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The Postcolonial Discourse of Resistance and Violence in the Short Movie *Jibaro* (2022)

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Abstract

Aim: Postcolonialism examines how narratives of the colonizing culture distort the experiences of the colonized, who strive to articulate identity and reclaim their past in the face of imposed otherness. The 'other' is portrayed as lacking identity and legitimacy. Resistance remains central to postcolonial discourse and often appears as subversion, opposition or mimicry. The short movie *Jibaro* (2022), directed by Alberto Mielgo for *Love, Death and Robots* season 3 on Netflix, presents a haunting relationship between colonizer and colonized marked by violence, resistance and destruction. This paper studies these issues in the narrative of *Jibaro* (2022).

Methodology and Approach: The paper examines postcolonial concerns in *Jibaro* (2022) from a theoretical perspective. It evaluates the role of violence and resistance within a postcolonial framework and is analytical and descriptive in nature.

Outcome: *Jibaro* (2022) employs the figures of a conquistador and a deadly siren to depict themes of conquest, inversion of power and tragic mutual loss, making it a postcolonial parable. The narrative highlights how colonial expansion shaped cultural domains and projected dominance as natural. It suggests that power between colonizer and colonized is reversible and destructive.

Conclusion and Suggestions: The film explores colonialism, greed and toxic relationships, with the siren symbolizing the native inhabitant. The paper emphasizes the destructive nature of colonial ambition, where both colonizer and colonized become trapped in a cycle of violence, desire and mutual ruin.



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Postcolonial narratives are often packed with resistance and agency, hybridity and identity as well as power dynamics. The short movie *Jibaro* (2022) by Alberto Mielgo beautifully exploits the postcolonial themes of cultural domination through representation, discourse and documentation. *Jibaro* (2022) can be regarded as a critique of colonial racialized acts of representation which focuses on questions of imperial domination which enables colonial powers to represent, reflect, refract native cultures in particular ways that involves unfavourable parallels between the colonial masters and the native subjects which often lead to fatal self-destruction. Post colonialism as a scholarship and academic practice refers to the hegemonic power structure of the Western colonial powers. The subjugation of the West not only has its detrimental social effects but simultaneously its imposition has harmful mental effects on the native indigenous people subjugated into colonies. Colonialism and imperialism have natural consequences that have mental and psychological imprints on the colonized. Postcolonial perspectives, according to Homi Bhabha, “intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give, hegemonic normality to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities and peoples” (Bhabha, 171).

Jibaro (2022) is a seventeen minute animated short film from the anthology of “Love, Death and Robots” on Netflix. The protagonist is Jibaro who is a deaf soldier. Jibaro is part of a colonial expedition in a lush forest. Near the forest, there is a lake where a siren resides. The siren has golden covers all over her body. Her whole body is jewel-encrusted. The siren sings to lure the soldiers to their doom. Each and every soldier is drowned in the lake. But the siren’s deadly song cannot have magical influence over Jibaro as he is deaf. Jibaro’s deafness saves him and he remains untouched by her song. When the siren sees that her song is unable to have any hold over Jibaro, she takes him to be extraordinary. The siren becomes fascinated with Jibaro and tries to connect with him. The siren’s jewel-encrusted body catches the eye of Jibaro and he only sees her as a treasure to be exploited. When the siren attempts to come closer to Jibaro, he stripped her of her gold and left her injured. The siren’s blood becomes mingled with the water of the lake and the water of the lake becomes miraculous with the magical blood of the siren. When Jibaro drinks the magical water from

the lake, his hearing is restored, making him vulnerable to the siren's song. When the siren gains her consciousness, she is aggrieved to look at her devastated body. The siren wants to take revenge and this time her deadly song touches the ears of Jibaro. Jibaro dies like other soldiers dancing in the lake. The film explores themes of toxic relationships, colonialism and greed. Director Alberto Mielgo intentionally leaves the interpretation open focusing on the destructive nature of desire and power dynamics.

The toxic relationship between Jibaro and the siren can be interpreted on multiple levels from postcolonial perspective. The relationship highlights resistance and agency, hybridity and identity as well as power dynamics. *Jibaro* (2022) uses a deaf conquistador and a deadly siren to unpack colonial guilt, the inversion of power and the tragic mutual loss that follows conquest making it a compact postcolonial parable.

The colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference. It is this ambivalence that marks the boundaries of colonial positionality the division of 'self' and 'other' and the question of political power. The relationship between Jibaro and the siren is marked by this ambivalence. Jibaro can be taken as the colonial 'self' and the siren creates a space of relations between colonizer and colonized. This is a site where colonial identity and native identity meet and often contest. According to Bhabha, the "hybridized native who refuses to return the colonial gaze, and who refuses to acknowledge the colonizer's position and authority, is placed in a position of in-betweenness" (121). The colonial wishes to erase and reinforce difference which is reflected in Jibaro's desire to control the siren and to deprive her of her gold. The native's attitude towards the colonial master is also ambivalent. The native often encodes a facile obedience but at the same time also expresses a deeper disobedience. This dual pattern of behaviour by the native is the direct result of the fractured nature of colonial discourse. The siren wants to submit herself to Jibaro but simultaneously she also wants to captivate him through her beauty and charm. This can be interpreted as the dual mode of postcolonial discourse.

