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SHRI SHIKSHAYATAN COLLEGE

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JOURNAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

A NAAC ACCREDITED WOMEN'S COLLEGE, AWARDED 'A' GRADE, CGPA 3.24  
IN NOVEMBER 2016 BY NAAC, AFFILIATED TO UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA)

# LITERATI

**JOURNAL OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**



## **SHRI SHIKSHAYATAN COLLEGE**

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Affiliated to University of Calcutta

**LITERATI**  
**VOLUME – 7**  
**2021**

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## **FOREWORD**

'Literati' has mirrored the academic interfaces, interactions and creative pursuits of the Department in the last six volumes. This edition is a combined volume encapsulating the literary outputs of the last two academic sessions. Most activities that dotted the academic life of the students and faculty of the Department during the pandemic, retained their characteristic vigour and enthusiasm. This edition has incorporated a new feature dedicated to former students with the hope of widening the scope for more meaningful outreach and roadmap for the Department.

It is heartening to record the sincere efforts of the Editorial team in publishing this seventh edition of 'Literati.'

Congratulations and Best wishes.

(Dr. Aditi Dey)  
Principal

# INTRODUCTION

The last one and a half year has been challenging for everyone. The sudden lockdown and subsequent isolation, physical distancing and yet the desperate need for social solidarity, the entire situation had left us mentally fatigued and physically tired. We have been living with fear; we have been living in a rainbow of chaos. Perhaps, it was the time when we could re-discover ourselves in complete solitude. As John Henry Newman once said, growth being the only evidence of life, we were growing in experience, struggling to find new ways to live.

If good life is one that is inspired by love and guided by knowledge as Bertrand Russell said, then the faculty members of the department had risen to the situation to be the true mentors to the students. The shift from classroom environment to the virtual platform, and subsequent 'new normal' was rather challenging. The Department, however, was quick to address the demands of the time and since then have been inculcating the spirit of learning among students.

This *Volume 7 of Literati*, therefore, comes as a culmination of both 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic sessions respectively. The Departmental academic calendar of the session 2019-20 featured special lectures, Book exhibition in collaboration with Sahitya Akademi on Indian Literature, but owing to the pandemic, we had to restrict ourselves to only one Special Lecture that was held on August 29, 2019. The enriching lecture was delivered by Dr. Siddhartha Biswas, Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Calcutta, on "Arthur Miller and American Theatre". In the session 2020-21, the Department had successfully organised two Special Web-Lectures delivered by eminent speakers in the academia. The First Special Lecture of the session 2020-21 was held on September 25, 2020. The lecture was delivered by Dr. Ajanta Paul, Principal, Women's Christian College, on "Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*". The Second Special Web-Lecture was delivered by Dr. Subhajit Sen Gupta, Associate Professor & Head, Department of English and Culture Studies, University of Burdwan. It was a commemorative lecture titled "*Now more than ever seems it rich to die* : The Theme of Mortality in Keats's Poetry," on the Bicentennial Death Anniversary of John Keats. This special lecture was a collaborative venture of the Department of English and IMPRINT, English Literary Society and was held on February 25, 2021. The English Literary Society, IMPRINT, had organised a students' presentation that was held on June 10, 2021, celebrating the birth anniversary of revolutionary poet, Allen Ginsberg. The presentation was titled "*A Slightly Mad Universe* : The Poetry of Allen Ginsberg".

The Active Learning Day for the academic session 2020-21 was held on June 17 and 18 respectively. The Honours students of semesters II, IV and VI each were divided into six groups respectively. The groups prepared power point presentations and their topics covered a broad spectrum from literary texts to films to web series, interrogating and problematizing the established concepts and canons. This volume brings together some of the research papers of the students' presentation on the Active Learning Day.

I thank our Principal, Dr. Aditi Dey, who has been constant in her support and encouragement in every academic and co-curricular ventures taken up by the Department. I also extend sincere gratitude on behalf of the Department to the College Management for facilitating the online platform to enable a smooth teaching-learning experience for both faculty members and students.

'Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul - and sings the tunes without the words - and never stops at all'. These lines of Emily Dickinson sums up our wishes that we shall live with this unceasing 'hope' to see a better tomorrow, and thus thrive to bring more scholarly essays by our students and faculty members for fervent readers in our next issue of Literati.

**Smt. Debolina Guha Thakurta**  
Head, Department of English

# CONTENTS

	<u>Page No.</u>
■ BATCH TOPPER FOR THE SESSION - 2016-2019 : <b>Nidhi Lohia</b>	1
■ THE STOCKHOLM SYNDROME CONTROVERSY IN BEAUTY AND THE BEAST <b>Anushka Nandi, B.A. Semester-IV, Department of English</b>	2
■ BIBBIDI – BOBBIDI – FEMINIST : CINDERELLA THROUGH A PSYCHOANALYTIC FEMINIST LENS <b>Ankita Saha, Semester IV, Department of English</b>	5
<b>ACTIVE LEARNING DAY PAPER PRESENTATION 2019</b>	
■ HARRY POTTER PARALLELS <i>This paper was written and presented by</i> <b>Pratiti Saha, Sayantani Chakraborty, Sreetama Basu, Upasana Bhattasali, Megha Maity</b> <i>B.A. Third Year, 2019, Department of English</i>	11
■ MAHARAJA ! TOMARE SELAM THE MAESTRO AND HIS SEMINAL CREATIONS <i>The paper was written and presented by</i> <b>Ramyani Sarkar, Patrali Chatterjee, Sanghopriya Chakraborty, Vandana Ghosh</b> <i>B.A. Third Year, 2019, Department of English</i>	20
■ THE MAD, THE MELANCHOLIC, THE POET <i>The paper was written and presented by</i> <b>Anushka Saha, Anwesha Roy, Shamayita Banerjee, Sherline Modak</b> <i>B.A. Third Year, 2019, Department of English</i>	26
<b>ACTIVE LEARNING DAY JUNE 2021 STUDENTS' PRESENTATIONS</b>	
■ CONFRONTING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE FICTIONAL WORLD <b>Srijani Sarkar, Pratirupa Banerjee, Debadyoty Saha, Ruchira Pachisia, Soumi Chattopadhyay, Ankita Das, Tanya Walia, Aparajita Mishra, Zaira Haram, Meenakshi Chakraborty</b> <i>Semester VI, 2021</i>	38
■ PRIDE BEFORE PRIDE : AN INSIGHT INTO HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN INDIA AS DEPICTED IN MAHESH DATTANI'S BRAVELY FOUGHT THE QUEEN AND ISMAT CHUGHTAI'S THE QUILT <b>Richika Bose, Nayanika Mukherjee, Ritika Saha, Lipi Mallik, Anushka Nandi, Patatri Jana, Shreya Chakraborty, Nabodita Saha, Shruti Mishra, Anuska Baral, Tannishtha Majumder</b> <i>Semester VI, 2021</i>	41
■ DEGLAMORIZING 'THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE' AND BREAKING 'THE FEMININE BOUNDARIES' IN PUPHEJMO : A DOLL'S HOUSE BY HENRIK IBSEN <b>Aishwarya Bhutoria, Anindita Bhattacharya, Ankita Saha, Annesha Datta, Bushra Khalique, Koushani Saha, Nayanika Das, Pritha Chakraborty, Shuvomita Mazumdar, Sohini Dutta, Srijita Datta</b> <i>Semester VI, 2021</i>	48
■ BOOK PREDICTIONS THAT CAME TRUE <b>Laboni Hira, Sanjukta Ghosh, Poulami Hazra, Naurin Sultana, Atriya Karmakar, Nadia Iqbal, Moumita Soren, Srijita Mondal, Aalia Hassan, Simran Murshid, Anyaja Mondal</b> <i>Semester VI, 2021</i>	55
■ LUCIFER : FROM TEXT TO THE SCREEN <b>Ananya Bhattacharya, Shreya Sarkar, Akansha Biswas, Manisha Roy, Tanisha Bhattacharya, Sneha Bhowmick, Shatabdi Roy, Afreen Sohail, Mahreen Butt, Debangshee Singh, Yashfeen Sultan</b> <i>Semester VI, 2021</i>	60
■ COMMEMORATING THE 107TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF JOHN HERSEY THE WRITER WHO LET HIROSHIMA SPEAK FOR ITSELF <b>Shreya Dasgupta, Anshita Panda, Susmita Saha, Sucheta Mondal, Ananya Ray, Ankita Sur, Ashera Sethi, Chetana Thakur Chakraborty, Itika Sureka, Somoshree Das and Fatima Raza</b> <i>Semester VI, 2021</i>	66

**INDIVIDUAL PAPERS BY STUDENTS**

■ A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE TO ROALD DAHL'S CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY <b>Aishwarya Bhutoria, Semester VI, 2021</b>	74
■ WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK : A TRAGEDY WITHOUT CATHARSIS OR OTHERWISE ? <b>Ankita Saha, Semester VI, 2021</b>	78
■ THE LACK OF STRONG FEMALE CHARACTERS IN MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN <b>Srijita Datta, Semester VI, 2021</b>	88
■ CONCEPTUALIZING POST-COLONIAL THEORY IN THE LIGHT OF MULK RAJ ANAND'S NOVEL UNTOUCHABLE <b>Pritha Chakraborty, Semester VI, 2021</b>	91
■ SATAN AND HIS HELL' AS SHOWN IN PRADISE LOST AND THE INFERNO : A CONTRAST BETWEEN MILTON'S AND DANTE'S 'HELL' AND 'SATAN' <b>Anyaja Mondal, Semester VI, 2021</b>	95
■ TINTIN IN THE CONGO AND CHANDER PAHAR : A STUDY ON THE DEPICTION OF AFRICA <b>Shatabdi Roy, Semester VI, 2021</b>	98
■ THEMES AND SIMILARITIES IN MAHESH DATTANI'S PLAYS TARA AND DANCE LIKE A MAN <b>Ushasi Sarkar, Semester IV, 2021</b>	101
■ ACCEPTANCE OF THE PATRIARCHAL FATE BY WOMEN IN THOMAS HARDY'S THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE <b>Shatabdi Roy, Semester VI, 2021</b>	104
■ TRAVERSING POST-WAR AMERICA AND THE GENESIS OF THE BEAT MOVEMENT THROUGH HOWL <i>The paper was written and presented by :</i> <b>Aratrika Ghosh, Ishika Samajdar, Radhika Banerjee, Semester II, 2021</b>	107

**FACULTY PAPERS**

■ DESIRE AND PERFORMANCE : THE MORPHOLOGY OF FEMALE BODIES IN ZOFLOYA AND VILLETTE <b>Dr. Malini Mukherjee, Faculty, Department of English</b>	114
■ 'LET'S MAKE A LITTLE CONVERSATION' : EXPLORING THE INTERFACE BETWEEN BECKETT AND DALI <b>Dr. Debnita Chakravarti, Faculty, Department of English</b>	120
■ RENEGOTIATING BINARIES : MEMORY, IDENTITY AND SPATIALITY IN DAVID MAZZUCHELLI'S ASTERIOS POLY <b>Smt. Divyani Sharma, Faculty, Department of English</b>	123

**ALUMNI SPEAK**

■ <b>SPEAKERS</b> <b>Ramyani Sarkar, Shewta Ganguly, Pratiti Saha, Srijita Datta,</b> <b>Tanisha Bhattacharya, Srijani Sarkar, Aishwarya Bhutoria, Ankita Saha</b>	133
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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
BATCH TOPPER  
FOR 2016-2019**



**NIDHI LOHIA**  
(SECURED 58.25% IN B.A./B.Sc. EXAMINATION,  
UNDER 1+1+1 SYSTEM, 2019)

# THE STOCKHOLM SYNDROME CONTROVERSY IN *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*.

Anushka Nandi, B.A. Semester-IV, Department of English

## Introduction

"You're mad, bonkers, completely off your head. But I'll tell you a secret. All the best people are."  
(Carroll 90)

This madness that Carroll talks about in *Alice in Wonderland*, is the shield that the conscious authors of children's literature utilized to profess greater lessons of life and deliver clarity of thought. 'Fairy tale' is one such folklore genre that tells the tale of apparent fantasylands where humans live their wish. A child, with the eyes of sheer innocence, develops the ambition for the same. However, an adult extracts a message from the story to live the real life with lessons from the imaginary world. *Beauty and the beast* ( French, *La Belle et la Bete*) is one such fairy tale that has been approached over the years through logical psychology and has presented the readers with food for thought, time and again. Originally written by the French novelist Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve and published in 1740 in *La Jeune Americaine et les contes marins* ( *the Young American and marine Tales*), it was influenced by some other stories like that of Cupid and Psyche, The Golden Ass and so forth. Later, its lengthy version was abridged, rewritten and published first by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont in 1756 in *Magasin des enfant* (*Children's collection*), which is the commonly circulated one. It has often been opined, that being composed in eighteenth century France, the purpose of the fairy tale was to promote arranged marriages, whereby the girl would find the prospect of leaving her parents and living with her husband more appealing. However, modern analysis of the tale leads to a lot of other ways of interpretation.

