



# THE EMERGENCE OF THE EMERGING TRENDS IN LITERATURE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: LITERATURE REVIEW

**Chetana Pokhriyal**

Associate Professor, Department of English

M.K.P. (P.G.) College, Dehradun, India

## ABSTRACT

*This paper explores emerging trends in literary research methodology, emphasizing how technological advancements and interdisciplinary approaches are transforming the field. The study highlights the role of digital humanities, which utilize tools such as text mining, computational linguistics, and digital archives to facilitate digital detailed and large-scale textual analyses. The study examines the incorporation of digital humanities, which employs tools like text mining, computational linguistics, and digital archives to enable more comprehensive and nuanced analysis of literary texts. It also explores the rise of ecocriticism and the focus on environmental themes in literature, driven by growing environmental awareness and interdisciplinary collaborations. Additionally, the paper addresses the impact of globalization on literary studies, emphasizing transnational and comparative literature approaches that consider the interconnectedness of global literary traditions. The application of quantitative methods, such as stylometry and network analysis, is discussed in terms of their ability to uncover patterns and trends across large corpora of texts, uncovering patterns and trends that traditional methods miss. Franco Moretti's 'distant reading' and Matthew Jockers' computational analyses of 19<sup>th</sup> century American literature exemplify these advancements, interdisciplinary approaches, such as cognitive literary criticism and postcolonial studies, incorporate insights from cognitive science and historical analysis to deepen literary understanding, as seen in Lisa Zunshine's exploration of Theory of Mind in literature and Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity. Quantitative methods like stylometry and network analysis offer new ways to attribute authorship and visualize narrative structures, enhancing our comprehension of literary texts through the works of scholars like John Burrows and Moretti. Ecocriticism highlights the relationship between literature and the environment, reflecting growing ecological awareness and addressing contemporary issues through speculative narratives like Kim Stanley Robinson's 'cli-fi' works. These methodologies, supported by critical theories and exemplified through specific texts, promise to deepen our insights into literary works and their broader cultural and historical contexts, showcasing the dynamic evolution of literary research in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

**Keywords:** Literary Research Methodology, Digital Humanities, Interdisciplinary Approaches, Quantitative Analysis, Ecocriticism, Distant Reading, Cognitive Literary Criticism, Postcolonial Studies, Stylometry, Network Analysis, Climate Fiction

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## **The Emergence of the Emerging Trends in Literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Literature Review**

### **Main Text**

The incredible boost to technological advancements, the explosion of internet use, revolutionized social interactions, dissemination of news, political activism and shifts, economic transformations, social movements and global changes had taken the world by storm since the turn of the millennium. There has been a marked shift in global perspectives and literatures from non-western canons emerged into prominence. The paradigm shifts in political and economic structures had led globalization to integrated economies. Moises Naim calls globalization as “diverse, broad-based and potent force” (Naím).

Sengupta defines globalization in two broad contexts which are not very far from each other as “the economic context, the other that of non-economic that broadly includes socio-cultural, historical and political dimensions of globalization.” (Sengupta) Nash identifies glocalization as an antithesis to globalization as “a global outlook tailored to local conditions” (Nash & Kate, 2000). David Hell and his coauthors defines globalization as nothing less than the “widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life.” The term globalization, coined by the economist Levitt in 1983, has a tapestry of history that started in the decade of 80s in twentieth century and gained considerable momentum in the 90s. Etymologically, globalization is derived from semantic word globe that means there is a whole world in it. The roots of globalization in literary research can be traced back to the study of the colonial and postcolonial literature. During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars began to examine the literary representations of colonialism and its aftermath, focusing on how colonial power dynamics and cultural exchanges influenced literary production. Edward Said’s seminal work, *Orientalism* (1978), was a pivotal text in this field, highlighting how Western literature often constructed and perpetuated stereotypes about the East. Postcolonial theory, with key figures as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha, further developed the analysis of literature in a global context. These scholars examined how colonial histories and power structures shaped literary texts, and how literature could serve as a site of resistance and negotiation of identity. Bhabha’s concepts of hybridity and the “third space” provided critical frameworks for understanding the complexities of cultural interactions in a globalized world.

