

NARRATIVE STRATEGIES OF DEPICTING ENDURING SHADOWS AND HORRORS OF THE EMPIRE IN GEORGE FOX'S *AMOK*

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Abstract

This Paper examines how George Fox's *Amok* (1978) uses narrative strategies to evaluate the psychological and cultural effects of World War II on the Japanese. The analysis focuses on the novel's use of atmospheric immersion and relentless pacing as narrative tropes for signifying how natural, political and cultural forces transform Kurusu, the main character of the book, who devours the jungles of the Philippines years following the war. The story follows a fast-paced, suspenseful format that reflects the unpredictable nature of the Amok's attacks: brief, intense chapters alternate between the soldier's lonesome viewpoint, the fear of the local villagers, and Michael Braden's compulsive pursuit after his brother is killed. Similar to a predator pursuing prey in the dark, this fast-paced rhythm deprives readers of leisure by intensifying the sensation of impending conflict and growing violence. Fox's skilful atmospheric immersion, which is accomplished through sensory-rich descriptions of the oppressive Philippine jungle, humid air thick with decay, rustle of unseen foliage, distant screams echoing through mist-shrouded valleys, and the metallic scent of blood mingling with tropical rot, complements this. As a postcolonial wilderness that engulfs society and permits the straggler's insanity, the jungle itself emerges as an active enemy that blurs the lines between natural savagery and human ugliness. In remote areas where American expatriate planters, Philippine authorities, and even Japanese veterans struggle to face a ghost of empire, these components criticize the erasure of wartime wounds. This essay makes the case that *Amok* serves as a warning about the cyclical nature of conflict by referencing postcolonial theory, namely, ideas of residual trauma and hybrid identities, as well as horror genre conventions. Fox demonstrates how story form may humanize geopolitical scars by inspiring empathy for both victims (displaced villagers and colonial vestiges) and perpetrators (the broken, duty-bound soldier). The analysis provided emphasises the novel's significance in late-20th-century Gothic literature as a vehicle for contemplation of the empire's persistent secrets, where insanity and cruelty continue long after formal hostilities cease, through close textual readings and historical contextualization of Japanese holdouts and Philippine-American entanglements.

Keywords: narrative strategies, psychological and cultural effects, World War II Japanese veterans.

Introduction

Narratology is the study of narrative structure, which writers use in conveying their messages through a text. Ryan, M. L. (2005) categorizes these narrative components in 3 folds: the narrator (voice), focalisation (mood), and the narrative situation. Every narrative has a story, which is the actual events, has a narrative discourse, and the

narration, which is the telling of the story. Genette (1980). Genette further argues that the narrative voice has many levels: the narrative instance, which refers to the actual moment and context of the narration, the temporal setting of the narration, as well as the time of the narration with respect to the events narrated. The second is the narrative time, which is indicated by the tense of the verb in the narrative, and the third is the narrative levels, which refers to the relation of the acts narrated to the acts of narration itself.

Genette (1980) further gives the following four levels of narrative: the sequence of events in relation to the order of narration (order), where he outlines the analepsis, which is the flash back, prolepsis, the order in which the events occurred, anachronism and metalhe point of view, which is further divided into paralipses where information is withheld from reader, and paralepse, where the narrator presents information which the reader ought to have. The focaliser can either be external, internal or retrospective focalization, where the character focalizes his or her past. This is further subdivided into four: the fixed, variable, multiple and collective focalised. Genet also talked about the narrator which he categorises into homodiegetic narrator, one who is in the story, while the heterodiegetic narrator is who does not participate and is out of the story, auto diegetic when a character narrates his or her own tale as in autobiography, intradiegetic is when characters become narrators and extradiegetic.

In this submission, the study explores some of these narrative features, particularly the narrative (voice) and the Focalization (Mood), with a focus on *Amok* by George Fox, Chapter One. The exploration will include how the voice and mood bring out the unique literariness of the narrative *Amok*.