## Freudian growth of the story

The story begins in Beauty's childhood, when we see a father struggling hard to keep his family alive after the wreckage they have suffered. Beauty is found to be deeply respectful and loving towards her father and even pledges to sacrifice her life for him if necessary. Hence, Beauty has just started off in the 'phallic stage', where she has merely begun to recognize the difference between male and female, the opposite sex still being an unknown arena for her to explore. With the introduction of the Beast in the story, Beauty is seen to grow protective of her father and compromising her life to live as a captive of the Beast, which portrays the 'Electra Complex' in her. After Beauty's entrance in the castle, she still remains in her complex as she perceives other males to be beastly and hence rejects the proposal of the Beast. However, with time, the proximity between them increased over regular meetings and empathetic conversations and later she began dreaming of an unknown handsome face. When Beauty decided to go and see her father, the Beast allowed her

for a specific time span, otherwise stating his own death. On arrival to her own home, however, Beauty was annoyed by the continuous negative vibe of jealousy that ushered in from her own sisters. Co-existence with the same sex again introduced her to the 'latency stage'. Finally, when she began to get upset about the visions of the Beast lying dead in his rose garden alone, she became aware of the emotion of love and hence reached the 'genital stage'. Now, the intersection of the time of her dreams of a handsome prince and her introduction to the 'genital stage' is what has, supposedly, given birth to the Stockholm syndrome that Beauty might have experienced.

### **Stockholm Syndrome and the Controversy**

Stockholm syndrome is a condition which causes hostages to develop a psychological alliance with their captors during captivity. These alliances result from a bond formed between the captor and captives during intimate time together, but they are generally considered irrational in light of the danger or risk endured by victims. This term was first used by the media in 1973 when four hostages were taken during a bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden. The hostages defended their captors after being released and would not agree to testify in court against them. Stockholm syndrome is paradoxical because the sympathetic sentiments that captives feel towards their captors are the opposite of the fear and disdain which an onlooker might feel towards the captors.

Now, *Beauty and the Beast* reveals not only positive feelings, but, the feelings of the ever-enigmatic emotions of love between the captor and the captive. Although in the original story, Beauty had been received by the Beast with utter grace and cordiality, yet, she was there against her will, only to avoid the peril in her father's life. Therefore, if Darwin's theory of evolution is considered, the methods of 'struggle for existence' and 'survival of the fittest', describes well the possibility of Stockholm syndrome emerging in Beauty. In 2014, University of Oregon evolutionary psychologist Michelle Scalise Sugiyama, Ph.D., proposed the theory that humans give in to Stockholm syndrome because our early ancestors used it as a coping mechanism. "Early humans", she wrote in the journal *Human Nature*, "were often taken as prisoners by other groups during wars, and they were more likely to live in the long run if they learned to adapt to their new group rather than resist the entire time they were captive." (Sugiyama 225). This trait was especially important for women because they were especially vulnerable, she says. Her theory suggests that the original Beauty learned to comply with the Beast's demands because, like her human ancestors, she figured that was better than getting killed.

### **Criticisms**

The two film adaptations of the fairy tale, however, refutes this notion of Stockholm syndrome in Beauty and portrays her as an independent individual and the only folklore heroine to take charge. Constance Grady, a writer for Vox, has argued that "depending on your reading, the story is either deeply empowering or profoundly oppressive and disturbing." (Grady 6), just as, actress Emma Watson takes the debate in an optimistic way. Watson, who plays the character of Beauty/ Belle in the recent adaptation in 2017, directed by Bill Clondon, opines in an interview with the *Entertainment Weekly*, "She has none of the characteristics of someone with Stockholm syndrome because she

keeps her independence, she keeps the freedom of thought.” Likewise, Veronica Poirier wrote, “Beauty and the Beast has endured the test of time, social justice warriors, and political correctness to remain a beloved family movie. Stockholm syndrome is a terrifying occurrence, and should garner scrutiny if placed in a positive light in a children’s film.”

## Conclusion

It may not have been established whether Beauty had been suffering from a psychological condition as devastating as Stockholm syndrome or not, however, it can be concluded that this particular controversy has left several ways open to rediscover human emotions and explore the nooks and crevice of the human brain. As far as morality is concerned, there is in no way that a captive’s positive feelings for an oppressor is justified. However, science has proved human being to be creatures with a continuous evolutionary process and perhaps, the story teller might have attempted to establish compassion and affection victorious over hatred and disdain. And if a fairy tale had intended to deliver such a message, indeed, these thoughts exist in human fantasy and indeed mankind wishes to belong to a land of emotional refuge.

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# **BIBBIDI – BOBBIDI – FEMINIST : CINDERELLA THROUGH A PSYCHOANALYTIC FEMINIST LENS.**

*Ankita Saha, Semester IV, Department of English*

## **INTRODUCTION**

*"You can be a strong heroine without being a tomboy."*

Why Cinderella is surprisingly Feminist ?

That is because there are other kinds of bravery and heroism besides the kinds involving fighting instruments and fighting words, and you can be a strong heroine without being a tomboy (however you define tomboy). Cinderella reconciles us to the original tales the revisionists fought against, while still showing us a strong-willed heroine with a backbone – if one not immediately apparent.

"Cinderella", or "The Little Glass Slipper", is a folk tale embodying a myth-element of unjust oppression and triumphant reward. Thousands of variants are known throughout the world. The title character is a young woman living in unfortunate circumstances, that are suddenly changed to remarkable fortune. The story of Rhodopis, recounted by the Greek geographer Strabo sometime between around 7 BC and 23 AD, about a Greek slave girl who marries the king of Egypt, is usually considered to be the earliest known variant of the Cinderella story. The first literary European version of the story was published in Italy by Giambattista Basile in his *Pentamerone* in 1634; the version that is now most widely known in the English-speaking world was published in French by Charles Perrault in *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* in 1697. Another version was later published by the Brothers Grimm in their folk tale collection *Grimms' Fairy Tales* in 1812. Although the story's title and main character's name change in different languages, in English-language folklore Cinderella is the archetypal name. The word Cinderella has, by analogy, come to mean one whose attributes were unrecognized, or one who unexpectedly achieves recognition or success after a period of obscurity and neglect. The still-popular story of Cinderella continues to influence popular culture internationally, lending plot elements, allusions, and tropes to a wide variety of Media.

Fairy tales are not meant to be taken literally, but can definitely be taken seriously in order to learn whatever they are meant to teach, be it life lessons or virtues and are a distillation of the human experience. Nobody watches Cinderella and learns that their favorite shoes will never fit another human being; nor should anyone take away from it that oppressed, lonely girls who do as they're told will eventually get rescued by a handsome prince. Less specific but more to the point, the story teaches that having the courage to be kind and remain hopeful in an utterly hopeless situation can save you in a way that you might never expect – and that is positive lesson for anyone. Fairy tales are pure plot – skeletons of stories. It is that skeleton that speaks to us, but the way we flesh it out that reveals us. This is where Cinderella has failed us so many times; the story is such that it can easily be

draped in very old-fashioned fabric, but it doesn't have to be. There's nothing inherently antifeminist in most classic fairy tales, only in our past retellings of them (e.g., "Someday My Prince Will Come"). The fact that Cinderella ends in marriage doesn't teach little girls that a wedding is the only thing to aspire to; marriage is simply a signifier of maturation and independence as those things would appear in a faraway kingdom.

*"Salagadoolamechickaboola  
Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo  
Put them together and what have you got  
Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo."*

## **– FAIRY GODMOTHER AND HER CHARM**

### **Fairytale Feminism : The Case for Cinderella**

Like most people, I am an avid Disney fan. I grew up on those movies, and the characters I adored the most were undoubtedly the princesses. When asked who my favorite princess is, however, my answer usually surprises people. It's Cinderella. Yup. There's no gag there. She is really my favorite princess of the lineup. Always has been and always will be, even over the more "modern" princesses like Merida, Tiana, and Elsa. Usually, when I tell people that, they express some mixture of surprise, confusion, and disappointment. It's usually something along the lines of "How could you like her ? She just waited around until a rich prince decided she was pretty and saved her. What an anti-feminist character !" That, in my opinion, is an embarrassingly shallow take on the story's message, but I understand why it's such a prevailing one. Since the original Cinderella movie came out in 1950, times have changed. Modern-day feminism prizes women's independence and strength. Hell, I've written several pieces praising the growing quality and diversity of women's roles in film, especially for women of color. Roles like these are a huge relief to see on screen after decades of relegation to eye-candy roles, as they represent an important step forward. However, that doesn't suddenly mean that the more old-fashioned Cinderella deserves to be derided. She is a feminist role model in her own right, too.

There are other kinds of bravery and heroism besides the kinds involving weapons and words, overthrowing despots or starting revolutions. Cinderella's environment, in my mind, represented a much more grounded version of reality than many fairytales did. Her oppressors didn't have magical powers or vast governmental influence, and they weren't some shadowy, mysterious overlords. They were her family, people who were supposed to look out for her – but chose to abuse and manipulate her instead, as family, friends, and strangers unfortunately sometimes do.

To say she sat down and "took" the abuse is the wrong way to look at it. She *survived* it and went on to find love later in life. More importantly, the suffering she went through didn't turn her hard and cold inside. She remained good and kind, and found a way to be happy even though her tormentors tried to snatch joy away from her.

It's *hard* to do the right thing. And it's really hard to be truly, *sincerely* nice to those who treat you poorly. It requires a kind of strength of character that is rare to find and even rarer to maintain in a

world where niceness and naiveté are considered one and the same. I love the 1950 version of Cinderella, but the 2015 live-action film put into words the central theme that the animated version really alluded to more than stated outright: “Have courage and be kind.”

That, really, is what it comes down to. For Cinderella, it's *kindness* that is an act of courage, of transgression. Repeated abuse warps you on the inside. People have certainly found far lesser reasons to become bitter and cynical towards the world. In Cinderella's case, yes – the whole world wrongs her, but she doesn't want revenge. She doesn't kick-flip her way out of a situation, swearing to wreak havoc on her abusers. Instead, she chooses kindness. She chooses forgiveness. “I forgive you” are, indeed, the last words she utters to those who have so ill-used her. That's much more painful, much more realistic, and – in my opinion – much braver. I can see myself talking tough words, refusing to take shit from someone who thinks less of me. But having the strength of character to forgive someone like that? Having *that much* kindness in my heart? I don't see that in myself. But I don't think the point of fairytales is to show us what we already are. It's to show us what we *could* be, what we should aspire to achieve.

And that's why I think the story of Cinderella will never fade away. The point of her story is to show that having courage and being kind is its own form of bravery.

### **'Cinderella' embodies feminism through kindness and strength**

Being a feminist doesn't mean trading in dresses and heels for more traditionally masculine attire. Women can be who they want to be and shouldn't be shamed for being more feminine or masculine. Modern Disney princesses are considered feminists because they play a more active role in their stories. Classic Disney princesses like Cinderella stay quiet about their situation, do the housework and need a man to rescue them. However, Disney's 1950 “Cinderella” is as much a feminist role model as any modern Disney princess.

The issue at hand is that traditionally feminine qualities are deemed “not feminist” and a woman with those traits can't be considered strong or a great role model. Cinderella challenges that by embodying both femininity and what it means to be a feminist. Cinderella is criticized for not getting herself out of her position, but many women in abusive situations and relationships find it difficult to leave.

It is not the victim's fault for finding herself in the situation nor for staying. While Cinderella's story is not meant to condone abuse, it shows that there is strength in choosing to create happiness in a world that is cruel. Despite years of emotional and physical abuse, Cinderella still finds reasons to dream, sing, and smile without taking it out on anyone. Not only is she emotionally strong for surviving an abusive household for as long as she did, but Cinderella is physically strong as well. She may not be going on physically-taxing adventures like Rapunzel or Moana, but you can bet that scrubbing floors builds muscle.

The destruction of her dress before the ball is a dark moment in the film. Her “family” humiliates her, tearing her dress apart from her body. She pleads for them to stop as her stepmother watches. Cinderella is criticized for crying in the film because she can't attend the ball, but in reality, she cries



because they abused her in an act that rivals assault. She is not weak for crying; it is a normal human reaction. Even after the humiliation, she manages to go to the ball, knowing that her abusers will be there too. As for the ball itself, Cinderella only wanted to go for the experience. She had no intention of going to find a man, in fact it was the prince who sought her out. The girl just wanted to have a night out. Cinderella going behind her “family’s” back and attending the ball despite their objections the way that Ariel goes behind her father’s back and trades in her voice for legs, or even how Rapunzel finds a clever way to keep her “mother” occupied while striking a deal with Flynn Ryder. These princesses are making their dreams come true. They know what they want and they’ll do what they have to in order to make it happen.

Modern Disney heroines are a product of our time, teaching girls to take an active role and pursue their goals. Cinderella is just as much a product of her time, if not ahead of her time. She has dreams and hopes for a better life. She does not let her situation dictate how she lives her life. Yes, she doesn’t actively get out of her situation until the end, but she is stuck in a position that she has no control over. She is able to overcome her challenges because of her emotional strength. Women are allowed to be assertive and goal-oriented in the same way that women are allowed to be shy and reserved. Being a feminist means embracing both masculine and feminine traits as valid forms of strength without shaming either one.

