

Ratti, Manav, Warwick University, United Kingdom

Cultural Studies and the "New" Human Rights: Between Law and Literature

This paper will examine the conjunction of law and literature as expressed through the discourse of human rights. I will argue, in contradistinction to Joseph Slaughter's *Human Rights Inc.* (2007), that the Bildungsroman is not simply a complement to contemporary legal human rights discourses in “creating” the modern subject. Instead, the postcolonial writer can subvert the “genre” of the Bildungsroman in order to release a logic that is quite apart from the Western Enlightenment understanding and creation of the “subject”. I will refer specifically to Shobhasakthi’s novel *Gorilla* (2008). The writer is a former child soldier in Sri Lanka now resident in France. How can the postcolonial writer, particularly from Asia, write “back” to the legal discourse of human rights as developed in Euro-America? What are the implications of this “new” human rights, working between literature’s sociological function and law’s cultural function, for public policy in a world rapidly becoming cosmopolitan? What should be the task of cultural studies in trying to understand the role of both law and literature in this process of re-thinking human rights?