

The Role of Metamodern Dispositions in Environmental Resolution: An Ecocritical Analysis of the Series Reacher

Junaid Ahmed Khattak ^{1*} Sadia Siddiq ²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Humanities, COMSATS University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Email: junaidteacher01@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities COMSATS University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Email: sadia_siddiq@comsats.edu.pk

ABSTRACT: Environmental decline poses a growing threat to the sustainability of life worldwide. Within the metamodern framework, popular media plays a significant role in shaping and reflecting discourses on environmental issues. Reacher is one of the famous drama series based on Lee Child's novel, exploring themes of mystery, thriller, and suspense. It also explores the theme of environmental degradation in the metamodern era. While previous research has examined the series through the lens of individual agency, there is limited research analyzing it through frameworks of metamodernism and ecocriticism. Thereby, using Catherine Belsey's method of textual analysis under the broader umbrella of metamodernism and ecocriticism, the current study aims to qualitatively examine the interaction of ecocriticism with metamodernism by exploring the role of metamodernist dispositions of the protagonist towards resolution of environmental issues in the series Jack Reacher. The findings of this study suggest that the interaction of metamodernism with ecocriticism occurs through the protagonist's emotional ambivalence and pragmatic idealism in response to toxic discourse and environmental injustice, ultimately promoting environmental conservation and ecological responsibility. This gives rise to a new ecocritical perspective termed "Metamodern Ecocriticism".

KEYWORDS: Metamodernism, Ecocriticism, Pragmatic Idealism, Environmental Conservation

Introduction

In the current era, Television and streaming series are playing a prominent role in shaping public discourse and reflecting societal values. This has resulted in the development of popular culture as a powerful medium for exploring philosophical, political, and ecological issues. According to Storey (2018), popular culture serves as a "site of ideological struggle and cultural meaning-making". Contemporary adaptations of literary works into drama series are also a phenomenon of popular culture that retain or enhance the philosophical depths of the original texts. Adaptation of literary texts into screen narratives provides new dimensions for analyzing themes like justice, corruption, and ecological decay through visual and narrative elements. Similarly, Jack Reacher, a television series based on Lee Child's novels, is an example of a narrative that moves beyond genre fiction into a more complex moral and existential domain. The series belongs to the genre of mystery, thriller, and suspense, which inculcates compelling plots, minimalist dialogue, and morally complex characters. The existing academic research on Jack

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Corresponding Author

Junaid Ahmed Khattak

✉ junaidteacher01@gmail.com

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Reacher focuses on the theme of individual agency, masculinity, and heroism in contemporary media narratives. However, there lies a significant gap in the literary horizon that explores the series through the frameworks of metamodernism and Ecocriticism. Therefore, by grounding in Catherine Belsey's textual analysis as a quantitative research model, this study will explore the series Jack Reacher through an intersection of metamodernism and ecocriticism, elucidating how the protagonist's metamodern attributes play an important role in revealing ecological degradation followed by its conservation.

Problem Statement

Environmental degradation is a rising global concern, putting the life sustainability of the globe at high-risk. In the metamodern era, popular media plays a crucial role in representing environmental issues. Reacher, a widely popular series based on Lee Child's ongoing novel collection, has also touched upon the theme of environmental degradation in the metamodern era. Despite this, there is inadequate research that highlights the interaction of ecocriticism with metamodernism in the series Jack Reacher. Thereby, the current study aims to explore the role of metamodernist dispositions of the protagonist towards the resolution of environmental issues in the series Reacher.

Research Gap

There is much research available on the series "Reacher" which focuses on the theme of mystery, crime, and suspense. These conducted researches focus on the attributes of character development, narrative style, plot structure, along with its major themes, but they leave a significant gap in exploring the interplay of the series with ecocriticism and metamodernism. Metamodernism, with its postulates of pragmatic idealism and emotional ambivalence, offers a valuable framework for understanding that the protagonist is shifting moral and emotional stances. Similarly, Ecocriticism, on the other hand, through its postulate of toxic discourse and environmental justice, provides insight into systemic corruption resulting in environmental decline represented in the narrative. However, there is inadequate research that highlights the interplay of these two theories in the series Reacher. By combining these perspectives, this study aims to fill an important gap by elucidating the role of Jack Reacher's metamodern dispositions in the resolution of environmental issues.

Research Objectives

1. To elucidate the role of emotional ambivalence of the protagonist towards the resolution of environmental issues in the series Reacher.
2. To elaborate on the role of pragmatic idealism of the protagonist towards resolution of environmental issues in the series Reacher.
3. To explore the interaction of environmental justice and toxic discourse with the protagonist's metamodern dispositions.

Research Questions

1. What is the role of the protagonist's emotional ambivalence towards the protagonist towards resolution of environmental issues in the series Reacher?
2. What is the role of pragmatic idealism of the protagonist towards resolution of environmental issues in the series Reacher?
3. How do environmental justice and toxic discourse in the series Reacher interact with the protagonist's metamodern dispositions?

Research limitation

The analysis and findings of this study are limited to the 1st season of the series Reacher. The series can be viewed at <https://azseries.org/seasons/reacher-season-1/>. The scripts of the series can be downloaded from <https://transcripts.foreverdreaming.org/viewforum.php?f=4991>.