The novel, which is set in the isolated Cagayan Valley of Luzon decades after Japan's surrender, revolves around a towering Japanese straggler soldier known locally as the "Amok" who, oblivious to the fact that the war ended with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, continues his lone guerrilla campaign with brutal efficiency, using a samurai sword to kill anyone who enters his domain. Inspired by actual Japanese holdouts found in the 1970s, this historical anomaly becomes a powerful emblem of unresolved imperial aggression, representing the persistence of colonial and wartime legacies. Stanzel (1984) says, an important question to ask in analysing a narrative is whose perspective we are getting, which calls the narrative situation, which, when summarised, are the first-person narrative situation (narrating 1), authorial narrative situation, and the figurative narrative situation (reflector). He further argues that it's mediacy that sets narration apart from other sorts of text, its role being to shape our relationship with whatever narrative we're reading. Against this backdrop, the study uses the voice and mood to analyse the first chapter of the text, *Amok*.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

Inspired by actual Japanese holdouts who continued to live in the Philippines long after World War II ended, George Fox's 1978 thriller-horror novel *Amok* is the subject of this study's concentrated, theoretically oriented investigation. The narrative, which takes place in the tobacco farms of Postwar Luzon, uses the terrifying character of Kurusu, a crazed Japanese soldier who carries out his terror campaign decades later, to address the enduring traumas of imperial occupation. The analysis, which draws on Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity, shows how the novel subverts genre conventions to critique postcolonial realities, where overlapping colonial histories, American plantation legacies, Filipino postcolonial existence, and Japanese wartime aggression create ambivalent, in-between spaces plagued by unresolved power dynamics.

The study aims to accomplish this by following three interconnected objectives:

1. analyse how postcolonial horror is portrayed in George Fox's *Amok* using narrative techniques.
2. examine how narratological elements, specifically, focalization, narrative voice, and narrative situation, emphasizes postcolonial conflicts and cross-cultural interactions.
3. place *Amok* in the context of postcolonial literature by demonstrating how its thriller-horror genre tropes function as a crucial tool for revealing persistent imperial shadows.

Theoretical Framework

According to Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity, postcolonial settings are defined by ambivalent cultural encounters that overturn coloniser-colonised binary oppositions and create new, in-between identities that challenge established ideas of authority, culture, and belonging. Long after official decolonisation, colonial legacies persist in warped, often outrageous forms of hybridity, which take the form of tension, imitation, and contestation rather than peaceful synthesis. With its portrayal of postcolonial terror, George Fox's 1978 novel *Amok*, which is set in the tobacco plantations of post-World War II Luzon in the Philippines, effectively captures this lingering shadow of territory. The story revolves around a Japanese soldier named Kurusu, who, oblivious to the fact that the war is over, carries on his ruthless campaign decades later. He is a spectral legacy of imperial aggressiveness that terrifies both American expatriate families and the local populace. The end result of Japanese militarism combined with the residual traumas of militarism and protest, the figure of the "amok," a deranged, unstoppable, murderous individual brandishing a samurai sword, functions as a horrific hybrid entity whose presence haunts the ostensibly postcolonial landscape and reveals the incomplete break from wartime imperial establishments.

By using this perspective, *Amok* turns the thriller-horror genre into a postcolonial critique in which the terror stems from the eerie continuation of imperial power dynamics in an ostensibly independent era rather than just physical brutality. While the Filipino villagers struggle to survive amid these intersecting histories of oppression, the American plantation owners, who are descended from early 20th-century settlers following the Philippine-American War, occupy a liminal position themselves, neither fully indigenous nor unproblematically imperial. The novel's narrative techniques, which combine American revenge motifs, Japanese bushido ideology, and indigenous folklore, create a disjunctive cultural realm that defies simple resolution, as Bhabha (2015) makes clear. Thus, the persistent fear of the Japanese holdout represents the "enduring shadows of empire", unresolved colonial traumas that resurface in hideous, hybridised forms, necessitating a reassessment of fairness, memory, and national identity in the postcolonial Philippines. This overview sets the stage for the study that follows, how Fox's use of narratological devices like narrative voice and focalization intensifies these hybrid conflicts and makes the work an engaging examination of postcolonial terror.

