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Patriarchal Corruption and Familial Disintegration: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Paternal Moral Failures in Contemporary Global Fiction

A B S T R A C T

This article examines representations of corrupted father figures in contemporary global fiction through close readings of four novels from different cultural traditions, Christos Tsiolkas's The Slap (Australia), Joseph Boyden's The Orenda (Canada), Keri Hulme's The Bone People (New Zealand), and Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger (India). Through a comparative approach grounded in postcolonial theory and family systems analysis, the study looks at how these texts show moral and societal corruption within family structures across different cultural contexts. The analysis shows how these stories challenge traditional patriarchal authority while at the same time exposing the social and cultural factors that lead to such paternal failures. This article adds to the literature on literary representations of fatherhood by showing how contemporary global fiction deals with universal themes of family problems through culturally specific forms, finally showing both the particularity and universality of patriarchal corruption across different societies.

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الأب الفاسد وتفكك الأسرة: تحليل متعدد الثقافات للإخفاقات الأخلاقية في الأدب العالمي المعاصر

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الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث تمثيل شخصيات الآباء الفاسدين في الأدب العالمي المعاصر من خلال قراءات تحليلية لأربع روايات تنتمي إلى خلفيات ثقافية مختلفة، وهي: الصفعة لكريستوس تسيولكاس (أستراليا)، الأورندا لجوزيف بويدن (كندا)، أناس العظام لكيري هولم (نيوزيلندا)، والنمر الأبيض لأرافيند أديغا (الهند). يعتمد البحث على إطار مقارن يجمع بين نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار وتحليل النظم الأسرية، مع التركيز على كيف تجسد هذه الروايات الفساد الأخلاقي والمجتمعي للأب داخل بنى أسرية مضطربة عبر سياقات اجتماعية متنوعة. من خلال تحليل هذه النصوص، يكشف البحث كيف تتحدى هذه السرديات السلطة الأبوية التقليدية وتستعرض العوامل الثقافية والاجتماعية التي تساهم في إخفاقات الآباء. يهدف هذا البحث إلى تعزيز الفهم الأكاديمي حول التمثيل الأدبي للأبوة، ويعرض كيف يتناول الأدب المعاصر موضوعات الخلل الأسري في سياقات ثقافية متعددة، مما يكشف عن الخصوصية والعالمية في الفساد الأبوي عبر المجتمعات المتنوعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الفساد الأبوي، شخصيات الآباء، تفكك الأسرة، الثقافة، أدب ما بعد الاستعمار، الإخفاق الأخلاقي.

1. Introduction

The father figure has long played a many-sided role in world literature, representing authority, protection, guidance, and, when morally corrupted, the potential for serious harm to both families and societies. The institution of patriarchy has come increasingly under question in contemporary world literature alongside its representations of family arrangements in different cultural contexts. The present study considers four novels from different cultural traditions: Tsiolkas's *The Slap* (Australia, 2008), Boyden's *The Orenda* (Canada, 2013), Hulme's *The Bone People* (New Zealand, 1984), and Adiga's *The White Tiger* (India, 2008). These were chosen for their depiction of corrupted father figures and their associated effect on family relationships and broader social structures.

These novels, forming a comparative study, question the institution of patriarchy and its potential for moral failure. The premise of Connell (2005), which forms the basis of the theoretical framework for this study, is that in terms of masculinities, patriarchal institutions are culturally particular and historically dependent, rather than uniform or unchanging. As Mac an Ghaill (1996:84) refers to as there is not one masculinity, but many different masculinities, each associated with different positions of power. Each book is examined in turn to evaluate the corruption of paternal authority within its own cultural context while also dealing with universal issues such as power, responsibility, and moral compromise.

By combining textual analysis with comparative cultural studies, each text is situated within its specific historical and cultural context while identifying points of convergence and divergence in their representations of paternal corruption. This comparative approach allows

for a detailed understanding of how modern global fiction deals with questions of patriarchy, moral failure, and family breakdown. According to Damrosch (2003: 281), "World literature functions not as a canon of texts but as a mode of reading."