*“If there’s any chance to set things right, I simply got to try.”*

– Cinderella

## Conclusion

Cinderella can be one of the most feminist, tenacious, and kind female characters I know. She’s a princess who saves herself just as much as any other one with a sword or daring journey. The way her story is told through modern adaptations shows the evolution of both the story and evolving ideas about feminism and representation. In the face of so much cruelty, grief, and trauma, Cinderella, in every version, never gives up on her hope and kindness. It’s why the prince falls in love with her. She endures and endures and endures, and it is nothing short of admirable. Her story exists in that of an idealized fairy tale, where there are fairy godmothers and glass slippers and magic – where heroines are (mostly) white and traditionally beautiful and, yes, end their stories with marriage, but it does not negate any of what Cinderella goes through to get her happy ending. She is all at once victim, survivor, and hero of her own story. There is no prince who can ease the lasting effects of abuse, only the spirit of a woman who refuses to give in to what the world would have seen her become had she lost sight of the importance of her own humanity. Kindness, just as much as any heroic victory in battle, can save the world.

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**ACTIVE LEARNING DAY  
PAPER PRESENTATION  
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# HARRY POTTER PARALLELS

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Last but not the least, we pay our warm gratitude to the author of the septet of books we have worked on, J. K Rowling for taking up the pen and creating a legendary piece of art relished by people of all ages and spheres.

THANK YOU.

**“It is important to remember that we all have Magic inside us”** – J. K Rowling has undoubtedly painted our childhood in shades of the magical and the unattainable through her meticulously penned down and perhaps her best and most popular work, the *Harry Potter series*, consisting of as many as seven volumes. Within a span of these seven books, though apparently fantastical and unbelievable, Rowling has met with success in granting them with an inherent capability of engulfing the reader's mind to such an extent that the horizon between the real and the fantastic turns bleak to bleaker till it is ultimately lost and the reader ends up becoming increasingly involved in each of the novels he or she happens to relish. Harry as the Central Protagonist serves as the “Point of View” with whom we, as readers travel to unravel secrets, traverse paths, encounter sensational creatures and in all, actively be a part of his journey from being an ordinary boy living in **“the cupboard under the stairs”** to being **“the Chosen One”**. What we happen to not know is the fact that Rowling, through this admirable series, has not only served us with a Children's Fantasy which is a treat to the senses but has also fraught it with innumerable hidden Biblical and Mythological references, parallels and interpretations. To cut it short, we would like to highlight the various major and minor references and parallels and offer interpretations of this septet of books, not merely as a Children's Fiction but as a proper piece of Literary work. Let us now step out into knowing the unknown and seeing the unseen.

## Omniscient-God or Dumbledore ? Or both ?

**“The best Headmaster Hogwarts has ever seen”**, Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore is the **“greatest sorcerer in the world”** in the famed *Harry Potter series* by J. K. Rowling. Rowling presents him as the *Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards* and *Chief Warlock of the Wizenagamut*. He was a *half-blood, muggle* supporting wizard, considered to be the greatest of his kind in modern times; perhaps of all times. We meet him in the first book itself as the Headmaster of *Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry*. He always comes across as the father-figure, not only to Harry (our protagonist), but to all in Hogwarts and beyond.

But this is his overt identity. A reading between the lines will enable the litterateur to recognize the Biblical parallel between the all powerful God and the all powerful wizard. In the Beginning, there was nothing but God, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent and the Omnipresent Almighty. The Supreme Creator of the universe, God, finds a parallel in the wizard world in the form of Albus Dumbledore, who is always found present in the right place at the right time and who seems to have more intelligence on the current goings-on than any other individual in the wizarding community.

The Creation of the Omnipotent includes Lucifer (Satan) as well. God, who creates light and life also creates death and darkness (“Did he who make the Lamb make thee ?” [Songs of Innocence and Experience]). In spite of being God's son and a privileged angel of the higher order, Lucifer's ever increasing power lust made him challenge God's authority in Heaven. This resulted in his fall from grace into the “gloomy deep” where light was so scarce that it made “darkness visible”. In a similar light, Dumbledore discovers the wizard in the odd orphan Tom Marvolo Riddle. It is Dumbledore who brings the kid to Hogwarts in order to train and hone his magical prowess. But Riddle, like Lucifer, develops an obsession for power that only the Dark Arts can provide. He too disregards his prospects and potential of becoming good and concentrates only on becoming great. The result: his fall from the position of power, as the Dark Lord, to a body less soul, too weak to function independently. This, for the most powerful and darkest wizard of all times, was his own personal hell.

What makes the Almighty a power unrivalled is the supreme weapon, Thunder. Likewise, it is Dumbledore who is unrivalled, even by the darkest of wizards, due to his possession of the most powerful wand ever made, the Elder Wand. It is this Thunder that is responsible for Lucifer's defeat and consequently his banishment into the “boundless deep”. Parallely, it is the Elder Wand that ultimately enters the picture and contributes in ending the Dark Lord, Voldemort.

Thus, Albus Dumbledore proves, undoubtedly, to be the God, the Supreme Being in the universe of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. He is surely the friend, philosopher and a glorious guiding light to any and all in Hogwarts, especially, Harry. He, thus, is the authority, whose calm, somber voice overpowers all, on the one hand, while on the other he is the father-figure providing an umbrella of affection, love and protection to all who ask and deserve, too much in a God-like way.

## He Who Must Not Be Named- Voldemort or Satan ? Or both?

Tom Marvolo Riddle, orphaned at birth, was a half blood wizard who spent most of his early childhood in a dingy orphanage in London, oblivious of his magical identity. From their very first meeting, it was clear to Dumbledore that the child was different; he needs to be watched over. Tom had the reputation of a bully; he had a tendency of collecting objects, from people whom he had subdued, as trophies. In time, he had also come to know that he had some strange powers and that he could control them at will. All these reveal very well that Riddle had an early start with the Dark Arts, howsoever trivial they may be.

Since we have already established the parallels between God and Dumbledore, it is only too obvious now that a parallel will be set up between Satan and Voldemort. Known as Lucifer before the Fall, Satan was one of God's earliest creations. As mentioned before, he was a privileged angel of the higher order. In the Utopian Paradise there was no dearth of luxury, peace and happiness. Yet Lucifer chose to accommodate his ambition of ruling all that God ruled upon. He believed himself to be equal to the best and the most powerful and therefore equally capable of ruling all. Disregarding his former glory, his position of grace and peace he decided to challenge and, thereby, betray God. Tom Riddle was no different. During his time at Hogwarts, he was a **“quiet, albeit brilliant boy committed to becoming a first rate wizard”**, as recounted by Horace Slughorn, the Potions master (David Yates's version of Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, 2009). As Dumbledore reveals to Harry, decades later, Riddle was considered by most of the staff at Hogwarts as a brilliant student with great potential and prospects. He had the best magical education that the country could provide for and yet he craved for more. Disregarding all the good that he was capable of, all his merits and prospects, Riddle ventured into the Dark Arts; magic that he believed would aid him on in his journey to power and authority. He believed this to be the befitting destiny of one who could call the great Salazar Slytherin his ancestor.

No revolution can achieve its desired goal if there aren't people supporting its cause. Lucifer, aware of this unwritten rule, had been successful in gaining the support of countless angels. These angels acknowledged his leadership and sought to aid him in overthrowing the Omniscent. These angels later came to be known as the Demons of Satan. The Rebel Angel, in return, promised them power and glory if victorious. A similar pattern can be noticed in Riddle's case. He too gained the support of many friends in school; friends who were **“more in the rank of servants”**, as Dumbledore observed. These friends were somewhat charmed by him. They admired him as well as revered him. A great many of these friends later went on to become the first Death Eaters, which was what the followers of the Dark Lord later came to be called. These followers recognized him as their leader and he, in return promised them power, glory and, most importantly, a pure-blooded magical community where blood mixing or associating with muggles (non-magical people) would be a crime punishable by law.

After the Fall, when Lucifer found himself in a place where utter darkness reigned supreme, he observed that it was better to reign in Hell than to serve in Paradise. Thinking so, he fashioned himself

a new name, Satan; a name that God forbade anyone to take in heaven. Once again, Riddle is seen mirroring the ways of Satan. Riddle, too, sheds his muggle father's name and takes on a new one; a name that, he very rightly foresees, wizards would one day fear to speak. This new Riddle calls himself *Lord Voldemort*.

Finally, in the Garden of Eden, there was, among other trees, the Tree of Knowledge that bore the Forbidden Fruit. This was the only fruit in the garden which Adam and Eve were debarred from having. Satan, taking the form of a serpent, tempted Eve to consume the said eatable by planting a doubt in her mind about her creator. He attacked God's wisdom, power and character as he slyly planted the desire of consuming the Forbidden Fruit in Eve's mind. Giving in to the temptation, Eve obliged. In a very similar light, Voldemort, through the horcrux in the form of a diary where he preserved a part of his soul, managed to tempt the only daughter of the Weasley family, Ginny Weasley (*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*). Ginny, who was mere child of 11 at the time, found the diary among her second hand books and confided all her worries in it. Surprised though she was when she found the diary soaking in all the ink and producing replies in return, she was happy that she had finally found someone, rather something, that understood her and comforted her in times of loneliness and fear. But soon the Voldemort in the diary began possessing her and tempting her to open the Chamber of Secrets. Ginny, unaware of this dark design, was a very easy prey on which Voldemort had utmost control. By tempting and successfully making her open the said chamber, Voldemort had almost succeeded in his venture of purging the school of muggle-borns.

Satan, the Rebel Angel, the deceiver, the evil, is the one associated with the distortion or contamination of all that is pristine and heavenly. Voldemort, thus, presents himself as a sure replica of Satan in the Hogwarts Universe. The journey of the Devil from being the arch-angel to being the arch-enemy and that of Voldemort from being the brilliant and promising Riddle at Hogwarts to being the Dark Lord is indeed identical. Darkness and gloom are all that define each of their worlds and Rowling, in her attempt to build an utterly striking and sensational character through Lord Voldemort, has undoubtedly shaped him in the outline of Satan from *The Bible*.

### **Deemed as The Saviour by a prophecy – Jesus or Harry ? Or both ?**

Harry potter, the titular character of Rowling's Magnum Opus, is introduced to us as a mere boy of 11. He, like Riddle, was completely unaware of his magical identity and was orphaned at the age of 1. The latter semblance owes its existence to Riddle himself, who, after rising to power as Voldemort, killed both Lily and James Potter in cold blood in Godric's Hollow where Harry was born. The infant was then rescued upon Dumbledore's orders and sent to the muggle world until that time came when he was ready to take his place at Hogwarts. Harry was brought up by his only living relatives who, as fate would have it, were only too determined to keep Harry's real identity from him. Thus, Harry grew up in the muggle world unaware of his reputation in the wizarding community as **“The Boy Who Lived”**, until his letter of acceptance arrived from Hogwarts.

Just like his mentor and his arch-enemy, Harry, too, has a very distinct parallel in the Bible and

by now it is only too obvious who his biblical counterpart is. Yes, Jesus Christ. After the Fall of mankind, man, unlike Satan, accepted the banishment with utmost humility in the hope that one day a saviour would come and redeem them from their sin. Finally, after 14 generations of ruthlessness, betrayal, greed, torture and battles, the long awaited messiah arrived in the form of Jesus, known to be the Son of God and born to parents Mary and Joseph. As Peter Stoner, Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena College, says, there are 55 prophecies about Jesus in The Old Testament that cover his birth, ministry (from his baptism in Roman Judea to The Last Supper in Jerusalem), his death and resurrection, and his role in the church. Correspondingly, during the dark days in the wizard world when the terror of Voldemort and his Death Eaters had reached its zenith, a prophecy was made that stated that the boy born at the end of the seventh month will have a power that even Voldemort knows not and this child will be born to parents who have **“thrice defied”** the Dark Lord. This boy will be marked as his equal by Voldemort himself and will possess the power to **“vanquish”** him. The wizarding community, who long awaited the arrival of someone who could put an end to the dark days, finally found their messiah in the little 1 year old Harry. Interestingly enough, the prophecy did not mean Harry distinctly, as its conditions referred to two boys, both born in the same year at the end of July to parents who **“thrice defied”** the Dark Lord, Harry Potter and Neville Longbottom. It was Voldemort, who having heard only the first half of the prophecy, thought that it was Harry the prophecy hinted at. Thus, Harry became **“The Chosen One”** for the wizardkind just as Jesus became the messiah for mankind.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke recount the story of The Temptation of Christ. After his baptism, Jesus goes to the desert to meditate and fast for forty days and nights. During his fasting, Satan visits Jesus in a human form, tempting Jesus to worship him and offering him bread to relive his hunger. Jesus, however, continuously resists the Devil's temptation. In a similar way, Harry, too, had to face a lot of temptation from Voldemort to join the dark side throughout the septet of books. After regenerating in a human form in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, the Dark Lord taunts Harry several times, saying that the latter is not strong enough to resist the pull of the dark side, and that he and Harry could rule the wizard world if they worked together. In *Sorcerer's Stone*, Voldemort tells Harry that if Harry would give him the Sorcerer's Stone, then, he, Voldemort, would be able to bring the latter's parents back to life. Despite the longing that the 11 year old Harry feels for his parents, he remembers Dumbledore's words that the dead can never be brought back and rejects the offer by calling Voldemort a liar.