The field of comparative literature, which emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, laid important groundwork for the globalization of literary studies. Comparative literature scholars sought the understand literature beyond national boundaries, comparing texts from different cultural and linguistic traditions. This approach encouraged a broader, more inclusive perspective on literary analysis, emphasizing the interconnectedness of global literary traditions. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of world literature gained prominence. Scholars like David Damrosch argued for a more expansive view of literary studies that includes a diverse range of texts from around the world.

Damrosch's *What is World Literature?* (2003) posited that world literature should be seen as a mode of circulation and reading, where texts gain new meanings and relevance as they move across cultural and national boundaries.

The rise of globalization theory in the social sciences and humanities during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century provided new tools and perspectives for literary research. Globalization theory examines the processes and effects of increasing interconnectedness and interdependence among nations, cultures, and economies. Key theorists such as Arjun Appadurai, with his concept of 'scapes' (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes), offered frameworks for analyzing the flows and exchanges that characterize the globalized world. These theoretical developments encouraged literary scholars to consider how globalization affects literature in terms of production, distribution, and reception. Globalization theory highlighted the dynamic and fluid nature of cultural interactions, challenging static and monolithic conceptions of national literature.

Transnational and diaspora studies emerged as important subfields within literary research, reflecting the increasing mobility and migration of people and cultures. Transnational studies focus on literary works that transcend national boundaries, exploring themes of migration, displacement, and cross-cultural encounters. Diaspora studies examine the literary expressions of diasporic communities, emphasizing the complexities of identity, belonging, and home. Key texts in these fields include Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993), which explores the transatlantic cultural exchanges among African diasporic communities, and Salman Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), which reflects on the experiences of exile and migration. These studies highlight the ways in which literature can articulate the experiences of displacement and the formation of hybrid identities.

The advent of Digital Humanities in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the most prominent trend in contemporary literary research, has significantly impacted globalization in literary research, and combines traditional literary scholarship with digital tools and methods, allowing researchers to analyze texts in new ways. Digital archives and online resources have made it access and analyze a wide range of texts from around the world. Projects such as the World Digital Library and Google Books have democratized access to literary works, facilitating comparative and transnational studies.

Recent trends in globalization and literary research have seen a growing emphasis on the global south and decolonial approaches. Scholars are increasingly attentive to the voices and perspectives of the writers from formerly colonized regions, challenging Eurocentric and Anglocentric biases in literary studies. Decolonial approaches seek to interrogate and dismantle the colonial legacies that continued to shape global literary production and reception. Walter D. Mignolo's *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (2011) critiques the epistemic dominance of Western modernity, and the collective work of scholars in Modernity/coloniality project, which explores alternative epistemologies and worldviews.

Digital Humanities combines traditional literary scholarship with digital tools and methods, allowing researchers to analyze text in new way. Franco Moretti's concept of "distant reading" involves using algorithms to analyze large corpora of texts, has been influential. Moretti argues that this approach can reveal patterns and trends that are not visible through close reading alone (Moretti, 2013). For example, Moretti's work on the evolution of the novel uses distant reading to map the rise and fall of various genres across different cultures and time periods. This method has been applied to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, exploring its numerous adaptations and their cultural context through digital analysis (Moretti, 2013). The Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon (DSBC) project aims to digitize and make accessible the vast corpus of Buddhist texts in Sanskrit, provides scholars with searchable texts, enabling detailed textual analysis and comparative studies.

The GRETIL (Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages) database offers vast collection of electronic texts in various Indian languages, including Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit, facilitates the study of classical Indian Literature by providing digital versions of texts. Text mining, computational linguistics, stylometry, examination of word frequency, sentence structure, and other stylistic elements of Mahabharata and Ramayana can help explore recurring themes and motifs, authorship, stylistic features, textual transmission and differences between various sections and contributions in these classical epics. Researchers have used Natural Language Processing Technique (NLP) to study and analyze the grammatical structures in Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* offering deeper insights into ancient Sanskrit grammar. The Digital Library of India (DLI) has made it possible to compare various manuscript versions of the *Rigveda*, shedding light on its transmission and preservation. Tools like Gephi and Cytoscape allow researchers to create and analyze networks based on textual data, revealing patterns and structures that are not immediately apparent through traditional reading. By locating locations in *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* on Geographic Information System (GIS), researchers can study the spatial dimensions of these narratives.