2. Theoretical Framework

The present study draws on various theoretical traditions in its examination of how corrupted fatherhood is represented across differing cultural contexts. First, feminist theories of patriarchy, particularly Connell's (2005) concept of "hegemonic masculinity" provide a framework for understanding how paternal authority becomes corrupted through its connection with broader systems of male dominance. Second, postcolonial theory, especially as expressed by Bhabha (1994) and Spivak (1999), offer analytical tools for looking at how the legacy of colonialism affect family structures and paternal authority. Finally, family systems theory, particularly in terms of Bowen (1978) on family dysfunction, provides insights into how corrupted father figures impact broader family relationships and intergenerational relationships. Armengol-Carrera (2008) has examined how modern fiction depicts the "crisis of fatherhood" in Western contexts, while Visser and van den Heuvel-Disler (2017) have explored representations of fatherhood in postcolonial literature.

Key to this theoretical framework is an understanding of corruption not only as personal moral failure but as a widespread decline that comes from the meeting of personal choices with broader community and societal forces. According to Rose (2018: 78), "Corruption in literary representations often functions as both metaphor and metonym - signifying both personal moral compromise and systemic social decay." This dual understanding of corruption guides the analysis of father figures in the selected books, looking at how their moral failures both reflect and contribute to broader patterns of societal dysfunction.

3. Thematic Analysis of the Cross-Cultural Texts

This section offers brief synopses of the selected novels together with thematic analyses centered on patriarchal corruption. The aim is to lay the foundation for exploring cross-cultural representations of unsuccessful fatherhood across varied cultural backgrounds and geographical settings. The analysis maintains a purely thematic orientation, examining how paternal moral failures manifest across different contexts.

3.1 Harry's Paternal Corruption in Tsiolkas's *The Slap*

Tsiolkas's *The Slap* takes place in suburban Melbourne, focusing on a single incident at a backyard barbecue where Harry, a successful Greek-Australian businessman, slaps another parent's child who was threatening his son with a cricket bat. This action splits the attendees and the broader community, showing underlying tensions in contemporary Australian society. The plot unfolds through eight different viewpoints, each showing complex reactions to the incident and exposing the fault lines in Australian suburban life: gender dynamics, racial tensions, class divisions, and generational conflicts. Harry represents a traditional form of hypermasculine authority that gets increasingly challenged in contemporary Australia. His marriage to Sandi gets shown to be troubled by his infidelity, and his relationship with his

son is based on fear-making rather than emotional connection. The novel explores how patriarchal authority works as both a source of stability and oppression in multicultural Australian society, while questioning the moral foundations of middle-class suburban life.

Tsiolkas's *The Slap* presents a multilayered examination of paternal corruption in contemporary Australian society through the character of Harry, whose violent act, slapping another parent's child at a suburban barbecue, serves as the novel's catalytic incident. Harry embodies what Connell (2005) terms "hegemonic masculinity" in its particularly Australian manifestation: financially successful, physically dominant, and unapologetically assertive of his patriarchal authority within both family and social circles. Yet the novel systematically reveals how this performance of masculine authority masks profound moral corruption.

Harry's patriarchal corruption mainly shows through his involvement in violence. “Harry was convinced that it was his very masculinity that was being questioned” (p. 87) when others challenge his right to physically discipline a child. Such a defensive stance illustrates the way Harry's idea of fatherhood is closely tied to the use of physical power, a connection the novel repeatedly questions. The slap itself becomes what Bourdieu (1990) would call a "structuring structure," both revealing and reinforcing patterns of patriarchal authority that exist in Australian suburban life.