Purpose of Study/Justification/Significance of the Research

The findings of this study will be helpful in expanding the academic Environmental discourse by offering an interdisciplinary approach, which will provide new opportunities for the researchers to explore the convergence of literary theory and Environmental Criticism. Metamodernism as a theoretical lens has not been explored in literary or cultural texts.

The findings of this study provide opportunities to broaden the scope of metamodern research within media and cinema studies. The theoretical framework employed in this research can also be applied to a wide range of films, television series, and cinematic narratives to explore the representation of metamodern dispositions and contemporary structures of feeling. Such investigations may further contribute to understanding how emotional ambivalence and pragmatic idealism shape contemporary screen culture.

This study contributes to the development of a new ecocritical postulate termed “Metamodern Ecocriticism,” which integrates Metamodern sensibilities with contemporary environmental concerns. The proposed framework can be applied to a variety of literary texts, films, and television series, which opens new avenues of research within environmental humanities and expands the theoretical horizons of ecocritical studies.

Literature Review

Alvi and Qasim's (2023) application of a metamodern framework to Bilal Tanveer's novel “*The Scatter Here Is Too Great*” reveals that metamodernism oscillates between “modern and postmodern dispositions” to uncover a sincere pursuit of meanings within a traumatic and fragmented urban setting. Radchenko (2020) further elucidates that in metamodern analysis, structural devices move away from self-reflexive mockery as they oscillate between extremes of emotion rather than being detached or having highly skeptical positions typical of postmodern protagonists.

According to James and Sheshagiri (2014), modern cinematic and popular narratives utilize a metamodern structure where characters “perform a strategic naivety”. They pursue their ideals of justice, morality, truth, and honor, but they act pragmatically as they know that the world around them is corrupt and toxic.

Gibbons (2017) elucidates that contemporary visual texts create an active “metamodern affect” by sustaining continuous structural tensions. He further explains that structural tensions refer to the idea that the narrative oscillates between a desire for sincerity and a recognition of ironist detachment. This oscillation that happens in terms of emotions provokes those characters to sustain duality of an emotion.

Similarly, Storm (2020) reveals that analyzing the psychological depth of modern protagonists requires an understanding of metamodern oscillation. The ongoing movement “between enthusiasm and a postmodern irony” defines the oscillation. This oscillation tends to bring various emotional and social changes within a character. This oscillation plays an important role in transforming the character according to different situations.

Metamodernism has not been rigorously explored in terms of arts and culture, but its applications are visible in music, as Keşlioğlu (2025) elucidates that contemporary musical narratives reveal a distinct dialectic where the performances “oscillate between postirony and a search for depth”. It utilizes the oscillation to navigate the

fragmentation of the modern world. The analyzed literature for metamodernism proves that metamodernism has not been explored much in terms of media narratives.

Choure and Sinha (2026) say that contemporary narratives reconfigure traditional settings, which ensures that nature gets a proper representation in the text from just being the mere background and backdrop of the text. The current texts are providing “active, ethically significant presence,” which directly challenges human-centered or anthropocentric views.

Deitering(1996) elucidate that analyzing postmodern corporate technological disasters reveals the role in which a text works as a toxic discourse, revealing the role of “chemical hazards and invisible airborne contamination” in dismantling safe pastoral spaces.

Koc (2026) says that evaluating historical narratives through a postcolonial ecocritical lens exposes the role of extractive colonization. This can be easily witnessed in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, where individuals search for “ivory,” revealing their efforts to convert a land of peace into a commodification-reducing environment to a mere object that can be sold or bought.

Chereches (2025), further to the narrative after analyzing postcolonial indigenous fiction through an environmental justice framework, elucidates that “corporate and state-led resource exploitation” goes beyond physical displacement, which marginalizes subaltern communities and erodes their traditional nature-dependent modes of existence.

The analysis of the reviewed literature reveals that there is a lack in the research done on metamodernism. The series *Jack Reacher* is not highly explored for its themes of metamodernism. Moreover, there is inadequate research that analyses the series with a combined framework of metamodernism and ecocriticism.

The review of the existing literature indicates a significant gap in metamodernist scholarship, particularly in relation to contemporary television narratives. The television series *Jack Reacher* remains largely unexplored from the ecocritical and metamodern perspective, although metamodernism has received scholarly attention. The available studies have not adequately examined the series through an integrated theoretical framework that combines metamodernism and ecocriticism. The previous research has focused on narrative, cultural, or ideological dimensions without addressing the intersection of ecological consciousness and metamodern sensibilities. Therefore, the current study aims to fill this scholarly gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of *Jack Reacher* through the combined lens of metamodernism and ecocriticism, thereby contributing to the expanding body of research in both fields.

Research Methodology

The current study employs a qualitative research methodology to examine the interaction between metamodernism and ecocriticism in the selected television series *Reacher*. The methodology is grounded in Catherine Belsey’s textual analysis because the study focuses on the construction of meaning through language, characterization, visual representation, and ideological structures. Belsey (2002) says that the purpose of text-focused “productive criticism is to use the symptomatic reading to explore the hidden ideological essence in the works to uncover what language might conceal

Research Design

The current study adopts a qualitative research design. The reason behind the selection of this design is that it is concerned with close interpretation of meaning, ideological structure, and representational patterns, which exist within the text. This research is qualitative in its domain despite relying on numerical generalizations.