Finally, Jesus walks into the Garden of Gethsemane, unarmed and ready to die. He is arrested by the Governor's men and taken to be nailed to the cross. The four Gospels narrate how after his painful death and his burial, several women including Mary Magdalene, found the tomb of Jesus to be empty. Here, they met with an angel who told them that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Later that day, Jesus was seen by some of his followers and for days afterwards by many other people. His followers realized that the angel's words were indeed true, and that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Likewise, in the last book of the series, Harry walks into the Forbidden Forest, unarmed and prepared to face his death, as he realizes that it is the only way to weaken the Dark Lord. Voldemort

greet him menacingly and hits him with the killing curse, “**Avada Kedavra**”. Harry meets his old teacher again, after being killed, in a place that looks like the Kings Cross Station, just “**without the trains**”. Here, Dumbledore tells him that he has a choice, a choice that he could go back or he could forget all about the war and stay back. Harry chooses to fight and is thus resurrected.

“**It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities**”. Harry Potter, thus, working on the teachings of his supreme mentor, Dumbledore, is the polar opposite to the evil Lord Voldemort solely because of his choice to nourish the goodness in him instead of yielding to the darkness. The human heart is, indeed, an interplay of light and darkness and it is the individual who decides which side to yield to. Harry, providing a sharp contrast to Voldemort hereby, is an entity defined by the ability to love, an ability which even “**the Dark Lord knows not**”. He is also the sole person capable enough to save the wizardkind from the venomous clutches of Voldemort. None but the redeemer of mankind, Jesus Christ, can be a reflection of him and his affinity to the God-like Dumbledore makes him more so. Harry has definitely made the “right choice” between “what is right and what is easy”. In other words, Potter is the celebration of perseverance and of the victory of good over evil.

### Minor References :

J. K. Rowling uses scores of mythological allusions and references in her characters, continually, throughout the Harry Potter series. Enumerated below are a few such instances :-

- ❖ The character of Minerva McGonagall is named after the Roman Goddess Minerva. Minerva is the Goddess of wisdom and war; the Greeks called her Athena. Minerva is usually depicted holding the Aegis, her shield which bears the head of the terrible Medusa.

Minerva McGonagall is the wise and powerful professor of Transfiguration at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. As an expert in the difficult art of Transfiguration she can easily turn a table into a hog or a rat into a goblet or even herself into an orange tabby cat.

Both these figures are also seen to be brave, wise, fierce and victorious in battles against dark powers.

- ❖ The character of professor Sybil Trelawney finds a parallel in the Greek legendary figure Sibyl, also called Sibylla, a prophetess in Greek literature. Tradition presented her as a woman of prodigious old age uttering predictions in ecstatic frenzy, but she was always a figure of the mythical past, and her prophecies, always turned out to be true even though no one believed her.

The professor of Divination at Hogwarts School Of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Sybil Trelawney, is known to be from the famous Seer family in magical heritage. She is the great-great granddaughter of Cassandra Trelawney, a famous Seer in the wizarding world and likewise, even her prophecies, though they are only two in number, are not taken seriously by anyone apart from Harry and Dumbledore.



- ❖ Three headed dogs are very rare magical beasts. Rubeus Hagrid, Keeper of keys and grounds at Hogwarts, owned a three-headed Staffordshire Bull Terrier hellhound demon dog named Fluffy, which served as one of the obstacles to the Philosopher's Stone.

In Greek mythology, Cerberus was a three-headed dog that guarded the gates to the underworld. In order to get past him, music would have to be played for him exactly as in the case of Fluffy.

- ❖ The sword of Gryffindor was a thousand year old goblin-made sword, owned by the famed wizard, Godric Gryffindor. It could only present itself, in an hour of need, to a true Gryffindor and no one else. When Harry enters the Chamber Of Secrets in order to fight the Basilisk and rescue Ginny Weasley, Albus Dumbledore sends him the sword wrapped in the Sorting Hat which helps him to fulfill his endeavour. Harry being a true Gryffindor successfully pulls out the sword at one go.

This sequence finds a parallel in the Excalibur or the sword in the stone which was pulled out by King Arthur. The sword trapped in the stone could only be pulled out by the rightful king of Britain, much alike a true Gryffindor.

- ❖ *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire* shares an uncanny similarity to the legendary Arthurian quest for the Holy Grail. The quest for the Triwizard Cup involves several tasks which seem to be a microcosm of the famous quest for the Grail. The first task involves stealing an egg from a dragon. Dragons are also very prevalent in the Grail legend. In the second task Harry displays chivalry just like King Arthur by saving Fleur's sister when he didn't need to. Lastly, the third task centers on finding the Holy Grail – the Triwizard Cup.

The most major parallel seems to be the quest for a cup and glory with the help of friends. At every obstacle Harry has a friend step in and give him the advice and help he needs to be triumphant. Likewise, Arthur has his Knights of the Round Table who have sworn loyalty to him.

- ❖ The character of Remus Lupin, the Defence against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts, was bitten by a werewolf, Fenrir Greyback, at the age of 4, and became a fully fledged werewolf himself. He finds a parallel in Remus of Roman Mythology, who was raised by a she-wolf along with his brother Romulus;

Interestingly, the name Lupin comes from the Latin word *lupus*, meaning wolf. Rowling has also revealed that Lupin's father's name was Lyall which originates from the Old Norse word *Liulfr*, once again meaning wolf.

- ❖ Sirius was the pet dog of Orion in Greek Mythology with whom the Goddess Artemis falls in love. When Artemis unknowingly kills Orion, she places him in the heavens, as a constellation, with his faithful dog, Sirius at his heels.

The character finds its parallel in the character of Sirius Black in Harry Potter, alias Padfoot, as he was an animagus who could transform himself into a dog. Throughout the series,

Sirius is presented as an extremely loyal and fierce friend to James and Lily Potter and as well as Harry's beloved godfather.

- ❖ The name Argus, too, has story behind it. In Greek Mythology, Argus (or Argos) Panoptes is a giant with a hundred eyes and is known as the all-seeing one. He is employed to act as watchman by the goddess Hera, the wife of Zeus, in order to keep the nymph Io away from the King of gods.

Correspondingly, Argus Filch is another all-seeing guardian, watching over every inch of Hogwarts and keeping his eyes on the students there. Like the Greek Argus, Filch isn't too successful at his job, although he does know Hogwarts better than anyone else (apart from Fred and George Weasley) and is almost always aware as soon as any student steps out of line.

- ❖ Fawkes, the phoenix, is inextricably linked to Dumbledore as the headmaster, together with Harry and the phoenix, forms the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit). After Dumbledore's death, Fawkes's phoenix song of lament is described as something connecting all the mourners to Dumbledore. Fawkes acts as the embodiment of the Holy Spirit which descends upon God's followers and grants them wisdom to spread His word.

The flame of the Holy Spirit is comparable to the flame in which the phoenix is reborn. During the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, also called the Holy Ghost, descends upon the apostles as fiery tongues and grants them wisdom, protection, and healing.

In a similar way, Harry sees Fawkes descend and speed through the air alike a ghostly bird towards him. It also heals Harry's wound in the Chamber of Secrets with its tears.

We are sure by now that all these hidden facts, parallels, references and interpretations must have provided all our readers with an eye-opening experience, very identical to ours, for who would have thought that a series, which otherwise would have been left behind in the worn out pages of our childhood memories, would be revived and presented again as a piece of literary work, bearing a host of hidden meanings unnoticed by the general reader.

Perhaps, it is these unsaid references which save it from dwindling away with the sands of time and age. Each novel turns into an experience where Harry, his bonds with his friends, his love for his mentor, his bittersweet dynamic with Professor Severus Snape, his memories of his parents which shield him, and ultimately his struggle with the Dark Lord are all life-like and realistic. As stated earlier, nowhere does the reader ever feel detached from the fantastical world of the wizards. Indeed, the creation of Harry Potter and his entire universe has been thought upon meticulously and this beautiful magical series is the fruit of Rowling's vivid imagination.

Yet, we can never remain oblivious to the fact that it offers us an interpretation of human life itself. The series is encumbered with views and perspectives of life, how difficulties should be dealt with, how light should be nurtured and darkness done away with, and how, even in the darkest of times, perseverance is key. Indeed, **"We do not need Magic to transform the world. We carry all**

**the power we need inside ourselves already”**. To put it differently, the Magic that is portrayed in the series is what is already within us and it is our job to find it just like Hogwarts finds its witches and wizards. Perhaps, through this septet of books, she calls upon us readers to introspect and acquaint ourselves with the magic that resides within us for **“Logic only gives man what he needs...Magic gives him what he wants.”**

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# **MAHARAJA ! TOMARE SELAM**

## **THE MAESTRO AND HIS SEMINAL CREATIONS**

*The paper was written and presented by :*

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On the semi-centennial anniversary of the most popular Bengali sleuth, Feluda, we take a trip down memory lane exploring the journey of its creator, the Maharaja among the Bengali filmmakers, Satyajit Ray.

Ray was born into a family of litterateurs. His grandfather, Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury was a famous Bengali writer, illustrator, philosopher, social reformer and much more. In 1913, it was he who was the pioneer behind the Bengali children's magazine, *Sandesh*. It was published by Upendrakishore Ray's publishing company, M/S U. Ray and Sons. *Sandesh* went out of print twice and it was Satyajit Ray who revived it again in 1961. It was also this magazine where his writings were first published including short stories of Feluda, Professor Shanku, etc.

Satyajit Ray's father, Sukumar Ray too was a prodigy in the field of Bengali literature, popular especially among children even today through his nonsense rhyme in *Abol Tabol*, *Ha Ja Ba Ra La*, short story collection of *Pagla Dashu* etc.

Born into such an exceptionally talented family, Satyajit Ray (1921-1992) too inculcated his predecessors' brilliant genes. He was a filmmaker, a screen-writer, music composer, graphic artist, calligrapher, lyricist and author. After completing his graduation at Presidency University, Calcutta, Ray was insisted by his mother to study in Viswa Bharati University at Shantiniketan founded by Rabindranath Tagore. Ray was reluctant at first because of his love for Calcutta and the low opinion of the intellectual life at Shantiniketan. However, he succumbed to his mother's wishes and joined as a student of Kalabhaban (Department of Painting) there.

"Although I joined as a student of Kalabhaban, I had no wish to become a painter – certainly not a painter of the Oriental school", Ray writes in one of his articles. His perspective however soon changed when the city-bred Ray had his first encounter with rural India. He began to appreciate Indian culture and the beauty that lay in the villages of his own land. His time at Shantiniketan brought a change in him for the better both due to his new found love of the East as well as because he was influenced by some brilliant teachers like Nandalal Bose and Benod Behari Mukhopadhyay. He began to finally appreciate his own roots.

Ray started his career at commercial advertising and also designed book covers. One of these books was an edition of Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay's novel, *Pather Panchali* which was actually adapted by him as his first film.

Ray had always nurtured the dream of being a film-maker. However, it was only after a six month trip to Europe where Ray met French film-maker Jean Renoir and watched Vittorio De Sica's film *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), did he decide to pursue independent film-making.

Ray directed 36 films, including feature films, documentaries and short films. He was not only a film-maker but a master story-teller who has left a cinematic heritage that belongs as much to India as to the world. His films demonstrate a remarkable humanism, keen observation and subtle handling of characters and situations, making it a rare blend of intellect and emotions.

Though Ray was initially inspired by the neo-realist tradition, his cinema does not confine itself to a specific time or category. His films belong to a meta-genre which includes the works of renowned artists of the world like Akira Kurosawa, Alfred Hitchcock, Jean Renoir, Ingmar Bergman, Ritwick Ghatak and many others.

Ray is best known for his cult movies like the *Apu Trilogy*, *Aranyer Din Ratri*, *Charulata*, *Kanchenjunga*, *Calcutta Trilogy*, *The Feluda series*, etc. His first film was *Pather Panchali*, which was an adaptation of a bildungsroman novel describing the maturation of Apu, a small boy in a Bengali village.

It was after watching De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* that Ray decided *Pather Panchali* would be his first film. He said "With all my knowledge of Western Cinema, the first thing I realized was that none of the films I had ever seen was remotely like the story I was about to film. *Pather Panchali*, the maestro's own low budget, open-air drama announced the arrival of a humanistic, Calcutta-centred Indian art cinema. This movie was a landmark one since before this, Indian cinema was relatively unknown in the West. Ray became hugely popular after this film and went on to win eleven international prizes for his first film itself.

On the first day of the shoot, the director had never directed, the cameraman had never shot a scene, the children in the leading roles had never been tested and the soundtrack was composed by the then obscure sitarist (the great Ravi Shankar!)

In *Desh Patrika* of 1965, Ray writes about Bosley Crowther, a renowned film critic of the New York Times. When *Pather Panchali* released in New York, his remark that the film was thoroughly unsuitable for the New York audience, worried the distributors of the film. However, the film ran for thirty-four weeks straight in New York alone. Perhaps, Mr. Crowther learnt a lesson and hence when *Aparajito* released, "he praised it sky-high". It ran for just eight weeks.

Ray's ardent wish was to make 'Pather Panchali' exactly how 'Bicycle Thieves' was made, with non-professional actors and a realistic background. Being a newcomer to the film industry, Ray's idea was considered unrealistic at that time but that did not weigh down his spirits. With his divine madness and fiery conviction, he borrowed a 16mm camera and with his cameraman Subrata Mitra, he went to Bibhutibhushan's village Gopalnagar, the Nishchindipur of *Pather Panchali*. They squelched through knee-deep mud and heavy rain and took shots in dim lights of the mangrove in pouring rain and in the falling light of dusk. Everything came out perfectly.

