering a rich field for examining literature's activist dimensions.

3.4. Analytical Tools

The methodological framework incorporates the following analytical tools

- Thematic Coding: Recurring motifs such as institutional racism, ecological degradation, intersectional oppression, and resistance are identified and categorized. This approach facilitates a layered interpretation of thematic content across the four novels.
- Narrative Mapping: Structural analysis focuses on literary techniques such as multiple narrators, nonlinearity, speculative elements, and hybrid genres. This tool helps assess how each author uses narrative form to reinforce political critique or ethical provocation.
- Intertextual Reference Analysis: The novels are

examined about external texts, histories, and theoretical paradigms, drawing on both explicit citations and implicit dialogic engagements.

- Reception Analysis: Drawing from Palumbo-Liu's (2012) concept of literature's "ethical function," this component analyzes critical and popular reception, including reviews, interviews, and digital discourse. It explores how readers, especially activist communities, have engaged with these works.

By combining these tools, the study situates each novel within both literary and cultural ecosystems. The analytical framework allows for a robust interrogation of how fiction serves not only as narrative art but also as a medium of sociopolitical engagement and transformation.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Narratives of Resistance

The modern fiction plays the role of a strong cultural tool that subverts the prevailing sociopolitical ideologies. Through narrative agency and symbolic disruption, as well as moral provocation, resistance occurs in the chosen novels in their own ways, with each of them addressing the issues of racial injustice, patriarchy, and ecological crisis.

Whitehead (2020) reveals structural racism and systemic violence of the American juvenile justice system in *The Nickel Boys*. The novel is based on the Dozier School for Boys in real life and tells the story of Elwood Curtis, whose naive idealism is destroyed by the institutional horror of Nickel Academy. The story of individual trauma is not the sole focus of Whitehead (2020): he also criticizes how racism is coded into state-endorsed systems, which Critical Race Theory observes and sustains by arguing that racial oppression is not an accident but a structure (Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

In the same manner, *Girl, Woman, Other* by Evaristo (2019) negates patriarchal and racial essentialism, building a polyphonic discourse that puts intersectional identities on the forefront. The novel reinforces this message about identity with characters such as Amma, Dominique, and Morgan, who undergo character arcs that are subverted in the typical fashion of character development to demonstrate that identity is fluid, multi-dimensional, and situational. The use of fragmented prose and overlapping stories echoes hooks' (1984) feminist insistence on representing the plurality of Black womanhood and Butler's (1990) critique of fixed gender categories.

Turning to ecological resistance, *The Overstory* by Powers (2018) merges human and nonhuman narratives to dramatize environmental interdependence and resistance. The trees in the novel are not mere background characters with agency, memory, and even intelligence. Powers (2018) constructs a moral narrative that elevates forests from passive scenery to active participants in global survival. This reflects Buell's (2005) view that ecocritical literature challenges anthropocentrism by investing the natural world with narrative weight.

Robinson's (2020) *The Ministry for the Future* explores speculative resistance through a future-facing lens. The novel proposes a range of geopolitical, economic, and technological strategies

to mitigate climate catastrophe, including carbon coin schemes, geoengineering, and climate terrorism. Rather than offering utopia, Robinson (2020) envisions what Ghosh (2016) calls "serious fiction," a narrative space that accepts the planetary crisis as a central concern and seeks to imagine transformative responses.

Each of these novels functions not simply as a story but as a counter-discourse, challenging dominant ideologies through the aesthetics of resistance. Thematic strategies and theoretical alignments across the four novels are summarized in Table 1, illustrating how narrative forms mediate activist critique.

Table 1: Literary Strategies and Sociopolitical Commentary.