Research Approach

This study follows the application of textual analysis through systematic interpretive procedures. Firstly, the selected scenes and dialogues are subjected to a close reading in order to identify the key linguistic and semiotic features. These include lexical choices, modality, syntactic structures, tonal variations, along with silence and figurative expressions. Secondly, these linguistic features are examined in relation to their discursive functions such as the construction of authority, resistance, morality, along with institutional power. This results in the revelation of the role of utterances or language in broader ideological formations. Afterwards, the language extends the analysis to visual and semiotic elements, treating the scenes' gestures and spatial compositions as meaningful textual structures. Lastly, the identified textual and visual patterns are interpreted through the theoretical lenses of metamodernism and ecocriticism. The linguistic and semiotic features are mapped into the metamodern concepts such as oscillation, emotional ambivalence, and pragmatic idealism. They are further linked to the ecocritical concerns including environmental degradation, toxic discourse, and ecological injustice. This layered analytical process results in a comprehensive understanding of the protagonist's metamodern dispositions contributing to environmental resolution within the narrative. Belsey (2013) says that text-focused analysis remains crucial because "criticism uncovers what the text leaves unsaid, the gaps, the margins, and the contradictions" that reveal how language actively constructs cultural assumptions rather than just reflecting them.

Conceptual Framework

The current study employs a conceptual framework. According to Maxwell (2013), a conceptual framework is a system of concepts. The system includes "assumptions, expectations, beliefs" which support and inform a research study. The conceptual framework is a framework that is constructed by a researcher through integration of relevant concepts from existing literature despite being confined to a single theory. This study utilizes a conceptual framework by retrieving concepts from metamodernism and ecocriticism. According to Vermeulen & van den Akker (2010), metamodernism is considered a cultural paradigm that oscillates between "modernist sincerity and postmodernist irony," forming a structure of feelings that reflects the emotional and philosophical tensions of the contemporary age. It is not a fixed ideology but a dynamic movement, swinging like a pendulum between opposing emotional and philosophical poles; the paradigm allows for sincere engagement with ideas, even while acknowledging their potential futility or contradiction. According to Garrard (2023), ecocriticism is a dynamic literary theory that examines the relationship between literature and the physical environment, integrating environmental ethics, cultural studies, and literary analysis to explore how narratives reflect, critique, and shape ecological consciousness and digital environments, reflecting the complexity of modern ecological discourse.

Pragmatic Idealism

According to Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010), metamodern subjects pursue idealistic goals while pragmatically adapting to the limitations and complexities of contemporary reality. They follow their ideals and goals while thinking pragmatically in an institutionally compromised world. This concept and ideal can be referred to as "Pragmatic idealism"

Emotional Ambivalence

According to Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010), metamodern subjects sustain a condition that elucidates the "movement between two binaries". Within this framework, it reflects a continuous oscillation between hope and doubt, sincerity and skepticism, attachment and detachment. This duality can be referred to as the emotional ambivalence of the characters.

Environmental Justice

According to Adamson et al. (2002) environmental justice within ecocriticism refers to ‘the equitable representation and treatment of all communities’, especially marginalized ones within environmental narratives, which emphasizes the need to address ecological harm as a social and cultural issue, not just a scientific one. Environmental justice focuses on the fair treatment of all people, regardless of race, class, or geography, in environmental policy and representation within literature and media.

Toxic Discourse

According to Buell (1998), toxic discourse in ecocriticism refers to the “narrative framing of environmental degradation, pollution, and contamination”, often rooted in the legacy of texts like Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, which exposed the psychological and ecological consequences of industrial toxicity. Toxic discourse highlights the presence of environmental contamination in literature, portraying pollution as both a physical and symbolic threat to ecosystems and human health.

Analysis

Emotional Ambivalence

In Reacher season 1, the metamodern approach of the protagonist is visible in his emotional ambivalence, which results in the resolution of systemic and environmental decline. In episode 1, the protagonist gets wrongfully arrested for murder. He sits at the dinner and says, “*I am just here for peach pie*” (Episode 1, Scene 3). This declarative clause signals a calm detachment. This linguistic phenomenon is also called understatement, as it’s the protagonist’s linguistic strategy to downplay danger with a contrastive ironical comment. The understatement here also highlights the protagonist’s ironical stance between a life-threatening stake, which is murder, in contrast to life mundane pleasure which are devouring a peach pie. The protagonist utilizes this linguistic strategy as his defense mechanism. So, instead of reacting to the situation, he responds with a low-key reaction that hides his vulnerability and enforces his detachment. It further positions him as someone who refuses to be destabilized by external authority. The law enforcement institution who were there to arrest him was expecting some sort of pragmatic effect of denial or aggression. So his assertive speech act marks his authority, resisting the interrogative authority of the police. His act of retaining calmness in his aura signals no depiction of fear or anxiousness. The brutal arrest for murder represents the irony of the situation where he gets falsely accused, but his responsive statement presents calm focus on food, which signifies his detachment from that irony; this oscillation between stoic irony and sincerity elucidates his metamodern disposition of emotional ambivalence. Similarly, in season 1, episode 2nd, when Reacher finds out about Kliner and his men, he decides to charge independently. Hearing this, Roscoe asks Reacher, “*Where do you think you are going?*” Reacher walks off silently in response. This response of Reacher again sustains the binary of emotional ambivalence. This nonverbal semiotic sign (silence) works as communication, conveying rejection of Roscoe’s directive. This silence also acts as a refusal of patriarchal institutional authority, which represents his “withdrawal without disengagement”. This allows him to pursue justice strategically, not emotionally. Moreover, it is observed that Reacher’s narrative involves minimal use of modal verbs, so instead of depicting possibility or uncertainty, his narrative depicts certainty and authority. Initially, Reacher seems to be detached here. He does not care about the warning of going alone. His act of walking away reassures that his cold detachment has sustained the conversation, but on the other hand, he is committed to fighting for justice; he refuses to abandon the investigation. So this oscillation between the act of “*being distant on the surface*” and internally being committed to the cause perfectly elaborates his metamodern ambivalence.

