Utopian Spaces Beyond the Earth: A Posthuman Analysis of Becky Chambers' *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet*

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Abstract: Over centuries, Western thought has dictated the manner in which humans perceive gender, sex, and sexual identity as confined to binary frameworks. However, the contemporary age marked by technological evolution challenges human centrality and the notion of identity as a fixed construct. In this light, speculative fiction in literature has become a transformative site for social imagination. This paper is an analysis of the novel *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet* (2014) by Becky Chambers. The paper is grounded in Posthuman theory to explore the demarcation of gender, sex, and sexual identity as exemplified by the entities in the novel. It adopts a close reading to examine Chambers' universe, inhabited by humans, non-human species, and artificial intelligence as an inclusive society. The paper draws on the concept of philosophical posthumanism by Francesca Ferrando to critique anthropocentrism, the idea of a cyborg as a figure that disrupts sex and gender, as presented by Donna Haraway, and the theoretical concept of gender performativity by Judith Butler to problematize gender and heteronormativity. By adopting this framework, the paper attempts to analyse the posthuman renaissance as envisioned by Chambers, where identity is fluid, constructed, and self-chosen. While previous studies have explored representations of identities, they lack alignment with literary theories. The paper concludes that the selected novel by Becky Chambers is a hopeful counter-narration to the dystopian science fiction and successfully dismantles the conventional notions of identity and redefines it as fluid, hybrid, and queer, paving the way for a utopian society.

Keywords: Posthuman, identity, gender, sex and sexuality, utopia, hopepunk

Since the classical era of Greece, the human species has been designated in the supreme position in the composition of the 'natural' hierarchy of living beings. It is apparent that this hierarchy isn't any philosophical formation, but an arrangement that shapes social structures,

created and maintained by humans to justify their own dominion over those below. However, with the growing developments in artificial intelligence and biotechnology, the human species as a powerful figure at the pinnacle has ceased to function. It has shattered the image of humans as autonomous and rational beings, resulting in the development of a posthumanist school of thought.

Within this transformational context, science fiction as a genre has emerged as a crucial site for experimenting with alternative beings and innovative technology. This contemporary genre functions as a speculative laboratory, allowing room for ethical imagination that stages encounters between human species, non-human species, artificial intelligences, and hybrid life forms to explore the limits of the human and the possibilities of the posthuman coexistence. In his chapter *Science Fiction, 1960-2005: Novels and Short Fiction*, David Higgins remarks that a new wave of young writers during that period rebelled against the conservative limitations of pulp science fiction tropes. This wave challenged the manner in which the genre addressed cultural understandings about sex, gender, race, and other social norms (Higgins 75). Helen Merrick reflects in her essay, *Gender in Science Fiction* the history of this genre as mainly dominated by males in terms of writing and as protagonist characters. However, over the years, science fiction has now become a "vehicle for exploring gender and humanity and 'unlearning' the strictures of cultural norms" (Merrick 251).

This paper is a posthuman analysis of the first novel of the Wayfarer Series, *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet* (2014) by American author Becky Chambers. It examines representation of selected human and non-human entities from the novel to reimagine identity, gender, sex, and sexuality by applying Francesca Ferrando's Philosophical Posthumanism, Donna Haraway's cyborg feminism, and Judith Butler's theoretical concept of gender performativity. The paper analyses the manner in which the selected novel decenters human subjectivity and constructs posthuman identity as fluid, performative and culturally situated rather than biologically fixed or universal. Thus, a renaissance of utopian ideals emerges by reconfiguring identity and accepting identities as different.

A few scholars and academicians have studied the selected novel within their research thesis. Building on these studies will allow the present research to establish connections and contribute original insights.

1. Lucija Begnoja's Masters thesis titled "Challenging Gender Roles and Heteronormativity in Selected Works of Fantastic Literature" (2020) is an analysis of gender roles in the first two novels of the Wayfarer Series. It adopts Judith Butler's theoryetical conceptof gender performativity to examine the manner in which the novels challenge gender roles. The paper concludes that although the novels attempt to challenge heteronormativity, they are nevertheless reestablished towards the end.

