

Eyes Everywhere: Ecological Migration and State Surveillance in the *Age of Iron Man*

Thejas Gigy Thomas¹ & Dr. Prasantha Kumar N.S.²

Research Scholar, Department of English, School of Social Sciences and Languages

Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore Tamil Nadu, India.

Email: thejasgt@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-5603-9057. *Corresponding author.*

Assistant Professor (Senior), Department of English, School of Social Sciences and Languages,

Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore - 632014, Tamil Nadu, India

E-mail: prasanthkumarns@vit.ac.in. ORCID: 0000-0002-7907-2423

Abstract

In today's society, migrants/citizens are monitored and exploited. A comprehension of the complexity of surveillance and resistance to it is crucial to guarantee a more democratic community. Disciplinary societies (in the Foucauldian context) have moved beyond the panopticon's ecologies. Today's monitoring is reterritorialized. Surveillance, enabled by digitalization, can adapt to any room today, but with the constant change in spaces, simply monitoring human actions would be inadequate. It is necessary to monitor both behavior and geographical place. Surveillance is also increasingly being marketed. Products are now being sold on the basis of people's private lives. This dual aspect of surveillance connected to "safety" and "company" is well suited to the neo-liberal agenda. But monitoring also needs the supervised to participate. The States and MNCs are in a challenging situation if and when the monitored resist surveillance. Efforts are still being made by the state and its technology to properly monitor ecological migrations. This study claims that it is ecological and migration surveillance that makes Iron Man a strong avenger. Yet there are several cases in which his surveillance is inefficient through the cinematic narrative. For those already oppressed and who resist surveillance, the study would investigate these moments as flashes of optimism. This study also attempts to enunciate some of the aspects derived from works by theoreticians like Gary Marx and David Lyon. With the collective will of surveillance, unethical monitoring of ecologies and migrations imposed on us, it can be resisted to a good extent.

Keywords

Ecology, surveillance, migration, marvel, neoliberalism, iron man.

Introduction

Surveillance is the process through which organisms and their surroundings are closely monitored, with or without consent, with the assistance of humans and/or infrastructure, including gadgets, with the intention of collecting data on the beings



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and their interactions with each other and the environment, to impact their behavior, use the information gathered to deduce and typify features, gather proof to imply, threaten or blackmail, and predict future “unusual” activity (as described by the monitor) and try to avoid it, while ensuring easy “administration” in general. Modern architecture and technology have developed, maintaining the monitoring factor as an important element. Iron Man being a cyborg is also apt to be part of the surveillance network, particularly being one who is historically invested in self-profit and State aid.

In this paper, the power of Iron Man derives enormously from the capacity to monitor individuals and ecology, also making a profit in the process. Iron Man embodies a bigger configuration, the “control societies” (Deleuze, 1992), which governs more by strategic surveillance than by brute force. Appreciably so, resistance to Iron Man (and the bigger set up he embodies) is efficient not when you take on your brute and physical strength, but when you manage to outsmart your monitoring technology.

Methodology

Using the evolution of the Benthamite-Foucauldian Panopticon into “New Surveillance” and Liquid Surveillance, where concepts like “personal panopticon,” “ban-opticon” and the like are discussed, the paper undertakes a study of Iron Man, his suit, his relationship with the state, and finally how all this has a bearing on ecological migrants.

The Closed Room Model: Panopticon Method

Bentham’s idea of the panopticon, borrowed by Foucault to talk about the nature of surveillance and the self-governance of the supervised, was an integral component of surveillance studies (Elmer, 2012). Deleuze argued that the transitory nature of surveillance models was predicted by Foucault. Deleuze’s “expansion” of Foucault’s concepts also had to “extend” further. The panopticon model operates as an efficient way to understand the “enclosure spaces.” Here, space is “closed” and intended to help monitoring and guarantee the consequent “self-governance” of the space-inhabiting topics. Even though subjects move, it is from “one enclosure” to the other. Surveillance in this model is local, expensive and often ineffective. Today, monitoring mechanisms are becoming progressively “fluid” (Bauman and Lyon, 2013) because they are not only monitoring individuals in closed spaces with fixed surveillance tools but also an immobile database is being gathered. The surveillance panopticon model may have had its suitable treatment in Foucault, but “liquid” surveillance, which in many ways is highly mobile, requires us to shift Foucault’s attention and study the new mechanisms involved.