Similarly, in the series, Roscoe is represented as a strong female character who risks everything to find the criminals behind suspicious murders in the town. However, in an attempt to reveal the real face of Kliner who is behind all the murders, she gets scared because of the threats she receives. So, finding Reacher a savior, she expresses her fear to him and admits that she fears for her life. Reacher replies with a response, “*I won’t let anything happen to you*” (Ep 3, scene 12). This response is later on followed by cold, efficient violence in which Reacher kills the Kliner’s thugs. So his response to Roscoe is structured as a declarative statement, but it functions pragmatically as a commissive speech act, which is a promise. The discourse shifts from the semantic field of intimacy “*won’t let anything happen to you*” to the field of aggression later on. In conversations with Roscoe, his register is low, intimate, and protective, marked by affective closeness, but against his enemies the register shifts to one of violent aggression, which is physical, ruthless, and impersonal. This register code-switching also highlights the dual moral economy. It makes him an empathetic caregiver, whereas his reaction toward the thugs turns him into a ruthless avenger. This oscillation between the empathetic caregiver and ruthless avenger depicts how his emotional ambivalence allows him to protect individuals while dismantling the corrupt structures.

Similarly, in episode 7, Kliner’s men capture Reacher. Normally, when a protagonist gets captured by an anti-hero, either he is presented as a non-affected being, or sometimes he is presented as a hero who is emotional. But when Reacher gets arrested, he says with a calm demeanor, “*I have been in worse spots.*” This statement of the protagonist is marked by his detachment and lack of fear for himself. It’s a declarative statement that minimizes the immediate danger, presenting torture or threat as routine and insignificant. Making him an entity who is not at all guided by emotions, but immediately afterwards he anxiously asks about his friends: “*Where are they? Did you hurt them?*” referring to Roscoe and Finlay. This shift from declarative calm to rapid-fire interrogatives signals a surge in emotional intensity. The syntax of this utterance, being a short, clipped question, heightens the dramatic tensions as well. This depicts his deep emotional concern for his friend. He willingly and vigilantly prioritizes his friend’s life over his safety. The utterance “*I have been in worse spots*” is a low modality claim which expresses certainty and self-assurance, whereas the question “*Did u hurt them?*” is a high modality claim demanding certainty, refusing ambiguity about his friend’s well-being. This shift in modality again highlights the protagonist’s oscillation, reinforcing his emotional ambivalence. This emotional ambivalence is presented through an oscillation from detachment to deep connection. The introduction of the word “hurt” marks a shift in semantic domain from stoic composure to emotional vulnerability, making visible the possibility of damage, pain, and loss alongside the protagonist’s detachment. This metamodern disposition becomes his strength as he endures the personal risks, precisely saving him from cowardice. Afterwards, he channels that energy into protecting others. The Kleiner family’s role throughout the series has poisoned the environment of Margrave. The environment of Margrave consists of social trust, justice, ecology of the town and its people. So Reacher’s concern for Roscoe and Finlay elucidates that he values the community as a part of the environment worth conservation.

Similarly, at another instance when Reacher is asked, “Who are you?” he replies, “Someone who prefers not getting involved”. This dialogue again depicts his emotional duality; Reacher claims to avoid involvement, yet his every action is driven by moral empathy and protection of others. The dialogue “who prefers not getting involved” defines his emotional detachment, but his action of avenging defines his ethical engagement. This oscillation between stoicism and sensitivity reflects his metamodern emotional ambivalence. The use of the indefinite pronoun “someone” distances Reacher from personal identity, conveying self-erasure and detachment, but the phrase “prefers not getting involved” reveals his subjective stance of ignoring involvement until things get unethical. So the existence between his “self-erasure” and “displaying his subjective stance” again reinforces his metamodern emotional ambivalence. The use of the indefinite pronoun “someone” can further be interpreted as a gesture of metamodern

humility. The gesture where the protagonist deliberately minimizes his personal identity in order to prevent the construction of eco-centered heroism. Instead of presenting himself as a grand savior or moral spectacle, Reacher linguistically withdraws from self-glorification, framing his presence as ordinary and interchangeable. Reacher's stance of non-intrusive involvement mirrors the principle of environmental conservation, which is achieved through restraining human intervention and allowing natural systems to sustain themselves.

