

Everyday Resistance in the Yin Space-Tracing Queer Heterotopias in *Body2Body: A Malaysian Queer Anthology* (2009)

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ABSTRACT

*Foucault's concept of heterotopia refers to a space of resistance situated in the realm of in-betweenness, where alternative forms of existence become possible. In relation to the LGBTQ community, this notion has been recontextualised into queer heterotopia, a space that enables LGBTQ individuals to live without conforming to heteronormative standards. This study examines queer heterotopia in Malaysian queer literature through selected short stories in *Body2Body: A Malaysian Queer Anthology* (2009), while also incorporating the Chinese metaphysical concept of yin–yang. It argues that queer heterotopia cannot emerge independently; rather, it is preceded and sustained by a yin-inclined space associated with femininity, darkness, fluidity, and secrecy. For characters living on the margins, the yin space provides the conditions necessary to form resistance. Within the anthology, queer characters navigating hostile environments draw on yin energy to reach queer heterotopias, where they articulate their identities through performative, emotive, and sexual expressions as forms of everyday resistance. The findings suggest that resistance within queer heterotopia need not be overt or confrontational; even when subtle and nuanced, resistance rooted in the yin space remains empowering, prompting characters to assert meaningful agency in their existence.*

Keywords: Body 2 Body; everyday resistance; Malaysian queer literature; queer heterotopia; Yin space

INTRODUCTION

The survival of all beings hinges on many factors such as climate, resources, and opportunities for growth. Yet, above all, a fertile environment may be the most crucial. Humans, just like any other species, thrive in an abundance and a safe environment. After all, positive transformations and growth are only possible when one finds themselves in the right environment, as a plausible environment might furnish one with the right support and energy in relation to fruitful living (Colston, 2018); the right environment or space might better encompass more than just the physical space in which one inhabits. In order to prosper in such ideals, Mary (2025) continues, both physical and emotional spaces are significant to generate dreams that burgeon within a supportive environment. When it comes to being granted the right environment or space in which one lives, the LGBTQ community often becomes the focus as they continue to struggle for secure and inclusive living spaces. In a world where heteronormativity is in practice, locating safe spaces for LGBTQ community members presents greater challenges. First, heteronormativity generally accords privilege to heterosexuals because being heterosexual is seen as natural, normal, and inevitable. Second, this might have led to the perpetuation of discrimination against sexual minorities who diverge from the conditions of heteronormativity (Fitzgerald & Grossman, 2024). Unlike LGBTQ community members, heterosexuals often take the liberty to live for granted because their sexuality aligns well with the dominant heteronormative worldviews. Those who do not fit into the heteronormative society are often ostracised as deviants or the unnatural (Johnstone, 2022).

Furthermore, the heteronormative world mirrors heterosexual prerogative, oppressing non-heterosexuals to the periphery (Kane, 2012). Goldberg (2016) argues that more than 90% of global high school students have admitted to being subject to anti-queer slurs, claiming that the hostility against them was more pronounced in their adolescence. Precisely because confronting violence, abuse, and discrimination are daily occurrences, it has become common for many queer young adolescents, particularly in the West, to realise that safe havens are merely illusions, no more (Houde, 2018). Clarke et al. (2010) succinctly argue that in places where gay rights are lawful, gay individuals continue to experience higher mental and physical stress than their straight counterparts. In the workplace, gay individuals are more likely to be dismissed from work or rejected for promotions due to their sexual orientations.

