

The Enemy Within the Walls: Examining the Ontological Dimension of Borders in John Lanchester's *The Wall* and Prayaag Akbar's *Leila*

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Abstract

This paper takes up a comparative reading of two works of speculative fiction, *Leila* by Prayaag Akbar and *The Wall* by John Lanchester, to embark upon a broader question regarding the ontological dimension of the borderization process. While a euphoria surrounding the rhetoric of globalization still pervades dominant cultures across the globe, we perceive a simultaneous retreat from the globalized order to address a collective reservation toward those deemed aliens and outsiders. The neurotic urge to identify an out-group, or an enemy, ultimately culminates in the materialization of the cartographic imagination in the construction of border walls. These walls, beyond their material and spatial situatedness, also symbolize the crises of communities, where the identification of an enemy becomes an ontological necessity. However, what if the enemy has already pervaded the walls? What if the monstrous enemy and the human self cannot be kept separate? Modernity has been unable to maintain its core binaries, failing to construct the individual as a unified self. Then, the borders are ultimately attempts of a Deleuzian control society to assert a racial and anthropocentric superiority following the dismantling of institutions of enclosure. The anxiety over the loss of familial and institutional bounds takes material form in borders, but the crisis entails that the process is never complete. Drawing on Mbembe's theory of borderization and Claeys's political dystopia, among others, the paper seeks to read the two novels to examine the symbolic and ontological implications of the borderization process.

Keywords: Borderization, control society, *Leila*, Lanchester, ontology, Political Dystopia, walls

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Introduction

In the slow but clear retreat from globalization, borders have become central in current geopolitics. Borders mark territory. While edges often mean closure, borders are also uncertain—small openings allow access to uncharted terrains, terra incognita. When internalized, borders reinforce a sense of security by keeping the “other” at bay, separating those who belong from those who do not. Belonging and unbelonging are not innate; they are shaped by ideology. In secure societies, borders not only deter arrivals but also shape both individual and collective identities. As we transition from disciplinary societies to societies of insecurity and then to Deleuzian societies of control, the collapse of traditional enclosures has altered our perspective on interiors and exteriors. The society of control, as Deleuze puts it, is a transitory phase that follows the Foucauldian disciplinary society. It is defined by the disintegration of both familial and institutional enclosures. In such a social arrangement, borders have become places where enslaving and liberating forces collide (Deleuze, 1992).

In the current geopolitical trends, the neoconservative alliance seeks to reinforce the border structures, and with them, manage the anxieties of a community against “alien” migrants. At this juncture, the permeable borders transcend their cartographic imaginations to manifest in the material reality of walls: the U.S. Mexico border and the Israel – Palestine Separation Wall are cases in point (Wheatley & Kroll-Zeldin, 2020). In this transformation, the border infrastructure also shapes political realities and informs alterations in ontology. Ontology, which can be defined as the philosophical study of being, is also concerned with how the being is situated and categorized in a given spatiotemporal context. These static structures, as objective forces erected to reassert the humanist utopian narratives, in turn, inform how beings are constructed both inside and outside. Thus, in works of dystopian fiction such as John Lanchester's *The Wall* and Prayaag Akbar's *Leila*, the walls transcend their materiality, becoming visceral in their ontological dimension.

This paper aims to demonstrate that physical walls in speculative fiction serve as catalysts for ontological transmutations, shifting individuals from unified selves to fragmented *dividuals*. Furthermore, as the project of differentiation is never complete, the enemy is likely to remain inseparable from the self. The central objective of the research is to examine how walls, rather than static, impermeable structures of enclosure, become structures of ontological necessity, shaping the contours of the self in a society of crisis.

Literature Review

The study focuses on the narrative of two works of speculative fiction, *The Wall* by John Lanchester and *Leila* by Prayaag Akbar. Speculative fiction, as a genre, lies outside the purview of canonical and classical forms of literature. However, it can lend a more honest look at the emergent ontological paradigms shaped by contemporary cultural movements, since it is relatively free of the burden of traditions. Braidotti's championing of the genre of speculative fiction entails, "Low cultural genres, like science fiction, are mercifully free of grandiose pretensions – of the aesthetic or cognitive kind – and thus end up being a more accurate and honest depiction of contemporary culture than other, more self-consciously 'representational' genres" (Braidotti, 2006, p. 203).

