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# Transcorporeality and the Resistant Body in Sarah Hall's *The Carhullan Army*

Sarah Hall'un *The Carhullan Army* Romanında Geçişken Bedensellik ve Direnen Beden

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**ABSTRACT**
This article examines Sarah Hall's *The Carhullan Army* (2007) in order to address how resistance can be reconceptualized beyond ideological and discursive frameworks and understood as a materially grounded, embodied activity. The article contends that Hall's work emphasizes resistance as transcorporeal phenomena arising from the entanglement of human and nonhuman forces, in contrast to conventional readings of dystopian fiction that frequently favour political or psychological interpretations of resistance. In addition, this article examines how group labour, environmental interaction, and physical punishment influence the protagonist Sister's transition from docility to agency, using posthuman feminist theory and Foucauldian biopolitics as its methodological framework. In the discussion, firstly, the political management of female bodies is examined. It is followed by tracing the process of embodied transformation and ended with displaying how a form of material resistance is made possible through environmental participation.

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## Introduction

Sarah Hall, who is well known for her unsettling depictions of the body, environment, and violence in contemporary British fiction, regularly explores the intersections between ecological instability, female embodiment, and political control. By rejecting to portray resistance as a simply ideological, symbolic, or psychological act, Hall similarly challenges accepted notions of resistance in *The Carhullan Army*. Furthermore, the novel finds resistance in the body's constant involvement with both human and nonhuman forces, its exposure to labour and pain, and its material transformation. The novel follows Sister, the protagonist, from controlled domestic life to her eventual involvement in the women's separatist commune of Carhullan, and ultimately, in armed rebellion. It is set in a dystopian Britain ruled by an authoritarian regime known as the Authority. Yet this journey is not merely political. It is also relational, ecological, and physical. Therefore, Hall's novel redefines resistance as a materially enacted process that arises via bodily discipline, communal labour, and environmental entanglement rather than merely narrating a woman's rejection of oppression.

The dystopian universe of the book is governed by biopolitical control. Reproductive intervention, surveillance, and the control of bodily movement are some of the ways in which the Authority rules, making civil life inextricably linked to the control of biological existence. Women's bodies, in particular, become key sites of state intervention, most strikingly through

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the compulsory use of intrauterine (IUD) devices and the possibility of random bodily inspection. These mechanisms show that power in the book operates through a more widespread system that aims to discipline bodies from within rather than only through overt coercion or obvious violence. As a result, Hall's protagonist is presented as someone whose body and subjectivity have already been moulded by routine submission rather than as someone who is initially resistive. The novel's critique of authoritarian modernity revolves around its emphasis on the corporeal register of control, but Hall goes beyond illustrating how female bodies are disciplined by authority. She also demonstrates how those same bodies can become centres of resistance agency through labour, movement, pain, and environment.

*The Carhullan Army* has frequently been placed within feminist dystopian and post-apocalyptic traditions that emphasize surveillance, reproductive politics, and patriarchal control in existing scholarship. For example, Sofia Ahlberg highlights how Hall's literature handles female bodies in crisis situations and situates this novel within women's post-apocalyptic writing of the twenty-first century (Ahlberg, 2015). Studies of critical utopian writing and dystopian resistance, like Tom Moylan's *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (2000), offer a crucial foundation for comprehending the political critique of the book. Understanding the Authority as a regime that controls populations by interfering with bodily existence, particularly through reproductive control, normalization, and discipline, has also been made possible by readings influenced by Foucauldian biopolitics (Foucault, 1978; Sawicki, 1991). In addition to earlier feminist materialism formulations that emphasize the interdependence of matter and meaning, environmental and materialist approaches, especially those influenced by Stacy Alaimo's *Bodily Natures* (2010), have opened up fruitful ways of thinking about the novel's landscape and its critique of industrial modernity (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008). However, these interpretations have frequently treated the body as a place of power exercise or as a metaphor for larger political struggle, favouring discursive, symbolic, or ideological narratives of resistance. The degree to which resistance is materially executed in the novel through the body's shifting relationship to labour, ecology, pain, and environmental forces is still underdeveloped.