Given the aforementioned discussions, it is not a stretch to argue that the LGBTQ community is at a constant war against heteronormativity. This is especially pervasive in the East nation-states where LGBTQ rights are almost non-existent, including Malaysia. Violence against the LGBTQ community is, in practice, rare, and prosecution against members of the said community is rampant and some are even state-sanctioned (Ellis-Petersen, 2018). While Western gay rights movements emphasising the centrality of individual rights continue to hold water, these rights are exercised in a rousing contrast in Malaysia (Shah, 2017). On the one hand, the domineering practices of Islamic values and beliefs in Malaysia generally mean that certain controversial human rights issues will need to be forgone; therefore, exclusions to the protection of the LGBTQ community rights are the more prevalent (Luther & Loh, 2019). On the other hand, individuals who choose to live openly gay in Malaysia are more susceptible to violence, exposing them to school bullies and workplace discrimination (Kingston, 2019). To worsen LGBTQ positions, Malaysian political and religious parties have consistently demonstrated interests in institutionalising heteronormativity, heterosexism, and homophobia into national policies, framing them in accordance with Islamic values and the prevailing social milieu (Peletz, 2009). The LGBTQ individuals in Malaysia, therefore, often find themselves needing to navigate the space that primarily marginalises them, making prosecution and violence against the LGBTQ community all the more possible and constructing tumultuous, chaotic realities in Malaysia and its surrounding countries, including Indonesia (Tang & Wijaya, 2022). In fact, the harsh environment that oppresses homosexuals can be largely attributed to the existence of the penal code 337A that criminalises carnal intercourse against the order of nature and a male may be imprisoned for up to two years for committing any act of “gross indecency” with another male person (Berlatsky, 2011).

The question, thus, becomes, how are safe spaces for Malaysia’s LGBTQ community constructed? To answer, the notion of space must first be contextualised, considered, and accumulated. Metaphysically speaking, the Yin-Yang energy is seen as the force balancing all spaces. Houston (2011) explained that the *yin* and *yang* elements are concepts closely associated with Taoism, and it is believed that the forces of the yin and yang flow perpetually when it is in balance. The Yin-Yang that has the power to regulate itself and retain balance generally influences our surroundings in numerous ways, particularly in the aspects of space. The Yin-Yang holds a powerful force together, holding the ability to transcend “time to posit a spatial vision of reality as a unity of time and space” (*Wisdom and Philosophy : Contemporary and Comparative Approaches*, 2016, p. 6). Regarded as an essential part of Feng Shui, the *yin* and *yang* elements reinforce the balance attained within two opposite fronts that contribute to the creation of living harmony. Feng Shui practitioners, thus, believe that all spaces and structures carry their own “chi” or energy, which can either gravitate towards the yin or yang, depending on factors ranging from placements of doors and furniture to the layout of the structures (Knox, 2023). Since the balance

of Yin-Yang energy represents the ideal state of all things, this resonates well with the notion of heteronormativity, as it is regarded as the dominant rule of society. For instance, the commingling between a male and female often mirrors the perfect balance of Yin-Yang energy (Whyke & Brown, 2023). As maintained by Brenner and Cruz (2024), the Yin-Yang theory was often used to perpetuate heteronormative ideas in ancient China. In a more modern context, heteronormativity is now regarded as a permanent fixture integrated closely into all cultural practices and educational practices; disrupting heteronormativity normally means destabilising the flow of classrooms (McEntarfer, 2016). These studies strengthen the claim that the Yin-Yang balance resonates closely with heteronormativity and is not meant to be disrupted.

Meanwhile, Cummins (2021) clarified that the forces of *yin* and *yang* can greatly influence the energy of the space around us, and this can, in turn, impact us emotionally. Overindulgence in any side of the forces will significantly sap the energy of the opposite side. This means that a build-up of yin feelings and emotions will lead to the decline of *yang* energy and vice versa. Although the balance of the Yin-Yang energy within a space is an ideal situation to strive for, given how it is mentioned earlier, it resonates well with heteronormativity. This study, on the other hand, examines how a lack of balance in the Yin-Yang energy may also bring positive impacts to people. More specifically, this study argues that an overflow of the *yin* energy is needed to ensure the continuous existence of certain members of the LGBTQ community who live on the margins. However, this study specifically examines how a yin-inclined space can serve as the ideal state for marginalised individuals in the literary realm. This study is important as Malaysian queer literature challenges the rigid principles of traditional Malaysian society. Scholarly and creative publications in queer literature remain scarce, with the two most notable queer anthologies being *Body2Body* (2009) and *Mata Hari Kita/ The Eyes of our Hearts* (2016) (Quayum, 2021). Nonetheless, Jerome (2022) argued that Malaysian queer literature has two distinctive traits that respond to discrimination: it reflects diverse understandings of sexual and gender identities, and it challenges traditional norms of sexuality and gender.