Methodology

Gérard Genette's framework of focalization (mood/point of view), narrative voice (narrator), and narrative situation is the main source of inspiration for this study's qualitative, text-centred methodology, which is based on close reading and literary analysis. It integrates key concepts from postcolonial theory, especially Homi K. Bhabha's notion of hybridity, with tools from narratology. The method uses George Fox's *Amok* (1978) as the main source, analysing its structural and discursive

components to show how the book uses the enduring, conflicting legacies of empire to create postcolonial horror.

The study aims to achieve three interconnected goals through a multi-layered interpretive process as part of the methodological procedure.

The overriding lens is Bhabha's hybridity, which conceptualizes the horror of the text as originating from cultural in-betweenness, mimicry, and the eerie return of colonial authority in warped forms. In a Postwar Philippine milieu characterized by American plantation legacies and local indigenous/folkloric responses, this portrays the Japanese holdout Kurusu as a hybridized monstrous person who combines imperial Japanese bushido ideology, wartime trauma, and spectral persistence. Specific sections, especially from chapter one and important events featuring narration variations, are analysed for focalization (internal to characters like American expatriates Mike Braden or Filipino villagers, external viewpoints of Kurusu, or zero focalization in thrilling sequences), narrative voice (mostly heterodiegetic but with varying disparity and occasionally free indirect discourse), and narrative situation (temporal anachronism via flashbacks to WWII, spatial positioning in the liminal jungle-plantation zone, and the implied narrative instance's ironic commentary on unresolved imperial histories). This demonstrates how formal decisions criticize partial decolonization and magnify disconnected cultural interactions. To show how terrifying genre conventions are adapted to reveal persistent imperial shadows, colonial hierarchies, liminal identities, and failures of formal independence while examining themes of memory, fairness, and national identity in the developing world, clue evidence from texts is combined with postcolonial criticism.

Discussion

According to Al-Alami (2019), the point of view in narrative refers to the focal angle of seeing, hearing, smelling, and perceiving the locations, characters, and events of the story. The opening paragraph on page seven employs the third-person narrative point of view, which is also the omniscient point of view and gives us insight into the characters' thoughts. By seeing through their minds, the covert narrative approach is used here. From the first lines through the use of the pronoun 'he', the narrator introduces the character in the text, by telling who he is and what he often does as a way of living, the word "again", which means that this character has the habit of going into the valley of Cagayan, which does not make today an exception. But today, the character seems to be hiding from something terrifying, so that while he hides, he still got himself a sword which could help him defend himself from the dangers that await him. At this point, the narrator is not a character in the text; he is therefore a heterodiegetic narrator. Furthermore, a simile is used to describe the intensity of fear in him, by comparing his frightened eyes to a crushed cockroach shells thus: "he peered down at the valley with eyes as flat and black as crushed cockroach shells". At this point, the reader also gets to know about what's happening in the text through the narrator, who is outside the text trying to tell the story; he is therefore an external focalizer when talking about the mode (Bal, 2014). He is also a fixed focalizer since he is a single narrator, giving the reader the narrative from a constant point of view (Creanga, 2007). On the same page, the narrator metaphorically tells us how the character studied the Cagayan Valley. His movement descending the steep slope into the valley is told by the narrator with the employment of a simile: "like a gigantic land crab" (Fox, 1978, p. 9), first paragraph.

Furthermore, there is a reported speech in an instance in the text which gives us information about the danger of the sun on the skin of the Bradens, so that the fog and the snow, as well as long overcast winter were good for them and not the heat from

the scorching sun. The use of “we” and “my” in “So naturally we settle in the Philippines” tells of a change in the narrative voice as a first person narrator is introduced here, although is in a dialogue with Cara, it is worth nothing to add that the act of telling occurred here providing us with the information about Lester Braden’s family who tried to avoid the heat of the sun, so they confine their personal inspection of the plantation fields to the early mornings and late evenings when the sun was yet to appear and when it had gone down, this we are told by the heterodiegetic narrator (voice). Here, we find both the homodiegetic narrator (voice) and the heterodiegetic narrator (voice) in the sense that the third-person narrator was still telling about Braden when Braden himself is introduced, telling the story as a character in the text, making him a homodiegetic narrator (voice). Prince (2001) states that that kind of narration is multi-focalisation (mood) because in the same episode, different focalisation is seen. Furthermore, in the expression “my brother mike is the only one of us who could stand the climate”, on (Fox, 1978, p. 9), paragraph three, we see the homodiegetic narrator (voice) and an internal focalisation (mood) because, we get to know what is happening through the character in the text where the first person perspective is used, but there is a switch in the mood on the same paragraph when the homodiegetic narrator goes further to talk more on his brother mike thus: “So, naturally, he was the first Braden in sixty years to move back to the states”. Then he comes back to using the first-person point of view and the multiple focalisation in “I” just wanted you to know what kind of crazy family you are throwing in with...” multiple because there is different focalisation in the same episode (Prince 2001). The use of “I” gives us a feeling of authenticity to the information disseminated by the narrator since the information given is first hand.