In the two works of speculative fiction chosen for the analysis, the Wall acts as an all-encompassing apparatus. It shapes the collective while simultaneously transforming the

individual on an ontological level. As contemporary movements in global geopolitics underline, the manifestation of walls in these works of fiction is only an amplification of the forces that seek to identify enemies to assert solidarity. However, as these novels show, the control of arrivals is never enough to keep enemies at bay who may have already penetrated the boundaries. Therefore, following a crisis of identity formation at the ontological level, the enclosure of walls is never complete – the fear at the heart of the collective denotes that this process of borderization must replicate itself.

The Wall encapsulates the speculative future of a dystopian England where, after a catastrophic ecological collapse named as The Change, rising sea levels have wiped out a significant portion of humanity (Lanchester, 2019). Among those who remain, the young generation has to guard the eponymous Wall in an effort to keep the Others at bay, immigrants who overcome great peril to reach the other side of the Wall only to be shot down by the guards known as Defenders. The Defenders comprise the national youth who get two years of involuntary military conscription to defend the border structure, and "... it is more than three hundred thousand people involved in defending the Wall" (Lanchester, 2019, p. 34). With so many people living on the Wall, the Wall becomes a brutalist ecology of its own. However, as we see, even the oppressive structure is inadequate to deter the enemy, which may already have crossed over to the other side. The story focuses on Joseph Kavannagh, who reluctantly begins his two years of service on the walls and forms a companionship with Hifa. Life at the Wall is uneventful until a swarm of Others infiltrates the structure, aided by a high-ranking insider among the Defenders. Following the rule written by the Elites, Kavannagh and his associates, who fail to defend against the Others, are abandoned to the sea. Deprived of means of sustaining life, they face the looming threat of death in the *terra incognita* of the sea, but there remains a promise of community in the most hostile of terrains. The desolate Defenders stumble upon a sea-steading community, whose way of life may be different, but their benevolence seems more humane compared to the civilized order of the Wall (Lanchester, 2019).

Leila unveils a similar urban topology marked by walled separations, albeit in a specific cultural context of the Indian apartheid of caste. Walls become markers of community pride and purity, as well as manifestations of anxiety about contamination by members of other castes. As axiomatic structures, these walls sustain a phallogocentric order, an order defined by a patriarchal, logocentric, closed-off structure, fragmenting identities and diminishing the human-nature compound. In effect, these walls, as erections, become symbolic of the dissemination of a phallogocentric enclosure, where they are not only worshipped but also form a core component of identity in their ontological configuration. The pluralist sociocultural heritage of India is bartered alongside a venerated wall called Purity One, where "People come to pray and plead" (Akbar, 2017, p. 2). The undermining of the nature-culture by the order of the walls is woven in the description, as the protagonist notes, "Some forty years after Purity One was erected, there are no trees" (Akbar, 2017, p. 38). The novel's first-person narrative follows Shalini, an upper-caste woman who defies the customs of her community by marrying outside her faith, becoming an out-group and an "other." Ousted from their respective communities, Riz and Shalini find a residence in the liberal enclave of East End, only to fall prey to the reactionary, oppressive apparatus of Repeaters. Following a surprise Repeater attack, Riz dies, while Shalini gets separated from their daughter, Leila. Navigating the disciplinary carceral

institution of the Purity Camp for her crime against the collectivist tradition, Shalini seeks her daughter's whereabouts.

Methodology

This study analyses these two novels in the light of contemporary studies on border structures and their ontological configurations of the individual and the community, particularly Mbembe's theoretical intervention on *borderization* and Deleuze's society of control (Mbembe, 2019; Deleuze, 1992). The method applied in the research is comparative textual analysis, with critical interventions in mind. The critical lenses specifically examine certain narrative elements in each text. These include the wall's materiality as a hyperobject in *The Wall* and its carcerality in creating an apartheid system in *Leila*.

In their viscosity, border walls are fantasmatic overdetermined objects aimed to contain the fear and anxiety of an imagined community, saturating "the psychic to the social" (Stümer, 2025, p. 530). Mbembe's borderization, in turn, entails the process of erecting borders, not only spatially, but also ontologically. This process extends to Mbembe's theorization of necropolitics. It is defined as the political strategy of a state in crisis that must employ the power of death to keep its citizens in line (Mbembe, 2019). Traditionally, political communities are based on solidarities arising from shared language, culture, or history. However, following the so-called repopulation of the planet, determining the sovereignty of a homogeneous political community has become subject to state enforcement of a universal that works against the natural. In the universal networked interface imagined by Fukuyama and proliferated by advancements in cyberspace, borders are identified as porous and enforced only to regulate the mechanisms of free trade across the globe (Fukuyama, 1989).