By putting Foucauldian biopolitics into a sustained dialogue with posthuman feminist theory and material ecocriticism, this paper deviates from those readings. According to Pramod K. Nayar in *Posthumanism* (2014), posthumanism questions the centrality of the autonomous human subject and instead, emphasizes relationality, materiality, and distributed agency, a move that is further extended in Clarie Colebrook's *Death of the Posthuman* (2014), which interrogates the limits and possible dissolution of the human as a stable category. Thus, this study contends that *The Carhullan Army* rethinks resistance as a transcorporeal process created by physical discipline, group labour, and environmental entanglement rather than as a solely ideological rejection of governmental power. Acknowledging that Hall's resistive bodies are formed via relational exchanges with land, food, weather, animals, tools, and the physical demands of community life necessitates moving beyond frameworks that separate the human body from the material world. Therefore, it is impossible to limit resistance in the novel to consciousness, choice, or symbolic defiance. Resistance emerges through embodied transformation. Since it explains how the contemporary state governs by controlling life itself rather than only punishing transgression, Foucault's notion of biopower is essential to such a reading (Foucault, 1978). Jana Sawicki's feminist formulation of Foucauldian power in *Disciplining Foucault* (1991) is especially helpful here because she makes a distinction between disciplinary power directed at individual bodies and regulatory power directed at populations. When combined, these frameworks shed light on the Authority's physical surveillance, territorial limitations, and reproductive policies. However, the novel's focus on the material and ecological aspects of transformation cannot be adequately explained by Foucauldian theory alone, even while it explains how the body is governed. For that, posthuman feminist theory becomes necessary. Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007), Stacy Alaimo's concept of transcorporeality (2010), Rosi Braidotti's *The Posthuman* (2013), Donna Haraway's challenge to human exceptionalism that is extended in *Staying with the Trouble* (2016), Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* (2010), and Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann's *Material Ecocriticism* (2014) together make it possible to see that Hall's

bodies do not simply resist power as isolated human subjects; rather, they are reshaped through ongoing contact with the material world. In this way, the novel's ontology of relational embodiment and politics of resistance are inextricably linked.

The way Sister's trajectory should be interpreted is also changed by such a framework. Although her journey from domestic captivity to Carhullan at first seem like a typical story of emancipation, Hall challenges this paradigm by not portraying emancipation as instantaneous of solely internal. Sister does not simply choose to overcome injustice by becoming resistant. Her body needs to be remade. Hardship, manual labour, altered eating habits, exhaustion, weather exposure, and involvement in a society whose connection to the land is essential to its survival all contribute to this remaking. Therefore, Carhullan is more than just a refuge from the Authority. The body goes through a different regime of creation in this area. The collaborative labour of the women: farming, foraging, hauling, building, cooking, and training, reorients embodiment itself in addition to sustaining the commune. Docility is eventually changed into a new corporeal capacity for endurance, interdependence, and action through these repeated material practices. In that sense, the novel's persistent focus on the environment is essential. The geography of Carhullan is hardly a neutral setting for political developments. It affects the women of Carhullan, puts them to test, provides for them, feeds them, and shapes the very form their resistance can take. Mountain trails, moors, severe weather, soil, livestock, and food systems are all active actors in women's metamorphosis rather than merely incidental elements. Hall emphasizes time and time again that living at Carhullan necessitates direct interaction with material conditions that were either hidden or mediated by urban authoritarian life. Because they challenge the liberal-humanist presumption that agency originates only within an autonomous subject, such scenes lend themselves to a posthumanist interpretation. Rather, the novel suggests that bodies' embeddedness in human and nonhuman networks gives them the ability to resist. One of the novel's most significant interventions is this transition from autonomy to relationality. In this way, *The Carhullan Army* contributes to a larger posthuman feminist reconsideration of agency. In the novel, the body is neither a merely cultural inscription nor a fixed essence. Power and resistance flow via this place, which is materially embedded, mutable and vulnerable.

This article therefore reads Hall's dystopia not simply as a critique of patriarchy or authoritarian governance, but as a narrative that redefines resistance through the intertwined dynamics of body, labour, environment, and nonhuman agency. The argument presented here aims to show that the novel reframes resistance as a relational and processual phenomenon by combining feminist dystopian studies, biopolitical theory, and posthuman materialist ideas into a unified framework. This is the novel's most important intervention: it demonstrates that resistance is physically executed through bodily connection with the tangible world rather than just being imagined, declared, or symbolized.