The use of digital archives and databases has also revolutionized literary research. Projects like Project Gutenberg, Hathi Trust, and the Digital Public Library of America provide access to vast collection of texts, facilitating large-scale comparative studies. Moreover, text mining and computational linguistics enable researchers to uncover linguistic patterns, thematic trends, and historical changes across extensive datasets (Jockers, 2013). Matthew Jockers' *Microanalysis* demonstrates how computational methods can be used to analyze thematic trends in 19<sup>th</sup> century American literature, offering new insights into works like Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*.

Another significant trend is the increasing integration of interdisciplinary approached in literary studies. Scholars are drawing on insights from fields such as sociology, psychology, history, and cultural studies to enrich their analyses. This trend reflects a broader movement towards interdisciplinarity in the humanities and social sciences.

Cognitive literary criticism, for example, examines how literature engages the mind and the emotions. Lisa Zunshine's work on *Why we Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and Novel* exemplifies this approach, exploring more readers understanding characters' mental states (Zunshine, 2006). Zunshine's analysis of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* highlights how Woolf's narrative techniques evoke readers' empathetic responses by closely depicting characters' psychological experiences.

Postcolonial studies, informed but historical and socio-political analysis, offer another vital interdisciplinary perspective. Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity and the "third space" provide critical frameworks for examining texts that cultural boundaries. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* is a key example, as it portrays postcolonial identity and historical consciousness through a narrative that intertwines postcolonial identity and historical consciousness through the narrative that intertwines personal and national histories (Bhabha, 1994). This approach illuminates how literature can reflect and shape cultural identities and historical narratives.

Quantitative narratives in literary research intersects significantly with digital humanities, employing techniques such as stylometry, network analysis, and corpus linguistics. Quantitative analysis in literature involved with the application of statistical, computational, and mathematical techniques to study literary texts. This approach has evolved over time, influenced by various historical, technological, and theoretical developments. Although, the origins of quantitative analysis can be traced back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the advent of stylometry, but pioneers like Augustus de Morgan and T.C. Mendenhall laid the groundwork for this field by exploring statistical methods to literary style.

Mendenhall's work on word-length distributions, for example, suggested that different authors have distinct statistical patterns in their writing, which could be used for authorship attribution (Mendenhall, 1887). The mid 20<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of the use of computers in humanities research. A pivotal figure in this era was Robert Busa, an Italian Jesuit priest, who collaborated with IBM to create the concordance of Thomas Aquina's works. This project known as the Index Thomisticus, was one of the first significant uses of computational methods in the humanities and demonstrated the potential of computers to handle large textual databases (Busa, 1980). The theoretical movements of structuralism and formalism during this period also influenced the adoption of the quantitative methods. Structuralism, led by Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Levi-Strauss, emphasized the systematic study of underlying structures in texts, akin to linguistic systems. This approach encouraged a more scientific and methodical analysis of literature, setting the stage for quantitative methodologies.

Russian Formalism, with key figures like Viktor Shlovsky and Boris Eichenbaum, focused on the formal properties of literary texts and the systematic study of literary devices. This emphasis on the mechanics of storytelling and structures of texts further reinforced the potential for applying quantitative techniques to literary analysis. The late 20<sup>th</sup> century saw significant advancements in computational technology and the rise of digital humanities. The creation of the digital text archives like Project Gutenberg, founded in 1971, and the development of text analysis software provided researchers with new tools for large-scale literary analysis. These digital resources made it possible to conduct extensive quantitative studies that were previously impractical. Franco's Moretti's concept of 'distant reading' emerged during this period, highlighting the potential of using computational tools to analyze large corpora of texts. Distant reading involves using algorithms to identify patterns and trends across many texts, offering a microscopic view of literary history and genre evolution that complements traditional close reading (Moretti, 2013).