It is also said that the contemporary structure of the networked interface morphs critical paradigms of center and margin, where the networked interface becomes a saturated exterior transforming spaces of places into spaces of flows (Read, 2012). However, current trends signal a conscious retreat from such a liberal vision: instances such as Trump's crusade against migrants, as well as the fortifying of European borders, show that borders still hold a prominent place in the self-determination of the state (Cabas-Mijares et al., 2024, p. 155). The ongoing ecological onslaught also opens up to a contingent future of scarce resources. In a future of scarcity, these walled borders restrict the movement of not only people but also resources, aiming to mend societies in perpetual crisis (Vallet, 2026, p. 4). In the context of this crisis, following the gradual erasure of institutional enclosures, Deleuze presents the idea of the control society, in which borders must be erected and reforms undertaken to create a semblance of security within the in-group. Trump's idea of the U.S.–Mexico Border Wall helped him gain a significant edge against his opponents, delivering him a landslide victory in the presidential campaign (Cabas-Mijares et al., 2024, p. 155). In a country of immigrants, the resonating effect of Trump's border policy "is a sign of just how disruptive the fluid flows of globalization have been to any solid sense of cultural and social cohesion" (Gardels, 2017, p. 2).

Walls are a specific type of border conditioned by their materiality: "Its standing structure concretizes an international border that otherwise exists only as a line on a map or in the phrasing of words in a bi-national treaty" (Casey, 2017, p. 91). In their materiality, walls impose strong warnings to those who lie outside; in their viscosity, walls seek to oppress by the dissemination of a differential logic. They project the insecurity of a community, above all, in their carving of an identity politics. In this function, the border wall plays a crucial role in

Mbembe's (2019) society of security, which primarily concerns itself with governing arrivals: "The aim of a society of security is not to affirm freedom but to control and govern the modes of arrival" (p. 104). Ironically enough, a society of security turns out to be a society of insecurity, insecure of its origins, its resources, and its shared heritage. A society of insecurity ultimately forms a prologue to the Deleuzian society of control. The control society is one in which institutional boundaries have disintegrated, leading to an overt, free-flowing control to contain the crisis.

Thus, for Mbembe, borders are "dead spaces of nonconnection which deny the very idea of a shared humanity, of a planet, the only one we have, that we share..." (p. 99). More than borders, Mbembe looks at the process of borderization that seeks to deprive people who are already systemically exploited, contaminated, and emaciated by imperial powers. Borderization translates to warfare targeted to "great swaths of humanity adjudged worthless and superfluous" (Mbembe, 2019, p. 100). While deterring this supposed enemy through the production of difference, they also bring difference production home, merging philosophical questions about ontology with the material realities of boundaries. Thus, the paper's ultimate goal is to examine how processes of borderization inform alterations in ontology.

Analysis

The speculative dystopia of John Lanchester's *The Wall* amplifies an anxiety already at the heart of the British society that shaped the populist narrative behind Brexit. Following a climate catastrophe known in the novel simply as the Change, society has undergone a radical restructuring. The eponymous wall is erected not only to discourage the swarm of outsiders desperate for refuge but also to contain the threat of the rising sea level. The novel begins with the protagonist, Joseph Kavanagh, being conscripted to the wall to begin his two years of mandatory service guarding the nation from the climate refugees, who are designated Others. The environment is decidedly hostile and marked by biting cold. At the same time, every day as a Defender is a quest for survival – failing to contain the Others is punishable by banishment to the sea.

The early descriptions of the wall make it seem like a sentient being, an oppressive hyperobject that shapes human ontological formations within the state: "There is the Wall in front of you, a long low concrete monster. It stretches into the distance. Although the Wall is completely vertical, when you stand underneath it, it feels as if it overhangs. As if it could topple over onto you. You feel leant on" (Lanchester, 2019, p. 4). Furthermore, the spectral effect of the Wall on the citizen is outlined: "... lots of people dream about it, long before they're sent there" (p. 5). The looming threat of the Wall as a symbolic leviathan is clearly illustrated – upon encountering the structure, the newly conscripted Defender should feel cold, trapped, and afraid, as the author divulges. Thus, it can be seen that the material structure is capable of standing in for an ontological necessity. On the Wall, which is officially known as the National Coastal Defence Structure, the ontological transmutation is informed by the semiotics of the concrete: "You could talk about the Wall in prose, or you could talk about it in poetry, but either way concrete would be prominent" (p. 14). The "prose" of the Wall is defined in terms of scale, describing the various infrastructural aspects. Conversely, the "poetry," informed by the ontological configurations of the border infrastructure, has a fixed function: the materiality of the concrete itself. As per Harman's Object-Oriented Ontology, the Wall exists as

an object for which there's not much description (Harman, 2018). At the same time, no description could capture the essence of the wall, which extends to ontological borderization.