The film was however scheduled to be shot in a village called Boral, now part of the Garia neighbourhood of Kolkata. A ramshackle and derelict house was taken on rent at Rs 50/month. For the first time, plaster over bamboo mats were used, now a mainstay in set making in India.

One of the most significant perilous experiences amongst many that Ray kept recalling was that on the 27th of October, 1952, he set out to take the first shot of the classic scene of the film where Apu and Durga discover the train across a field of Kaash flowers. The following Sunday he returned to shoot further only to discover that the Kaash flowers had been destroyed. He had to wait for the next season of flowers to complete the scene.

After the shooting started, the funding went precariously low and despite the help from his family, he had to stop shooting for eight months. Ray's editing team used to travel by bus to the cine laboratory where editing was being done and Ray, being 6ft tall would stand on the foot board of the bus, for being inside would have his head banging on the bus ceiling and hiring a taxi was not an option. Kanu Bannerjee who played the role of Apu and Durga's father added to the crisis as eight shots had to be cut for him mispronouncing "Luchi Mohonbhog" as "Luchi Mohonbagan"!

At that time only help came from the then C.M., Dr B.C Roy who sanctioned an amount of 2 lakhs that covered the whole budget for the rest of the film.

One of the most significant minor characters created by the author was Indir Thakrun whose presence adds further realism to the plight of poverty portrayed in the film. The author described the character to be "an old woman of seventy-five..." in his writings. Ray recalls, "her appearance was not the only thing we had to worry about". Rather they were worried whether an old lady would be able to withstand the physical exertion of outdoor shooting or most importantly whether she would be able to memorise and deliver the dialogues in front of the camera!

Chunibala Debi not only fitted the author's description of the character, on being asked if she could recite by Satyajit Ray, she spontaneously recited "Ghum Parani Mashi Pishi" adding self-created lyrical lines to it, mesmerizing the director. Ray stated- "While working with Chunibala Debi I kept thinking that had we not found her, *Pather Panchali* would never have been made."

The scene of her funeral procession was shot when most of the work on the film was already finished. Much to the director's surprise Chunibala Debi agreed at once to be put on a bier. After the shot was over and the bier was lowered down to ground, Chunibala Debi did not move and Ray's heart skipped a beat. However, after few minutes, she exclaimed "Has the shot been taken already? Why nobody told me! So I was still pretending to be a corpse!" Ray recalls "Her acting was truly extraordinary".

Thus it is rightly said that the story of the making of *Pather Panchali*, the masterpiece is itself a story which can well become a film script. It is a fitting example of perseverance, stubbornness and a purpose.

*Aparajito* forms the next part of the trilogy dealing with Apu's adolescence. It provides a nearly flawless continuation of the journey begun in *Pather Panchali*. *Apur Sansar* is the 3rd and final film of

the Apu Trilogy. In this film, Ray introduced two new actors, Soumitra Chatterjee and Sharmila Tagore, who would become the regulars for the later Ray-films

Apart from these, the name Satyajit Ray rings a bell in the minds of even a five year old because of his unputdownable evergreen creations of Professor Shonku and Feluda.

Professor Shonku's mild eccentricity is endearing and his ingenuity never ceases to astonish the readers. This absent-minded scientist who was a figment of Ray's imagination, made his first appearance in the Bengali children's magazine *Sandesh*.

Professor Shonku is conceived by Ray as an unconventional genius, who is also a polyglot capable of speaking 69 languages. His scientific fervor is larger than life and his discoveries speak volumes about the sheer genius of the character as well as Ray's own brilliance. The adventures are set in several countries throughout the world.

There is no denying the influence of the West on our creative imagination. Yet the one count where Bengalis look homeward is in the allegiance to literary sleuths.

In 1965, at the age of 44, soon after the release of his landmark film *Charulata*, Ray wrote the first draft of a short story, which featured a young boy, barely into his teens, describing the superlative analytical and detection powers of his older cousin brother. Intended to be a light-hearted detective story, it had several comic elements, and there was very little of 'crime' in it. But the fond relationship between the narrator and the protagonist was beautifully captured. That young boy was Topshe, and his 27-year-old cousin was none other than Prodosh Chandra Mitra, also known as our beloved Feluda.

From the father of all detectives, Sherlock Holmes to Agatha Christie's little Belgian superman, Hercule Poirot, all were detectives with impeccable credentials. However, for the Bengalis, the detective living in 21, Rajani Sen Road, Kol- 700029 was always the primary draw.

A quintessential Bengali young man, Feluda was tall, smart and reserved, with an excellent sense of humour. He was upright, honest to the core, extremely well read, possessing photographic memory, interested in all things under the sun, excellent with wordplays and card tricks, physically fit, extremely logical and yet with a mind completely open to the paranormal and pseudoscience. Ray had given his creation certain qualities that set him apart from the stereotypical Bengali man in his early thirties.

Feluda too made his first appearance in *Sandesh*. His character is a Holmesian combination of mental and physical agility. According to Ray, he is the universal "dada" mentoring the youth without mollycoddling them.

While making the character, Ray made Feluda the archetypal Bengali foodie and we get glimpse of that when he thoroughly enjoys his fish curry in the film rendition of Joy Baba Felunath, the second of Ray's classic Feluda films.

We find another of Ray's evergreen characters through Feluda stories and films – Lalmohan babu, a short, stocky, witty and talented writer of crime stories. The alliterative title of his novels



written under the nom de plume of Jatayu, make their way into every Bengali banter. He is shown as a man of principle when he says to Feluda “Share-e jabo kintu” (We'll share the taxi fare).

Feluda's opponents are no ordinary villains be it Maganlal Meghraj or Mandar Bose. Maganlal Meghraj's character was played to perfection by Legendary Utpal Dutta.

One of the important reasons for Feluda's popularity is the reader base. Ray wrote Feluda for young adults keeping in mind at the same time that all well written children's literature are also enjoyed by adults.

Ray's dislike towards having Feluda drawn into contemporary political and social settings has a deeper root: he did not like what he saw happening around him. This bhadrolok abhorred the breakdown of reason, the flood of chaos, unthinking violence and unintelligent criminal acts. Feluda stories also depict common motifs like the fact that the nature of crimes always rises from an aberrant greed of human.

Ray desired to remain an 'apolitical' writer. Feluda was the crystallization of Ray's unease with Bengali middle-class straitjacketing and delusional self-imaging, as well as with his natural distaste for the populist, the garish, that somewhere in his mind, slid down to the all-too-visible lumpen. Feluda holds the key to maintaining an equal distance from the ossified bhadrolok (cultured man) and the rampaging chhotolok (lumpen).

While reading Feluda, we find the violence as a kind of “white-violence”. The theme does not come across as anything grotesque or gory. Ray kept this in mind since his readers consisted of people from all age groups.

Feluda stories have the ability to draw the reader into solving mysteries using the same clues that the detective has. The dramatis personae are numerous enough to keep the reader guessing, but not so many that the reader is overwhelmed. Feluda adventures strike the right balance between all these and remain the most popular detective stories among Bengalis even today.

The world of celluloid has seen and given birth to numerous legends. But few possess the magic and deep understanding of human relationships and the world alike, as the maestro Satyajit Ray does. His genius and art has been applauded by renowned filmmakers and artists at world stage:

In the words of Audrey Hepburn, an actress whom Ray had admired throughout, “His rare mastery of art and motion pictures and profound humanitarian outlook has had indelible influence on filmmakers and audiences throughout the globe”

“The quiet but deep observation, understanding and love of the human race, which are characteristic of all his films, have impressed me greatly” – Akira kurosawa

“The work of Satyajit Ray presents a remarkably insightful understanding of relations between cultures and his ideas remain pertinent to the great cultural debates in the contemporary world not least in India.” – Amartya Sen

“Although he was such a superb visual artist, Ray's main inspo was literary. He always wrote his own scripts and his greatest films were all adaptations of favorite novels and stories including



*Charulata*, based on a novella by Tagore. It doesn't seem to matter through what medium novels, plays, films, music-the most potent influences reach us.” – Ruth Prawer Jhabvala

Ray always denied that he made films to change the world unlike his contemporaries Mrinal Sen or Ritwik Ghatak . Unlike the popular cinema of his time he also did not paint his characters in black and white or good and bad; Ray's characters lived in an instantly recognizable middle ground. They moved in a layered landscape of a variety of human emotions and motivations. It was the struggle of the ordinary person that interested him. There are no heroes in his films. Instead the brave heroism of the ordinary person was what interested him. He created archetypes of individuals battling with their day to day lives.

Apu's journey through adolescence, young Devi, the feudal landlord in Jalshagar, a bored but brilliant housewife in *Charulata* – these characters will be forever reminiced and will define complex human associations. With strong woman characters and a modernistic vision, Ray's film played a significant role in how people perceived India. The way Ray managed to create his magnum opus *Pather Panchali* despite constraints such as budget, technology, marketing and distribution speaks volumes about his determination.

Though Ray's own political stance was ambiguous, he was drawn to Nehru not because of Nehru's passion for state socialism, centralized planning, industrialization but on account of Nehru's secularist nationalism, cosmopolitanism interest in social reform, faith in reason science and progress. He said during an interview, “I admire Nehru, I understand him better because I am also in a way a product of East and West”.

The legacy of Ray exceeds his films and documentaries. He was a man who embodied the Bengal Renaissance as it were. Being exceptionally gifted in several disciplines, Ray worked as a graphic designer and worked out many famous book covers such as Jim Corbett's *Man-eaters of Kumaon* and Nehru's *Discovery of India*. Ray also designed four typefaces for Roman script named Ray Roman, Ray Bizarre, Daphnis, and Holiday script, apart from numerous Bengali ones for *Sandesh*.

In 1947, he set up the first Indian film society in Calcutta. He received the Dadasaheb Phalke award in 1984 and Bharat Ratna in 1992. He was awarded the Legion of Honour in France in 1987 and the honorary award at the 64th Academy awards among many. His legacy is further carried on by his son Sandip Ray, also a filmmaker contributing to his father's series of *Feluda*, guiding the magazine *Sandesh* and various other short stories.



# THE MAD, THE MELANCHOLIC, THE POET

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The amalgamation of the concept of Madness and Art are as old as Western Culture. Aristotle identified a tendency to melancholia in the artistic temperament; Shakespeare produced multiple variations on the theme of lunatics and poets being “*of imagination all compact*”; and Dryden coined the notion of a “*thin partition*” between wit and insanity. The modern problem with the mad-artist principle emerged from two conflicting urges of the 19th century. The first was a desire among early romantics to view inspiration and psychic disturbance as essentially the same thing : the font of artistic motivation. The second was the less romantic urge to classify as medical conditions extremes of mental distress. Coleridge's opiate vision in ‘**Kubla Khan**’, of a sacred river, deep within tumultuous caverns of the mind, as creativity itself, or the pre-Raphaelites' celebration of mad Ophelia as the image of beauty, were confronted in the 1890s by Emil Kraepelin's definition of the two principal psychiatric diseases : dementia praecox (later, schizophrenia) and manic depression.

Mention of the existence of private mental health facilities or 'madhouses' have been found in records dating as far back as the 1600s. At that time, since science and psychiatry had not developed, symptoms and Behavioral patterns which are today known as signs of mental illness were regarded as madness. People with such symptoms were locked away from society in these 'madhouses' and many died in squalid and inhumane conditions. Over time, society used these institutions to commit people who were not “like them”, including those with radical attitude and low intelligence levels. It wasn't until the 18th century, and the passing of the 1774 Lunacy Act, that the science of psychiatry really began to develop. The 18th century was a time of great reflection and “enlightenment” resulting in the questioning of society and changes in science. Thus, began the slow progress of mental health treatment.

For **William Blake**, a piece of poetic work should be “*an embodiment of the poet's imagination and vision*”. Blake was a man of superb creativity and radical thinking. He is regarded as one of the earliest Romantics due to his emphasis on the sublime, the subjective, idealization of nature, spirituality and freedom of thought. Throughout his life, he believed that “*the Real Man*” was “*The Imagination which Liveth for Ever*”. At the age of four, for the first time, he saw the “*vision*” of God looking through his window. His friend, journalist **Henry Crabb Robinson** said that Blake would recount his visions “*in the ordinary unemphatic tone in which we speak of trivial matters*”. Blake's visions played a major role in his creation of his myths, his original characters, his prophetic books and the **Songs of Innocence and Experience**. All his works are connected in one whole which stand as the symbol of Blake's philosophy.

One day Blake saw a little girl named Ololon coming down from heaven into his garden. A moment later, he fainted at the climax of a complicated vision. He had seen John Milton renounce Satan, and he had glimpsed the return of Jesus Christ. Blake described this experience, together with many interesting things that had led up to it, in the shortest of his three major poems, **Milton**.

**Milton** assumes knowledge of the other writings in which Blake explains the cosmic myth on which it is based. Much of the poem is biographical allegory. Characters of uncertain significance, such as Ololon, play prominent roles. Figures with different names are regarded as one character or coalesce. Shifts in perspective are bewilderingly rapid, and Blake has complicated it all by adding supplementary pages within the text.

**Milton** contains more details about William Blake's own "*spiritual acts*" than any of his other writings except the letters. According to the poet, the epic is built around two great visions.