The employment of “His” in the an occurrence in the text, brings us back to our heterodiegetic narrator, who is the external narrator in the third person point of view, where he tells us of the desire old Braden had importing the hybrid seedlings which he thought will do well in the Philippines to compete with the ones in North American markets, unfortunately many of the plants had died using the pronoun “they”. The whole of this information was disseminated to the reader through this narrator.

Additionally, the narrator employs the use of the pronoun “he”, making him an heterodiegetic narrator who goes on to speak about Braden and his wife Cara teaching their four-year-old to swim and how he had not agreed to having a pool since the Cagayan river was not too far from them, good enough for him and his brother Mike. But he later understood why she needed one (Fox, 1978, p. 10).

Moreover, the heterodiegetic narrator introduces the narrative voice of Braden thus: “I worry too damned much”, he told himself... (Fox, 1978, p. 11). Multiple focalisation is seen here as in the same episode, different moods is seen, though a switch in the mood is seen when the narrator continued, describe how the Conary island seedlings were located. At this point, the narrator stands away, allowing the character to speak for himself. The narrator, being a third-person narrator, tends to see what happens everywhere, including what’s on the minds of the character such as the hunger and ache in the belly of the character; no wonder the narrator here is said to be the eye of God.

Imagery is used here, where a vivid picture of the struggle between fear and courage on Braden’s mind and on how to overcome the monster is created in the minds of the reader through the heterodiegetic voice, as the description of the monster is made, also, we are told how Braden was flung out of his saddle and his hat flew from his head. Through the narrator’s employment of a simile, the reader gets to see the

attacker standing above Braden, who could not scream for help because his throat had been choked with his own vomit, thus: “like straw absorbing water”. The narrator goes further in the seventh paragraph on page five to describe the dehumanising manner in which Braden was murdered, making him an external narrator. (Fox, 1978, p. 12). Subsequently, the author employs the use of visual image expressed by the external narrator to show how the dead man was dragged by the monster in the text. The reader still gets to know this through the narrator with a heterodiegetic voice. Telling the reader that there had been many Americans in the valley of Cagayan, “returning to hide his torso, he saw that he had slain a white man” (Fox, 1978, p. 13). Quickly in that same paragraph, we find the employment of the multiple focalisation (mood) as on the same episode, the point of view changes from the third person to the first person thus: “I have killed this man before “he decided” wondering how such a thing could be possible”... we see a reported speech here by the narrator even though he allows the killer to express himself on his thoughts.

Employing the Multiple focalisation and heterodiegetic voices, the narrative moves from Braden to Cara, his wife, describing her family life and background and how she enjoyed a bath in the pool under the sun while the nursemaid takes care of Evie, page thirteen, paragraph five. Her thoughts are revealed to us, the readers, through a monologue. We get to know how she despises being with Les as she says: “Oh God, I ’am going to be left with him again”. (Fox, 1978, p. 14). The personal pronoun “I” here tells of a first-person narrator, but it’s introduced by the narrator in the same episode as the one he was speaking on, so it’s the multiple focalisation. The narrator switches back to the third person point of view when he goes further to tell us about some of the reasons why she hates being left alone with Les, as he introduces us to Sam. We find the narrator here playing a very significant role, little wonder Martens (2017) contends that the standard assumption of classical narratology is that every work of fiction must have a distinct narrator.