Pragmatic Idealism

The protagonist's metamodern pragmatic idealism is well presented in the season as well. Pragmatic idealism within metamodern theory refers to the pursuit of ethical and moral ideals while acknowledging the structural imperfections of the world in which those ideals must operate. In Season 1 episode 1, when the protagonist Reacher is elaborating his decision not to have a permanent settlement to Roscoe, he says, "*Had a home base my whole life. Gave it up. Now I see my country on my own terms*". The protagonist makes a practical and pragmatic decision of abandoning a fixed home base. This results in a reduction of dependency on material possessions and systemic constraints. The protagonist's lifestyle choice is rooted in functionality, as the mobility allows him to act freely and respond to situations without bureaucratic or logistical limitations. The protagonist's decision is not purely utilitarian, but it reflects a moral and philosophical idea of autonomy and authenticity. The protagonist considers personal freedom and experimental engagement with the world over accumulation and permanence. The protagonist's idealism is grounded in reality because he does not romanticize nature or freedom completely. This blend of practicality and idealism is the essence of pragmatic idealism, where the protagonist is acting on ideals in ways that are feasible and effective. The protagonist's attempt to reject a permanent home reduces resource consumption as his mobility refrains him from the ecological footprint which is tied to ownership and accumulation. Reacher critiques the culture of excess that drives environmental degradation by refusing systemic entanglements (mortgages, possessions). This refusal elucidates his escapism from the mechanisms that sustain ecological and institutional imbalance. Thus, pragmatic idealism results in environmental conservation

In season 1 episode 2, Reacher says, "*I am not leaving. You understood wrong. I figured I'd stick around a while*". Initially, Reacher was expected to leave the town after the clearance, but he declares his intention to stay. This context reveals his convergence from being a wanderer to an active participant in the resolution of the local crisis. Justice and moral responsibility motivate this decision by any sort of practical gain. The protagonist's decision to remain is not emotion-driven. It's a decision guided by a rationale, as he knows that leaving would result in systemic corruption left unchecked. This decision is guided by a moral commitment to justice and loyalty to his brother's memory. His idealism results in higher values, as despite gaining any leverage, medals, or recognition, or having any personal safety or comfort, he works solely for the attainment of justice. This idealism doesn't romanticize any heroism but results in some practical, sane actions for the sake of betterment. This phenomenon can be referred to as his pragmatic idealism. The phenomenon merges an idealistic purpose (justice and truth) with practical execution, like (direct) involvement without any bureaucratic delay. The phrase "I am not leaving" is a firm, decisive command that signals a practical resolve. The phrase "You understood me wrong" is not just asserting autonomy but is actively clarifying the protagonist's purpose to stay in Margrave. Through this phrase, he makes his readers see the real intention behind his stay, which is not his stubbornness. It's his commitment to achieve justice. The Kliner Industries symbolize the corrupt consumerism and industrial greed. This greed has disrupted the town's social system as well as ecological balance. So his decision to stay in the town labels him as an active agent against the town's toxic system. This pragmatic idealism results in his stay in the town making him play an active role in environmental conservation. In the same episode, there is an instance when Finlay asks Reacher to share his contact details for updates on the investigation. To which Reacher responds, "*I don't have a phone*". The protagonist's decision to avoid owning a

phone is not reckless; it is calculated as he understands that constant connectivity results in obligations and distractions. This decision is pragmatism-oriented as it reduces his vulnerability and maintains operational freedom. This pragmatism is guided by his idealism as he reflects his ideal. His choice reflects a deeper idea of living independently and free. The resistance to having a phone symbolizes his resistance to the culture of hyperconnectivity and commodification of privacy. This phenomenon can be called his pragmatic idealism, as he doesn't merely dream of freedom. Despite this, he operationalizes it by taking certain pragmatic steps of refusing it. Even if we consider that the idea behind refusing the phone is to work for achieving justice without being found, he still makes this idea possible by taking a pragmatic step of rejecting a phone. Rejecting a phone reduces electronic waste, energy consumption, and enforces dependency on eco-friendly alternatives. Beyond its ecological implication, the refusal of a phone also reflects resistance to surveillance capitalism, where technological connectivity enables both commodification and institutional monitoring. In compromised systems, information becomes a tool of control, and constant connectivity produces vulnerability rather than empowerment. Reacher's calculated technological absence therefore operates as pragmatic invisibility, allowing him to pursue justice without becoming traceable within corrupt networks. His decision reveals that pragmatic idealism requires awareness of systemic power structures and the willingness to operate strategically within or outside them when necessary. This also represents his anti-consumerist stance as it's a critique of capitalism. In addition to not having a phone, the protagonist avoids being tracked by digital tracking and communication channels that Kliner's men could use to exploit. The protagonist's action of refusing the consumerist technology to avoid being found by Kliner's men becomes a tactical move against them. As they are the agents of environmental destruction, Reacher's action makes him an agent of environmental conservation. In season 1 episode 3, Reacher says, "*Hard copies only: we don't want a digital trail*". This insistence on material documentation foregrounds the ethical weight of evidence preservation within an institutionally compromised environment. Truth, in this context, is fragile and vulnerable to erasure through digital manipulation or bureaucratic interference. By privileging physical documentation, Reacher transforms pragmatism into a protective ethical mechanism that safeguards the integrity of justice. His strategy demonstrates that ideals cannot survive without procedural discipline, and that moral commitment must be reinforced by tactical foresight in order to resist systemic corruption. This line is from the instance when Reacher instructs Molly Beth to provide physical copies of Joe's file instead of digital ones. He pursues the idealistic commitment of serving and working for justice but does it with pragmatic caution. The protagonists' attempt to avoid digital format reveals his pragmatic approach, as digital formats leave digital footprints that can be utilized by the antagonists, Klinger and his team, to corrupt the investigation. This calculated and resource-oriented decision, where he prioritizes security over convenience, reflects his approach, which is grounded in real-world constraints. The insistence on hard copies reflects his principle-driven stance, which is that truth and justice must be protected at any cost. Here he is keeping his idea of attaining justice as the top most priority as he considers his responsibility to protect the evidence at any cost so that it may not become a hurdle in the process of achieving justice. The sentence has an imperative tone as the phrase "Hard copies only" reflects a directive statement signaling urgency and confidence, whereas the phrase "Don't want a digital trial" emphasizes a deliberate avoidance showing foresight and strategic and pragmatic intent. So by utilizing this utterance, Reacher merges idealistic goals with practical execution. The preference for hard copies and securing evidence offline, Reacher sustains his fight against the Kleiner, who are environmental exploiters. His choice ensures that the investigation survives, which enable him to dismantle a system that thrives on exploitation and environmental destruction. So his pragmatic idealism indirectly results in environmental conservation