The first vision in **Milton** begins with the mysterious union of William Blake with the spirit of the poet John Milton. We learn that this happened while Blake was still living at Lambeth in London. The second grand vision described in **Milton** took place several years later, at Felpham. Interestingly, Blake tells us how he had been sent to Hayley by Los, the Zoa of Imagination. The question remains how much of the plot of this poem is based on Blake's actual visions, although the poem certainly draws on Blake's unusual feelings and experiences.

The most important action of the poem is the changes in the attitudes of his allegorical characters. First Milton, then Los, Ololon, and eventually the human race itself move from anxious concern for self and surroundings to the creative self on which visionary existence depends. Blake built his epic around this theme.

J.T. Smith writes in his **Blake's Visions and Voices : The Explanation** :

"On the day of his death, August 12th, 1827, he composed and uttered songs to his Maker so sweetly to the ear of his Catherine, that when she stood to hear him, he, looking upon her most affectionately, said, "My beloved, they are not mine ...no... they are not mine"

Blake's hallucinations usually occurred in clear consciousness. This is unusual except in **Schizophrenia** and a few intoxications. Solitude, drowsiness, and emotion seem to have helped Blake's visions appear. The visions often arose from things about which Blake had been thinking. A parallel to the black chalk and pencil drawings of Blake's **Visionary Heads** is the experience of one of Bleuler's patients, who reported being visited by famous people after he read about them. The subjects of these sketches by Blake, who are mostly famous historical and mythical characters, appeared to him in visions during late night meetings with John Varley, the watercolour artist and astrologer.

Visual hallucinations in schizophrenia are typically concrete and vivid. They often are so distinct that patients can draw the visions as if they were real objects seen by their physical eyes. Blake remarked, "*He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light than his perishing and mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all.*"

We find another characteristic of schizophrenia in Blake's *"spiritual communications"*, his conversation with the shade of Voltaire and his ability to communicate non-verbally with the visionary sitters. These are auditory hallucinations – the *"voices"* of the invisible speakers.

A related hallmark of schizophrenia is the passivity experience. Patients have a very vivid feeling of being influenced or controlled by unseen powers. *"Inspirations"* come daily to many such people. Blake was himself *"possessed"* by the mighty Los, and although he was frightened, he felt a sense of cosmic exultation. On the other hand, the external forces may interfere with the patient's thinking. The spirits steal their thoughts away, or force fantasy on them, dragging them from their earthly affairs. The *"spirit of abstraction"* interfered with Blake when he wanted to concentrate. While Blake was working on the pictures described in the **Descriptive Catalogue**, he was harassed by *"Titian"* and the *"blotting and blurring demons"*.

The cosmic scope of Blake's myth itself strongly suggests schizophrenia. Patients often become aware of immense and universal things, cosmic happenings of the utmost importance. Blake's voyages into the mental worlds, his apocalyptic visions, and his *"spiritual struggles"* are like things that happen to many other schizophrenics. Dr. Jaspers explains this as *"Journeys of the soul into the Other World"*.

Blake's descriptions share most of such apocalyptic qualities, including their universal importance. Dr. Jaspers' comment on one of the ways schizophrenics can write recalls Blake's prophetic books : *"More rarely we find writings, where the manner is very bizarre, and the style high-flown and striking[...]The patients[...] develop theories, new cosmic systems, new religions, new interpretations of the Bible, or of universal problems, etc."*

Intelligent schizophrenics do wonder why people around them fail to notice their visions, and their one frequent explanation is that they have developed powers merely latent in other people. Blake decided that other people failed to see his visions because they were blinded by materialism. However, Blake's inspirations told him how his favourite artists worked – they shared his visions.

It is possible for the writings or paintings of a schizophrenic to make sense, or even to be very good. Other famous artists with schizophrenia or schizophrenic-like syndromes include Franz Kafka, Robert Schumann and Vincent Van Gogh.

Blake did not become demented as he grew older or require institutionalization, but neither do many untreated schizophrenics. Dr. June Singer has suggested that Blake's work as an engraver helped prevent schizophrenic deterioration. Engraving is a tedious work that requires full concentration. So, it resembles the therapeutic tasks given to present-day institutionalized schizophrenics to prevent them from being overwhelmed by fantasy.

In the words of Northrop Frye :

*The complaints that Blake was "mad" are no longer of any importance, not because anybody has proved him sane, but because critical theory has realized that madness, like obscenity, is a word with no critical meaning.*

The visions and feelings described in **Milton** are typical of schizophrenia. A new star appeared in the sky. It entered Blake's body, filling him with both terror and exultation. The star was a man from a world beyond time and space. His appearance affected the spirits of all people. Nothing like this had ever happened before. The sky was shattered and the apocalypse was about to begin. Space and time were transformed and Blake entered a new world. The Lord of Inspiration overwhelmed and became one with the visionary. The world appeared strange; the aura of majesty hung in the atmosphere. All objects were alive and humanized. Strange powers that control mortal life loomed around the poet. Cosmic truths became apparent.

A didactic enumeration by seventeenth century British Poet Laureate **John Dryden**,

"Great wits are sure to madness near allied and thin partitions do their bounds divide"

heralds the poetic penchant of the late 18th century, often termed as the Romantic Age, where the muse traversed from the land of "*Spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions*", sipped the water from banks of the subconscious and unconscious regions of the mind, and gave rise to an image of a *Furor Poeticus*, which was a blurred region in the domain of poetry. Mental disorders were often mistaken in the Romantic Age, with the concept of '*Mad Genius*'. The unrestrained imagination on "*wings of poesy*" infused with wistful melancholy and a sense of alienated subjectivity exposed the minds of the poets on an intimate level, thus making it easier for an intricate study of the Mental illness the poets endured.

One of the major poets of the Romantic Age whose mind lay devoured by numerous Mental disorders is **Samuel Taylor Coleridge** – Best known for his poems '**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**', '**Kubla Khan**', and '**Cristabel**', S.T. Coleridge is one of England's most beloved literary figures, he was a celebrated critic, philosopher and theologian, and along with William Wordsworth, Coleridge was one of the spearheads of the Romantic movement, and so, was a member of the Lake Poets, a group of famed English poets who lived in England's Lake District. He was the youngest of 14 children who showed his intellectual aptitude early. His father, a village vicar and headmaster in Devonshire, died when Coleridge was eight. His family sent him off to study on scholarship at a boarding school near London, where he remembered feeling "*depressed, moping, friendless.*" bringing out the first visible signs of depression caused by isolation. The twin demons of mental illness and addiction caused Samuel Taylor Coleridge to fail at nearly everything he attempted in life. His addiction to alcohol and opium was well known and documented, so was his crippling anxiety and depression. There are empirical speculations that he suffered from Bipolar disorder- an illness that had not been identified in his lifetime.

Bipolar Disorder, previously termed as Manic Depression, is a mental disorder that causes a cyclic wave of abnormally elevated mood known as Mania or Hypomania, followed by a period of Depression. Those afflicted with bipolar disorder possess a higher rate of relationship problems, economic instability, accidental injuries and suicidal tendencies.

During the Hypomania phase a Bipolar personality tends to be easily irritated or distracted, make uncharacteristically poor judgement, take frivolous decisions, and indulge in drug abuse. This is evident from his impulsive nature during his prime years. He was considered "the most restless,

unsettled, and dendritic of minds,” Coleridge’s life often consisted of impulsive decisions made during maniacal episodes. As cited in *Romanticism: An Anthology* by Duncan Wu it states, “Coleridge joined the King’s Light Dragoons under the name Silas Tomkyn Comberbache. And after six weeks he was discharged and the Regimental Muster Roll recorded : “discharge S. T. Comberbache Insane; 10 April 1794.” At this time, in a letter to his brother, Coleridge writes :

*“I laugh almost like an insane person when I cast my eye backward on the prospect of my past two years – What a gloomy Huddle of eccentric Actions, and dim-discovered motives!.. – since that period my Mind has been irradiated by Bursts only of Sunshine – at all other times gloomy with clouds, or turbulent with tempests.... It had been better for me, if my Imagination had been less vivid....I seized the empty gratifications of the moment, and snatched at the Foam, as the Wave passed by me. – My Brother”*

Through a thorough examination of writings, we can look at specific mental states of individuals, which in turn may inform those looking for answers, or symptoms of bipolar minds, Coleridge speaks of his last two years and describes them as having “*eccentric Actions, and dim-discovered motives !*” He admits his actions are fuelled by an unknown source that is dimly discovered. He descriptively tells the story of his manic-depressive states as he uses metaphors and bold language to depict states of “*Bursts only of Sunshine*” or “*turbulent with tempests*”. His impulsive mood is described here with fierce language like “*seized*” and “*snatched*” as he uses the metaphor of a wave to describe the ebb and flow of his bipolar states. He describes his imagination as “*vivid*” which is often a trait of manic-depression as ideas explode in the mind vividly and clarity takes hold. Further, the manic bipolar tendencies are apparent from his nature described by William Wordsworth and Robert Southey, who outlined him as an unreliable and often unpredictable, who regularly found himself penniless.

**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner** was written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). It was first published in *Lyrical Ballads*. The poem is all about retribution, punishment, guilt, and curse, the Ancient Mariner in the poem has to pay for an impulsive act of killing the Albatross. Through the poem Coleridge is able to exercise his mind, unveiling the deep-seated knowledge gleaned from his own experiences with his mental state. The “*hot and cooper sky*” and “*bloody Sun*” connotes a painful state that hovers above the mast and sits there “*Day after day, day after day*”. Like most depressive episodes that last for days or more, Coleridge points to a prolonged state that continues for days where they are “*stuck*” with no “*breath nor motion*”. Depression is described as suffocating and paralyzing. Coleridge writes “*Water, water everywhere, / And all the boards did shrink.*” The image clearly articulates the feelings experienced by a person suffering from manic-depression. The image of water represents the journey of a bipolar person that sails through life with bouts of depression and gets caught in depleted states of nothingness. “*Alone, alone, all, all alone, / Alone on a wide, wide sea! / And never a saint took pity*” Coleridge reiterates the state of the Mariner’s mind through repeating the word “*alone*” three times as if being alone is a long endured dark place on a “*wide, wide sea.*” This sentiment mirrors that of a depressed person who can feel long stretches of loneliness and dark times which unfold in waves similar to that of a sea. Coleridge writes “*and never a saint to pity on*



me” which points to the hopelessness often endured during bouts of depression where one feels completely abandoned with no one to turn to. Coleridge states not even a “saint” took “pity” on him. His use of the word “pity” points to a heightened state of desperation that begs for help.

In the poem The Mariner is forced to wear the bird about his neck as a symbol of guilt.

*“Instead of the cross, the Albatross / About my neck was hung”.*

Looking at the poem through the psychiatric and psychological domain, the symbolism, the narration and the entire setting of the poem represents **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**. The Mariner suffers from survivor’s guilt and his condition worsened as he saw all the sailors dying in front of him. Mariner is a lone survivor. He becomes closed-off psychically and finds himself trapped in a profound sense of guilt.

*“But oh ! more horrible than that Is the curse in a dead man’s eye! Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse, And yet I could not die”*

Another phobia which overtakes him is **Stygiophobia**, an irrational fear of hell. Its symptoms are breathlessness, excessive sweating, dry mouth, nausea, feeling sick, heart palpitations, and inability to speak or think clearly, a fear of dying, a sensation of detachment from reality or an anxiety attack. With his careful craftsmanship, Coleridge not only expressed the nuances of his Bipolar mind but also ventured the arena of fear psychosis. The mental stress of a person under a crisis situation has remarkably been evoked in this poem.

Bipolar disorder holds a notorious affinity to be comorbid by nature, where Anxiety, Suicidal tendencies and Substance Abuse are often diagnosed in clusters. According to the statics presented by the *American Journal of Managed Care* : Symptoms of bipolar disorder such as anxiety, Pain, depression and sleeplessness are so alarming, that many individuals will turn to drugs and alcohol as a means for offsetting the discomfort, if only for a little while. The disorder of **Substance Abuse** interrelated to Coleridge’s Bipolar nature is evident since, he allegedly used large quantities of Opium in the form of Laudanum to not only placate his Neuralgic pain and cure his insomnia, but also counter his **Anxiety** attacks caused due to **Hypochondria** ( an abnormal chronic anxiety about one’s health) – The following anxiety is evident in the content of the letters Coleridge wrote to Thomas Cottle, his publisher :

“A devil, a very devil, has got possession of my left temple, eye, cheek, jaw, throat, and shoulder. I cannot see you this evening. I write in agony”

“I am seriously ill. The complaint, my medical attendant says, is nervous – and originating in mental causes”.

“I take laudanum every four hours, 25 drops each dose.”

His critically acclaimed poem ‘**Kubla Khan**’ was conceived and composed under the influence of Opium which confers a phantasmagorical quality to the piece. Although, left incomplete, the nature, narrative and fragmented style of the poem vividly mimics the psychedelic experience of a stroboscopic dream which is similar to the snippets of drug induced visions shown in the movie ‘Enter

*The Void* by Gasper Noe. From “*Alph, the sacred river*”, the scene shifts to brilliant gardens, then after a flash of, “*that deep romantic chasm*”, turns into the “*dome of pleasure*”; and suddenly in that vision within a vision appears an “Abyssinian maid” and finally the glimpse of Coleridge’s *Furor Poeticus* “*drunk the milk of Paradise*”. Although the poet considered the influence of Opium aided his imagination, the morbid reality was, that Coleridge gradually deteriorated with weakening of his nerves, pangs of drug induced withdrawal symptoms and further melancholia that aggravated his Bipolar Disorder.