Lastly, Cara’s voice is heard but still told by the narrator and grandfather, (Fox, 1978, p. 17) but all told to us by the narrator who is outside the text. According to Nilssen, (2017) is the heterodiegetic voice, Cara’s voice in the first person point of view is heard, but since it was within the same episode, it could be said to be multi focalisation, where she mentally framed words which she will tell Les when he returns, but when a jeep stopped by her veranda, we get to hear Cara’s voice asking what the matter was? Here, in an episode, we find both the third and first-person points of view, and it is said to be multiple focalisation, as well as the words “Amok”, said by the man in the jeep. So, there were about three people who spoke in the same episode.

According to Homi K. Bhabha, hybridity emerges as the primary mechanism through which unanswered colonial traumas resurface in terrifying, contradictory forms. The results of this study show that George Fox's *Amok* (1978) successfully employs narrative strategies to depict postcolonial horror as a manifestation of enduring imperial legacies. Kurusu's main character, the Japanese holdout soldier, serves as a model hybrid: a spectral combination of wartime militarism, imperial Japanese bushido philosophy, and extended seclusion that endures into the postcolonial era. Kurusu maintains his presidential bid of beheading and terror in the Cagayan Valley of Luzon decades after the fall of Japan, attacking both foreigners and plantation labourers as well as residents. Within the seemingly independent Philippines, initial American colonial establishment through tobacco estates, and the Japanese presence during World War II, this terrifying perseverance transcends time and cultural distinctions, creating horror not through supernatural elements but through the uncanny survival of imperial violence in a space that has supposedly achieved decolonization.

Therefore, the novel depicts postcolonial terror as emerging from hybrid cultural contacts that defy resolution, where the “Amok” turns into a living legacy that highlights the vulnerability of national sovereignty and the continuous struggle over identity and space.

Further evidence of how these formal elements intensify postcolonial conflicts and hybridity comes from narrative analysis of focalization, voice, and narrative circumstance. The novel's primarily uses heterodiegetic narration with variable focalization: internal focalization through American expatriate Mike Braden (a Vietnam veteran returning for revenge after his brother's murder) highlights themes of reflected brutality and individual trauma; external or zero focalization in anticipation episodes heightens the mystery and terrifying nature of Kurusu as an unknown "other"; and sporadic shifts to the perspectives of Filipino villagers draw on local folklore depicting the killer as “The Amok,” fusing indigenous conceptual structures with histories of colonialism. By rejecting a single point of view and criticizing insufficient decolonization, these perspectival changes create a disconnected narrative realm that resembles Bhabha's hybrid site of contestation. While physical placement in the transitional jungle-plantation zone emphasizes overlapping sovereignties, temporal anachrony through flashbacks to WWII atrocities and the Japanese occupation contrasts historical imperial aggressions with contemporary hauntings. In addition to maintaining thriller-horror suspense, these structural decisions intellectually dismantle fixed colonizer/colonized dichotomies, exposing how hybridized residues uphold power disparities.

Ultimately, Amok transforms classic horror-thriller tropes relentless pursuit, terrifying adversary, graphic violence into a postcolonial critique that highlights the shortcomings of formal independence in eradicating imperialist traces. Perpetual colonial power structures and the fight for memory, fairness, and identity in the developing world are highlighted by the liminal positions of American planters (descendants of early 20th-century settlers), Filipino communities negotiating survival amid multiple oppressions, and the insane holdout individual. The book advances postcolonial literary discourse by using genre clichés as a means of examining these themes. It does this by demonstrating how popular fiction can address theoretical issues like hybridity to make the terrible, long-lasting effects of power structure evident in everyday postcolonial realities.

Conclusion

The first chapter of George Fox's Amok is analysed using narratological concepts, with an emphasis on two key categories: the narrator (as voice) and focalization (equivalent to mood or point of view). These elements, which are derived from Gérard Genette's paradigm, allow for an organised analysis of how the story creates discourse and perspective. The narrator's voice demonstrates the degree of diegetic engagement (heterodiegetic or homodiegetic) and the degree of overttness in influencing the reader's access to the storyworld, while focalization analysis reveals the filtering of events through a specific consciousness, whether internal to a character, external, or variable. By revealing layers of meaning beneath the surface plot, this dual lens sheds light on how the text's literariness arises from intentional formal decisions that control perception, distance, and interpretative authority. In addition to deepening understanding of the text's structural complexities, this narratological method aligns with the broader goals of narratology, which emphasise the structure and form of narrative discourse rather than its content. A thorough structural interpretation of Amok's first chapter is made possible by the interaction of voice, mood, and the entire

narrative situation, which includes elements like temporal ordering, geographical positioning, and the implicit narrative instance.