When examining the characters in the anthology entitled *Body 2 Body: A Malaysian Queer Anthology* (2009), an anthology that features 23 LGBTQ-themed short stories written by Malaysian and a few Singaporean authors, it is noticed that the LGBTQ characters in these stories struggle in their own ways while dealing with heteronormative rules. While the balance of the Yin-Yang energy within a space may be crucial for ensuring those who are part of the majority thrive, the marginalised ones, specifically the characters in the stories who are part of the LGBTQ community, may require a space where the Yin-Yang energy is out of balance. Notably, the overflow of *yin* energy creates a space where selected characters in the anthology can freely resist. There is a need to highlight that when a space is overflowed with the *yin* energy, the dark side within that space intensifies. Kuah-Pearce (2009) observed that the *yin* is associated with earth, darkness, death, water, femininity and stillness, and it is believed that in death, the *yin* element of the body will completely take over the *yang* element, and this leads to the complete separation of the *yin* and *yang* in one's body. The association of the *yin* element with femininity is also noted by Dr. (2015), who explained how the *yin* energy of the earth will render it cold, moist and nourishing. Meanwhile, the dark side of *yin* is also well noted by Srinivasan (2021), who associated the *yin* element with darkness, coldness and stillness. While a space that gravitates towards darkness, death and femininity may not be ideal for the unoppressed to thrive, such a space may precisely be what the marginalised and the oppressed ones need to ensure their continuous existence.

RESISTANCE IN QUEER HETEROTOPIA WITHIN THE YIN SPACE

A yin-inclined space is one that transgresses from the norm and convention, and as a result, the notion of a queer heterotopia takes shape, which is a form of deviation that comes as a result of self-imposition or is imposed by authoritarian structures. In a broader term, it refers to all other spaces that function to separate deviant behaviour from the rest of society (Smith, 2014). Tompkins (2014) noted that a heterotopia not only isolates and reinvents space, but it also has the power to render what is visible invisible. With its origins rooted in Foucault's doctrines, heterotopias are spaces where alternative possibilities or identities can emerge. In these spaces, they are permitted to lose a sense of time and to imagine themselves in a way that mirrors time as unimportant. Meanwhile, queer heterotopia that started to take form in the 1990s can be understood as the space where a reality that is timeless and exists purely within the imagination as queer individuals are granted the opportunity to live queerly (McCune, 2014). Examining queer heterotopia in relation to the LGBTQ characters in *Body 2 Body: A Malaysian Queer Anthology* (2009) is crucial as queer heterotopias allow individuals to step outside not just the ordinary world but also the restrictive norms and structures that limit their desires and the formation of their subjectivities. The heterotopias discussed in this article function as safe spaces where men can explore and express queer identities within environments dominated by heteronormativity. Furthermore, heterotopias also grant people a chance to escape both the outside world and the rules that restrict who they are and what they want. Hence, queer heterotopias can function as safe spaces where men can explore and express queer identities within environments dominated by heteronormativity (Mountney, 2015). When examined closely, heterotopia and yin space do share a lot in common. Both of them function as “other” spaces that exist on the margins of mainstream society, giving room for alternative practices and subjectivities to emerge. They are often regulated by rules or cultural codes, not freely accessible to everyone. Additionally, they carry a sense of hiddenness or separation from dominant spaces, which allows for safety and subtle forms of resistance. Most importantly, both spaces disrupt dominant norms—heterotopia by juxtaposing incompatible meanings in one place, and yin space by existing in the shadows where quiet resistance can take root. This study argues that a yin-inclined environment gives rise to the emergence of queer heterotopia, which is necessary for queer characters to be given the chance to resist in the harsh conditions they live in.