Going Beyond Boundaries: Liquid Surveillance

Borrowing from and building on the concept of Liquid Modernity by Zygmunt Bauman, David Lyon conceptualizes what he calls “liquid surveillance.” Neoliberalism and globalization privilege a certain type of mobility and liquidity that appears to be contrary to the concept of boundaries, nation-states. This boost in mobility (whether capital, expertise, labour, migrants, raw material or finished product) is also

accompanied by modifications in monitoring processes. While the panopticon monitors bodies within closed architectural rooms, the contemporary type of monitoring maintains tabs on mobility and nature. Scrutiny at the airport is a good example of how mobility is surveilled and controlled.

Drones, visas, social media activity, cash cards, google maps, travel applications, online money transfers, cell phone usage are just a few mechanisms that allow for liquid monitoring. It does not require that the topic be monitored statically. Monitoring becomes further complex by the increased willingness of the supervised to participate. Mini and more efficient panopticons are gadgets that one carries around today. Cyborgs' arrival redefines our knowledge of monitoring, privacy, and ontology as a whole. We're carrying our own panopticons in our pockets today as we travel (Bauman and Lyon, 2013).

Not only are the instruments and monitoring topics mobile, but even the information gathered as a consequence of monitoring is mobile. The internet's birth was the consequence of the need to share information otherwise stored locally in a single computer. The Internet and other surveillance techniques operate together to facilitate information sharing across borders. Trade monitoring and monitoring for the sake of "safety" are tightly knit (Gandy, 1993). This dual aim of monitoring requires that the gathered information be transferred easily and immediately between different organizations. Liquid surveillance therefore helps us, as a notion, to better understand contemporary day-to-day monitored life.

New Surveillance: No Place to Hide

Liquid monitoring is followed by a rise in the likelihood of monitoring from a distance and is defined as "fresh surveillance." It makes the warden's function almost obsolete in the classic panopticon. Instead of changing rooms to allow simple monitoring, surveillance today is changing gadgets and culture to allow for trouble-free, cost-effective monitoring (Marx, 2002). This makes it possible to monitor stealthily and safely. Unfortunately, the human eye emerges with the whole body, which poses two obstacles to monitoring:

- i) Safety of those engaged in monitoring a particular topic.
- ii) A high likelihood of being caught in the monitoring process.

These issues have been solved by new monitoring. Gary Marx draws attention to how outdated, or at least insufficient, is the classical definition of surveillance. He points out, in particular, the problem of using "close observation." New monitoring is not necessarily proximal, nor is it just "observation." (Marx, 2002). Marx's New Surveillance description overlaps with Lyon's concept of multi-level liquid surveillance. Surveillance studies that have conceptualized new methods of understanding and coping with surveillance have also been created as a consequence of the evolution of surveillance. Resisting surveillance is becoming harder. The capacity to monitor mobility from a distance without the required participation of individuals, readily transfer the information gathered, and make the whole method more effective and foolproof,

among others, has made life harder for migrants. The monitors continue to strive and comprehend the nature and consequences of new surveillance, as well as to devise methods of avoiding and resisting it.

When Art Merges with Daily Life and Politics

Iron Man as an avenger is the culmination of several monitoring events over the last few centuries. Not only the gadgets but also the role of the state and personal players, the supervisory hierarchies and how one's personal place impacts supervision, surveillance standardization, and the debates surrounding surveillance, safety, information collection, and privacy discover their share in the film. The Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) has come to occupy not only a big room in the globe of cinema with high investment and greater yields but also to have an enormous impact on the contemporary world as a consequence. It has been dubbed into several languages and the impact has only grown. Among other projects, merchandise, cultural activities surrounding MCU, comics and TV series have transformed Marvel into an enormous sector. It's the most effective film series ever produced financially. (McSweeney, 2018). McSweeney's earnings had exceeded \$12 trillion when he wrote. It has exceeded all the film series that has ever been produced. It is only saying that there is a powerful business element connected to a security and safety film.

It is commonly held that art is merely a reflection of socio-political truth, particularly popular culture. This frivolous attitude to art has survived from Plato to Marx in one form or the other. Art in itself has its relationships with everyday life, borrowing from, contributing to, and engaging with the "outside reality" (even if one is going to go through the common binary of art and reality). The MCU has become the finest illustration of how art is connected to everyday politics inextricably.