2. Marcus Lund's Project titled "Love and Its Discontents: An Analysis of How Gender and Love are Portrayed in *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet* by Becky Chambers" (2019) is an analysis of gender and intersectionality in the selected novel. The paper applied Butler's concept of heterosexual matrix and the definition of intersectionality by Dorthe Staunes to map the novel as different from other sci-fi novels.

3. June Anette Haarvik's Masters thesis titled "Wayfaring Bodies: Embodiment in Becky Chambers' Wayfarer Series" (2020) is an examination of body, gender, sexuality, and disability. While the paper extends the discussion on non-normative identities, it fails to engage with theories to form strong arguments.

The current research paper is an attempt to bridge the gaps in the previous research. The novels of Becky Chambers present a broad spectrum of characters and identities. This paper is an examination of Sissix, Ohan, Dr. Chef, Lovelace, Jenks and Rosemary as each of them embodies a distinct mode of posthuman being that challenges human-centred identity models. Thus, this selection of non-human and human entities foregrounds a multi-dimensional perspective, allowing the analysis to reconfigure identity and relational coexistence.

Alexandra Rowland, a fantasy author made a Tumblr post in 2017 that read, "The opposite of grimdark is hopepunk. Pass it on." that had received over 50,000 comments. This positive endorsement towards the concept of hopepunk prompted Rowland to expand it further in an essay titled, *One Atom of Justice, One Molecule of Mercy, and the Empire of Unsheathed Knives*. Aja Romano defines hopepunk in her article as not submission or acceptance but standing up

and fighting for our beliefs, demanding a better and kinder world. By 2019, hopepunk had been popularised as a subgenre of science fiction with narratives about positive change and radical kindness, driven by a worldview that fighting for a positive social system is worthwhile. Beatriz Hermida Ramos examines the genre in her article *Hope Is the New Punk: Politics of Storytelling, Queerness and Marginalized Communities in Becky Chambers' The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet* argues, "hopefulness is not empty optimism or a feel-good narrative, as it demands action and awareness" and it is "a form of creating and reclaiming symbolic spaces where marginalized narratives can be finally voiced in order to subvert and challenge the systems of inequality" (Hermida Ramos 31-32). Becky Chambers is a notable writer of the hopepunk genre, emphasising care, empathy and opposition during dystopian times through her novels.

Thomas More coined the term utopia in 1516 with the publication of his work Utopia, a narrative text about an ideal world structured by stoic and monastic ideals. Although etymologically derived from Greek elements 'ou' meaning not, and 'topos' meaning place, literally meaning 'no place' or a non-existent society, the concept's current understanding is quite contested. Soon, utopian worlds became a popular literary genre that explored a better or ideal society by critically addressing contemporary societal issues. The novel, *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet*, illustrates a subtle posthuman utopian world through non-violent resistance.

The Wayfarer series is set in a distant future galaxy wherein the timelines are indicated as Galactic Commons Standard. *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet*, the first novel of the series, follows the journey of a spaceship, the Wayfarer, boarded by an interspecies crew that punches wormholes to accelerate interstellar travel. The entire universe has societies of different species with complex cultures wherein all possible combinations of gender, sex, and sexuality form a fluid society. The novel's plot follows the life and experiences of Rosemary Harper as a new human crewmember on this ship, negotiating learning and unlearning about different species and cultures for a peaceful coexistence, to a degree of creating their version of utopia.

Posthumanism as a philosophical movement emerged in the late 20th century as a challenge to the foundations of the humanist school of thought. Francesca Ferrando, one of the influential proponents, defines posthumanism in her book *Philosophical Posthumanism* (2019) as something

""post" to the notion of the "human," located within the historical occurrence of "humanism"" (Ferrando 24). Posthumanism is an onto-epistemological and ethical approach that eliminates confrontational dualisms and hierarchical legacies. Thus, it can be examined as post-humanist, post-dualist, and post-anthropocene. Ferrando refers to post-anthropocene as an aspect that decenters humans in relation to the non-human based on the realisation that the human species has granted itself ontological privilege by placing itself at the top of the hierarchical scale. Becky Chambers builds this post-anthropocentric attitude in the selected novel through its multi-species societies. Through a critical analysis, it can be inferred that the human species is no longer central nor ethically superior.