The Victorian Age experienced unprecedented flux, as science and technology shook the foundations of traditional society. Scholars have described the Victorians as people torn by spiritual doubts as many began to question the existence of God. Materialism prevailed during the age as people embraced industrialisation and became concerned only with bettering the ‘*self*’. Due to their ineptness regarding mental health, they dealt inadequately with various types of neuroses and nervous disorders. Considering all these factors, it is no wonder that certain members of society began to feel isolated and fragmented.

The Victorian Age of change was especially detrimental to the health of sensitive minds like **Alfred Lord Tennyson**. Not only did Tennyson worry about the age in which he lived, he also had personal problems that plunged him into deep depressive moods. Tennyson’s father, George, was a first son who was disinherited because of signs of mental instability early in his life. Scholars speculate that George Tennyson also suffered from epilepsy, a condition that was believed by the Victorians to be a form of madness. He was also an alcoholic who became violent toward his wife and children. Therefore, in an age when madness and epilepsy were thought to be inherited diseases, Tennyson feared what his ancestors termed as ‘the black-blooded madness’. His fears were soundly based, as he contended with family members who suffered from epilepsy, depression, mania, hypochondria, hysteria, alcoholism, and drugs. At one time or another, all his family, father, mother, brothers, sisters, and Alfred himself, were afflicted with these illnesses. These psychological factors played an important role in Tennyson’s poetry. In his early poetry, one clearly sees speakers who are isolated beings who long for death or who exist in a life-in-death existence. These isolated, despairing, almost paralyzed characters are found in ‘**The Outcast**’, ‘**My life is full of weary days**’, ‘**Mariana**’, and ‘**Tithonus**’. Daniel Albright writes of Tennyson’s early poetry that ‘*the loss of self*’ is evident. In **Locksley Hall** and later in **Maud**, one finds the manic side of a **bi-polar** speaker. Both speakers rave about the ills of society and how they feel cut off from the world in which they live. In the above-mentioned poems, Alfred Tennyson is clearly creating fictional personae, but there is a strong autobiographical flair in them. The embarrassing and humiliating circumstances of lacking wealth and social status are the direct results of his father’s disinheritance and unstable state of mind. These circumstances, combined with the death of his best friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, and the souring of his relationship with the wealthy and beautiful Rosa Baring are transmuted into the fabric of his poetry. Roger Platizky notes that there has been little discussion regarding *Maud*’s theme of **depression** and **mania** and the social implications of these. Perhaps critics have been deterred from exploring the autobiographical significance of these works because Tennyson vehemently denied its existence.



The speakers in **Maud** and **Locksley Hall** wrestle with the complex problems of Tennysonian love, characterized by the obstacles society places in the lovers' ways, and the trauma that results when the speaker's depressed personality is at odds with itself. Psychologist Rollo May observes that the social and psychological problems of the twentieth century can no longer be isolated one from the other. This was also true of the nineteenth century in general and in particular of Tennyson's speakers. Their health hinges on how successfully they cope with internal and external pressures and achieve a balance among the contradictions that inform their existence. The same attacks on wealth, materialism, and unrequited love that pervades **Locksley Hall** is also in **Maud**, which critics have described both as Tennyson's best and his worst poem. In **Maud**, the speaker isolates himself from the world while he sternly protests the social injustices of what he calls the '*wretched race*' of men, just as Tennyson isolated himself from the society after Hallam's death and his unrequited love affair with Rosa Baring. With his views on the corrupt state of England and society's obsession with wealth, it is not surprising that Tennyson nicknamed Maud 'his little Hamlet', since both **Maud** and **Hamlet** depict speakers who vacillate between sanity and madness, like bipolarity. Both Hamlet and the speaker in Maud represent a self-caught up in a corrupt world in which he does not wish to exist. Tennyson wrote **Maud** to resolve internal conflicts. The poem also reflects his preoccupation with science, religion, the class system, and materialism, concerns that plagued Tennyson most of his life. Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* and later Darwin's *Origin of the Species* caused fundamental doubt, confusion and disillusionment as to how the world and humankind came to be. Poets of the day, including Tennyson, were both fascinated and sympathetic because they sensed that 'madness' was a symptom of the times.

Another prominent poet of the Victorian times is **Robert Browning**. He is a great master in the art of representing the inner conflicts of human beings, their moral qualities and the self-justifying tendency of a criminal mind. Moreover, Browning's humanism and psychological insights as exemplified in his poetry, reveal a profound understanding of his fellow creatures. However, despite his surface ideal relationship with Elizabeth Barrett Browning, many of his poems reflect tremendous anxiety about man's sheer capacity for love. Can a loving relationship be sustained ? Is a lasting love within marriage conceivable ? Will it not turn to hatred or indifference ? Browning seems to have trouble coming to terms with man and woman's essential 'otherness'. The very thought of an unbridgeable gap between the two sexes appears to torment him atrociously, as he deems it responsible for the lovers' unsuccessful efforts to communicate with one another and the ensuing conflicts.

Browning's poem '**My Last Duchess**' has long been considered a masterpiece, an exceptional carving of the sadistic drives resulting from self-doubt and inferiority complex. In the form of a dramatic monologue, the narrator gives a remorseless account of his private motivations for having his Duchess-wife murdered. In '**A Woman's Last Word**', a woman solaces herself with the thought that her death will put an end to her lover's contests and allow love to triumph over trifles. But there is a sense of doom throughout, an extinguishing feeling of hopelessness as the two lovers' lifetime cannot suffice for them to fully comprehend one another. The relationship between Browning's narrators and their respective lovers easily find similarities with one of Shakespeare's prominent characters, Othello and his all-consuming love for Desdemona. While celebrating Browning's

success both as poet and lover, **'One Word More'** makes a plea for inadequate mastery in the art of communication. It addresses the poet's muse, his wife, and is one of the few instances in which Browning deliberately sets his mask aside to speak in his own person, in spite of his otherwise steady and obstinate advocacy of impersonality. His constant anxiety as regards his ability to express himself has been the subject of many of his texts as well as of many criticisms. As A.T. Beck pointed out, anxiety is related either to realistic fear, when the fear is based on sensible assumptions of impending danger, or to unrealistic fear, when the fear is based on fallacious assumptions or faulty reasoning. For instance, when a child or adult is afraid of being alone in the dark, *"what he is really afraid of"*, Freud argues, *"is the absence of someone he loves"*. Browning himself once declared: *"I desire in this life... to live and just write out certain things which are in me, and so save my soul"*. Browning was indubitably suffering from tormenting guilt (**paranoia**) which he sought to wash off (**projective identification and splitting**) through the cathartic function of writing (**cathexis**), and which perhaps was derived from warded off incestuous longings.

Realism was the crux of poetry in the 20th century. True to all other phases of literature, poetry was a pristine reflection of the existing society then and was born from the human minds residing in that environment and affected by it. Alienation and self-realisation due to confinement in the concrete forest were considered chief elements that shaped poetry of this time. The movement from 'within' to 'without' was gradual but boldly visible in the works of this time. The non-linearity of human mind was always sufficiently visible but the time had come when science took up mind as the subject of study. Psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung came up with theories of the mind that divided this intangible share of brain into several portions and had an explanation about the working of each. As more men became enlightened about these progresses, they started incorporating the studies in their own lives and took newer interest in mind and its functions. People now realised that functions come with malfunctions and thus problems relating to the mind began to get normalised.

It's popularly believed that without pain poetry cannot exist and poets must experience life at its worst to create something heart rendering and effective. The two poets who are to be discussed under our topic belong to Modern period of English Literature. Both have had terrible experiences of their own that manifested in their works. They have known psychological torment from very close quarters and thus mirror the illness of mind with beautiful dexterity. Poets **T. S. Eliot** and **Wilfred Owen** are two of the most important faces of Modern poetry, belonging to extremely different genres but certainly meeting at one common point, that being the futility of existence.

**Thomas Stearns Eliot** has been introduced with varying grandeur surrounding his reputation as a literary pioneer. But unknown to a lot of people is his story as a survivor who fought depression (**Major Persistent Depressive Disorder**) through years without even identifying it as so. The crisis at the heart of his renowned poem **The Waste Land** wasn't only global, it was also personal. Eliot's wife, Vivienne Haigh-Wood, also had poor physical and mental health and he scattered his poem with references to their life together. *"I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter,"* ends the poem's first stanza, in one of the most powerful and subtle lines ever written about **insomnia**, of which he and Vivienne were both sufferers. She asked him to remove some lines due to their being too personal, but many others about a husband and wife living with mental illness were retained. *"My*

*nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me./ Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak."* When Eliot's breakdown came in 1921, he referred to himself as a "**neurasthenic**", "**tired and depressed**", and was advised to take three months off work. He went to Margate, then Lausanne, where psychoanalyst Roger Vittoz taught Eliot how to rid the mind of behavioural "*cliches*"; being "*calm when there is nothing to be gained by worry*". The final part of the poem, '**What the Thunder Said**', ends with the Sanskrit : "*Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata. / Shantih shantih shantih*". Give. Compassion. Control. Peace. In other words, let go. Eliot later told Virginia Woolf that he wrote this part "*in a trance*".

In 1921, having taken time off from his job at Lloyds Bank for what would now be called depression, TS Eliot spent three weeks convalescing in Margate. Every day, he got the tram from the Albemarle Hotel in Cliftonville to the sea front, and, sitting in Nayland Rock shelter, he wrote "some 50 lines" of his poem **The Waste Land**.

Eliot's time in Margate is preserved in **Part III of The Waste Land : On Margate Sands**, he wrote, "*I can connect / Nothing with Nothing. / The broken fingernails of dirty hands.*" If this, among the fragmented voices of a poem designed to disorient, directly reflects the poet's psychological state, it also reflects the enterprise : connecting "*Nothing with Nothing*", and stitching together disparate parts of history and literature to make a polyphonic, modern masterpiece.

Since TS Eliot often intertwined his writing by having one piece relate to another, **The Hollow Men** is sometimes considered a mere appendage to **The Waste Land**. Although difficult to discern the poem, the reader easily perceives the overall feeling of hopelessness in just the opening lines, "*We are the hollow men / We are the stuffed men*", which establish a grim feeling of emptiness. Images like "*This is the dead land / This is cactus land; Under the twinkle of a fading star*" (lines 39-44) create a bleak and barren setting. The theme of the poem parallels that of Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**. The degradation of ritual (religious or otherwise) and the emptiness or reduction of human to childish behaviour are parallel concepts in both pieces.

The next poet who suffered through his entire youth due to external reasons inflicting pain and torment in his internal being is War poet **Wilfred Owen**. He wrote some of the best British poetry on World War I, having composed nearly all of his poems in slightly over a year. In November 1918 he was killed in action at the age of 25, one week before the Armistice. Only five poems were published in his lifetime. Undergoing traumatic experiences like war, when soldiers see friends and enemies die in front of them, limbs lost, and violence raging, it can only result in an accumulation of guilt and suffering. Imagine a soldier who is defending his country and amid the fighting, begins a battle with himself. During the time of World War I the term "*shell shock*" was used to describe a severe psychological disorder discovered among war veterans after they had gone through traumatic experiences during battle. Some labelled symptoms of shell shock as cowardice, or escape, because, once diagnosed, unstable soldiers were sent to treatment centres or back home to gain mental stability. Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen were two men who both served as army officers and in poetry, expressed their horror.

Owen and his fellow soldiers were forced to lie outside in freezing conditions for two days. He wrote : “*We were marooned in a frozen desert. There was not a sign of life on the horizon and a thousand signs of death... The marvel is we did not all die of cold*”. It was against this background that Owen wrote **Exposure**.

“Tonight, this frost will fasten on this mud and us,  
Shrivelling many hands, and puckering foreheads crisp.  
The burying-party, picks and shovels in shaking grasp,  
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,  
But nothing happens.”

Owen and a number of other poets of the time used their writing to inform people back in Britain about the true, horrific nature of war and about life on the front line. The picture they painted contradicted with the scenes of glory portrayed in the British press. **Exposure** is a particularly hard-hitting example of this.

Owen had joined the army in 1915 but was hospitalised in May 1917 suffering from 'shell shock' (today known as **PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**). In Craiglockhart War Hospital, Owen met the already established war poet Siegfried Sassoon who, recognising the younger man's talent, encouraged him to continue writing. The futility and powerlessness made Owen realise the inevitability of death in human life and the direct effects of these thoughts are in his creations such as ‘**Futility**’, ‘**Dulce et Decorum Est**’ and ‘**Strange Meeting**’.

Plato in his work **Republic** argues that the influence of poetry is pervasive and often damaging, and that the ideas it presents about nature and the divine are often mistaken. In **Book X** of the same work, Plato concludes that poetry must be banished from the hypothetical, ideal society and poets must be outcasted. This is one of the earliest ideologies of poetry yet stood the test of time as men still consider poets a different species due to their creative impulse and lateral perspective and visions. To conclude, the ‘*mad genius*’ of a poet has been misunderstood as insanity throughout ages and paradoxically, the array of mental disorders too have been equally cloaked within the garb of ‘Creativity’, hence the art of Poetry is a lobotomy of the psyche of the poet, a dissection which spills to the world the intermingled truth of Creative Imagination and morbid mental state, inherent within a sensitive imaginative poet's mind.