In episode 4, Reacher instructs Molly Beth to avoid the airport and deliver files via train to prevent digital tracking. This reflects his strategic thinking and commitment to justice while restraining exposure to surveillance systems. The protagonist's choice of utilizing offline methods to protect sensitive information prioritizes the

mission's security over personal convenience. This again elucidates his pragmatic approach as he avoids bureaucratic and technological vulnerabilities. A metamodern hero works in compromised systems in order to progress according to his ideals. Similarly, Reacher's selection of physical methods and avoidance of bureaucratic vulnerabilities reflect his pragmatic approach. On the other hand, his insistence on secrecy reflects his principle-driven approach as he is safeguarding the truth and justice at a personal risk. His pragmatic sense of action is guided by his strong morals of achieving justice at any cost. This results in the protagonist's rejection of systemic shortcuts and selection of resilience. The command is imperative in its nature and conveys pragmatic authority sustaining his pragmatic approach. The preference for physical delivery presents an anti-consumerist stance where he rejects the convenience culture which is tied to surveillance capitalism. This action of Reacher again sustains the investigation and efforts against the killers who are providing ecological harm to the environment. So Reacher here works as an agent of environmental conservation as his pragmatic idealism results in efforts for sustaining the ecology while dismantling the corrupt systems.

Environmental Justice and Toxic Discourse

In season 1, episode 1, Reacher observes the surroundings at a barbershop. The barber responds that “*The Kliner Foundation takes care of the margrave*”. The phrase “takes care of” constructs a paternalistic discourse. It frames the corporate dominance as benevolence. Rather than control. This represents the classic toxic discourse where harm is masked under that language of protection and philanthropy. The utilization of noun “Foundation” carries a moral legitimacy, disguising the real interiors of the Kliner's. This word signals charity, trust, and stability, but the narrative later reveals industrial corruption behind it. This depiction falls under the domain of environmental justice as the control over land, labor, and industry is rhetorically softened through philanthropic vocabulary. The discourse of toxicity has been disguised in paternalistic words. It further elucidates the role of capitalism in embedding itself into the community's identity. The town appears “maintained”, “polished” and orderly, which creates a surface-level harmony. This can be further debated that visible beautification (gazebo, flowers, statue) functions as environmental spectacle. This functioning can result in distraction from invisible toxicity. Nixon (2011) calls “slow violence” a harm that is gradually concealed and normalized. The role of Kliner Foundation in restructuring Margrave's spatial environment facilitates the privatization of civic pride. This transformation of public space into a site of corporate sponsorship creates a state of environmental dependency. The narrative further presents that the town's ecological and economic health remains tied to a single industrial entity. In the series, Toxic discourse functions through the redefinition of exploitation as caretaking. This shift from public governance to corporate guardianship ensures the weakening of democratic accountability along with institutions. The structural amendment of the landscape serves as a case study in greenwashing rhetoric. The underlying counterfeit and toxic networks are presented as a sustainability illusion. The maintenance of emotional reassurance further results in the delay of suspicion. This systemic suppression of the environment reveals the community's social fabric. Reacher's metamodern disposition becomes visible because he immediately senses “it's more than civic pride.” He oscillates between surface trust and critical suspicion. This oscillation within the discourse of toxicity elucidates his interaction with it. The protagonist's sincerity wants to believe in the community's pretentious order. But afterwards his ironic distance detects artificiality. Margrave is aesthetically maintained but morally contaminated. In this context of toxic discourse, the aesthetic cover is utilized to hide the darkness behind human actions. The Kliner's foundation becomes a symbol of toxic benevolence. The toxic benevolence again elucidates the concept of environmental justice, as the aestheticism is enjoyed by economically feeble people like barbers and the black profit is enjoyed by the Kliner's. Moreover, the consequences of the Kliner's' actions are being paid by the people of Margrave. This line functions as early narrative foreshadowing of ecological and moral contamination. It shows how toxic discourse precedes toxic exposure. This

elucidates the interaction of the protagonist's metamodern disposition with environmental justice and toxic discourse.