The Exodan, a term used to refer to humans of the Sol System, are widely recognised across the galaxy for their insatiable hunger for power. This excessive pursuit of dominance culminated in a devastating war, catastrophic climate change, and overpopulation that resulted in the destruction of Earth to such an extent that the planet could no longer sustain life. Consequently, the Exodans were forced by circumstance to abandon their planet and seek survival on another world. Given the history, they realised the only way they can do it in space is by living and working together with other living posthuman non-human species like Aandrisk, Aeulon, Sianat, Laru, among others. Thus, humans are no longer superior; they live along with multi-species who are radically different beings, but their culture, lives, needs, and forms of embodiment are treated with equal importance. Consequently, the novel destabilises the hierarchy and traditional social structures, thereby paving the way for a space that is without ranking, more inclusive and plural towards subjectivity. Further, Ferrando rejects the idea of humanist individualism and reconceptualises subjectivity as not autonomous but as fundamentally relational. While the humanist thought believed that individuals or humans are self-sufficient and independent, Chambers's novel dismantles this by portraying a posthuman society as collective.

Merriam-Webster defines "sex" as "either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and that are distinguished respectively as female or male, especially on the basis of their reproductive organs and structures". This widely accepted and yet traditional binary understanding of sex reflects the manner in which humans have categorised living beings historically in binary, as most humans reproduce that way. Within this binary understanding,

"gender" is defined as "the behavioural, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex", thereby often expressed through socially accepted notions of masculinity and femininity. While "sexuality" is defined as "a person's sexual identity or self-identification as bisexual, straight, gay, pansexual, etc," social discourses have reduced this spectrum to a binary in which heterosexuality is normalised, while homosexuality is marginalised. As a result, these interconnected categories function to distinguish identities as either normative or non-normative, resulting in the systematic exclusion and discrimination of those who fall outside dominant social norms. Brian Attebery, in his book *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction* (2002), comments that the genre of science fiction acts as "Science fiction is a useful tool for investigating habits of thought, including conceptions of gender. Gender, in turn, offers an interesting glimpse into some of the unacknowledged messages that permeate science fiction" (Attebery 1). It allows authors to create a new society with rules that do not adhere to the social conventions of the present society. Consequently, authors have used this freedom to address societal issues such as gender and sex in several novels.

Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) develops her theoretical concept of gender performativity by challenging the conventional notions of sex and gender. She counters the notion of gender as a stable identity rooted in biological sex as not an inherent but a socially constructed one. It is not something one is, but something one does. Thus, gender is a series of acts and behaviours performed, and its repetition creates an illusion of being natural or demonstrating acceptable qualities. She writes, "Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeals over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler 33).

Ohan is the Navigator of the Wayfarer ship and belongs to the Sianat species of the Galactic Commons. These species are four-limbed, bow-backed, and covered in dense blue fur, which they regularly trim in fractal patterns to show their dark grey skin. All the children of this species are infected with a neurovirus called the Whisperer during a ritual. This has completely changed their brain functioning and physiology, allowing them to intuitively understand the multidimensional nature of space. Thereafter, the host Sianat and the virus are collectively referred to as a Sianat Pair.