Tsiolkas places Harry's corrupted fatherhood within the specific cultural context of Greek Australian identity. Per Papastergiadis (2016: 124), “Tsiolkas's fiction consistently explores how migrant masculinities negotiate between traditional patriarchal values and contemporary Australian social norms.” Harry's violence partly arises from this cultural liminality and is seen as his attempt to assert a traditional patriarchal authority increasingly challenged in modern Australia. His father, Manolis, embodies an older model of migrant fatherhood marked by stoicism and unquestioned authority, while Harry's more volatile assertion of patriarchal power suggests the corruption that happens when traditional authority structures become destabilized without being replaced by more equitable models.

The consequences of Harry's corrupted fatherhood extend beyond his immediate family to affect the larger social circle shown in the novel. Through the alternating perspectives of eight different characters, Tsiolkas shows how Harry's violent assertion of patriarchal authority causes ripple effects throughout the community, making others face their own involvement in systems of violence and domination. Dimitriadis (2012: 67) notes that “The Slap uses its multiple narrative perspectives to reveal how patriarchal corruption infects not just individual families but entire social networks.”

Harry’s corruption as a father figure represents what Connell (2005) describes as the "patriarchal dividend" the advantages men receive from maintaining an unequal gender order. Yet Tsiolkas reveals how this dividend comes at a significant cost, not only to those subjected to patriarchal authority but to patriarchs themselves. Harry's marriage is revealed to be fundamentally dishonest (he maintains an affair throughout), his relationship with his son is based on intimidation rather than genuine connection, and his social standing is maintained through performances of masculinity that ultimately leave him isolated. This portrayal aligns with what Flood (2019) identifies as a recurring theme in contemporary Australian fiction: "the hollow victory of patriarchal authority in late capitalist society." (p. 43).

3.2 Christophe's Corrupted Mission in Boyden's *The Orenda*

Meanwhile, Boyden's *The Orenda*, set in 17th-century Canada (present-day Ontario), tells the story of interactions between Indigenous peoples and European colonizers through three narrators: Bird, a Huron warrior who has lost his family; Snow Falls, the young Iroquois girl he adopts after killing her family; and Christophe, a French Jesuit missionary. The story follows their connected lives against the backdrop of conflict between the Huron and Iroquois nations, made more complex by French colonial expansion. Christophe's mission to convert the Huron to Christianity shows the religious excuse for colonization, while his genuine but misguided belief in his spiritual duty shows the complex moral position of colonial agents. The book openly shows the violence of both Indigenous warfare and European colonization, ending in the destruction of the Huron settlements. Christophe acts throughout as a father figure whose religious and colonial agenda basically corrupts his capacity to provide real paternal guidance, despite his sincere belief in his mission of spiritual salvation.

The Orenda presents a different manifestation of paternal corruption through the character of Christophe, a Jesuit missionary in 17th-century Canada whose religious and colonial agenda corrupts his potential as a father figure to both his biological children and the Indigenous individuals he seeks to convert. Unlike Harry in *The Slap*, whose corruption manifests through physical violence within a domestic context, Christophe's corruption operates on multiple levels; personal, religious, and colonial, making him a complex embodiment of what Ashcroft et al. (2002) term "colonial paternalism".

Christophe's paternal corruption begins with his fundamental misconception of his role among the Indigenous peoples he encounters. As Boyden writes, "He saw himself as father to these people, these children who knew not what they did" (p. 142). Such an infantilizing perspective, characteristic of what Memmi (1965) identifies as the "colonizer who refuses" to acknowledge Indigenous autonomy, underlies Christophe's corrupted fatherhood. His paternal role is fundamentally compromised by his inability to recognize the agency and wisdom of those he seeks to guide, resulting in what Spivak (1999) terms "epistemic violence", or the imposition of European knowledge systems that delegitimize Indigenous ways of knowing.

The corrupting influence of colonial ideology on Christophe's paternal potential is particularly evident in his relationship with Snow Falls, the Iroquois girl adopted by Bird, a Huron warrior. While Christophe genuinely believes he is offering spiritual salvation, his inability to recognize the validity of Indigenous spiritual practices reveals the fundamental corruption at the heart of his paternal mission. As McKegney (2014) argues, "Boyden's portrayal of Christophe reveals how colonial paternalism justifies cultural destruction through the language of spiritual salvation" (p. 89).