However, not all resistance is linked with violence, loudness and aggression. Resistance, particularly everyday resistance, can take place in a manner that is subtle, quiet and nuanced. Everyday resistance is used as a method by individuals who are historically oppressed to subtly challenge those with more power, and it often involves doing things differently than those in power expect or want (De Certeau, 1984). This resonates well with the LGBTQ individuals who are no strangers to being oppressed. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that, every day, resistance happens at a micro-level and it is neither organised nor structural. This is particularly common among people who are considered too powerless to make a revolution (Scott, 2008). The queer characters featured in the examined short stories are all deemed powerless because their existence and survivability hinge upon their abilities to navigate the heteronormative space that is harsh and hostile towards them. Nevertheless, this never stops them from resorting to everyday resistance through the projection of queer expressions. These expressions can be divided into three categories, namely performative, emotional and sexual expressions. These expressions will be addressed in detail in the methodology section in relation to the notion of everyday resistance.

While the classical Yin-Yang dynamic suggests that spatial and social harmony lies in balance, this balance presumes an environment where opposing forces can coexist peacefully. In the Malaysian context, where heteronormative (Yang-coded) structures dominate legal, cultural, and spatial norms, the temporary overflow of yin becomes not a disruption of harmony, but a necessary spatial imbalance—one that briefly allows queer energies to surface by allowing queer heterotopia to exist. In Malaysia, the LGBTQ community is often perceived as powerless due to the hostile social and political climate that restricts their ability to live openly. As a result, this community turns to everyday resistance as a subtle means of pushing back against these oppressive structures. In the anthology *Body2Body* (2009), the queer characters exemplify this form of resistance by using everyday life as their site of struggle and survival. Resistance here does not necessarily involve large protests or overt political actions, but rather unfolds in ordinary, daily practices. The ways in which queer individuals dress, speak, express love openly, form chosen families, or establish safe social spaces all serve as small but significant acts that challenge heteronormative norms. These seemingly simple practices quietly resist oppression while affirming queer identity and visibility in everyday life.

METHODOLOGY

This paper analyses *Body 2 Body: A Malaysian Queer Anthology* (2009) through the lenses of queer heterotopia and yin space. Both concepts coexist, as seen in queer characters navigating Malaysia's heteronormative environment. Yin elements—darkness, secrecy, passivity, and femininity—shape settings that, though not necessarily female-centred, allow characters to feel secure and closer to queer heterotopia. These spaces, shielded from the dominant order, sustain marginalised existence by offering protection and comfort. While excess yin disturbs the ideal Yin–Yang balance, here it enables survival by granting alternative spaces where individuals can thrive.

Within such spaces, everyday resistance emerges through performative, emotive, and sexual expressions. The first two are platonic—acts, feelings, and speech that affirm queer identity and connections without shame. Sexual expressions, more sensuous and erotic, offer comfort and escapism from a rejecting world. The analysis will be divided based on these two categories of resistance: platonic and sexual. The study argues that queer heterotopia does not arise randomly or through strategy but through metaphysical yin energy. For clarity, this research uses the term *gay* specifically to refer to male characters who are attracted to the same sex. The term *queer* is employed as an adjective for heterotopia and expressions, representing a broader concept that extends beyond sexuality alone. Meanwhile, *LGBTQ* and *queer* are used to denote a group of individuals encompassing a wide range of non-heterosexual identities. Accordingly, the terms *gay*, *queer*, and *LGBTQ* are applied in distinctive ways throughout the manuscript. This expands feng shui beyond real-life struggles to fictional queer settings, where yin spaces grant marginalised individuals the possibility of living by personal convictions rather than external demands, proving that even in a work of fiction that falls within the domain of queer literature, feng shui still finds its relevance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies applying Yin–Yang in literature are limited but not absent. Hou et al. (2023) examined its healing role in Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain* (2007) and *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2012), while Han and Guo (2020) identified yin—darkness and water—as central to Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Beyond literature, Deng and Fung (2022) explored its influence on Bright Sheng's music. In queer studies, Wang (2024) showed how Liaozhai reshaped gender norms through Yin–Yang, and LeBlanc (2015) argued that it encompasses homosexuality within Daoist thought. In Malaysia, Seach (2024) and Beng and Amarasekera (2025) highlighted how space shapes identity and resistance, though without reference to Yin–Yang.