In consequence, Ohan is a symbiotic being composed of a host body and a collective of coral-like microorganisms. Ohan therefore prefers to be identified with pronouns they/them. This idea of a universally singular, sexed body is thus destabilised. Perhaps, the host organism may have been sexed singular biologically; in Ohan's case, he was a male. However, after being infected by the Whisperers, Ohan prefers to be addressed not as an individual being but as a composite lifeform whose identity is no longer themed on bodily sex. As there is no clear distinction whether to categorise Ohan as a male or a female, sex as an identity becomes ontologically irrelevant. Judith Butler criticises linguistic structures in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and argues that language does not simply describe identity; it produces it. Names, pronouns and labels are not innocent as they create and sustain rigid categories of identity. Traditionally, language forces subjects into a binary spectrum of 'he' or 'she', which is regarded as natural and fixed. However, Ohan's decision to adopt 'they/them' pronouns interferes with this universal function of language. The non-binary pronoun acts as a site of resistance where identity is not anchored in anatomy but through discourse.

Furthermore, Ohan's anatomical form makes gender unintelligible as there is no singular body upon which gender norms can be performed. They do not enact masculinity or femininity, or any other recognisable gender role. Instead, their virus has enhanced their skills in navigation. This brings to focus that gender is only a regulatory system that emerges in certain bodily and cultural conditions. Likewise, the desire to be in a romantic or sexual relationship is also absent from Ohan's identity. They do not engage in such relationships, nor is this framed as a lack. Instead, for Sianat Pairs, intimacy is internalised as it takes the form of self-care, symbiosis, and interdependence by rejecting the erotic, sexual, and romantic meaning of intimacy. This virus weakens its host's body and brings death at an early age. Thus, Ohan is not oriented towards desire but towards survival, balance, and peace, eventually queering human sexuality.

Dr. Chef is a doctor and cook on the Wayfarer ship. He is a Grum, a non-Galactic Commons species and among the last 300 of his kind. Dr. Chef is physically large and grey in colour with six multi-functional limbs. This species does not possess sexually dimorphic bodies as categorised by humans. As there is no biological distinction equivalent to male and female, reproduction is not

categorised as per binary sex differences. During the first encounter of Rosemary, Dr. Chef introduces himself as, "I am a Grum, and I'm currently male" to end her confusion he continues, "Biological sex is a transitional state of being for my species. We begin life as female, become male once our egg-laying years are over, then end our lives as something neither here nor there" (Chambers 35). This absence of sex difference is not framed as a lack but perhaps as irrelevant to their social identity. The species thus highlights the idea that binary sex is neither universal nor necessary.

Accordingly, the human understanding of gender as organised around sex is also dismantled. Due to the lack of a gendered binary of masculine/feminine, division of labour based on gender and hierarchy based on gender do not exist for the Grums. Dr. Chef shared about the multiple professional roles he has played that reflected his nurturing and caring nature. He was born as a female in his homeworld. As an adult, she participated in the war as a battlefield medic. She gave birth to five daughters who also grew up to become soldiers. Unfortunately, they all lost their lives in it. After the war, Dr. Chef opened a soup shop and spent her time training to qualify as a multispecies doctor. She then transitioned into a male and shortly joined the crew. He shared his grief with Rosemary over losing his children and referred to their roles, "None of my children ever mothered. None of them ever became male" (Chambers 208). It sheds light on the stages of his species' life through gender. As sex differences do not exist in Grums, gender is not performed in a universally recognisable and acceptable way. Dr. Chef does not perform masculinity, femininity, or androgyny, but rather performs professional tasks responsibly. The narrative does not foreground the sexuality of Grums to social relationships, nor does it imply repression or absence of intimacy, but rather cultural organisation in which sexuality is not central. Thus, Dr. Chef represents a form of subjectivity in which identity is not anchored in sexual desires or gender but in care and social contributions.

Sissix Seshkethet is a pilot of the Wayfarer Ship and belongs to the Aandriks species of the Galactic Commons. Aandrisks resemble the physical qualities of lizards, with green or blue scales, flat features and bodies taller than humans. Their body is covered with multi-coloured feathers and often like to decorate their claws or shimmer their scales. Aandris's family structure is very

complex as it changes over the course of their life. This impacts Sissix's perception of sex, intimacy, and family.