Boyden's narrative technique, which alternates between the perspectives of Christophe, Bird, and Snow Falls, allows readers to witness the devastating consequences of Christophe's corrupted fatherhood from multiple vantage points. While Christophe believes he is bringing salvation, Bird and Snow Falls experience his paternal mission as fundamentally destructive to their way of life and spiritual traditions. This narrative structure embodies what Bhabha

(1994) terms the "ambivalence of colonial discourse", revealing how colonial paternalism simultaneously claims to nurture and fundamentally damages those it claims to protect.

It is the historical dimension that distinguish the depictions of paternal corruption as portrayed in the two books by Boyden and Tsiolkas. Christophe represents not just individual moral failure but an entire historical project of colonial paternalism that continues to impact Indigenous communities in contemporary Canada. As Justice (2018) observes, "*The Orenda* connects historical patterns of corrupted fatherhood to ongoing trauma in Indigenous communities, revealing the intergenerational consequences of colonial paternalism." (p. 112) This historical dimension makes Christophe's corruption both more profound and more systemic than Harry's in *The Slap*, suggesting that paternal corruption operates differently across historical and cultural contexts.

3.3 Joe's Paradoxical Fatherhood in Hulme's *The Bone People*

The plot of Hulme's *The Bone People*, centers on the interconnected lives of three damaged people in New Zealand: Kerewin Holmes, a part-Maori artist who lives in self-chosen isolation; Joe Gillayley, a widowed Maori factory worker; and Simon Peter, Joe's adopted mute son who survived a mysterious shipwreck. The book revolves around their complex relationships, particularly Joe's physically abusive but emotionally devoted relationship with Simon. After a particularly severe beating leaves Simon hospitalized, the three characters separate but eventually come back together through a process involving Maori spiritual traditions. The book explores themes of isolation, violence, communication, and cultural identity in post-colonial New Zealand. Joe represents a deeply compromised father figure whose love for his adopted son is genuine but expressed through patterns of violence that reflect his own trauma and cultural dislocation. The book finally suggests the possibility of healing through community and cultural reconnection rather than through traditional nuclear family structures.

The Bone People presents perhaps the most complex portrayal of corrupted fatherhood among the selected texts through the character of Joe Gillayley, a Maori man raising his adoptive son Simon in contemporary New Zealand. Joe's paternal corruption manifests through his physical abuse of Simon, yet Hulme resists simplistic moral condemnation by contextualizing this violence within Joe's experience of cultural dislocation and personal loss. Knudsen (2004) supports this by stating, "Hulme's portrayal of Joe represents the paradox of a father figure whose love and violence are inextricably intertwined" (p. 56).

Joe's corrupted fatherhood originates from what Durix (1987) identifies as "the intersection of personal trauma and cultural dispossession" (p. 132). Having lost both his wife and biological child, Joe adopts Simon, a mysterious mute boy who survives a shipwreck. Their relationship becomes the site of profound ambivalence; Joe simultaneously loves Simon deeply and subjects him to brutal physical abuse. As Hulme writes, "He loved the child, but he was also puzzled by him, sometimes infuriated by him, and occasionally, just occasionally mind, frightened of him" (p. 87). This ambivalence suggests that Joe's paternal corruption stems not from the absence of love but from the inability to express that love constructively within the context of his own trauma and cultural dislocation.

Unlike the father figures in *The Slap* and *The Orenda*, whose corruption manifests primarily through their assertion of patriarchal authority, Joe's corruption emerges paradoxically from his vulnerability. Keown (2005) observes that "Joe's violence toward Simon stems not from patriarchal entitlement but from profound insecurity about his ability to protect and nurture his adopted son" (p. 78). This distinction reveals how paternal corruption can manifest differently depending on the father's position within broader power structures; Joe's marginalized status as a Maori man in postcolonial New Zealand shapes his particular form of paternal failure.