Recommendation

A fascinating example of late-20th-century American literature, George Fox's 1978 book *Amok* explores the lasting scars of imperialism by fusing elements of horror, thriller, and historical narrative. The plot, which takes place in the Philippines after World War II, revolves around a massive Japanese holdout soldier who fights a lone guerrilla struggle in the Cagayan Valley jungles without realizing Japan has surrendered. This figure, dubbed "the Amok" by the scared locals, represents the dehumanizing machinery of empire, reduced to a savage killer using a samurai sword on American foreigners, villagers, and others deemed a threat. With this assumption, Fox investigates the "enduring shadows and horrors of the empire" a term that alludes to the destructive, cultural, and psychological legacies of Japanese imperialism in Southeast Asia, entwined with remnants of American Colonial dominance by means of the owners of plantations and Vietnam War veterans. I recommend *Amok* for postcolonial and narratological studies as a researcher because of its creative storytelling techniques that undermines imperial beliefs and portrays the empire's legacy as an unavoidable, terrifying force. Scholars of war literature, horror as social critique, and narrative theory should pay special attention to the novel's stylistic skill, according to contemporary studies.

The narrative diversity, a technique that splits and divides narratives to reflect the shattered truths brought about by the empire, is at the heart of Fox's portrayal. According to Kyiileyang (2025), this method serves as philosophical deconstruction, using multimodal and temporally disturbed narration to demolish the monolithic myths of imperial power. Mobile focalization, in which the narrative standpoint moves smoothly between persons to reveal subjective realities and the empire's ubiquitous effect, is a crucial component. For example, the perspective changes between heroes like Mike Braden, a disillusioned Vietnam veteran seeking retribution for his brother's death, and the Amok himself, who is shown as a "human-monster" distorted by solitude and obligation. This mobility exposes the shadows of the empire as internalized tragedies rather than as distant history: Braden's devotion suggests that imperial aggression sustains trauma cycles throughout generations and nations, much like the Amok's unwavering loyalty. Fox emphasizes how empire warps perception and transforms people into vehicles of its persistent horror by rejecting a single gaze. Voice heteroglossia, which is based on Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of conflicting discourses inside a text, complements this.

To illustrate ideological conflicts, Fox uses a variety of voices, including colonial English rhetoric, local Filipino languages, and the Amok's internalized imperial directives. Some scholars such as Kyiileyang deconstructs the empire's myth of superiority by analysing talks that combine American scepticism with peasant legend. Power disparities that persist in postcolonial environments are revealed by the Amok's silent, predatory presence in contrast to American protagonists' garrulous colonial excuses. The horrors of empire are shown in this heteroglossia as linguistic and cultural dominance: the Amok's rampage represents the violent eruption of suppressed history, while the "shadows" take the form of soft indigenous voices and the din of imposed ideas. A character's memory of the Japanese occupation breaks the plot in a crucial passage, connecting individual loss to more widespread colonial exploitation. According to Genette's narratological model, this strategy produces a disturbing non-linearity: the past "runs amok" in the present, symbolizing the novel's thesis that the

horrors of empire are cyclical rather than final, as seen by persistent bloodshed and cognitive dehumanization of people.

Fox's narrative techniques turn *Amok* from a pulp thriller often compared to *Jaws* due to its tense pacing into a deep indictment of empire. The novel's unrelenting drive, along with stylistic advances in focalization, heteroglossia, and analepses, makes the shadows of the empire visceral and unavoidable, challenging readers to face the monstrosity that colonialism spawned. Scholars and students studying literary studies, especially those looking at how genre fiction might challenge ideological frameworks, should definitely read *Amok*. It provides rich material for lectures on narratology, postcolonial horror, and the ethics of depicting the aftermath of war, and its relevance persists in an era contending with neocolonial legacies.

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