Objective

Using, first and foremost, the thoughts of David Lyon and Gary Marx, as explained earlier, this study would like to focus on Iron Man's cinematic narrative and know-how he has dealt with the problems of surveillance, migration, and ecology. The study would also like to draw out the deconstructive moments to show the opportunities of resisting surveillance partly or thoroughly.

The Neo-Liberal Enterprises

Around the globe, nation-states have managed to thoroughly design a complex bureaucracy with a manipulative judicial system to benefit a few people and corporations. The existence of an effective propaganda scheme parallels this. Democracy's concept and illusion are constantly maintained and diluted to keep intact the faith in the configuration. Surveillance like propaganda is also "outsourced," at least partly, by the state.

Media: Propaganda Tool in Hands of The State

While these contemporary nation-states criticize state-run fascist and communist models of propaganda, they have created a more subtle system of propaganda

outsourced to media corporations. Governments do not regulate the content directly but guarantee that only a few media houses flourish effectively through the selective functioning of censor boards, ratings, funds, raids, and other such means. Therefore, the neoliberal state is a sly connection between corporate houses and the state, with an efficient and covert scheme of propaganda producing approval among the bigger population (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). They exchange their databases as and when necessary for the sake of “safety” and trade (Gandy, 1993).

An Unholy Nexus: The State and Corporations

Surveillance is no longer simply a state-owned company in this context. Just as many parts of human society today are intertwined with both the state and corporations, the state and the MNCs are also involved in surveillance. The neo-liberal state is prepared not only to share but also to force the MNCs to share their gathered information. This database sharing is an essential component of “New Monitoring.” For example, in just six months in 2015, the U.S. government requested Facebook to access their databases 17,577 times, Google 12,002 times, Microsoft 5,940 times, and Apple 971 times. Several of these instances have also been brought before the tribunal. What’s not surprising is that they managed to be successful with Facebook by 66%, Google by 78%, Microsoft by 80%, and Apple by 81% (Garnham, 1990). Companies attempted to withstand this not with an ethical stand, but with the fear that this practice would force their clients to lose confidence in them, which is always deadly to the MNC. So, even as the State and the MNCs have a very symbiotic relationship, they are still figuring out the conditions of their connection. The state and MNCs are still squabbling like beasts to settle on agreed limits in their locations. Although their love is mutual, there are arguments and bitter snarks in their course.

Marvel Universe: An Embodiment of Neo-Liberalism

The MNC is an essential component of this configuration and has effectively performed its function. The aesthetic strength and effect of art in camouflaging the politics engaged in its development, content, and dissemination is of great help. MCU is not only an example of the neoliberal state’s relationship with the MNCs but also a careful study of the relationship and an interesting representation of it as well. Iron Man, a film at the heart of which is Tony Stark, depicts this connection in all its complexity, advertently or inadvertently.

A Symbiotic Relationship: Iron Man and The U.S. State

The court scene in Iron Man 2 is the best example of this connection. (“Iron Man 2” 00:11:09-00:17:13) The government is making every effort to restore Tony Stark to a situation where the connection between them is interdependent. On the other hand, Tony is trying his best to make the state as less accountable as possible. While describing the suit as a weapon, he defines it as a high-tech prosthesis (“Iron Man 2” 00:11:17-00:11:40). To solve this issue, an expert is called. We are casually introduced to the reality that he is Hammer Industries’ CEO as well. So, in principle, in the name of legislature, bureaucracy, national security, and patriotism, it is the state that is

attempting to grab and favour one MNC over another. By hacking into video footage and making them play on the screen, Tony manages to disclose the superficiality of the situation. Here the judge's arguments are demonstrated to be flourishing, but more importantly, the efforts by Justin Hammer to reproduce the Iron Man suit are also disclosed.

The public emerges to take a stance where Stark is held in high respect and the court and Justin Hammer in contempt. But it hardly happens to the crowd that Stark also uses the state system smartly to monopolise the production of guns by trampling on other lower and weaker rivals. At the end of the court scene, he claims, "I have privatized world peace effectively" ("Iron Man 2" 00:16:51-00:16:56). Within this state-to-MNC connection, we have complicated database exchanges made accessible through surveillance by both sides.