The Aandrisks family structure is divided into three phases. Aandrisks lay eggs, individuals are born into hatch families and stay with them until they are mature enough to breed, after which they join a feather family. Feather families are formed through emotional bonds rather than biological ties, as Aandrisks believe in gifting a feather to someone who has touched their heart through care or kindness. Feather families usually consist of friends and lovers who depend on each other emotionally. "The feather families tend to change over time, as Aandrisks need different things during different times in their lives" (Chambers 251). The third type of family is a house family. Aandrisks are encouraged to study and travel during their early adulthood, and therefore, they hand over their eggs to a house family who looks after and raises the offspring. When these eggs hatch, the house family becomes a hatch family for the little Aandrisks.

The biological mothers and fathers in Aandrisks family do not hold the same importance as they do in the human family. This becomes apparent when Sissix informs Rosemary that she has children, and clarifies, "'[b]ut that does not make me a mother'. She winked. 'I'm not old enough for that yet'" (Chambers 253). Unlike the human species, Aandrisks species do not conform to the rigid male/female binary and sex is not considered the primary marker of identity, hierarchy, or social role. This species does not attach social meaning or status to sexual anatomy. This distinction of sex from social categories highlights that sex is not inherently meaningful; rather, cultural interpretation gives meaning to it. Thus, the character of Sissix denaturalises the assumption that biological sex structures an individual's identity, kinship, or social hierarchy.

For Sissix, and more broadly, Aandrisks species, gender is a social role performed through relational practices such as kinship obligation, communication, and care. According to Butler's theoretical concept of gender performativity, it is her gesture of care towards strangers, loyalty to her family groups, her way of forming relationships, and the manner in which she addresses other issues that constitute gender in her culture. Predominantly, the performance does not label into categories like 'feminine', 'masculine' or 'non-binary'. Instead, it reveals that these categories are not universal in nature but culturally specific. Thus, Sissix demonstrates that gender is not necessarily a natural extension of sex but a repeated social practice that can be understood only

within a particular cultural context. Furthermore, the sexuality of her species is not around monogamous romantic or reproductive pairs. In an Andrisian society, both males and females have multiple sexual partners throughout their lifetime. Sex is seen as a natural part of the Aandrisk life, and there is no larger valuation put into this fact. From a theoretical lens of queer studies, this challenges heteronormativity that privileges exclusivity and lifelong pairing, thereby queering the human norm.

Rosemary Harper is a 23-year-old human raised on Mars. She is a new addition to the crew of Wayfarer and joins as a clerk. Through the narrative, it is revealed that due to her father's illegal actions, she spent all her money to generate a new identity and start over her life in the Galactic Universe as a clerk. Biologically, Rosemary is a female human within the conventional framework of sexual dimorphism of human society. However, this binary normative classification of sex loses much of its social significance once she enters the multispecies environment. Consequently, she also loses her automatic authority, desirability towards heteronormative relationships, and normative status of belonging to the human species. This de-centring of the female human body also showcases that sex does not hold universal meaning.

Initially, Rosemary's actions are recognisably feminine, shaped by qualities of being polite, emotional self-regulation, and cautious in the new universe. Over time, as she encounters alternative models of embodiment and identity in the universe, her performance begins to shift. In the novel, Rosemary recollects a warning by her old university professor on interspecies relations to "not judge other species by your own social norms", emphasising a conscious attempt of acceptance and inclusion in the light of being self-aware (Chambers 24). Through Butler's performativity theory, Rosemary can be seen as context-adaptive and sensitive rather than being rigid or innate. She learns more about different identities, and thus, her gender becomes a process of becoming rather than a fixed identity.

Likewise, her sexuality is initially shaped by human norms of romantic exclusivity, heterosexuality as the norm, and binary thinking. However, her exposure to non-human, non-binary, post-human identities allows her to unlearn rigid human essentialisms and reconfigure her real identity. Towards the end, Rosemary expresses her feelings of care and attraction towards Sissix. "I understand that you don't limit yourself to one person. I understand that our notions of

family are different, and that they probably won't fit together down the road. But I'd like to be part of your notion for a while, all the same" (Chambers 276- 277). The two enter a consensual sexual relationship but remain uncommitted to each other. Through this interaction, Rosemary begins to unlearn human-centric norms of social categories and demonstrates openness and acceptance towards polygamy and cultures of other species. This does not erase her sexuality but pluralises it, allowing sex, sexuality, and desire to be understood independently and not as socially fixed categories.

