

CHAPTER 2

BODIES THAT REMEMBER: CASTE, CULTURAL MEMORY AND NARRATIVE MOURNING IN MALAYALAM COUNTER-ARCHIVES

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the dynamics of counter-memory in literary cultures and Malayalam visuals through a comparative analysis of Lijo Jose Pellissery's *Ee.Ma.Yau* (2018) and the Dalit short fictions of C. Ayyappan, a collection from Ayyappante Therañjedutha Kathakal (2010). *Ee.Ma.Yau* set against the backdrop of a coastal Christian community, appears to be a black comedy at first which talks about the death rituals, but beneath it lies a poignant critique of institutional religion, patriarchal authority and the performative spectacle of mourning. The movie follows the chaotic aftermaths of a man's sudden death and his son's several attempts to provide him a dignified funeral. Death is not given the idea of closure in this particular movie; rather it is used as a disorienting narrating device to expose the performativity of ritual and the quiet violence of social hierarchies. In parallel, C. Ayyappan's Dalit stories revolve around the Dalit communities in Kerala, mapping their humiliation, exclusion and resistance. His raw style becomes an act of memorialization, refusing to let the society erase or ignore the experiences or struggle the community faces. Both the film and the literary text do not follow a linear storytelling, but foregrounds the body, especially the dead or suffering body to highlight how deeply issues like memory, social status and power are connected. Through close textual and cinematic analysis, this chapter argues how *Ee.Ma.Yau* and Ayyappan's short stories function as counter archives that challenge Kerala's progressive self-image and reclaims the narrative space for

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