Similarly, there is another utterance by the barber when he says, "*You name it, Kliner do it. Real estate, trucking, chemicals, machine parts,*" season 1 episode 1. This dialogue is also spoken by the barber when he explains the role of Kliner Industries to Reacher. The phrase "*you name it*" represents a totalizing presence which reveals that Kliner Industries' capitalistic control over Margrave. This hegemonic presence signals the environmental deterioration in the series. The informal utilization of "*Kliner's do it*" reflects a normalization. This normalization reveals the existence of corporate dominance inside people's minds. The listing of real estate, trucking, chemicals, and machine parts functions as accumulation rhetoric. These businesses being controlled by Kliner's reveal their control over the environment. This control is directly proportional to deterioration because the more they control, the more they deteriorate the environment. This again signals the existence of Toxic discourse in the novel. This presentation of expansion also elucidates corporate competence along with systemic dominance. Kliner Industries, being presented as the sole service provider, acts as an agency of totalitarian control within the landscape of Margrave. This diversification also acts as a cover for the underlying mechanics of extractive capitalism. The inclusion of the word "chemicals" signals toxicity into the narrative long before any environmental damage becomes visible. The utilization of the word chemical presents the concept of chemical processing as harmless, which is again a tactic of corporate industries in order to minimize the depiction of environmental loss. They try their level best to minimize this depiction because it protects them from environmental responsibilities and benefits them in terms of economies, which signals a shift away from environmental justice. Environmental justice is further depicted through the integration of industrial operations into a small rural town. The corporation's control over land, movement, and material production signals vertical integration. This concentration of power deteriorates environmental and economic systems within the community space. Toxic discourse facilitates the normalization of industrial scale through infrastructural capitalism. The absence of resistance in the speaker's tone indicates complete ideological absorption. According to van Dijk (1998), groups that exercise greater control over influential public discourse have greater opportunities to influence the knowledge, opinions, and ideologies of less powerful groups. The ideological absorption of this idea signals that Kliner Industries are the ones controlling the institution of power. This institutional control results in environmental control. The environmental control signals the ideological control resulting in normalization of environmental deterioration among the people of Margrave. This alignment with Nixon's (2011) "slow violence" ensures that chemical harm remains gradually concealed. The list structure mimics the promotional language of corporate brochures. The industrial activity is framed as economic vitality, which creates ecological invisibility. This industrial multiplicity increases the environmental vulnerability of the town. The people of Margrave become dependent on a toxic infrastructure controlled by the Foundation responsible for environmental deterioration. Such individual presence can be related to a form of neo-colonization. Reacher's metamodern disposition becomes visible through his skeptical interpretation of this list. His ironic distance contrasts with the town's passive acceptance of the corporate narrative. He responds with structural doubt rather than admiration. This interaction demonstrates a metamodern oscillation between surface prosperity and underlying suspicion. The Kliner Foundation's listing of real estate, trucking, chemicals, and machine parts serves as a reflection of systemic power through narrative. Each sector contributes to a closed ecological-economic loop that facilitates the dominance of corporate eco-systems. Real estate transforms land ecology through the privatization of space. Trucking increases the mobility of harmful materials across the rural landscape. The production of chemicals introduces toxicity into the town's infrastructure. Machine parts enable the industrial scaling required for mass chemical processing. This combination demonstrates how toxic discourse is established with a language of corporate capability. Such capability eventually transitions into environmental contamination. The town's aesthetic stability depends entirely upon this

hidden environmental risk. Environmental justice analysis reveals that the Foundation's glorified presence creates an industrial-scale vulnerability. This structural arrangement foreshadows the chemical bleaching and environmental runoff revealed later in the narrative. The conversation tends to a point where the barber says, "*He gave Kliner a sweetheart land deal for his factory.*" The phrase "sweetheart land deal" signals corruption through economic favoritism. Land serves as the key environmental category here. It is not a mere background but an agent of active power. This is not abstract business corruption but territorial control. Environmental justice begins with land distribution and the mechanics of its transfer. The term "deal" reduces the intended existence of the ecological space into a mere commodity of transaction. "Sweetheart" trivializes corruption by softening structural injustice through affectionate vocabulary. This shows how environmental exploitation is normalized at the level of municipal governance. This further elucidates the metamodern disposition of pragmatic idealism where the protagonist is surviving in an institutionally compromised system. Land with agricultural or communal value becomes industrial property. Environmental harm often begins with these specific zoning decisions. This reflects regulatory capture where the state aligns with private industrial interests. The mayor functions as a facilitator of extractive capitalism. Environmental justice dimensions emerge through the total absence of community consultation. The economic benefits are distributed among the elites, while the hazards are distributed among the proletariat. This itself reveals how the concept of environmental justice fails to prevail in Klainer's society. The land deal restructures spatial ecology before any chemical harm begins. Factories eventually reshape air, soil, and water systems. This quote foreshadows the environmental runoff revealed later in the narrative. Toxic discourse hides behind an economic development narrative. The factory is presented as an opportunity rather than a threat. This reflects what environmental theorists describe as growth rhetoric. The "sweetheart" element implies a personal relationship between political authority and industrial power. Such a connection blurs the boundaries between public and private interests. The community remains secondary to elite negotiation and institutional arrangements. The land deal represents the pre-toxic stage of environmental injustice. Extraction begins legally through procedural maneuvers. Reacher's metamodern disposition appears as he quietly registers this asymmetry. He observes structural alignment without immediate moralization. His oscillation between calm detachment and investigative suspicion starts with this observation. Environmental injustice is shown to be embedded in governance rather than accident. The town's pastoral aesthetic hides its industrial origin story. Environmental harm is institutionalized before it becomes visible. This is slow violence in its administrative form. This reveals the interaction of metamodern oscillations with environmental justice and Toxic discourse