On heterotopia, Asl (2020) showed how conflicting spaces in Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Refugees* created Cold War-inflected heterotopias. Queer heterotopia has been explored in media spaces such as gay film festivals (Stanciu, 2014), online fanfiction (Llewellyn, 2021), and YouTube communities in South Africa (Andrews, 2020). El-Tayeb (2013) demonstrated how racialised groups in Germany form queer heterotopias that resist exclusion. In literature, Suwa (2018) examined Sarah Waters's novels, where heterotopia provides spaces of queer desire and freedom.

Within Malaysian queer writing, studies remain scarce. Jerome (2008) revealed how Malay male identity in Karim Raslan's fiction is shaped by personal, cultural, and religious norms. Razali et al. (2015) analysed *Body 2 Body: A Malaysian Queer Anthology* (2009), showing how characters embrace homosexuality through id, ego, or superego—by desire, conscious choice, or moral conflict. Overall, queer heterotopia and Yin–Yang have rarely been examined together, particularly in Malaysia. This study, therefore, investigates how Yin energy affords action possibilities to queer characters in *Body2Body* (2009), linking Foucault's heterotopia with the metaphysical dimensions of yin. By focusing on yin's receptive qualities—rather than balance—it highlights how queer subjectivity and emotional depth emerge in queer Malaysian spaces made possible by the combination of queer heterotopia and the yin space.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

RESISTANCE THROUGH PERFORMATIVE AND EMOTIVE EXPRESSIONS

The intersection between queer heterotopia and the yin space creates a site for everyday resistance, expressed through performative queer expressions in several of the selected short stories. These expressions are not necessarily sexual or sensuous but often remain highly platonic. Through such performative actions, the characters move closer to the queer domain, enabling them to resist heteronormativity in subtle yet meaningful ways.

As previously elucidated, the *yin* is associated with earth, darkness, death, water, femininity and stillness. These are the elements which are evidently present in the three private spaces examined in this section. In Brian Gomez's *What Do Gay People Eat?*, a story that recounts an Indian elderly couple's anticipation in welcoming their son and his boyfriend to their family gathering, the father's acceptance of his son's sexual orientation is one aspect worth examining. His worldviews about what makes a person gay are worth noting as they reflect his openness in accepting his son's sexual orientation. Despite the lack of descriptions available about the house that the gay son, Prasad, grows up in, there are clear innuendoes suggesting that the family house is filled with yin energy. The father even acknowledged that his son's homosexuality could be the

result of inheriting the mother's excessive female genes... *and if at all it is ever conclusively proven that gayness is indeed caused by genes. Surely Prasad got it from Parames what? I mean, come on. Think about it in a scientific manner (p.18).* Another textual clue that suggests Prasad did, in fact, grow up in a household overflowing with the yin energy is reflected through his closeness with his sister, Priya. When the father called Priya to ask if it would be a good idea to cook mutton for the family gathering, Priya's reply *...It's Prasad's favourite. He'll want home-cooked food. His boyfriend eats Indian food all the time over there, okay?* (p.18) serves as a strong indication that his brother would have confided in her about his sexual orientation much earlier. This again suggests that the two female figures who are instrumental in rendering the household a yin space also play a role in affording Prasad to embrace his self-expression. Notably, the son's exposure to a predominantly feminine (yin-leaning) environment does not cause his queerness, but it offers a relational and emotional landscape where his already existing inclination can find comfort, validation, and safety — even if temporarily. The overflow of yin energy softens the surveillance of heteronormative codes, allowing space for queerness to emerge. This does not mean all individuals in that space will express queerness, only that the emotional conditions for such expressions are more likely to appear in someone already predisposed.

Most Bangladeshi workers here are, you know. But you can't really blame them, also, come on. Thirty to forty of them crammed into one shophouse, all men, some more. ...I mean, who knows what-all circumstances would cause a man to change to gay?

(p.19)

Besides that, the father's impression of what gayness looks like when he recounts his observation about the Bangladeshis' living conditions is also another aspect worth looking into. His perception of what renders a person gay is once again attributed to the space gravitating towards the yin energy.