## Biopolitical Control and the Production of Docile Bodies

Sister's account of the IUD insertion foregrounds the invasive and materially grounded nature of the Authority's control over the female body:

> A nurse came in and quickly explained what would happen to us. She held up a model of the device. It was made of copper and was about the size of a matchstick. Two threads ran from it. She pointed to these and said they were longer than those of the original coils, so that the vaginal checks we would undergo to see whether they were still in place could be made more easily, and not necessarily at the clinic. I didn't understand what she meant. It was only later I found out the Authority was making random examinations; that women were sometimes asked to display themselves to the monitors in the backs of cruisers. (Hall, 2007, p. 32)

Authority in *The Carhullan Army* is exercised through a system of control that penetrates the intimate materiality of the body itself in addition to over force. It is an example of what Foucault refers to as biopower because it controls life processes, such as reproduction, movement, health,

and physical integrity instead of depending only on overt violence or legal enforcement. According to Foucault, contemporary power "serves as the basis of biological processes affecting birth, death, the level of health and longevity" (1978, p. 68), indicating a shift from sovereign power that creates life to regulatory power that controls it. In this framework, the body becomes a place of power production, circulation, and stabilization rather than just an object of control. By differentiating between disciplinary and regulatory authority, Jana Sawicki's development of Foucauldian biopolitics clarifies this dynamic. While regulatory power works at the level of populations, guaranteeing systemic stability through health management and demographic control, disciplinary power works at the level of the individual body, treating it as a machine to be optimized, taught, and made submissive (Sawicki, 1991). These two modalities come together in the novel within the state's reproductive policy, as women's bodies are both collectivized and individualized, vulnerable to both intimate intervention and broader population strategies. An example of this convergence is the mandatory insertion of intrauterine devices, which shows how the Authority blurs the line between individual liberty and governmental authority. For a long time, feminist theorists of embodiment have stressed that these mechanisms cannot be understood solely as abstract structures but must be read through their material effects on lived bodies. While Susan Bardo (1993) emphasizes how disciplinary procedures inscribe themselves into the body through daily routines, Judith Butler (1990) shows the ways in which disciplinary practices inscribe themselves onto the body through everyday routines. In turn, Elizabeth Grosz (1994) conceptualizes the body as a volatile interface between biological, social, and material forces, suggesting that embodiment is not fixed but continuously negotiated. In addition to highlighting how knowledge and embodiment are located within material and social conditions, Nancy Hartsock's feminist standpoint theory emphasizes how power is perceived differently across embodied positions (Hartsock, 1998). These viewpoints agree that the body is a dynamic site where power is materialized.

By equating female bodies with livestock under a system of extraction and management, Sister's comparison "as efficiently as a farmer clipping the ear of one of his herd" (Hall, 2007, p. 32), makes the logic of biopolitical control clear. The procedure's invasive character is concealed by its clinical jargon, which turns an act of bodily violation into a commonplace administrative task. Power no longer functions at a distance but rather permeates the conditions of embodiment, as seen by the expansion of monitoring beyond institutional places in to the most private areas of the body. Sandra Lee Bartky's claim that disciplinary actions not only control bodies but also result in subjects who internalize their own subjugation is supported by such imagery (Bartky, 1990). Sister's observation of the device, "as if the thing were an ugly birthmark," further demonstrates this internalization (Hall, 2007, p. 97). Here, the IUD is an integrated marker that modifies self-perception instead of an external imposition. The line separating the body from technology blurs, exposing the degree to which biopolitical control functions through embodiment processes. In this context, Iris Marion Young's concept of the "lived body" is especially pertinent since it emphasizes how societal limitations impact bodily experience while preserving the possibility of action (Young, 1990). Despite its limitations, Sister's body continues to be a tense place where resistance and power coexist. Sister's body is determined not only by regulation but also by its interaction with nonhuman forces as she ventures outside of the Authority's regulated areas and starts to experience the material circumstances of the Carhullan environment.