However, a plain binary between the Defenders and the Others does not really hold – as the narrative voice of Joseph wryly admits, "... if the Others attack during somebody else's shift it's not your problem..." (Lanchester, 2019, p. 26). The imagined sense of community comes into being only in relation to the Others, and its fragility is easily exposed when confronted with a Darwinian motif of survival. Furthermore, while the Defenders who fail to stop infiltration are exiled on a boat, we come to realise that the influx of the Others is not always contained by the presence of the Wall. Laws were lenient before, but "Now, today, Others who get over the Wall have to choose between being euthanised, becoming Help, or being put back to the sea" (p. 47). Of course, those desperate enough to climb up the oppressive Wall often choose to become Help, and they are kept within the state as second-class citizens, less than the humans who are native to the state.

The Wall works to impose binaries between inside and outside, self and other, and the most glaring of them, human and inhuman, in its need for the construction of a humanist utopia. In simpler words, the Others are deemed less than human due to their restricted access to resources. Casey (2017) notes, for instance, that two sides of the border wall produce different ontological responses: "...the immigrant looks with a combination of fear and challenge, the police officer takes comfort and even pride in defending all that the wall stands for" (p. 92). However, Lanchester's dystopia reveals the delicate nature of such a constructed self. When Joseph contrasts the persona towards the beginning of a shift with the one that emerges at the end of one, the self is already fragmented by the presence of the wall: "Your shift twin was a person you met twice a day, about whom you had very strong views, whom you didn't really know" (Lanchester, 2019, p. 50). While the Wall seeks to demarcate home and outside, it ultimately exposes the fragility of a selfhood based on the ideological construct of a national-familial space. The familial here is already contaminated by agents from the outside, resulting in the diminishing of the self. When the narrator returns home from his first two-week tenure at the Wall, he reflects: "... the whole concept of home was strange, a thing you used to believe in, an ideology you'd once been passionate about but had now abandoned" (p. 54). On the Wall, like in the imperial economy, the production of sameness and difference becomes two sides of the same coin. The society is still stratified from within, while the dissemination of an identity politics enables the accumulation of resources for the Elites, they also need the Help, as well as people like the protagonist who aspires to be part of the Elite. Such a border wall, on an ontological level, does not stop at segregating the masses between the natives and the invaders; it runs the differential engine *ad infinitum*.

At the same time, a tribal solidarity comes into effect, initiating an identity formation based on sameness: "The more time I spent with them, the more I realised I was more like the other defenders than I was unlike them" (Lanchester, 2019, p. 74). When a group of Others, infiltrating the Wall, engages in an armed conflict with the Defenders, the protagonist, along with the compatriots of his shift, is banished to the sea. Mbembe (2019) notes that the walls, more than the enemy itself, produce the "desire for an enemy," or an apartheid – they enclave communities aiming to strip them of excess presence but "without ever fully succeeding in keeping away those considered a threat" (p. 43). In other words, the enemy is already within and cannot be kept separate from the subjects formed within enclosures. The desire for an enemy, for Mbembe, "amounts to a quasi-anal need for ontology," beyond a purely social need

(p. 48). Then, when it is disclosed early in the novel that the Captain, who was initially an Other, has been made a Captain by the Elites, it does not prepare the reader for the final betrayal of the Captain in placing his solidarity with the Others that leads to the protagonist's exile.

Prayaag Akbar's novel *Leila*, on the other hand, reflects on a different kind of apartheid, that of the Indian apartheid of the caste system. The novel begins with a description of 'Purity One,' a venerated wall which "is believed to have an inscrutable power" (Akbar, 2017, p. 1). The wall, as a symbolic line of segregation between the pure and the polluted, is worshipped by people in the dystopia conjured in *Leila*. In the small room "abutting the wall," devotees seek a low cage which houses "the holy centre of the wall" behind its "thin wire bars" – the supposed "first brick of Purity One" (p. 2). The worshipping of the brick as an absolute manifestation of the material monolith signifies an ontological desire for a phallogocentric order, which is also reflected in society, which impermeably segregates itself from within, creating enclaves for different castes known as Sectors. Environmental emaciation goes hand in hand with the erection of walls, and attritional destruction of ecology becomes manifest. Shalini informs the reader:

Some forty years after Purity One was erected there are no trees. The stunning canopy is gone. Now there are hundreds of walls, no one sure how many. Each wall is fifty-nine feet high and two feet thick, in agreement with Council law. They loop through and around the city, bigger than anything except the tallest buildings. My father detested these walls. Now that I use the Outroads every day, I live with what they expel. I must see their shit and slime, the cascading brown water and showering refuse.... These walls diminish us. Make us something less than human.... We are in an enormous maze. (Akbar, 2017, p. 38)

These walls become constructs enforcing the mimetic desire for apartheid, of violence, while resting their structure on an idea of a world that remains inherently threatening, where the logic of suspicion gains primacy. You are always an enemy until proven otherwise. This sense of enmity produces relations of hatred, guiding ontological restructuring of our times. The dystopias presented in works of speculative fiction, such as *Leila* and *The Wall*, do not conjure a world that is radically different from ours - they only amplify certain aspects of the production of the relation of hatred that already colour our symbolic order and inform our ontological reorganisation. Shalini, the protagonist of *Leila*, gets separated from her husband and child in the wake of a populist reactionary revolution, which has given way to an impermeable apartheid structure of society. Shalini's husband, a liberal humanist, becomes a casualty of the revolution as the state's necropolitical apparatuses are exposed. Meanwhile, Shalini is confined to a disciplinary facility to repent for marrying outside her faith. Mbembe's (2019, p. 92) necropolitics entails "contemporary forms of subjugating life to the power of death." In the necropolitical order, the state holds the power to dictate who may live and who must die. In Joseph's dystopia, the Defenders are kept in line only by the regime of death, where failure entails that they must be banished to the sea. In Shalini's dystopia, life is diminished by the dead spaces of the walls, which hold the inhabitants of the city captive in a regime of death.

Shalini's comment that the walls diminish the human is insightful. Placing the comment in Graham Harman's paradigm of object-oriented ontology, it becomes apparent that any description or apprehension of the wall fails to capture its presence, while humans in the

dystopian city are only able to seek their existence in relation to the wall (Harman, 2018). Before being human, you have to be part of a sector, or you are forced to live a life like Shalini, an inhuman life conditioned by oppressive carceral institutions, attritional violence, and toxic infrastructure. Furthermore, the walled object's diminishing of the human is only an extension of the imperial legacy that ultimately led to the production of extractive "worlds without humans" (Stümer, 2025, 536). In turn, they also brings to mind how the first walls that were created to separate early human settlers from non-humans gradually translate to the logic that informs modern maladies of racism, casteism, and apartheid (Morton, 2021). When Shalini's father seeks to enter the Patel Sector in defiance of the oppressive structure of the political dystopia, he is beaten and bruised.

When Joshiji, the leader of the reactionary movement, is asked about the basis of separation in a media interview, he rests his faith on a return to a primitive clan identity, evoking anger and hatred: "Don't go by these foreign ideas of what is right, what is wrong. This is our way of living... It is the flowering of an ancient consciousness... What-all people coming from everywhere. Where are they coming from?... Good people are getting angry" (Akbar, 2017, pp. 44-5). In the final manifestation in the reflective formation of an identity, the walls dismantle an ontological unity, where the human self must conceal a monstrous other, as Shalini's internal monologue reveals: "Sometimes, when I look in the mirror, it seems like something vital has been drawn from me – a monster emerged from sleep and shadow and took to my breast and now I have begun to shrivel" (p. 194). But as Braidotti notes, the monster can be an affirmative embodiment against the phallogocentric order that is sustained through the erection of walls.

Discussion

Claeys (2016), in his analysis of the political dystopia, has noted that external threats and hostility are directly proportional – aggravation of one intensifies the other. The identification of the enemy, or the desiring-production of the enemy, is based on an anxiety within the community, and Joshiji's speech on purity banks on the same anxiety. Both Joshiji in *Leila* and the Captain in *The Wall* are agents who wield power, yet both indicate that the society of security cannot contain the enemy outside the walls. They must pervade the in-group, destabilising the border structure. The walls are material-symbolic manifestations of this anxiety that must produce an enemy before it can assert the self:

Under extreme and prolonged pressure the herd instinct may trump all desire for individuation, to the point of absolute submission to the group. Fear and hatred are particularly closely interwoven when the group's existence is imperilled by crisis. For we hate intensely only when we fear deeply. So the most destructive groups are also the most paranoid. (Claeys, 2016, p. 42)

The societies unveiled in *Leila* and *The Wall* both attempt to construct a society based on differences, an apartheid structure, and the paranoid construction of subjecthood ultimately results in destruction, extermination, annihilation, ecocides, and symbolic violence (see Žižek, 2010). The National Coastal Defence Structure in *The Wall*, as well as the sector system in *Leila*, are both exercises in constructing subjecthood by first delineating an invasive enemy. In both novels, these structures function as hyperobjects that resist total description while exerting a definitive influence on the characters' ontological configurations.

The walls in these novels are material and symbolic structures, informing the ontological reorganisation currently underway, one that demands a symbolic return to the clan. But as we have seen, the function is not always fulfilled as the enemy surfaces both within and without. In their apocalyptic imagination, the border walls become their own paradoxical undoing, because, as Stümer notes, "...the apocalypse staged by the border wall imaginary in the present is not exactly in the future at all, but has already happened" in the context of settler colonialism (Stümer, 2025, p. 536). In these speculative necro-states, the walls become more than material divides; they are ontological divides that condition a modernist society in crisis. The Deleuzian society of control is, after all, also a society in crisis (Deleuze, 1992). It is a society in which definitive institutional and familial enclosures have disintegrated and are gradually being replaced by a free-flowing control. In these societies, institutional enclosures like schools, prisons, and hospitals have broken down. This disintegration ensures that the wall-building process is never truly complete. The system cannot have enough of these walls, which are ultimately feeble attempts to reform a structure that has already disintegrated in the parallel dissemination of the global networked interface, marking the return of the "zombified migrants or retributive nature" (Stümer, 2025, p. 537) Joshiji in *Leila* is an advocate of walls as a means of reforming social structure. In the control society, "The administration in charge never ceases announcing supposedly necessary reforms..." (Deleuze, 1992, p. 4).

In the system of free-floating control that replaces old disciplinary institutions, a Defender can become an Other in the blink of an eye and vice versa. As Wheatley and Kroll-Zeldin (2020) assert, "In and of themselves, walls are highly symbolic.... Through enforcement and militarized policing, however, walls become active, dynamic, and even mobile" (p. 191). However, as symbolic structures, their binary logic remains volatile. As the self is always threatened to be displaced by the other, their ontological enclosures are never absolute – there always remain emergent affinities that undermine the walls. In *Leila*, Shalini finds affinity with her fellow inmates at the Purity Camp. At the same time, in *The Wall*, the exiled Defenders stumble upon a nautical community, both carving out the space for a broader eco-political *communitas*.

Conclusion

The analysis of walls as material-carceral structures offers an understanding of the neoconservative alliances in the contemporary world, fuelled by populist narratives. While the walls are mobile and always in the process of being built, they themselves are not passages – they rather restrict movements to the best of their ability, compensating for the disintegration of spaces of enclosure. The rise of gated communities that shape contemporary urban topologies is thus a microcosm of the speculative spaces of difference that figure in the novels analysed in this paper, which scholars of urban studies and sociology can further explore. As the present research's findings assert, the walls inform spaces of enclosure and ontological compulsions towards the deliberate production of an enemy, and one must overcome them to be more human. To overcome the crises of the control society, walls concretize differences and undermine humanity's essence. This process breaks individuals into fragmented "dividuals." In this state, failing to produce an ID card or password automatically identifies a person as an out-group member. Thus, the physical walls inevitably lead to fragmented individuals in the works of fiction analysed in this paper. They underline that the current global societies of insecurity run on the same divisive logic of identifying an enemy.

To counter the dead spaces of separation, one must strive to foster greater relationality with fellow humans. Only action-based kinship can deliver us from the carceral and insecure walls. It is worth noting that Shalini and Joseph are returned to their respective human selves only when stripped of such identifiers, fostering greater relationality with others. Shalini's kinship with her fellow inmates at the Tower and Joseph's later life in the island state both exemplify a human need to cultivate action-based kinship, outside immediate clan identities. Therefore, while the ego-punctuated walls restrict, they also conceal a desire to venture to the other side, where one can embrace their minoritarian selves and move towards the embodiment of a new eco-political subject.

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AI Statement

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Statement of Absence of Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research, findings, or recommendations presented in this paper. All conclusions drawn are independent and unbiased.

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