Advancements in statistical methods during this period further enhanced the capabilities of quantitative literary analysis. John Burrow's "Delta Method" for stylometric analysis, which measures the stylistic distance between texts, became a widely used tool for authorship attribution and study of the literary device (Burrows, 2002). These methods allowed for more precise and objective analyses of textual features, contributing to the growing acceptance of quantitative approaches in literary studies. Stylometry, for example, is used to attribute disputed works to particular authors by analyzing stylistic fingerprints. John Burrow's work on Jane Austen's novels demonstrates how stylometric techniques can distinguish her unique narrative style from those of her contemporaries (Burrows, 1987). Network analysis which maps relationships between characters, themes, or texts, provide another quantitative tool. Franco Moretti's network analysis of Shakespeare's plays reveals the complex interplay of characters and social dynamics within the texts, offering a structural understanding of the narrative and thematic development (Moretti, 2011). This method allows scholars to visualize and analyze the interconnectedness of literary elements in ways that traditional close reading cannot.

The early 21<sup>st</sup> century saw the continued expansion of digital humanities and the increasing integration of interdisciplinary approaches in literary research. Collaboration with fields such as linguistics, computer science, and information science brought new methodologies and perspectives to literary studies. This interdisciplinary approach enriched the field, leading to innovative research questions and methods. Technological advancements in natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning further expanded the toolkit available for quantitative literary analysis. Tools for sentiment analysis, topic modelling, and network analysis enabled researchers to uncover deeper patterns in texts, such as thematic trends, emotional tones, and the relationships between characters or concepts.

In the recent years, the field of quantitative analysis has been profoundly influenced by the rise of big data and advances in computational analysis. The availability of large digital corpora and powerful computational tools has enabled more sophisticated and comprehensive studies of literary texts. Projects like Google Books Ngram Viewer, which allows researchers to analyze the frequency of words and phrases over time across millions of books, exemplify the potential of big data for literary research. These tools enable researchers to explore long-term trends and patterns in literary history on an unprecedented scale. The development of advanced machine learning algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI) has also opened new frontiers for quantitative literary analysis. Techniques such as deep learning have been used to analyze complex textual features and generate new forms of literary criticism. For example, AI models can be trained to identify and analyze narrative structures, genre conventions, and stylistic elements across large corpora of texts.

The trajectory of quantitative analysis in literary research has been shaped by a series of technological advancements, theoretical developments, and interdisciplinary collaborations over the past century. From the early efforts in stylometry and computational linguistics to the rise of digital humanities and the integration of big data and AI, quantitative methods have increasingly become an essential part of literary studies. These developments have enriched the field, providing new tools and perspectives for understanding literary texts and their broader cultural and historical contexts.

Ecocriticism has emerged as a significant field within literary studies, focusing on the relationship between literature and the environment. This development has been driven by growing environmental awareness, the urgency of addressing ecological issues through cultural narratives, interdisciplinary collaborations, and evolving theoretical frameworks. Cheryll Glotfelty, a pioneer in ecocriticism, emphasizes its interdisciplinary nature, drawing on ecology, biology and environmental science (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). The roots of ecocriticism can be traced back to the Romantic era of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which saw a heightened appreciation of nature and its representation in literature. Romantic poets like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge emphasized the beauty and spiritual significance of the natural world. Their works often reflected a deep connection with nature and a response to the industrialization of society. Wordsworth's lines "Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" (1798) is a quintessential example, celebrating the restorative power of nature.

Similarly, the American Transcendentalists, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, contributed to early environmental thought through their writings. Thoreau's *Walden* is a foundational text that explores themes of simple living, self-sufficiency, and deep observation of the natural world. The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century environmental movement significantly influenced the development of ecocriticism. Books like Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) highlighted the detrimental impacts of human activity on the environment, raising public awareness and inspiring environmental activism. This period saw an increasing recognition of the need to address environmental issues, which began to be reflected in academic discourse. In the decade of the 70s and 80s, scholars began to explore the intersections between literature and the environment more systematically. The early academic interest was driven by a growing recognition of environmental consciousness. Key works during the period include Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* (1964), which examines the tension between pastoral ideals and technological progress in American literature. However, the 1990s marked the formal emergence of ecocriticism as a distinct field within literary studies. Several key publications and institutional developments played a crucial role in establishing ecocriticism.