Although feminist and Foucauldian frameworks offer a thorough explanation of how bodies are disciplined, they frequently continue to emphasize human-centred processes. By emphasizing the relational and material aspects of embodiment and questioning the notion that agency is solely human, posthuman theory expands on this analysis. It can be said that the primary idea here is Karen Barad's concept of intra-action, which holds that entities do not pre-exist their relations but emerge through those relations. According to Barad, "reality is not a fixed essence" but rather "an ongoing dynamic of intra-activity," wherein human and nonhuman forces intertwined (2007, p. 206). This viewpoint places the body inside a web of material relations, undermining the idea that it is a bounded entity. In a similar vein, Stacy Alaimo's theory of

transcorporeality highlights the interdependence of human bodies and their surroundings (Alaimo, 2010). To ground this interdependence in a specific ontology, it is necessary to recognize that transcorporeality defines the very location where the human and the nonhuman meet. Alaimo proposes that we inhabit "trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world…which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment'" (Alaimo, 2010, p. 2). This foundational definition serves as the baseline for this article's argument: Sister's suffering and eventual resilience at Carhullan are not isolated human experiences but events occurring within this entangled, inseparable time-space. Alaimo emphasizes the permeability of physical borders in *Bodily Natures*, arguing that the "existence of anything… cannot be taken for granted as simply existing out there" (2010, p. 21). This approach makes it possible to rethink resistance as a process that emerges not solely from human intention but from the interaction between bodies and their environments. This is further supported by Jane Bennett's idea of "vibrant matter" and Donna Haraway's concept of "companion species," which attribute agency to nonhuman elements and imply that agency is dispersed across assemblages rather than found within individuals.

Sister's interaction with the environment and labour at Carhullan makes her metamorphosis materially visible, as she notes: "This was as honest and raw as I could get" (Hall, 2007, p. 111). Rejecting processed food and industrialized processes represent Sister's return to direct material interaction, in which the body interacts more directly with its surroundings instead of being mediated by the Authority's institutions. This transformation is not just physical but also epistemic, changing the body's perception of itself and its place in the world. Iovino and Oppermann extend this argument by proposing that matter itself is "storied," actively participating in the production of meaning (2014). Within this framework, the Carhullan landscape is not a passive setting then. The landscape becomes an active force that shapes women's transformation. The terrain, the labour it demands, and the resources it provides all contribute to the reconfiguration of embodiment, revealing that resistance is inseparable from material conditions. If bodies are constituted through their relations with human and nonhuman forces, then resistance cannot be reduced to a purely ideological or symbolic act. Thus, it must be understood as a materially enacted process that unfolds over time, which is illustrated through Sister's transformation as an armed rebel. Her initial departure from the Authority does not result in resistance right away, but it does start a process that reconfigures her body by hard work, perseverance, and interaction with the environment. Sawicki's assertion that "when restraining forces are overcome, power relations collapse into force relations" (1991, p. 25) captures this transition. Women's resistance changes from survival to organized rebellion as their labour becomes more intense. This intensification marks a shift into a new political subjectivity where the human can no longer be considered separate from the environment in any meaningful sense. Alaimo emphasizes that the recognition of the "material interconnections of human corporeality with the more-than-human world… allows us to forge ethical and political positions that can contend with numerous… realities in which 'human' and 'environment' can by no means be considered as separate" (Alaimo, 2010, p. 2). Consequently, the rebellion at Carhullan is not just a fight against a political regime, but a defence of this material inseparability against a system that sees to manage bodies as if they were sterile, isolated units. That same intensity is further manifested in a private training camp where physical violence is not just a tool of war, but a method of hardening the collective body: "I saw her body arc through the air before she was slammed onto the grass. I winced as her head rebounded off the turf" (Hall, 2007, p. 93). Such meticulous exercises highlight that the material resistance at Carhullan is forged through repeated, painful contact with both peers and the earth itself. The common experiences of the Carhullan women namely labour, adversity, and environmental engagement, create a web of connections that allow resistance to become a powerful force.

## From Docility to Resistance

*The Carhullan Army* constructs resistance as a gradual transformation of the body shaped through material, relational, and communal processes rather than an immediate ideological

rupture, given the novel's persistent engagement with biopolitical control, feminist resistance and environmental interconnection. Because it reorganizes embodiment itself in addition to rejecting state authority, the all-women commune of Carhullan serves as a radical counter-site to the Authority's dictatorship. The commune, led by Jackie Nixon, redefines autonomy as a state created through labour, interdependence, and environmental sensitivity. Nixon's authority comes from collective acknowledgment and embodied discipline. In contrast to the Authority's extractive and regulatory logic, Carhullan operates through practices of self-sufficiency, sustainable production, and collective survival, thereby repositioning the body within a different network of relations. Resistance, in this sense, is not a declaration but reconfiguration of a lifestyle. In contrast, the centrality of reproductive control within the Authority's system reveals the extent to which the female body is positioned as a primary site of intervention. The device integrates control at the identity level and becomes a part of her self-perception. The body is no longer merely controlled but redefined, demonstrating how power functions within social and material conditions. The Authority's interventions shape Sister's body, making it a place where power is experienced and potentially contested. However, these conditions do not instantly reverse when one moves from docility to opposition. Rather, it develops gradually as Sister moves in the direction of Carhullan and away from the Authority. Her initial act of resistance, which was to leave her husband, appears minor in scale but is significant in its disruption of normalized patterns of behaviour:

> In the early morning I left our bed without waking Andrew and dressed quietly in the communal bathroom … I had trained myself to wake early and had practiced this departure … He would never have let me go off with a packed bag, out of the official zones, even though we were at odds now, hateful or silent towards each other. (Hall, 2007, p. 10)

This rehearsed escape reflects what Butler identifies as the body's capacity to act within and against regulatory structures. The body has the capacity to deviate even inside control systems, although these actions are frequently limited and incomplete. Rather than signifying the end of a process, Sister's leaving signifies its start. Her account of spatial confinement reveals the depth of her previous indoctrination:

> For years I had not been out of Rith. No civilian had, unless they were being transported to a detention centre. The zones did not allow for transference. The original register bound people to their areas at the time of the collapse. Only government agents and the Authority has any need to travel, or the means to do it, and then it was usually by train. (Hall, 2007, p. 11)

A prime example of regulatory authority is the zoning system, which shapes perception as well as mobility. The Authority creates individual who accept confinement as normal by reframing geographic borders as unalterable and unquestionable. As Sister's renaming shows, this internalization extends to identity itself:

> My name is Sister. This is the name that was given to me three years ago. It is what others called me. It is what I call myself. Before that, my name was unimportant. I can't remember it being used. I will not answer to it now, or hear myself say it out loud. I will not sign to acknowledge it. It is gone. You will call me Sister. I was the last woman to go looking for Carhullan. (Hall, 2007, p. 8)

Renaming breaks the connection between identity and state classification, acting both as tangible and symbolic opposition. However, without matching adjustments to the material circumstances, this transformation is still unfinished. Her reflection on confinement underscores this limitation: "I was tied to this building… There were no other options for us" (Hall, 2007, p. 12). The sense of inevitability demonstrates the extent to which authority is internalized. A rupture in this internalization is represented by Sister's desire to leave, but this rupture can only become transformative via persistent mobility and experience. Her resolve going forward, "I made myself not turn around… forward," signals the beginning of a reorientation, both

physically and perceptually (Hall, 2007, p. 12). Reorientation of such is immediately triggered by the sensory shift of the landscape, where the "wounded" rain of the Authority's zones gives way to a nostalgic, raw alertness. "The cool reminded me of my childhood. Back then the weather had been more distinct, separated" (Hall, 2007, pp. 8-9). This sensory reclamation marks the first stage of her transcorporeal awakening as she moves beyond the semi-tropics of state control. Sister finds circumstances that are very different from those enforced by the Authority as she moves into the wild world. The environment poses difficulties that call for physical adaptation but is not controlled by surveillance or regulation. This change raises the prospect of an alternative way of embodiment that is moulded by interaction with nonhuman factors as opposed to institutional control. Change in question later on becomes communal when she finally arrives at Carhullan. At Carhullan, environmental engagement, interdependence, and labour are used to recreate the body. Sister's observation of the women captures that recreation: "I liked them, and I liked being with them… It was the sense of basic usefulness" (Hall, 2007, p. 140). Here, usefulness is determined by a contribution to group survival rather than productivity within an exploitative system. This relational usefulness is a manifestation of what Alaimo calls "intercorporeality," a state in which embodiment is never a private affair but a constant interaction with other bodies. She writes that "to describe embodiment as intercorporeality is to emphasize that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and nonhuman bodies" (Alaimo, 2016, p. 29). For the Carhullan women, this mediation is the source of their power; their bodies are recomposed not through individual willpower, but through the communal and environmental intra-actions that produce their collective strength. The claim made by Young that the lived body "refuses the distinction between nature and culture" is particularly relevant because the women's relationships with the land transform both their identities and their abilities (1990, p. 17). The commune's material practices serve as another articulation of this transformation:

> Within a year of it being inhabited the women had installed a waterwheel, harnessing a nearby spring. A year-round garden had been planted, and a fast-growing willow cops. There were sties, bees, an orchard, and a fishery at the beck shuttle of the tarn… It was, and had always been, removed from the faulted municipal world. (Hall, 2007, p. 59)

