

Them Among Us: No Nation for the Less Equals

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This special issue focuses on the critical practices that define the concept of the *New Xenophobia*, linked as it is to the varied forms of Othering and violence in the age of neoliberalism. In the context of the ongoing economic and migrant crises in Europe, Tabish Khair pointedly contends in his book, *The New Xenophobia* (2016), that violence has become abstract. The new xenophobia is an accentuated trait of neoliberal capitalism focusing on not all immigrants, but “illegal immigrants; not all Muslims, but religious Muslims, etc. (108)

By triangulating emotive agencies that work through fear, difference, and contact/border- Khair shows how the abstraction of capital, following globalization, in recent times has paved the way for the abstraction of violence in everyday life. Although Khair's analysis of xenophobic violence is predicated on the Western gaze towards outsiders/strangers/immigrants, it is also helpful in understanding how the nexus between the state and the state-sponsored/backed capitalism can reconfigure a nationalist sentiment which may, through “modern welfare legislation” give rise to xenophobic tendencies against the constructed outsider/stranger. If unemployment is the product of industrial society, then the modern welfare legislation in those societies is determined by populist measures to redirect the anger of the unemployed youth towards strangers (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). However, the term stranger is not to be understood in its common parlance as this stranger is outside the ambit of the imagined community. The stranger could be different from the imagined closed group either in ethnicity, religion, language, colour, food habits, sexuality, or ideology. Therefore, if “vulnerability seems to follow from our being socially constituted bodies” (Butler, 2003, 20); the community that is exposed to differential treatment is also exposed to social vulnerability.

Under such xenophobic conditions, triggered as they are by a deep collusion between state and capital, the stranger is seen as a threat, and the body and individuality (visible and invisible) are “culturally and politically worked over in complicated ways” (Khair, 2016, 19). Therefore, hatred toward others and fear of the known, yet unknown, are constructed as strangers depending on how the political narrative constructs the image of the other in the discourse of Nationalism. The process is quite like the colonial discourse, as illustrated by Homi K Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* and Frantz Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Masks*, which produced a fantasised stereotyped image of the Orient. It is unsurprising to see the natives are always the object of suspicion and derision, described as weak, cunning, effeminate, trickster, licentious, profligate, and corrupt. In old xenophobia the difference was made visible as there was a direct connection between classical capitalism and labour; however, in new xenophobia, as the capital formation is devoid of its value-associated labour, its abstract nature privileges an abstract form of power that functions disparately at the national, and global level because of social and political dynamics as new capitalism is characterised by abstraction of value which is determined by powerful capitalist syndicates. As a result, the politically

controlled narratives that appear on media helps in creating abstract monsters. Nationalist sentiments are invoked to protect the sovereignty and integrity of the nation from these monsters. Therefore, narratives that help consolidate electoral votes are spawned within the framework of various forms of nationalism: ethnic, religious, and linguistic. Interestingly, when we survey the socio-political situation in the Indian subcontinent, the xenophobic sentiments are not only directed towards the internal immigrants, but also towards the victims of partition, violence and displacement within the subcontinent based on ethnic, religious, or linguistic differences. The Uyghur, Rohingya, Hazara, Kashmiri Pandit, religious minorities in specific geo-political spaces, the Blacks, the natives, the immigrants, the displaced, all become the feared stranger, the other, within a majoritarian society where they are either to be devoured or banished (what Zygmunt Bauman calls *anthropophagic* and *anthropoemic* respectively; although *anthropophagic* is a problematic concept due to several reasons).

It is against this backdrop of global xenophobia, that this special issue attempts to draw attention to the condition of the minority communities in their respective socio-political contexts across the globe. We aim to look at the literary texts and films as a critical intellectual response to xenophobia, so that while understanding the systemic penetration of xenophobia, a response can be built up in academia to identify and create dialogues on ideological frames that facilitate the growth of capitalism and new xenophobia.

Some of the relevant questions that this special issue will address are: How does the novel as a global form lead to affective witnessing? As a literary archive, what role do literature and/or movies play in the humanitarian project of worldmaking? How do we envisage evidence of the new xenophobia in literary texts/movies? In the backdrop of the new xenophobia, what then remains of our socialist project of a collective future?

Contributors are encouraged to submit proposals that seek to engage with the above-mentioned issues, asking questions that include but are not limited to:

- Neoliberalism and the New Xenophobia
- Colonizing borders
- Precarious bodies
- Abstract and slow violence in the neoliberal age
- Literature of the Global South and pedagogical tools for worldmaking
- Literature and human rights
- Ethics of bearing witness
- Testimonial literature
- Decolonial thought in the age of extractive capitalism
- Refugees and Border-Bodies

Please submit an abstract of 500 words by March 31, 2025 to deb61594@gmail.com & om_dwivedi2003@yahoo.com

Complete paper submission: December 10, 2025

The length of a particular manuscript should not be more than 10,000 words. British English and APA7 referencing style are to be followed. For more details, please refer to <https://www.spaceandculture.in/index.php/spaceandculture/about/submissions>

Work Cited:

Bhaba, H.K. (2015). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge

Butler, Judith (2003). *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. Verso.

Fanon, F. (2008). *Black Skin, White Masks*. Grove Press.

Khair, Tabish. (2016). *The New Xenophobia*. OUP

Salmela, M., & von Scheve, C. (2017). Emotional roots of right-wing political populism. *Social Science Information*, 56(4), 567-595. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018417734419>