In the event of migrants, we see that nation-states produce "official" records and "authorize" them. This makes a lot of data accessible in distinct nations about individuals. On the other side, personal players have control over databases that effectively record their daily activity. Resisting monitoring is hard for a migrant today. Since the State and MNCs collect, classify and store information that is essential and is incomplete without the databases of the other, they are extremely interdependent and the caution with which they share these databases also leads to a lot of friction. Even as they struggle in moments of disagreement, on several occasions both sides attempt to pacify each other to guarantee that the connection is not too fraught.

Tony Stark's entire modern art collection is donated to the Boy Scouts of America, which as an organization is fully committed to advancing the State's narrative ("Iron Man 2" 00:19:26-00:19:52) and Stark's annual advantage to the Firefighters Family Fund ("Iron Man" 01:06:35-01:06:48) are two striking examples of how the MNCs are trying to pacify and stay in excellent relations with the State. In exchange, the State allows Tony Stark to borrow their databases as and when it needs – for example, when JARVIS prepares a Mandarin database by compiling information from SHIELD, FBI, and CIA ("Iron Man 2" 00:29:48-00:29:56); it enables him to obtain whatever he needs, even if it implies overriding his own prior instructions ("Iron Man 2" 01:56:00-01:57:02). Several such cases can be found where the love-hate relationship between the State and Stark industries is evident.

The Normalisation of Monitoring

While this is the nature of the state-to-MNC connection, the nature of the state-to-media connection (which sometimes also tends to be MNCs) is also essential. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky claim that "in summary, the U.S. mass media are efficient and strong ideological institutions that perform a system-supportive propaganda function by relying on market forces, internalized assumptions and self-censorship, and without important overt coercion."

Post 9/11, surveillance was anticipated by States all over the globe as helpful in ensuring the safety of the nation and nab miscreants (Ceyhan, 2012). According to the

state narrative, the mass media also broadly propagated the same perspective. Increased use of social media has normalised the concept of providing the public with access to one's own information. Despite several reports that data privacy is not guaranteed by networks like Facebook, the use of these platforms has not declined. If anything, there is a steady increase in the number of customers. On the other hand, the use and sharing of video footage and pictures have been further presented by films as normal, "cool" and effective. These elements of contemporary cultural life have made it more difficult to argue against surveillance based on ideas such as "privacy," as they are radically redefined and even undermined by the supervised themselves (Lyon, 2012).

Surveillance yielded under few favorable attributions

As a result of the migrant surveillance, a few beneficial methods may be implemented in the near future, mainly;

1. Ensure that migrants' lives and safety are protected and that any migrants in danger are rescued and provided with timely aid.
2. Ensure that all repatriations adhere to international law and properly protect migrants' human rights.
3. Ensure that migrants have access to education.
4. Ensure that all border management procedures safeguard human rights.
5. Protect migrants' right to a decent living level.
6. Make human rights a priority in all stages of migration, especially responses to large and heterogeneous migrations.
7. Ensure that migrants have the right to labor in fair and advantageous circumstances.
8. Assure that migrants have access to the legal system.
9. Ensure that migrants' family unity is fully protected; support family reunification, and prohibit arbitrary or unlawful intervention with migrants' right to privacy and family life.
10. Ensure that migrant women and girls' human rights are protected.
11. Protect the right to information of migrants.
12. Migrants must be protected against torture and other types of violence and exploitation, whether perpetrated by the government or by private parties.
13. Make sure that all migrants have the best physical and mental health possible.
14. Ensure migration governance is based on human rights and gender equality.
15. Recognize and encourage the work of human rights activists who promote and safeguard migrants' human rights.

States, MNC's and New Surveillance

In the modern world, surveillance has become more effective given the connection between MNCs and the state. New monitoring is efficient due to the skillful use of specially designed systems to gather information from distant locations and make it accessible across distinct platforms in real-time (Marx, 2002). Iron Man's suit, a product of the strong MNC-Stark Industries, comes equipped with all the recent monitoring opportunities.