These systems' construction shows how resistance is ingrained in material conditions. Women's labour creates a new relationship between body, environment, and power in addition to sustaining the commune. Jackie Nixon's declaration reinforces that creation of a new relationship: "It's time for a new society" (Hall, 2007, p. 55). Instead of focusing only on opposition, this remark reframes what they stand for as a commune of women as a resistance that creates an alternative understanding of autonomy. A restricting of autonomy as relational rather than individual is reflected in the women's dedication to self-sufficiency and group responsibility. Sister's ultimate metamorphosis is the result of this process: "I liked what I saw in the clouded mirror… I saw the truth of her" (Hall, 2007, p. 218). As a result, a new embodied subjectivity emerges when this "stranger" is acknowledged. This recognition in the clouded mirror confirms that the protagonist has successfully sloughed off her state-mandated docility in favour of a fierce, new identity: "She was a stranger to me, this woman opposite, and yet I saw the truth of her… She was my anima" (Hall, 2007, p. 218). By defining this new self as anima, Sister acknowledges that her transformation is a deep, psychological rebirth triggered by a total material reconfiguration. Once constrained and disciplined, the body becomes a location of agency that is changed by its interactions with the environment and other people. In that sense, the shift from subservience to resistance appears not to be a linear progression but a complex process that unfolds across multiple levels including biopolitical, material, and relational.

## Environmental and Transcorporeal Resistance at Carhullan

Within the Carhullan commune, the women's daily engagement with labour, landscape, and survival practices reveals that resistance emerges through the body's direct interaction with material conditions rather than through armed opposition alone. When viewed through the lens

of transcorporeality, the body transcends the boundaries of an independent human subject and becomes a location of an ongoing interaction with its surroundings. This condition is most fully expressed in *The Carhullan Army*, where resistance is materialized through the reciprocal relationship between body and environment. Therefore, the women's resistance cannot be reduced to a sequence of deliberate acts driven by ideological rejection or prior trauma; rather, it is constructed through persistent engagement with nonhuman forces that actively modify their physiological capacities. Their hard work, perseverance, and exposure to the environment not only boost the resistance but also create it. Thus, resistance takes on a tangible form as a result of bodily reconfiguration processes. This transformation is possible only when the subject recognizes that the environment is not a passive element for human action but a world of active fleshy beings. As Alaimo contends, "Thinking across bodies may catalyze the recognition that the 'environment,' which is too often imagined as inert, empty space or as a 'resource' for human use, is, in fact, a world of flesh beings, with their own needs, claims, and actions" (Alaimo, 2008, p. 238). By acknowledging these active claims of the Carhullan landscape such as its soil, weather, and topography, the protagonist's struggle becomes an ethical intra-action with a world that actively talks back to the Authority's biopolitical control. Before this transfiguration can stabilize, the body must undergo a state of total material breakdown, as seen when Sister collapses upon reaching the farm's perimeter: "my feet felt as if every tiny pliant bone in them was broken… I was like a landed fish" (Hall, 2007, p. 60). This image of the landed fish illustrates the physical vulnerability of the docile body as it is fished out of the Authority's environment and prepared for the raw conditions of Carhullan. According to Sawicki, "restraining forces are overcome, power relations collapse into force relations," indicating that resistance is not external to power but arises when bodies exceed the conditions imposed upon them (1991, p. 25). As Sister becomes increasingly integrated into the Carhullan community, resistance undergoes a significant transformation from survival-based adaptation to organized and collective rebellion. The women's concerted efforts to topple the Authority's power structures serve as an example of this change: "To strike it would be to sunder the chassis that held everything together… We were going to hold Rith for as long as possible" (Hall, 2007, p. 208). The language h ere signals a transition from passive endurance to strategic intervention, where resistance is no longer reactive but anticipatory and materially grounded. Sister's last testimony is the pinnacle of this metamorphosis: "This is my statement… I was a willing participant in the siege on Rith" (Hall, 2007, p. 221). Her declaration signifies the beginning of a fully embodied resistance that is based on common material conditions and is collective rather than individual. The ability of the Carhullan women to take coordinated action is a product of their interdependence through labour, shared resources, and mutual reliance. The women's interaction with the environment, which serves as an active participant in their development is inextricably linked to this process. Because it emphasizes the mutual construction of nature and culture, Barad's claim that "materiality is an active factor in processes of materialization" is especially pertinent in this context. The women's bodies are shaped by the Carhullan terrain in the same way as their labour shapes it.