The publication of *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, was a seminal moment. This anthology brought together foundational essays that defined the scope and aims of ecocriticism, providing a theoretical and methodological framework for the field. Cheryll Glotfelty's work was particularly influential in advocating for ecocriticism as a legitimate area of academic inquiry. She emphasized the need for literary scholars to address environmental issues and consider the ways in which literature reflects and shapes human relationships with the natural world.

The establishment of professional organizations and academic journals further solidified the field. The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE), founded in 1992, provided a platform for scholars to share research and collaborate on ecocritical projects. The journal *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, first published in 1993, became a key venue for the dissemination of ecocritical scholarship. The early 2000s saw the expansion and diversification of ecocriticism, with scholars incorporating global perspectives and interdisciplinary approaches. This period was characterized by an increasing recognition of the interconnectedness of environmental issues and the need for a more inclusive and holistic approach.

Global perspectives brought attention to the ways in which different cultures and literatures engage with environmental themes. For example, postcolonial ecocriticism examined the environmental impacts of colonialism and the ways in which indigenous literatures reflect ecological knowledge and resistance. Key texts during this period include Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), which explores the gradual and often invisible forms of environmental degradation that disproportionately affect marginalized communities. Interdisciplinary collaborations with fields such as environmental science, geography, and anthropology enriched ecocritical research. These collaborations facilitated a deeper understanding of the complex interactions between human societies and the natural world. Ecocritics began to draw on scientific concepts and methods to analyze literary texts, exploring themes such as climate change, biodiversity, and sustainability.

In the recent years, ecocriticism has continued to evolve, addressing contemporary environmental challenges and embracing new technologies. The rise of climate fiction (cli-fi) as a genre reflects the growing public and academic interest in climate change, explores the cultural and psychological dimensions of climate change through speculative narratives. Novels like Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Ministry of the Future* (2020) and Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* (2009) exemplify cli-fi, envisioning future scenarios, shaped by climate change and exploring socio-political responses to environmental crisis (Trexler, 2015). Such texts illustrate how literature can engage with contemporary ecological issues, offering imaginative scenarios to imagine sustainable futures and ethical reflections.

Digital ecocriticism has emerged as another significant trend, leveraging digital tools and media to study the representation of environmental issues. Digital archives, GIS mapping, and data visualization technique have opened new avenues for ecocritical research, allowing scholars to analyze large corpora of texts and analyze environmental data in innovative ways.

Ecofeminism and environmental justice have become important areas within ecocriticism, highlighting the intersections between gender, class, and environmental issues. Ecofeminist scholars like Greta Gaard and Val Plumwood have examined the links between the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women, advocating for an integrative approach to environmental and social justice. Environmental justice ecocriticism addresses the unequal distribution of environmental harms and benefits, focusing on the experiences and perspectives of marginalized communities. This approach emphasizes the need for equitable solutions to environmental problems and the inclusion of diverse voices in environmental discourse.

The rise of ecocriticism in literary research methodology has been shaped by a confluence of historical, theoretical, and technological developments. From early environmental awareness and the Romantic appreciation of nature to the formalization of ecocriticism in the 1990s and its subsequent expansion and diversification, the field has continually evolved to address pressing environmental issues. Recent trends such as climate fiction, digital ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and environmental justice highlight the ongoing relevance and adaptability of ecocriticism in understanding the complex relationships between literature, culture, and the environment.

The methodologies employed in the literary research are becoming increasingly diverse and sophisticated, reflecting broader academic and societal changes. Digital humanities, interdisciplinary approaches, quantitative analysis and ecocriticism are among the most notable emerging trends, each offering new tools and perspectives for understanding literature. These methodologies, supported by critical theories are exemplified through specific texts, promise to deepen our insights into literary works and their broader, cultural and historical contexts.

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