Findings and Discussions

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that emotional ambivalence in the series is not portrayed as psychological instability. The emotional ambivalence acts as a structurally informed response to contaminated environments. The protagonist's oscillation between detachment and moral engagement reveals a metamodern sensibility shaped by exposure to concealed injustice. This concealed injustice includes institutional distortion and ethical ambiguity. This inhabits the tension between the two binaries of an emotion that allows sincerity to coexist with suspicion without collapsing into cynicism or idealistic absolutism. This ambivalence becomes an interpretive stance through which the moral texture of Margrave is read and decoded. The town's aesthetic order masks industrial toxicity and political manipulation. This layered reality results in the production of emotional oscillation. Therefore, emotional ambivalence is not merely a character trait but a situated response to systemic instability. This response prepares the ground for deeper engagement with structural harm and environmental injustice in the subsequent analysis.

The analysis of pragmatic idealism reveals that the protagonist's metamodern disposition does not remain confined to internal oscillation but evolves into procedural action. The ideals are transformed in disciplined

intervention through investigation, preparation, and execution. Pragmatic idealism in the series acknowledges institutional risk, personal sacrifice, and structural constraint, but it refuses paralysis. The protagonist adopts a calibrated realism instead of heroic action or moral reflection through which justice is pursued. This synthesis of ideal aspiration and pragmatic method demonstrates that metamodern ethics operates within compromised systems rather than outside them. The contaminated socio-political environment shapes emotional stance along with operational strategy. Thus, the protagonist's actions reflect an ethics forged within toxicity. The actions further open the analytical space to examine the role of environmental justice and toxic discourse in interaction with his metamodern dispositions.

The analysis of toxic discourse and environmental justice reveals that environmental justice and toxic discourse interact with the protagonist's metamodern disposition throughout the narrative of *Reacher*. The series repeatedly exposes environments shaped by institutional corruption, exploitative economic systems, and structures that normalize harm through everyday language and bureaucratic logic. Toxic discourse becomes visible in the ways authority, greed, and systemic violence are disguised through normalized practices. The patterns of environmental injustice are revealed in which communities, social spaces, and institutional systems absorb the consequences of corruption and toxic infrastructures. Within this landscape, the protagonist's metamodern disposition emerges through a pragmatic awareness of these contradictions. Reacher navigates toxic systems through critical recognition, ethical restraint, and calculated intervention rather than adopting either naive idealism or complete cynicism. His responses reflect an oscillation between realism and moral responsibility. In his responses, structural harm is acknowledged while still being actively challenged. The interaction between environmental injustice, toxic discourse, and metamodern subjectivity therefore becomes central to the narrative's ethical framework, illustrating how the protagonist interprets and confronts environments shaped by systemic toxicity. The interaction between environmental justice, toxic discourse, and metamodernism becomes central to the narrative's framework. This depicts the illustration of protagonist who is confronting the environment shaped by systemic toxicity. The findings suggest a productive convergence between metamodernism and ecocriticism. The phenomenon may be termed "Metamodern Ecocriticism," where ecological concerns are resolved through Metamodern structures of feeling such as pragmatic idealism and emotional ambivalence.

Conclusion

To cut short, the research has demonstrated that popular media texts are not merely sites of entertainment but complex cultural artifacts capable of articulating ethical, emotional, and ecological discourses. The findings of this study reaffirm that contemporary television narratives operate as significant media. These mediums offer space for discussion or exploration of environmental issues, ideological tensions, and possibilities of resolution. At the core of this research lies the argument which states that metamodernism exists as a cultural logic which is characterized by oscillation between sincerity and irony, hope and doubt. This cultural thought provides a productive framework for understanding the protagonist's engagement with environmental issues. The analysis reveals that Jack Reacher's character embodies key metamodern dispositions, particularly emotional ambivalence and pragmatic idealism. These dispositions enable him to navigate morally and ecologically complex situations. The study further contributes to the growing field of environmental humanities. The study highlights a previously unexplored intersection between metamodernism and ecocriticism. This interaction of emotional ambivalence, pragmatic idealism, toxic discourse, and environmental justice suggests the possibility of an emerging critical orientation that may be termed Metamodern Ecocriticism. This perspective will further offer a framework for examining the role of contemporary narratives in representing and resolving ecological crisis through metamodern dispositions.

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