This dynamic is captured in Shruti's reflection. "There is nothing like this place for rehabilitation… It's working with the land that does it" (Hall, 2007, p. 141). In this framework, rehabilitation is material rather than psychological. It is accomplished by physically interacting with the surroundings and by performing tasks that call for perseverance, repetition, and adaptation. The Carhullan women's bodies are able to transcend the passive state enforced by the Authority when they engage in farming, foraging, and food preparation. This transcendence is most visually represented by Sister's literal shedding of the Authority's garments to allow the environment to touch her skin directly: "I stopped, put the bag down, and stripped off to the waist… Rain snaked down my shoulders and arms, dripping off my breasts" (Hall, 2007, p. 48). By allowing the rain to snake down her body, Sister enacts a transcorporeal merger where the boundary between her flesh and the wounded rain dissolves into a singular, resistant entity. Carhullan's "raw" conditions like its soil, climate, and labour-intensive practices of taking care of the animals all act as transformative forces that alter their identities and bodily capacities. This

transformation is a direct rejection of the stately distancing practiced by the Authority, moving instead toward a literal, inescapable enmeshment in matter. In her interview, Alaimo explains that transcorporeality "does the opposite of distancing or dividing the human from external nature. It implies that we're literally enmeshed in the physical material world, so environmentalism cannot be an externalized and optional kind of pursuit, but always present, always at hand" (Kuznetski, 2020, p. 139). Sister's transition into a willing participant in the commune is therefore an act of claiming this at-hand environmentalism, turning her every flesh into a site of resistance that can no longer be ignored or optional. The definition of labour itself is likewise redefined by this change. Under the Authority, labour is forced, exploitative, and unrelated to agency. But at Carhullan, work becomes connected, meaningful, and produces identity. Sister's perspective on the way she understood labour has changed drastically as she looks upon the women around her toiling: "I could not have said why exactly, but I liked watching the women work. The routine of their hands, the craft of what they were doing, was hypnotic" (Hall, 2007, p. 205). The repetitive, embodied nature of these practices and tasks generates a new understanding of value, one that is not dictated by industrial productivity but by collective survival and shared purpose. This is consistent with posthuman feminist views, especially Alaimo's notion of transcorporeality that describes how bodies are constantly moulded by their interactions with material surroundings (Alaimo, 2010). Agency, in this perspective, is not an inherent property of the individual but emerges through relational processes. The novel's portrayal of ecological instability also serves to further solidify this relationality: "Even the rain is different now; erratic, violent, not the constant grey drizzle of old postcards, jokes, and television reports. It's rain that feels wounded" (Hall, 2007, p. 9). The personification of rain is a manifestation of an ecological consciousness where the failure of oppressive policies and environmental deterioration under the rule of the Authory are inextricably linked. Carhullan commune allows for the flourishing of environmental agency through the labour of women and their interdependence with the environment: The women's damaged bodies are reflected in the wounded surroundings, indicating that resistance must function both for the women of Carhullan and the environment itself. In keeping with Ursula K. Heise's focus on the interdependence of local and global ecological imaginaries and the need to reconsider environmental belonging beyond isolated human perspectives, this ecological awareness places Carhullan within a larger framework of material interdependence, where survival is dependent upon maintaining a reciprocal relationship with the environment (Heise, 2008). As a place of transformation as well as a protective barrier, the landscape itself is essential in strengthening the resistance among Carhullan women:

> It was only when I heard dogs barking in the distance, and I looked up. … Against the dull brown massif it looked like the last place on earth, defended and extraordinary, an outpost where all hopes and energies, all physical means, had been consolidated and fortified. (Hall, 2007, p. 69)