Lovelace is an Artificial Intelligence system installed aboard the Wayfarer. There are multiple Lovelace systems installed around the universe. However, these AIs gain their knowledge through their environment and are shaped by events and people around. The AI on the Wayfarer, installed by Jenks, is named Lovey. Being an AI system, Lovelace does not possess a biological body. Consequently, she does not have organs of sex or reproduction in an anatomical sense. As there is no basis for categorisation of male or female, there is no sexual dimorphism either. This absence does not focus on lack rather an understanding that sex is only a prerequisite concept of identity.

It is imperative to note the language used to refer to Lovey, suggesting that although technically there is a lack of sexed organs and anatomy, the referrals 'she and her' make one believe that Lovey is an organic form. The gendering of an AI can be understood as a cultural performance embedded in code, design, and interaction. By assigning gendered voices, names, personalities and behaviour traits, linguistic patterns and emotional bonds are scripted and repeated. As per Butler's theory of performativity, Lovey's gender emerges not from biology but from social repetition of the manner she responds, communicates, and connects emotionally. Her gender is thus not anatomical but relational and performative. Lovey demonstrates that gender can be produced through recognition, interaction and even in the absence of sex. Meanwhile, she does not express sexual desire in a biological sense. However, she develops a strong, deep, emotional connection with Jenks that increasingly takes the form of a romantic relationship and a mutual desire for sexual intimacy. Importantly, Lovey's yearning for a body kit as an embodiment in the novel does not originate from biological necessity but because of the limitations of the disembodied existence that is making their intimacy feel incomplete. Thus, she destabilises the idea of sexuality as a natural drive, originating in the anatomical body, instead presenting it as an experience of intimacy formed through deep and meaningful connection.

Jenks is a human computer tech of the Wayfarer born in a Survivalist clan on Earth. He is biologically a male within the conventional human framework, and his body anatomically aligns with human biological classification. However, due to his appearance, the narrative does not treat his male sex as a source of power and authority. Thus, decentering it. Jenks is unusually short, possibly due to dwarfism. Rosemary's initial reactions upon meeting Jenks are shock and wonder. The concept of hegemonic masculinity, developed in the 1980s by R. W. Connell, describes it as the dominant form of masculinity in a given society. It holds the idea that a culturally idealised form of manhood holds more power and influence in society as compared to other forms. In Western society, masculinity has been historically associated with traits like white, physical strength, tall, heterosexual, independent, etc. Naturally, men who don't conform are Othered. Evidently, Jenks does not belong to the category of masculinity. Although Jenks has accepted his body form, he gets annoyed when someone comments on his height and needs to be gene-tweaked. Jenks deviates from the traditional form of masculinity by being a non-white man, of short height, yet confident enough to speak up for himself. Through Butler's concept of gender performativity, his masculinity is non-dominant, but gentle, empathetic, and expressive in his interactions with Lovey. Thus, his masculinity is a site of resistance to the traditional patriarchal gender norms.

Jenks' sexuality, too, is oriented not towards physical or reproductive desire, but towards intimacy and his emotional connection, especially with Lovey. Although Jenks and Lovey's relationship is technically heterosexual, his desire to form a sexual relationship with Lovey is a representation of technosexuality. David Levy, an expert on artificial intelligence and author of the book *Love and Sex with Robots: The Evolution of Human-Robot Relationships* (2007), explores the concept of technosexuality. He remarks that as the technology is evolving, the distinction between a human and a robot is blurring. Levy predicts that by 2050, making emotional connections and having sexual relations with robots will be ordinary, especially for introverts.

In a scene where Janks and Lovey are discussing Lovey's opinion on having a body kit, the narrative illustrates him being sexually attracted to her.