Armored Avenger and advent of New Surveillance

In many cases, in terms of monitoring, Iron Man appears to be more effective than the State. In Iron Man 3, the government can't figure out where Mandarin is calling from. They only claim that in Pakistan it has a possible source ("Iron Man 3" 01:00:03-01:00:56). On the other side, Tony Stark indicates a more precise way to identify the place and JARVIS does it rightly ("Man 3 Iron" 01:10:40-01:11:06). When JARVIS says the place has been recognized, Stark attempts to take a guess; he lists out a number of Islamic countries. It's the same prejudice that makes the people and the president believe it's likely that the call is being made from Pakistan. New Surveillance, with the assistance of technology, attempts to decrease these variables that appear when people are engaged in the surveillance process. Happy expresses this concern quite explicitly after becoming Stark Industries' head of safety. He suggests that their point of weakness is the human element of human resources and therefore they need to be replaced. Ivan Vanko, too, shares the same view and says to Justin Hammer, "There's an issue for people. Trust me. Trust me. Drone better." ("Iron Man 2" 01:04:50-01:05:35). To some extent this faith is widespread and maybe true. Technology is replacing the human element of surveillance.

The suit of Iron Man is fitted with all the recent surveillance methods. It is capable of facial recognition, placing together several databases, identifying particular vulnerability points in a structure before him, checking people's criminal past after facial recognition, identifying structures with particular objects (missiles) in them, communicating with Stark from a distance with micro-repeater implantation, health diagnosis, and biometrics. Through the Iron Man films, we see these tech tools evolving and reaching their best (to date) with the Spider-Man suit. It is Tony Stark who makes this suit and is fitted with New Surveillance's finest opportunities. The existence of Tony Stark in the MCU represents the part played in contemporary culture by New Surveillance and New Warfare.

Surveillance of Ecological Migration

It is in this broader context of new surveillance enabled by the neoliberal relationship between MNCs and nation-states that we are all migrating today. Migration is defined by the English Oxford Living Dictionary as "a motion to a new region or nation to find a job or better living conditions."

The Migrant Story: Living in the Shadow of Fear

Nation-states attempt to maintain the status quo through an efficient scheme of bureaucracy, propaganda, and military. Citizens are constantly supplied with stories that persuade individuals to resist state dominance and strong social groups. Strong police and legal setup intimidate those who manage to resist despite this. Those who refuse to be intimidated are jailed or caught in a series of court instances that limit their further agitation and motion. The worker is an outsider of these procedures. They want to move into another nation that has a distinct set of state apparatuses after being subjected to one nation's ideological state apparatuses. Ivan Vanko (Althusser, 2001) is this migrant who is a nightmare to any state-corporate nation. He's a component of his own ecology after he goes to the U.S. as well. We see this with his insistence on returning with him his bird. In contrast, Agent Romanoff is the "excellent migrant." Her transfer to the U.S. State Apparatus is smooth and is therefore rightly rewarded. This role of declaring the "good" citizen and the "good" migrant is always played by nations.

Since they generally migrate in search of better living circumstances, they are predominantly willing to work harder, even in dangerous circumstances and for lower salaries. One assumes that they will be easily accepted into any nation as a surplus workforce. But it does not appear to be the case. Besides built-in prejudices against the "Outsider," fear also seems to be a figure moving from one ISA to another ISA. A figure free from the propaganda of the State is sufficient reason for creating fear among state officials. The individuals, on the other side, are also opposed to the same migrant because of their concepts of purity. Given their assumptions about the migrant as the carrier of pollution and "illegal" consumer of "their" assets, when individuals in a region agitate against the presence of migrants, the State too happily clamps down on the migrants' motion for its own benefit.

Under the Lens: Monitoring the Migrant

Migrants are subject to contemporary day monitoring in two main respects. One, what the "ban-opticon" is called by Didier Bigo (Bigo, 2006). Here, through a shared database, companies and states are striving to maintain individuals outside boundaries, even as they persuade individuals within boundaries that migration is indeed a simple task and that they are in favour of a globalized world where cross-border movement is encouraged. This kind of monitoring is distinct from the panopticon of Foucauldians. It does not bring individuals to discipline and track them within its enclosure. It keeps them out of the enclosure after monitoring (in the sense of "near observation"). At national borders alone, this ban-opticon does not operate. Buildings, examination halls, cinema theatres, temples all act as ban-opticons, keeping out of their limit's certain types of individuals.