Theme	Novel	Narrative Strategy	Theoretical Lens	Impact/Outcome	Reference
Racial Injustice	<i>The Nickel Boys</i>	Linear narrative, historical realism	Critical Race Theory	Exposes systemic racism in juvenile justice	Whitehead (2020); Crenshaw (1991)
Intersectionality	<i>Girl, Woman, Other</i>	Polyvocal narrative, stream of consciousness	Intersectional Feminism	Depicts overlapping oppressions of race, gender, and class	Evaristo (2019); Collins (2000)
Ecological Activism	<i>The Overstory</i>	Interlinked stories, symbolic trees	Ecocriticism	Fosters eco-consciousness through human-nature ties	Powers (2018); Buell (2005)
Climate Governance	<i>The Ministry for the Future</i>	Speculative fiction, documentary realism	Ecocriticism, Postcolonial Theory	Proposes radical responses to the planetary crisis	Robinson (2020); Ghosh (2016)
Gender Nonconformity	<i>Girl, Woman, Other</i>	Fragmented timelines	Intersectional Feminism	Challenging binary gender roles	Evaristo (2019); Butler (1990)
Carceral Critique	<i>The Nickel Boys</i>	Symbolism, moral irony	Critical Race Theory	Critiques institutional abuse	Whitehead (2020); Delgado & Stefancic (2001)
Eco-justice	<i>The Overstory</i>	Mythic structure, arboreal allegory	Ecocriticism	Trees as agents of resistance	Powers (2018); Garrard (2004)
Global Inequality	<i>The Ministry for the Future</i>	Multivocality, systems narration	Postcolonial Criticism	Centers the Global South	Robinson (2020); Yusoff (2018)
Black British Identity	<i>Girl, Woman, Other</i>	Multiple perspectives	Postcolonial Feminism	Reclaims diasporic narratives	Evaristo (2019); hooks (1984)
State-sanctioned Violence	<i>The Nickel Boys</i>	Retrospective revelation	Critical Race Theory	Historical memory and justice	Whitehead (2020); Crenshaw (1991)

4.2. Identity Politics and Intersectionality

Intersectionality plays a central role in shaping

character formation, conflict, and resolution in the selected texts. Rather than presenting identity as singular or monolithic, these novels portray characters as shaped by overlapping systems of race, gender, class, and sexuality.

In *Girl, Woman, Other*, Evaristo (2019) defies the unidimensional portrayal of Black women by offering twelve intersecting life stories that reveal a spectrum of political, sexual, and generational experiences. The novel operationalizes what Collins (2000) calls the "matrix of domination," a framework in which multiple axes of identity interact to produce unique modes of oppression and resistance.

Whitehead's (2019) *Elwood* is also marked by intersecting forces: his race renders him vulnerable to state violence, while his class position and idealistic naivety amplify his disempowerment. These intersecting identities do not simply co-exist but compound his marginalization, highlighting the CRT principle that injustice is multidimensional (Crenshaw, 1991).

Robinson (2020) approaches intersectionality through systems rather than individuals. By intertwining perspectives from bureaucrats, refugees, and climate victims, *The Ministry for the Future* explores how global inequality intersects with environmental injustice, especially in the Global South. This thematic approach reinforces the argument that systemic change must address not just climate but class, race, and geography.

4.3. *Literary Forms and Activist Aesthetics*

Form is not merely decorative in these novels is integral to their political work. Experimental narrative structures challenge conventional reading habits and reflect the disruption they seek to evoke in the real world.

Evaristo (2019) uses non-punctuated, stream-of-consciousness prose and the interlacing of narrative voices, and opposes the linearity of the conventional novel. This official derailment constitutes what Berlant (2011) calls an affective dissonance, and this aspect encourages readers to interact with the text and the reality it presents in new ways.

In a parallel fashion, Powers (2018) echoes the ecological systems in the form of interconnected narrative arcs, which echo the biodiversity and the networked agency. The form of *The Overstory* resembles the interrelatedness of the roots of trees and fungal networks, further supporting ecological interdependence on a thematic and formal level.

In *The Ministry for the Future*, Robinson (2020) uses a fragmented, polyvocal structure, alternating interviews, speeches, and stream-of-consciousness

monologues. This type of technique is an illustration of what Jameson (2005) states about speculative fiction as a laboratory of alternative political imaginaries.

Such narrative inventions constitute what might be called activist aesthetic forms, not only representing resistance but performing it in their form.

4.4. *Literature and Ecological Imaginaries*

The texts are not about environmental justice but rather about it. Both Powers (2018) and Robinson (2020) present the visions of climate activism based on interdependent ecological, economic, and ethical systems.

According to Nixon (2011), slow violence is the long-term and usually unseen results of environmental degradation. *The Overstory* makes this violence clear by revealing how deforestation, climate change, and habitat destruction ripple through human and nonhuman life. Further developing this perception, Yusoff (2018) emphasizes the fact that the very concept of the Anthropocene is racialized, as it is based on the colonial vision of extraction, which is also reflected in the vision of global governance advanced by Robinson (2020), who prioritizes the concerns of the Global South.

The two novels reject the conventional environmental discourse of human-nature conflict and redefine the crisis as a problem of relational ethics and kinship of planetary life (Haraway, 2016).