While the notion of having a big group of men crammed into one private space may appear to be teeming with the yang energy, it is the loss of order, control and hierarchy within this space that renders it bursting with yin energy. Also, the shophouse, which is often located away from public view, means that it embodies yin elements, which are inward, dark, and confined. With all the hallmarks of yin environments, the father believes such a space becomes the Bangladeshi workers' queer heterotopia. Although this observation reflects the father's own assumptions about homosexuality, his view is significant. It shows that his willingness to accept his son as he is is shaped by how he interprets spatial conditions. For him, the yin energy affords the possibility for one to embrace their sexual orientation, even if that potential is never directly acknowledged.

Another story to be examined in relation to performative queer expression is Kung Kai Jhun's *Dude, Don't Tell Me*, " in which the gay character David finds himself struggling internally when he has to attend Amir's wedding. Amir is his best friend and ex-roommate who also happens to be the person whom David has been secretly in love with for years.

David and Amir walked to a quiet corner of Sara's mansion and talked about the good old days before the business of settling down overtook them. But David wasn't concentrating on Amir's talk. He found his feelings begin to simmer. While Amir was going on and one about what they did after graduation. David could only recall hugging him that graduation night and the agony of trying to control his arousal to Amir's cologne. It didn't help that Amir was wearing the same cologne on his wedding night.

(p.80)

While the celebratory vibes at the wedding venue of Amir and Sara filled the space with strong yang energy, *the quiet corner of Sara's mansion* came as a stark contrast to the yang-inclined space. As the yin element is often associated with personal contemplation and emotional depth, the quiet corner undoubtedly embodies this trait. Within this yin realm that gives rise to the formation of queer heterotopia, David and Amir are able to relive a chapter of the past that features a shared narrative exclusively for the two of them. It is noteworthy that being in the yin space also often evokes a heightened sensory experience. Hence, it is not surprising that the scent of Amir's cologne is able to conjure up past memories in David. Despite the short-lived reminiscence triggered, the hug that David gave Amir on the graduation night has created lingering memories in him. Reliving it that night helps David feel a sense of reconnection to his dear friend. The yin space here then enables everyday resistance to happen by providing a sheltered, hidden, and less visible environment where marginalised groups, such as the gay community, can safely express themselves. Unlike dominant or highly regulated public spaces, yin spaces are often private, intimate, and fluid, allowing individuals to perform acts of resistance in subtle ways without attracting direct confrontation.

On the other hand, emotive queer expressions show how feelings like care, closeness, and vulnerability shape the lives of the characters. These emotions, even when quiet or gentle, become a way for them to push back against heteronormative expectations and create their own sense of belonging. Concerning this, Maya Tan Abdullah's *The Man from Beralı Carpets* is a story about a closeted gay policeman who stalks a blind carpet seller, which is one that best exemplifies the power of emotive expression. His observations on the carpet seller are filled with admiration, adoration and fondness. The policeman is tired of all the ugliness around him. The man from Beralı Carpets is the only pure person whom he has chosen to admire from a distance — someone he will never approach, for fear of spoiling that purity. Whenever he feels emotionally drained, he goes to Beralı Carpets just to see the man, who helps him hold on to his sanity. When observing the carpet seller from afar one night, these thoughts came to his mind.

In the back streets where we were, just off the old Odeon cinema, a hazy orange light bathed us all, and passing vehicles exhaled softly. I stood there, staring at the man from Beralı Carpets. He was sitting with one knee up, in a kurta sort of. It was hard to tell where he was from exactly or how old he was. ...He didn't say anything. He just kept smiling. An open gesture that could have said hello, you are welcome, or help, I know all your secrets, I've been waiting for you a long time.

(pp. 53-54)

The hazy orange light setting is a classic yin characteristic—soft, diffused, and unclear, it sets a muted tone rather than the sharp clarity dictated by yang. The policeman's observation point in the back streets near the old Odeon cinema further suggests the yin aspect of space. In this quiet and less visible part of the city, he can admire the carpet seller on his own terms. Shielded from public exposure, this yin space allows him to indulge in the carpet seller's charm without rushing or competing with others. Nothing happens outwardly, yet much occurs inwardly, and the stillness reinforces the yin presence. From the standpoint of the Beralı Carpets Shop, the store becomes more than a business—it serves as a safe emotional anchor for the policeman. Spaces of refuge, quietness, and reflection are yin-aligned. He goes there not to act, but to feel and restore himself, making the space psychologically yin. Within queer heterotopia, the setting becomes a temporary queer space, not through action but through emotive experience. Though the policeman does not speak, touch, or engage, the space enables queer longing in ways the structured daylight world would repress. Here, heteronormative order is momentarily suspended, allowing a fleeting yet powerful queer spatial possibility.