Postcolonial narratives are written to present the "unequal relations of power based on binary opposition" (Kehinde, 108). 'Self' and 'other', 'powerful'

and ‘powerless’, ‘torturer’ and ‘tortured’, ‘master’ and ‘slave’, ‘civilized’ and ‘savage’, ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’, ‘human’ and ‘subhuman’ are some of the prime examples of such binary oppositions. However, the colonial narrative of *Jibaro* (2022) reverses the dichotomy of colonizer and colonized. Generally, the condition of the colonizer and the colonized is a radical division into paired oppositions such as good-evil, true-false, and white-black where blackness confirms the white self and whiteness empties the black subject. The colonizer believes that the other has to be owned, altered and ravished because the other is deceptive and fertile. This postcolonial model is based on the tension between colonizer and colonized, and dominating and dominated. This points to the importance of binary oppositions in post colonialism. The colonial narrative in *Jibaro* (2022) protests against ways of categorization. The story of the film attempts at exposing binaries which often expresses it in the rewriting of canonical stories that are at the basis of inequality. Both the colonizer and the colonized are scarred through the fatal transformation through the encounter.

If colonialism, at its very simplest, involves the conquest and subjugation of territory by an alien people then the human relationship that is basic to it is likewise one of power and powerlessness. Postcolonial theory is a multifaceted approach that examines the impacts of colonialism on both the colonizers and the colonized, exploring the complex power dynamics that emerge during and after the colonial experience. At its core, the theory seeks to challenge and disrupt the dominant narratives established by colonial powers, emphasizing the importance of understanding diverse perspectives and the voices of those historically marginalized. The narrative of the short movie explores themes of agency, hybridity and assimilation to understand how colonized individuals and cultures respond to and resist colonial domination.

The movie opens in a jungle. The jungle is a metaphor of colonized site. The jungle is plundered by conquistadors. Their gleaming armour and horses become symbols of European imperialism. The adornment of horses by the gold becomes symbolic of colonial greed. The colonialists are led by a deaf soldier, Jibaro. The lake of the siren stands for the unexplored colonial land and the siren plays the crucial role of being the native inhabitant of the colonial land. Whereas the siren lures and attacks all the soldiers to death, Jibaro is immune to death

because he cannot hear the deadly song of the siren due to his deafness. The siren's killing of all the conquerors except Jibaro can be interpreted as the civilized conqueror being vulnerable to the savage native suggesting that colonial power is fragile when stripped of its usual sensory dominance.

Though the siren is generally taken as a mythic monster, the siren mirrors colonized native population. Her mesmerizing dance and fatal scream represent the violent backlash of colonized peoples against oppressors, a metaphor for resistance and the destructive consequences of cultural erasure. The siren is mesmerized over the fact that her charm cannot have any influence over Jibaro and she gets fatally attracted towards him. This is symbolic of the fact that the admiration of the native towards the colonial master is illusory and it lacks any solid grounds. The siren's appeal to Jibaro is based on pure greed. He desires the gold and ornaments adorned over her body. This mutual attraction based on each other's individual motives is implicative of postmodernist interpretations of power. No longer unidirectional in a case of domination/exploitation, postmodernist interpretations of power examine an all-inclusive and multidirectional presence that is actively coercive upon the individual through process of knowledge production. In this postmodern perspective, one has to see power and the effect of that power on both the colonizer and the colonized. Leela Gandhi's remark can be cited in this regard, "Arguably, then, it is through post structuralism and postmodernism.... that post colonialism starts to distil its particular provenance" (25).

The narrative of the short film destabilizes the "truths" born out of colonialism and opens a space for alternative voices and perspectives to be heard. The cinematic text is an excellent example of a postcolonial text challenging colonial knowledge production. The gold and jewellery adorned on the body of the siren represents her power and authentic self. The violation of the golden body of the woman by Jibaro, the knight, who strips her, steals her gold, and abuses her trust. This violation connotes the power dynamics of colonialism. Such extractions violence also echoes the painful and brutal legacies of global colonialism which so often have left indigenous populations vulnerable and defenceless. However, *Jibaro* (2022) is not just another allegory of colonial and extractivist intent. It is also a reminder that in the present day, "the objectification,

the demonizing, the orientalism, the othering, of the female form occurs as a form of colonialism" (Tallarita, 48).

The final defeat of Jibaro in the hands of the siren conveys the belief that though the native appears to be defenceless at times, but the native is capable of destroying the power structure of colonialism through resistance and defiance. Though vulnerable and helpless towards the end, the siren manages to destroy Jibaro through her fatal shriek. This ability to exercise power is referred to as "agency" and is a critically important aspect of postcolonial theory. The ferocity perpetrated by Western forms of thought upon the East is of great concern to Spivak. She takes "the third world as the conception of the West that locks non-Western cultures into an imperial representation" (Morton, 8). The narrative of *Jibaro* (2022) breaks the hierarchies between the colonizer and the colonized and shows that both the master and the slave are equally vulnerable in specific context. The assimilation of cultures of both the colonizer and the colonized and the cross-fertilization of both the cultures can be seen as positive, enriching and dynamic as well as oppressive. The narrative of *Jibaro* (2022) helps us to break down the false sense that colonized cultures----or colonizing cultures for that matter----are monolithic, or have essential, unchanging features.

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Dr. Himakshi Kalita completed her M.A. in English from Tezpur University (Central University), Assam, and obtained her Ph.D. from Gauhati University, Assam, India. Her doctoral research, titled “Quest for Identity as Represented in Fictional Writings from Northeast India,” examines questions of selfhood, ethnicity, and cultural representation in regional literary narratives. She currently serves as Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya, Assam, India. She has published research articles in national and international journals, contributed chapters to edited volumes, and presented papers at various national and international seminars and conferences. Her academic interests include Indian Writing in English, women’s writing, cinema studies, literature from Northeast India, and issues of ethnicity and identity in the northeastern region of India.