The second way they are impacted is by allowing them to cross boundaries but being kept under continual observation. One portion of this is accomplished by assigning them to several camps and other restrictive areas where almost in the classic

Benthamite sense they could be constantly controlled. The other portion is about what this paper is all about. The migrant crossing a distinct area is no longer an anomaly. Over the years, migrants have only grown. In 2017, out of 220 million in 2010, and 173 million in 2000, the number of global migrants reached 258 million (International Migration Report, 2019). The problem of migrants has become so negative that it has actually been argued that the "migrant" should be regarded as the core of contemporary socio-political set-ups and not the "citizen," as has been the case up to now.

Standing up to Surveillance

The aspect that provides hope is that without opposition there is no attack on human rights. People around the globe continue to battle the neoliberal state's discriminatory and oppressive components and its connection with the corporations. In the same vein, discriminatory monitoring is heavily opposed. Two wide forms are needed. One is the everyday acts of opposition where it is not necessarily rooted and mostly unorganized in an ideological position. The other is the kind of resistance that arises from an ongoing research, organized effort, and ideological dedication to discriminatory surveillance opposition.

Breach of Trust: Keeping Things Private

Furthermore, Iron Man films present many such cases of daily opposition to surveillance that involve nothing beyond 'presence of mind'. When Iron Man begins to work on the suit, JARVIS asks him to store the information on the central database of Stark Industries. Stark recommends JARVIS not to save it to the office database, but to save it to his private server, since he can no longer trust anyone ("Iron Man" 00:54:20-00:54:45). When Obadiah begins working on his own suit under Section 16, he commands that this information be "masked" ("Iron Man" 01:28:20-01:28:28). When Pepper Potts retrieves all the latest shipping manifests in the Stark office, Obadiah unexpectedly enters. At this stage, she just pulls a newspaper over the lock chip inserted into the laptop to conceal what she's there for. The download is still incomplete when it gets nearer to the computer. So, to buy a little more time without getting caught, Potts turns the laptop into the screensaver mode and Obadiah rightly doesn't find out until she leaves and sits on the desk ("Iron Man" 01:32:47-01:34:43). Many of these film cases assist us to look at them and construct on them to withstand surveillance in our own settings.

Organized Resistance: Going Under the Radar

Although Iron Man is portrayed as invincible with his coalition with the State, there are several cases in the film where the vulnerabilities in this ecological migration monitoring become apparent. Besides this, Iron Man himself operates in the process through the loops when he is cornered. This operates against the primary narrative that attempts to introduce him to this as an expert. There are also his enemies who seem to resurrect in a greater manner each time, though defeated, in a distinct avatar. Using these three wide categories, several methods of evading and resisting

monitoring can be grasped through the films themselves. The Iron Man films show both organized and unorganized opposition to surveillance, obviously showing scope for more opportunities. If considered important, evading and resisting surveillance is viable as long as we try to comprehend how it works first and then think about fresh ways of resisting it accordingly.

Conclusion

Modern-day surveillance from where it started has improved and come a long way. Without even individuals realizing it, they can be spied on and begin disciplining themselves when they realize that this is the overall state of the community. The migrant who is perceived as a threat to the nation-state is now also subject to various types of monitoring. We should act quickly to counter the toxic worldwide discourse that has maintained a skewed and destructive view of reality. Humanity is still in a state of flux. For millennia, migration has woven the tapestry of our common existence, strengthening continents, governments, and communities. Evading or resisting surveillance that tends to limit us will quickly become impossible. Resistance possibilities still exist and continue to exist. It relies on how efficient and standardized monitoring can be. An informed and organized reaction to monitoring will guarantee that the migrant/citizen can win privileges. If we want to fulfil the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and eradicate poverty, we need to embrace migration rather than stifle it. In addition, this study has inspired the creation of a global technical network on migration and its relevance, which is equipped to deal with migrant problems in rapidly changing and increasingly diverse societies.

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Mr. Thejas Gigy Thomas is a Ph.D. student in the Department of English, School of Social Sciences and Languages at Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore. He has published a couple of papers in National and International conferences based on his area of research. He is pursuing his research mainly in Ecocriticism and Ecotheology.

Dr. Prasantha Kumar N.S. is a Senior Assistant Professor in the Department of English, School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore. His research focus is on the efficacy of Cooperative Learning to enhance the writing skills of engineering students. His research interests include English Language Teaching, Subaltern Studies, and Eco-literature.