4.5. *Reception and Cultural Impact*

All four novels examined have attracted considerable critical and popular discussion, winning prizes, drumming up controversy, and going viral in activist and literary circles.

The Nickel Boys was a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel in the Fiction category, and it was published when the U.S. was in a national reckoning with racial violence. It influenced not only literature but also the discourse of criminal justice reform in the mass media.

Girl, Woman, Other won the Booker Prize and was acclaimed because of its formal boldness and inclusivity. Critics and readers alike have celebrated its complex portrayal of Black British identity, driving discussion of intersectional feminism and queer representation.

The Overstory was nominated for the Booker Prize and acclaimed as a novel of ecological vision. It was a cult hit among the environmentalists, scientists, and literary critics, and even activist

organizations organized forest protests based on the ideas of the novel.

Climate scientists, journalists, and activists have said that the Ministry for the Future is one of the most ambitious pieces of climate fiction that they can recall. It has been discussed in climate policy circles and book clubs, and online reading groups.

These reactions highlight the point made by Felski (2015) that the value of literature does not consist

only in the interpretive effort but in the mobilization of feeling and ethical action. According to Palumbo-Liu (2012), the interaction of the reader gets included in the literary amplifying, arguing, and recontextualizing of its political charge. The sociocultural influence of the novels, as a whole, on awards, reader reception, and social discussion is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Reader Engagement and Cultural Impact.

Theme	Novel	Narrative Strategy	Theoretical Lens	Impact/Outcome	Reference
Activism	<i>The Overstory</i>	Inspired tree-sit protests	Ecocriticism	Mobilized climate action	Powers (2018); Nixon (2011)
Prizes	<i>Girl, Woman, Other</i>	Booker Prize win	Intersectional Feminism	Validated inclusive storytelling	Evaristo (2019)
Recognition	<i>The Nickel Boys</i>	Pulitzer Prize	Critical Race Theory	Elevated racial justice themes	Whitehead (2020)
Global Discourse	<i>The Ministry for the Future</i>	UN climate dialogues	Speculative Ecocriticism	Influenced policy thinking	Robinson (2020)
Digital Circulation	<i>Girl, Woman, Other</i>	BookTok and Goodreads buzz	Feminist Criticism	Amplified reader activism	Palumbo-Liu (2012)
Academic Debate	<i>The Overstory</i>	Syllabi inclusion	Ecocriticism	Established as canonical ecofiction	Buell (2005)
Cultural Dialogue	<i>The Nickel Boys</i>	Public talks and op-eds	Critical Race Theory	Fostered national memory work	Crenshaw (1991)
Technological Futures	<i>The Ministry for the Future</i>	Discussed in AI ethics forums	Posthuman Ecocriticism	Raised questions on tech justice	Ghosh (2016); Robinson (2020)
Queer Visibility	<i>Girl, Woman, Other</i>	Non-binary characters	Intersectional Feminism	Expanded gender discourse	Butler (1990); Evaristo (2019)
Empathy and Ethics	<i>All Novels</i>	Affective storytelling	All Frameworks	Shaped moral imagination	Felski (2015); Said (1993)

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that contemporary fiction is not only a reflection of the realities of society but rather a tool of sociopolitical change, as can be seen in the works of *The Nickel Boys*, *Girl, Woman, Other*, *The Overstory*, and *The Ministry for the Future*, which explore the themes of racial injustice, gendered oppression, environmental crisis in great depth. The texts are characterized by the use of new literary devices, including polyvocal narration, speculative structures, and ecological allegory to interrupt the ideology of power and provoke ethical consideration, empathy, and social resistance. This study plays a role in activist literary studies by

situating literature as a practice, in support of the political power of fiction as theorized by such scholars as bell hooks and Edward Said. It also highlights the necessity of the interdisciplinary methods related to Critical Race Theory, Intersectional Feminism, Ecocriticism, and Postcolonial Criticism to comprehend the functioning of narratives in the system of power. Lastly, the research opens up to future study of non-Western and Global South literatures, and the changing landscape of AI-created and digital narrative, which both broaden ideas of authorship and participatory involvement in deep and intriguing ways.

Acknowledgements: The authors gratefully acknowledge the constructive insights and academic support that enriched the interdisciplinary analysis presented in this study. We also extend our thanks to colleagues and collaborators for their thoughtful feedback during the development of this manuscript. Finally, we acknowledge the continued encouragement from our institutions throughout the research process.

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