Hulme situates Joe's corrupted fatherhood within the specific context of Maori cultural identity in contemporary New Zealand. Joe's violence toward Simon represents what Ihimaera (2000) terms "the broken fatherhood of colonized men". Paternal relationships damaged by the intergenerational trauma of colonial dispossession (p. 45). Hulme nonetheless resists the reduction of Joe to a mere symbol of postcolonial trauma, instead creating a character whose paternal failures and potential redemption remain deeply personal even as they connect to broader historical patterns.

What distinguishes Hulme's portrayal of paternal corruption is her emphasis on the possibility of healing. While all four texts examine how fathers fail their children, *The Bone People* uniquely charts a path toward potential redemption through the intervention of Kerewin Holmes, an artist who forms a complex bond with both Joe and Simon. As Beston (1984) claims, "Hulme ultimately suggests that corrupted fatherhood can be redeemed not through patriarchal self-sufficiency but through new forms of communal responsibility" (p. 92). This redemptive element introduces an important nuance to the portrayal of paternal corruption, suggesting that such corruption, while devastating, need not be definitive.

3.4 Paternal Abandonment in Adiga's *The White Tiger*

Finally, Adiga's *The White Tiger* is in the form of as a series of letters from Balram Halwai to the Chinese Premier, in which Balram tells his rise from poverty in rural India to becoming a successful entrepreneur in Bangalore. Born in the poor village of Laxmangarh, Balram's early life gets marked by lack of basic needs and the early death of his father, a rickshaw puller who dies from tuberculosis without proper medical care. Balram becomes a driver for a wealthy family in Delhi, where he sees the corruption built into Indian society and the sharp divide between the privileged and the servants. Eventually, Balram murders his employer, steals money meant as a political bribe, and escapes to Bangalore to start his own business. The book offers a harsh criticism of class inequality in contemporary India, looking at how the caste system, corruption, and economic exploitation trap the poor in what Balram calls "the Rooster Coop" of servitude. Balram's father represents paternal failure through structural abandonment - his early death and inability to protect his son result not from personal moral failings but from his victimization by systems of class exploitation.

The White Tiger presents a distinct manifestation of paternal corruption through the character of Balram Halwai's father, a rickshaw puller whose premature death and failure to protect his son from exploitation represent what Gopal (2009) terms "the structural abandonment endemic to subaltern fatherhood in contemporary India" (p. 67). Unlike the father figures in

the other selected texts, who actively perpetrate harm through their presence, Balram's father represents corruption through absence; a failure to fulfill the paternal role due to his own victimization by systems of oppression.

Adiga's portrayal of Balram's father connects paternal corruption to broader systems of class exploitation in contemporary India. As Balram narrates, "My father's body had been wrapped in a tough, white cloth and half burned, then dumped into the river like the body of some animal. That was the way, traditionally, the bodies of the poor were disposed of" (p. 15). This unceremonious disposal symbolizes what Spivak (1999) terms "the dispensability of subaltern bodies" under neoliberal capitalism, a dispensability that fundamentally compromises the ability of men like Balram's father to fulfill traditional paternal roles of protection and provision.

What distinguishes Adiga's portrayal of paternal corruption from the other selected texts is its explicit connection to economic systems rather than individual moral failures. As Schotland (2011) observes, "*The White Tiger* presents paternal failure not as individual moral corruption but as the inevitable consequence of a system that structurally undermines the capacity for effective fatherhood among the poor." (p. 123) This systemic perspective expands understanding of paternal corruption beyond personal moral failure to encompass structural conditions that make successful fatherhood virtually impossible for men in certain social positions.

Adiga's narrative technique can be viewed as a series of letters from Balram to the Chinese Premier that allows for a sardonic critique of how economic systems corrupt not only individual fathers but the very concept of paternal care. As Balram observes of his village, "A rich man's body is like a premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank. Ours are different. My father's spine was a knotted rope, the kind that women use in villages to pull water from wells." (p. 26) This corporeal comparison highlights how class position literally shapes paternal bodies, compromising their capacity to embody traditional paternal strength and protection.