The landscape tests the women's physical limits and protects them from surveillance, fostering resilience through adversity. The claim made by Iovino and Oppermann (2014) that matter itself contributes to the creation of meaning and agency is reflected in this dual role. Instead of being passive, the Carhullan environment is "storied," actively aiding in the change of the women. For Sister, this storied landscape provides a new garment of agency that replaces the clinical surveillance and artificial lighting of the Authority: "As I stood and looked in the direction of the summits I felt properly dressed in my own muscles… as if I belonged outside… away from the crowding" (Hall, 2007, pp. 47-48). This feeling of being properly dressed in her own physicality underscores the argument that agency in the novel is found in material belonging rather than liberal autonomy. The connection of material and affective elements is further demonstrated by Sister's feeling of hope as she states: [i]t was hope that nourished me day after day, in a way the imported canned food never would," expressing the material and emotional interdependence of the women in Carhullan (Hall, 2007, p. 18). The concept that resistance is maintained through the interaction of material circumstances and affective states is reinforced in this instance by the fact that nutrition is both physical and emotional. A larger rejection of the Authority's logic of

control is shown in the preference for locally produced resources over industrialized food systems. The novel also emphasizes how this change is still influenced by prior experiences with control and surveillance. This memory stands in stark contrast to life at Carhullan, where bodies are incorporated into a mutually dependent system rather than being the subject of intrusive surveillance as it is reflected in Sister's feeling of rejuvenation: "I felt myself again, a self I had not been for so long. I remembered how I had experienced the same feeling in this place when I was young, when I had been here walking, before the restrictions" (Hall, 2007, p. 37). This resurgence of selfhood is the outcome of a new relational configuration moulded by the community and surroundings rather than a return to a prior identity. The role of nonhuman forces becomes particularly evident in Sister's interaction with the landscape:

> Now I stumbled across its gills and over its marshland, bending to meet the wind when it roared against me, and dragging myself up the scars by handfuls of heather and thorn bushes, by any firm hold. … If the mountains tested my limits, they also gave me satisfaction, they were the measure by which I gauged my resilience. (Hall, 2007, p. 187)

The mountain is now an active agent that influences physical experience as it challenges, resists, and eventually helps build resilience. This dynamic is an example of a transcorporeal understanding of resistance, in which agency is not only found within the human subject but also arises through interaction with nonhuman forces. Carhullan thus represents a space for a type of resistance that is essentially relational and material for the women.

## Conclusion

The novel reconceptualizes resistance by the way its narrative displaces the idea of resistance from the real of purely ideological or psychological opposition and relocating it within the material, embodied, and relational processes that constitute lived experience. Instead of portraying resistance as an instantaneous or declarative act, the novel chronicles its birth through the body's progressive alteration, affected by environmental entanglement, communal labour, and biopolitical regulation. By doing this, the story subverts anthropocentric and individualistic conceptions of agency and shows that resistance is a tangible product of contact rather than merely a choice. This subversion reaches its peak when the protagonist finally realizes that her self is not a bounded soul but is made of the very substance of the world she sought to join. This reflects Alaimo's own conclusion on subjectivity in the Anthropocene: "we are always already the very substance and the stuff of the world that we are changing" (Kuznetski, 2020, p. 139). The novel's dystopian universe, which is organized by surveillance, reproductive control, and spatial restriction demonstrates how authority functions both at the discursive level and through the management of material life at a physical level. Posthuman feminist perspectives, especially the concept of transcorporeality shed more light on this relational understanding of resistance. Transcorporeality allows resistance to be understood as an evolving process rather than a fixed attribute by highlighting the permeability of biological boundaries and the interconnectivity of human and nonhuman subjects. According to this theory, bodies resist by becoming entangled with their surroundings, materials, and other bodies. The novel demonstrates how the Carhullan women's resistance is created through their interactions with the land, their shared labour, and their collective experiences. The novel also places this change in a larger ecological and political framework. Descriptions of changing weather patterns and degraded landscapes show how the environment is damaged and unstable, reflecting the effects of authoritarian governance and implying a close connection between ecological and political disasters. In this view, resistance goes beyond the human body to include a more comprehensive ecological consciousness that connects environmental responsibility with survival. The Carhullan community's rejection of industrial systems and its reliance on localized, material practices further reinforce this connection, positioning resistance as both a political and ecological act. By integrating Foucauldian biopolitics with posthuman feminist theory, this article has aimed to argue that *The Carhullan Army* redefines resistance as a transcorporeal process that emerges through the interaction of body, environment, and power. This reconceptualization not only challenges traditional frameworks that privilege ideology over

materiality but also contributes to broader discussions within posthuman feminism by foregrounding the role of nonhuman forces in shaping agency.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Declaration of AI Use

Any AI-assisted tools, if used, were limited to language editing. No AI tools were used for data collection, analysis, or interpretation of findings. The author(s) assume sole responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and final content of the manuscript.

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