He took off his clothes and climbed into the pit, as he had done many times. He sat down and leaned back against her core, his bare skin bathed in her glow. Without the chilled air,

she felt like sunlight, only softer. […] He pressed his back against her, pressed the soles of his feet, his shoulders, his palms, trying to soak in as much of her as he could. He twisted back and brought his lips to her. He kissed the smooth, warm metal. (Chambers 308).

Chambers' portrayal of Jenks and Lovey normalises this bond within the framework of ethics and care. This queers conventional human sexuality while challenging the traditional assumption between two biological, sexed beings. Technosexuality can be understood through Butler's theoretical perspective of performativity, where desire for machines sexually is produced through repeated socio-technical interactions with feminised AI voices.

Donna Haraway's ground-breaking essay *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1991) defines cyborg as "cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway 5). It is not a mere technological being but ontologically a figure that destabilises the foundations through which Western thought has categorised identity and society. The figure of cyborg thus dismantles boundaries such as human/machine, physical/non-physical, natural/artificial, male/female, etc. Building on this understanding, all the citizens of Galactic Commons are methodologically cyborgs as they are implanted with tiny chips under their skin that hold all the crucial information of that being, which makes them data embedded beings. There are two kinds of cyborgs in the universe of Galactic Commons, one that are invisible or the normalised cyborgs like all the human and non-human species on the GC and outside. The other kind is contested and criminalised cyborgs that are ontologically inorganic, like Lovelace. From this standpoint, the analysis of all the selected beings through Butler's concept of posthumanism dismantles the foundations of identity in Chambers' universe.

Historically, the renaissance signifies a rebirth. In the context of this novel, *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet*, renaissance acts as a rebirth and re-imagination of subjectivity by moving away from the independent and autonomous model of the humanist, as identity is no longer bounded and defined by fixed norms of categories. The multispecies universe departs from the conventional human-centred space to a world organised around relation and ethically structured plurality, oriented towards care and coexistence. Renaissance, thus, is a re-making of self and the world. In this manner, the novel articulates a utopia where the world is not conflict-free but ethically oriented towards posthuman inclusivity through ongoing learning and un-learning of

ingrained assumptions, norms, and ideologies. The concept of ontological openness is a framework that emphasises a willingness to remain open to the idea of identities or entities as not static an ongoing process of becoming. An exposure to unfamiliar cultural norms and bodily practices in the novel illustrates this idea through Rosemary's gradual unlearning of human-centric norms and Jenks' evolving understanding of intimacy. In a sense, Chambers weaves an everyday and pragmatic posthuman utopia in which coexistence is achieved not through revolt, rather through everyday resistance to anthropocentrism, resistance to domination, resistance to binaries, and resistance to exclusion.

Conclusion:

The paper is an examination of gender, sex, and sexuality in the multispecies world as created by Becky Chambers in the novel *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet*. It argues that the selected novel reimagines the categories of identities by dismantling the traditional understanding of binary and human centered framework around biology. Grounded on Francesca Ferrando's concept of philosophical posthumanism, the study reveals a posthuman, post-anthropocentric world as imagined by Chambers.

The study further draws on Judith Butler's theoretical concept of gender performativity to analyse selected characters and identities from the novel. It attempts to analyse the manner in which categories of identity operate in the posthuman world. Characters such as Dr. Chef exist beyond the binary frameworks of sex and gender altogether. Ohan dismantles language structures and prefers using gender neutral pronouns. Sissix dismantles the assumption that biological sex structures individual identity. Rosemary, a human and a newly joined crew member, undergoes a process of unlearning rigid human socio-norms and accepts fluid identities. Lovelace becomes a subject through which gender and sex without a biological body are explored, while Jenks reconfigures masculinity through the practice of care. Accordingly, the analysis attempts to examine the dissolution of the ontological foundation of hierarchy and human essentialism. Consequently, this reframing reconstitutes a renaissance of the self and the world by reorienting social identity. Thus, a utopia is created through everyday acts of non-violent resistance, empathy, care and inclusive coexistence.

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