The consequences of this paternal corruption through structural abandonment are profound for Balram, who must navigate a social landscape devoid of effective paternal guidance. As Mendes (2010) argues, "Balram's moral corruption, his eventual murder of his employer, stems directly from the absence of ethical guidance that his father's premature death and prior exploitation created." (p. 78) This connection between paternal absence and moral disorientation suggests that corrupted fatherhood creates intergenerational patterns of ethical compromise, a theme that resonates across all four novels despite their distinct cultural contexts.

4. Patterns of Paternal Corruption Across Cultural Contexts

The examination of paternal figures carries significant analytical weight. A consistent pattern across the novels reveals that literary representations of corrupted fatherhood frequently operate as what Jameson (1981) calls "socially symbolic acts," using individual character studies to expose broader social contradictions. Jameson (1981:237) amplifies Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900) through its treatment of paternal authority: between the dramatic

Patna episode and Jim's subsequent romantic adventures in Patusan, the father-figure Stein wields influence and interests that allow him to position the stigmatized Jim for a final reckoning with destiny.

Therefore, these books together show how corrupted fatherhood impacts not only children but entire communities. In *The Slap*, Harry's violence spreads through his suburban community; in *The Orenda*, Christophe's colonial paternalism contributes to cultural genocide; in *The Bone People*, Joe's abuse of Simon disrupts potential community formation; and in *The White Tiger*, the structural absence of effective fatherhood contributes to broader social dysfunction. This community impact suggests that literary representations of paternal corruption often connect family dysfunction to societal breakdown, challenging artificial distinctions between private and public spheres.

Secondly, these books together show how paternal corruption appears differently depending on the father's position within power structures. Harry's corruption in *The Slap* comes from his relative privilege within Australian society; Christophe's in *The Orenda* stems from his position as a colonial agent; Joe's in *The Bone People* reflects his marginalized status in postcolonial New Zealand; and Balram's father's failure in *The White Tiger* results from his extreme powerlessness within India's class hierarchy. This difference suggests that literary representations of corrupted fatherhood are sensitive to how power differences shape the specific appearances of paternal moral failure.

Third, these texts together show the intergenerational consequences of paternal corruption. In each book, children bear the weight of their fathers' moral failures, but they also develop coping strategies that sometimes continue patterns of corruption. This intergenerational dimension suggests that literary representations of corrupted fatherhood often engage with what Abraham and Torok (1994) term "the transgenerational phantom" the unconscious transmission of unresolved trauma across generational boundaries.

Finally, these books together suggest that corrupted fatherhood, while devastating, need not be final. *The Bone People* is the most explicit in the way it charts a path toward potential healing, while each text contains moments where alternative models of care and nurturing emerge to balance paternal corruption. This restorative element suggests that contemporary world literature, while direct in its criticism of patriarchal failures, often imagines possibilities for repair and reconciliation beyond corrupted models of fatherhood.

4.1 Shared Ideologies and Character Patterns

This analytical study brings about a set of shared ideological frameworks, including but not limited to the following:

Patriarchy as Structural Force: All four novels show patriarchy not just as individual male control but as a systematic social arrangement that shapes institutions, relationships, and identities. In *The Slap*, patriarchy appears through suburban Australian masculinity; in *The Orenda*, through colonial religious authority; in *The Bone People*, through post-colonial Maori gender relations; and in *The White Tiger*, through caste-affected class hierarchies.

Post-Colonial Tensions: While working in different historical moments, all four books engage with the aftermath of colonialism. Tsiolkas looks at how migration changes patriarchal authority in multicultural Australia; Boyden shows the initial colonial encounter and its devastating impact; Hulme explores how colonial trauma shapes contemporary Maori masculinity; and Adiga looks at how colonial legacies continue in the economic structures of post-independence India's.