Resistance through emotive expression also appears in Cheryl Leong's *Breathing Pure Oxygen*. Written in a semi-autobiographical style, it recounts Cheryl's struggles and eventual acceptance by her mother. The story empowers by portraying a young lesbian navigating the challenges of dating and networking. The yin element plays a key role in her coming to terms with her sexual identity, most clearly captured in the epiphanic bathroom scene.

I had an epiphany out of the blue one day and quite literally heard myself say, "You know what, you should really stop kidding yourself-you're so gay." I still remember the exact day and where I was when this realisation struck. On February 13 2004, in the shower at home. That insight was simultaneously startling, alarming and what a relief.

(p. 30)

While most readers may pay close attention to the epiphanic moment that shifts Cheryl's perception of herself, it is equally important to pay attention to the space where this epiphanic moment takes place. The bathroom aligns well with the yin energy as it is a private, secluded space that is typically cool, damp, and associated with cleansing or purging. Hence, this setting becomes a metaphor for Cheryl's emotional and mental purification. In this way, the Yin space of the bathroom becomes a sanctuary, where a queer character is granted the opportunity to resist with emotive expression, even in the face of societal opposition. Once again, the Yin space of the bathroom becomes a sanctuary of queer heterotopia, where a queer character is granted the opportunity to resist. As seen here, yin's characteristics—discreetness, flexibility, and the ability to exist "in the shadows" of mainstream society—make them ideal for sustaining small but meaningful forms of resistance. Within these spaces, ordinary practices like forming bonds, sharing stories, or expressing identity can take place, quietly challenging dominant norms while avoiding immediate repression.

RESISTANCE THROUGH SEXUAL EXPRESSIONS

Just like performative and emotive resistance, queer sexual expressions also do not need to be loud or overt. When framed as everyday resistance, these expressions find room within a yin-inclined space filled with secrecy and quietness, creating a queer heterotopia where queer characters can express their sexuality without fear of rejection by the heteronormative world. Jerome Kugan's *Alvin* is another story worth delving into when examining how the yin space brings two gay characters together for some sensuous enjoyment. The meeting between Jay and Alvin may not be particularly honourable in its intent, as it enables them to satiate each other's sexual desires. However, regardless of these intentions, it offers a form of comfort to Jay, who is navigating a complicated relationship with his then-boyfriend. Their first private meeting, which takes place in Alvin's apartment, ignites some much-needed sparkles in both Jay and Alvin. Viewed from a spatial perspective, the yin energy lingering in Alvin's apartment undoubtedly plays an essential role in affording moments of intimacy between the two.

We stopped when we reached 119. All this time, we had been so quiet; it was such a relief to hear the key turning in the lock of his door. As he shut the door behind me, the darkness of his apartment engulfed us. I felt his hand reaching for the waist of my jeans and pulling me close to him...he turned on one of his apartment lights and led me into the living area...he disappeared behind a wall. I cast a quick glance over the interior of the apartment. The walls are white, the tiles are a fake marble grey, the furnishings are spare and either white, black, brown or blue. He didn't seem to be adventurous when it came to decorating.

(pp. 219-222)

The yin energy in Alvin's apartment is evidently present. For instance, "*the darkness of his apartment engulfed us*" is one classic yin trait. The yin presence in the apartment is further enhanced by colour tone, "*The walls are white, the tiles are a fake marble grey, the furnishings are spare and either white, black, brown or blue*", indicating an obvious absence of yang-infused colours that are bright and vibrant. The fact that Alvin is not "*adventurous when it came to decorating*" serves as another strong indication that he favours the minimalistic style, which once again lends credence to the claim that Alvin's space is imbued with yin energy, given the lack of adventurous decors that magnify the space's energy, which is often associated with the yang. This yin space serves as the place that presents Jay and Alvin the queer heterotopia to get intimate. In spite of the promiscuity involved, the yin space affords them the place to connect with each other on a more intimate level, both physically and emotionally, and this again proves that the yin space is a receptive and transformative site where vulnerability, emotional depth, and unspoken desires can surface.