Criticism of Violence as Masculine Expression: Each book looks at how violence becomes a primary way of masculine expression when patriarchal authority gets threatened or compromised. Harry's slap, Christophe's participation in colonial violence, Joe's abuse of Simon, and the structural violence that claims Balram's father all represent different ways of how violence sustains patriarchal power and strengthens it while finally undermining its legitimacy.

Economic Systems as Shapers of Paternal Capacity: All four books connect fathers' moral compromises to their economic positions. Harry's wealth helps his sense of entitlement; Christophe's religious mission gets mixed with French economic colonization; Joe's frustrations partly stem from his marginalized economic status; and Balram's father gets is compromised by his situation of extreme poverty.

4.2 Character Patterns and Parallels

The analytical study reveals a set of the following shared patterns and parallels:

The Corrupted Authority Figure: Each book presents a father whose authority gets compromised by moral failing, though in different forms. Harry's authority gets corrupted by his use of violence; Christophe's by his colonial blindness; Joe's by his inability to process trauma; and Balram's fathers by his structural powerlessness. These characters together show how patriarchal authority becomes corrupted across different cultural contexts.

The Vulnerable Child: In each story, children bear the consequences of paternal corruption. Harry's son sees his father's violence; Indigenous children get subjected to Christophe's cultural imperialism; Simon suffers physical abuse from Joe; and Balram must navigate life without paternal protection. These characters show the intergenerational impact of corrupted fatherhood.

Female Witnesses and Potential Healers: Each novel includes significant female characters who witness and respond to paternal corruption. In *The Slap*, Rosie and several other women challenge Harry's action; in *The Orenda*, Snow Falls observes Christophe's colonial paternalism with scepticism; in *The Bone People*, Kerewin Holmes intervenes in Joe and Simon's destructive relationship; and in *The White Tiger*, Balram's grandmother represents an alternative source of family authority after his father's death.

Community as Context and Witness: All four novels situate paternal corruption within broader community contexts that both enable and judge fathers' moral failures. The suburban barbecue attendees in *The Slap*; the Huron community in *The Orenda*; the extended Maori community in *The Bone People*; and the village and servant communities in *The White Tiger*

all serve as collective witnesses to paternal failure while sometimes perpetuating the conditions that make such failure likely.

The Son Who Must Transcend: Each novel depicts sons who must ultimately find ways to surpass their fathers' limitations. Harry's son must potentially develop a different model of masculinity; the Indigenous youth in *The Orenda* must navigate between traditional and imposed religious systems; Simon must heal from Joe's abuse; and Balram must overcome his father's absence to create his own path. These characters represent the possibility of breaking intergenerational patterns of patriarchal corruption.

These shared patterns show how contemporary global fiction, despite coming from distinct cultural traditions, engages with universal concerns about patriarchal authority, its built-in weaknesses, and its impact on families and communities. The books together suggest that corrupted fatherhood represents not just individual moral failure but symptomatic signs of broader social contradictions across diverse societies.

5. Conclusion

This journal article has examined the figure of the father in cross-cultural texts, recognizing that fatherhood carries significant connotations and dimensions that extend far beyond biological relationships. The term "father" encompasses not only biological and foster fathers but also holds profound cultural significance for both family and nation throughout history. The deeds of fathers; their moral choices, their failures, and their successes; reverberate through generations, determining the futures of children and grandchildren. While praising successful fathers remains a common pattern in literary studies, examining failed and unsuccessful fathers constitutes an equally important social and critical task. Such examination serves a vital function: by understanding paternal failure, scholars and readers alike can identify the mechanisms of corruption and work toward cultural improvement and social healing.

This comparative study has demonstrated the critical value of examining corrupted fatherhood across diverse cultural landscapes through close analysis of four significant contemporary novels: Christos Tsiolkas's *The Slap* (Australia), which interrogates suburban masculinity and multicultural tensions in contemporary Australian society; Joseph Boyden's *The Orenda* (Canada), which explores paternal authority within Indigenous and colonial contexts; Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (New Zealand), which examines the intersection of Māori cultural identity with cycles of paternal violence; and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (India), which reveals how postcolonial class structures and economic desperation corrupt father-son relationships.

Each novel offers culturally specific insights into how patriarchal authority manifests and fails within particular historical and social contexts, yet their juxtaposition reveals striking commonalities in the mechanisms and consequences of paternal moral failure. The comparative framework employed in this study illuminates patterns that would remain invisible through single-text or single-culture analysis, demonstrating how contemporary global fiction simultaneously addresses universal themes of family dysfunction while expressing these concerns through culturally particular narrative forms.

This approach underscores the necessity for literary critics to engage in cross-cultural thematic analysis, moving beyond the boundaries of national literatures to examine how writers from diverse traditions grapple with shared human concerns. By placing these texts in conversation with one another, this study reveals both the particularity and universality of patriarchal corruption, encouraging scholars to pursue similar comparative investigations that can deepen our understanding of how literature across cultures represents, critiques, and potentially transforms our conceptions of fatherhood, family, and social responsibility.

At the same time, the texts taken together suggest a certain universality to paternal corruption that extends beyond mere cultural boundaries. Despite their diverse geographical, historical, and cultural settings, all four novels reveal striking commonalities in how corrupted fatherhood operates and impacts families and communities.

First, all four texts demonstrate how paternal moral failures profoundly impact children's development, creating intergenerational cycles of trauma, shame, and damaged identity. Second, they illustrate how broader societal structures; whether colonial legacies, authoritarian regimes, immigrant displacement, or capitalist competition; function as enablers in bringing about corruption on the part of individual fathers. Third, each narrative explores how communities both perpetuate and potentially heal from the damage of corrupted fatherhood, suggesting that paternal failure is never merely an individual or private matter but always a social phenomenon with collective consequences. These shared concerns suggest that literary engagements with paternal moral failure tap into fundamental human experiences that resonate across cultural contexts, revealing the universal dimensions of a problem that manifests in culturally specific ways.

The cross-cultural analysis undertaken in this study opens pathways for future scholarly investigation. Future research might expand this comparative framework to include literary representations of corrupted fatherhood from additional cultural traditions, particularly those from African, Middle Eastern, and East Asian contexts, which remain underrepresented in comparative literary studies of fatherhood. Such expansion would enrich our understanding of how different cultural systems construct, experience, and respond to paternal failure. Additionally, future studies might examine how contemporary global literature represents alternative or resistant models of fatherhood that challenge patriarchal corruption, exploring how marginalized communities reimagine paternal roles in ways that promote healing rather than perpetuate harm.

Gender-focused analysis could also investigate how representations of corrupted fatherhood intersect with constructions of motherhood, masculinity, and femininity across cultures. Finally, interdisciplinary approaches incorporating sociology, psychology, and postcolonial theory could deepen our understanding of the mechanisms through which literary representations of paternal failure both reflect and shape social attitudes toward fatherhood.

In conclusion, these literary representations of corrupted fatherhood collectively suggest that contemporary global fiction offers a vital space for examining how patriarchal institutions fail both children and fathers themselves across diverse cultural contexts. By bringing together texts from India, Afghanistan, the Dominican Republic, and Australia, this study has demonstrated that while paternal corruption takes culturally specific forms, it also reveals

universal patterns of moral failure, intergenerational trauma, and social complicity. Literature's unique capacity to represent the interior lives of flawed fathers; their rationalizations, their inherited traumas, their moments of recognition; provides insights that sociological or historical analysis alone cannot offer.

These narratives do not merely condemn corrupted fathers but invite readers to understand the complex social, historical, and psychological forces that produce paternal failure. In doing so, contemporary global fiction performs crucial cultural work: it makes visible the mechanisms of patriarchal corruption, validates the experiences of those harmed by failed fathers, and opens imaginative space for envisioning more just and nurturing forms of fatherhood. As societies worldwide continue to grapple with the legacies of patriarchal authority and seek more equitable family structures, these literary explorations of corrupted fatherhood remain essential resources for understanding where we have been and imagining where we might go.

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