The final story to be analysed in this section is Paul GhanaSelvam's *Monsoon Massage*. This is a rather straightforward story about two former schoolmates who meet again after several years, only to find that life has taken them down very different paths. Reza now lives openly as a woman with a lover in town, working as a masseur. Kumar, a married man with two children, believes they no longer share anything in common until one rainy afternoon, when his perspective begins to shift in the massage room under Reza's skilled hands:

The room was messy, and the floor creaked noisily. In one corner, a lone fan stood, laden with so much soot it threatened to cover the room in darkness if it ever fell. Laundry was hanging on a string drawn from the cupboard to the window grill. A dressing table with an oval mirror by the door was overflowing with make-up, mascara, lipsticks, nail polish of unsaid colours, and wigs curled, straight, brown or wavy. In the middle of the room was the single bed. In the drawer of the bedside table, Kumar caught a glimpse of condoms and small bottles.

(p.181)

He tries talking to Reza, but his mind has lost both logic and utterance. Kumar chose to ignore everything and give in to the pleasures. Taking on a life of their own, his hands slowly edged their way over Reza's soft buntut.

(p.183)

Once again, the quietness and privacy linked to the room represent a quintessential yin space. In spite of being visually chaotic and messy, the feminine traits in the room can be immediately spotted with the presence of *mascara, lipsticks, nail polish of unsaid colours, and wigs curled, straight, brown or wavy*. As a transgender person, Reza surely needs these items to help him enhance his softness and feminine allure. Thus, with his male (yang) energy subdued as a result of masking himself with the listed items, all that is left in him is only the yin aspect of qualities. This yin gives rise to queer heterotopia where Kumar experiences a moment of detachment from logic and social expectation, allowing instinct and bodily desire to quietly take over. The room, saturated with signs of hidden intimacy, from the soot-darkened fan to the drawer of condoms, reinforces Yin's symbolic link to concealment, secrecy, and fluidity. Within the space that comes as a stark contrast to the outside world, bodily desires take over Kumar and the duo, who seem to have nothing in common, and they are thus connected intimately, as the yin element and queer heterotopia surface. This resonates with the traits of a queer heterotopia that often grants queer individuals the chance to explore and experiment with their desires. This space also carries the potential to create alternatives to existing spaces where heteronormative structures reign supreme (Chakraborty & Roy, 2025).

CONCLUSION

The six short stories demonstrate how queer heterotopia and the yin space often coexist harmoniously, enabling a domain where every resistance could take place. Whether in family houses, bathrooms, minimalistic modern apartments, back cinema streets, quiet corners at mansions, and hidden massage rooms, the yin energy is one constant presence that continues to alter the vibes in the aforementioned spaces. To the marginalised, the dominant yang forces, which are often associated with societal norms, institutions, and rigid structures, may serve as a form of suppression to their existence. To counter this, a strong yin presence, generally marked by hidden spaces, fluidity, and receptivity, becomes necessary for their stories to be told and their identities to be acknowledged. Hence, this study contributes to spatial scholarship by extending the universality of Yin-Yang elements beyond their traditional parameters into the realms of literary and queer studies. More importantly, this study demonstrates that queer heterotopias in these stories are not fixed in visible spaces but are brought into being through a surge in yin energy, which momentarily destabilises the yang-coded normativity of the environment. For queer-inclined characters, these moments become critical sites of resistance and self-recognition, even if fleeting. Queer heterotopias are time-bound spaces that only become accessible at certain moments, and this characteristic resonates with the nature of yin spaces. In the yin-yang balance, harmony is usually maintained, but at specific times when yin energy intensifies, the space opens up possibilities for quiet resistance. Just as one must wait for the right moment to enter a heterotopia, access to a yin space also depends on the right conditions. When these conditions align, it opens up the possibility for queer individuals to resist dominant norms without direct confrontation.

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