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**ACTIVE LEARNING DAY**  
**JUNE 2021**  
**STUDENTS' PRESENTATIONS**

# CONFRONTING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE FICTIONAL WORLD

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*Semester VI, 2021*

## Abstract

According to the American Medical Association (Nansel et al., 2001), more than 160,000 students stay home from school due to fear of being bullied by other students, reported adolescent bullying incidents has increased nearly 50% since 1983 (Olweus, 2003). Disturbed. Nuts. Freak. Psycho. Spastic. Crazy. Mental. These labels are among the more than 200 that researchers (Rose, Thornicroft, Pinfold, & Kassam, 2007) identified as being used by young adults to stigmatize people with mental illness. A lack of understanding of depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) – as well as frequent disparaging references to mentally ill individuals in film, television, and newspapers – encourage young adults to “other” those with psychological difficulties. In fact, one of the main risk factors of being a victim of a bully is being identified as having depression, anxiety, or low self-esteem (“Stop Bullying”). All these mental health issues, time and again, have been addressed by eminent authors and directors in different forms of art and literature. In this article, we would be discussing about some of these characters who are diagnosed with severe mental health problems, which are often not much talked about, but thoroughly discussed by some of the literary critics.

## Introduction

To quote Tiffany Maddison “The problem with having problems is that someone always has it worse.”

In this paper, we'd like to throw light on the topic sensitive enough not to be talked about still in majority of the society, mental health. The term, the reasons and the recovery cues discussed along the path of our very own literary courses. We have taken few literary characters and tried to analyse the reasons and mind forces that triggered their certain actions under certain situations.

Our first character is Courage from the show *Courage the Cowardly Dog*. It is an American animated television series solely based on an abandoned dog, Courage who initially began his life with two dog parents that were taken away from him and sent to outer space by a sadistic veterinarian for experimental breeding. He was later rescued by an elderly couple Muriel and Eustace. Courage is said to suffer from Post-traumatic stress disorder PTSD in the show. Whenever Muriel is out of his sight, Courage becomes frantic as he is worried that she might be taken away from him by supernatural beings that often appear at their home. It is from this episode and the others that we observe Courage's symptoms of PTSD which includes flashbacks, extreme fear, nightmares, and separation anxiety.

Our next character is our wellknown Frankenstein the creature from Shelley's Frankenstein. It is one of the most famous horror novels. We all are well acquainted with Frankenstein's monster. But he wasn't born a monster. He was huge, strong but the mentality of a newborn.

Love and companionship is all that he desired. But he was always welcomed with terror and rejection. Even though he saves a drowning girl and also when the family of the blind man returned his kindness by driving him away. He was not born a monster, he was just physically different.

His inner sufferings can be felt by anyone with Depression. The feeling of unnatural, wrong, empty, hopeless, incapable of being loved. The feeling of the whole world population being divided between him and the rest, the sheer loneliness. His psychopathic disorder from severe depression cannot be overlooked as well. How worse can desolation push one's rage and selfishness ? Frankenstein's last resort of hope fell to pieces when his creator rejected him as well. He killing his creator Victor Frankenstein's younger brother, best friend and new wife was a sheer action in making Victor feel miserable like him, to understand his pain.

Frankenstein is a consequence of a Doctor's curiosity and desire to become God. Heturning to a monster is his physical difference and the society's inability to accept something unordinary and thus shunning it towards self destruction is why almost everyone has a Frankenstein hidden. We cannot harm our creator, but we end up harming ourselves.

Here, comes the character of Baa, in Mahesh Dattani's Bravely fought the Queen, the character of Baa is diagnosed with the post traumatic stress disorder. Her excessive anger, exasperation, anxiety and depression are the symptoms which vividly exude her cognitive ailment. She induced her older son Jiten to beat his wife Dolly while her pregnancy and as a result Dolly gave birth to an autistic child. She used to hallucinate the incidents, the torture her husband inflicted on her. From this aspect, she identified Jiten with her husband. Somehow, she escaped from this reality by confiding in Niten. It was Baa's Immense vexation that she endured through out her life. Hence, as are a derwe exceedingly sympathize with the very character. She was the victim of the society and is more sinned against than sinning. An obnoxious familial subjugation propelled her to step forward into the arena of unsound phase. Our next and last character is Persephone from greek mythology. In Greek mythology, Persephone is the daughter of Zeus, the king of gods and Demeter, the goddess of agriculture. As the wife of Hades, the king of the Underworld, Persephone is often considered to be the queen of the Underworld herself. She is also said to have bipolar disorder, which is a disorder associated with episodes of mood swings ranging from depressive lows to manic highs.

Persephone was abducted by Hades in her early teens and was subjected to sexual abuse, which triggered her bipolar disorder. As a child and adolescent, Perseph one is frequently observed to be quiet, unassuming, compliant, eager to please and tends to mould herself according to the circumstances or in relation to stronger personalities around her. As a mature woman, Persephone learns to take care of herself and meet her own needs responsibly by telling her truth instead of blaming others.

Persephone, who has undergone her transformative experience in Hades is, now equipped to guide others in their descent into the Underworld. She becomes the most compassionate, intuitive



and wise guide for others in connecting with their own depth and meaning. Persephone also requires sufficient alone time to regenerate her energies because she absorbs the vibrations or emotions of those around her. Music, nature and mystical experiences reenergize her. Thus, Persephone can be considered to be the life giver (she is the season of spring herself) and life taker (queen of the land of dead).

## Conclusion

These literary characters are somehow inspired from real life experiences. The disorders mentioned earlier are quite discreet and bona fide which also makes it realistic in day-to-day worldly complications. Like the earlier centuries, mental health is not just an aimless talk in the air but has a pragmatic base to stand on. Fictional stories are simulations, capable of helping us to develop empathy with literary characters. Their study concludes, "The world of literature encourages us to become others in imagination, and this may be one of the most benign means of improving one's abilities in the social domain."

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# **PRIDE BEFORE PRIDE : AN INSIGHT INTO HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN INDIA AS DEPICTED IN MAHESH DATTANI'S *BRAVELY FOUGHT THE QUEEN* AND ISMAT CHUGHTAI'S *THE QUILT***

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*Semester VI, 2021*

## **Abstract**

The following paper aims at analyzing the homosexual sphere of human existence, before the concept of 'Pride' and the liberation of individual sexuality found expression in society. Nothing captures the essence of an age precisely and dexterously than literature, and hence, Mahesh Dattani's post-modern play *Bravely Fought the Queen* and Ismat Chughtai's short-story, *The Quilt* (*Lihaaf*) remain prominent documentaries of the condition and situation of homosexual relationship in India in the contemporary times. In both the texts, social constructs of union and desire do not coincide, though they co-exist together in the social shell. The narratives introduce arranged marriages, where individual choices and desires (sexualities) are not only disregarded but stunted, leading to moral and sexual transgressions in people, irrespective of being a man or a woman. In *The Quilt*, Begum Jaan, a woman, seeks liberation from her sexually unconsummated marriage in the arms of another woman, and in *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Nitin, a man, and a closeted homosexual, explores his fantasies with an auto-rickshaw driver, leaving his wife stranded in a loveless marriage. It may also be noted, both of them chose partners from a lower social strata, probably to preserve the secrecy efficiently, by taking charge themselves, a power which comes with upper-class privileges.

Mahesh Dattani and Ismat Chughtai, through their artistic ventures, provided space for the voices of this suppressed streak of homosexuality, that merely could peep through cracks of intolerance, in a society ignorant of the idea of LGBTQI rights. Their works, do not suggest false hopes or any kind of optimistic illusions, but simply presented the trepidations of these peripheral sexual identities as they were. The paper will try to form a comprehensive idea of the role of these two texts in the evolution of homosexuality as treated today in India.

## **Introduction**

Amara Das Wilhelm's book *Tritiya Prakriti : People of the Third Sex*, compiles years of extensive research of Sanskrit texts from medieval and ancient India and essentially proves that homosexuality and the 'third gender' were not only in existence in the Indian society back then, but that these identities were also widely accepted. Therefore, unlike in many other cultures, the narrative of homosexuality has a distinct presence in Ancient Indian History when the religion was predominantly

Hindu. Wilhelm opines in the Preface of the book, “.....Hinduism acknowledged a “third sex”, or people who were by nature a combination of male and female, and such people were considered special in many ways. They were thoroughly described in the Kama Shashtra and were not punished under the rigid laws of Dharma Shashtra. People of the third sex were described as homosexual, transgender, and intersexed persons; they were such by birth and consequently allowed to live their lives according to their own nature. Gay males were never expected to marry women, as they are almost always forced to do today in modern Hinduism, and in fact, Sanskrit texts specifically forbid this. Similarly, lesbian women were not forced to marry men but were allowed to earn their own livings independently. Even gay marriage, such a controversial issue at the time of this writing, was acknowledged in the Kama Shashtra many thousands of year ago.” (10-11).

However, with the influx of various other cultures, India has gone through a process of dissociation with its own native identity and has been depersonalised. In addition to that, the very changes that a culture undergoes even within itself has somehow taken modern Indian society so far away from the ideals of our ancient original culture that the effects are too different to even compared. Thus, the essence of Ancient Indian Culture and the beliefs and ideas that were upheld during that time have slowly eroded away. In the context of sexuality in the Indian society, this has meant that the concept of fluid sexuality has been diluted out and done away with to make an intensely orthodox patriarchal Indian society and with that there has been a slow but sure descent into homophobia. This patriarchal society has disregarded the notion of individual identity and enforced being heterosexual as the norm. Individuals have been stunted in their ability to explore and understand their sexuality and have been denied the primitive right to choose their sexual partners if they want to. The entire conversation about the concepts of sexuality have been made one-sided. This enforced heteronormativity has led to the prevalence of binaries as the gender norm and a subconscious emergence of homophobia that has been ingrained in the minds of numerous generations. Consequently, homosexual relationships have been curtailed behind the mainstream of heterosexual relationships.

However, it is inevitable that such significant changes in society find themselves reflected in the art and literature of following generations. Literature is after all the imitation of human action. It is the duty of artists and writers to voice narratives from every section of society, mainstream or otherwise. It is with this sense of duty that writers of India in the post-Independence period have reflected the reality of undeniably important issues in and through their works. These issues pertain to the topics of gender, sexuality and representation; and while women's issues have been pushed to the forefront more prominently, the more complex problem regarding homosexuality has come out as a latent one.

### **Homosexuality in Indian Literature**

Indian literature has been a home to sexual identities and gender constructions beyond the canonical heteronormativity, from time immemorial. Beginning with the revolutionizing Sanskrit text of *Kamasutra*, written by Vatsyanya that has an entire chapter dedicated to erotic homosexual behavior, and dates back to as early as 300 to 400 BCE, to the Viratparba of our much revered epic

*Mahabharata*, where Arjun takes up the guise of a woman, Brihannala, to avoid unwanted revelation of identities, India has come a long way in identifying and embracing diverse gender behavior. The *Markandeya Purana* carries the story of Avikshita, the son of a king who refused to marry because he believed he was a woman. Gender was fluid, for yakshas and humans alike, in ancient and medieval Indian culture. The *Mahabharata* famously tells the story of Amba, the princess who was abducted by Bhishma but rejected by the warrior, who had taken a vow of celibacy. Praying to avenge the insult, Amba is reborn as Shikhandini, daughter to King Dhrupada, and then prays for a further transformation into Shikhandi – as a man, she can fight Bhishma, and becomes the cause of his death on the battlefield.

However, as noted before, modern Indian society is eons away from the world of ancient India. The society has now deemed every 'other' kind of relationship barring the socially accepted heterosexual ones as 'unnatural', 'wrong' and even 'sick'. The importance that the Indian society puts on the concept of 'family' and the silence of the intelligentsia on the matter of same-sex relationships in fear of being censored has added to this dangerous kind of suppression and 'otherisation' of the community. But if one group is perceived to be silent, then the other always finds courage to say what is needed. As a result, in spite of heavy censorship and a brutal refusal to accept such narratives, certain artists have went on to portray the issue of homosexuality through their art. The aforementioned portrayal is diverse and when compiled together is found to reach every nook and cranny of the experience of a homosexual in Indian society. The primary credit of this goes to the school of post-Independence Indian English writers who have reported the reality of such issues from within. It is the first-hand accounts of individuals who have been intensely familiar with the Indian society and the evils in it and it is with this consciousness that they represent the narratives of the marginalised especially that of homosexuals.

There are several instances of such well-crafted portrayals: ranging from plays like Vijay Tendulkar's *Mitrachi Ghoshta* which had a lesbian character for a protagonist and the one-act *The Wisest Fool on Earth* by Raja Rao, to novels such as *Cobalt Blue* by Sachin Kundalkar, *The Boyfriend* by Raja Rao and *Memory of Light* by Ruth Vanita. Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* told the stories of two couples- John and Liz and Phil and Ed who are trying to navigate their way through love and life. Similar efforts were made by writers like Neel Mukherjee and Rahul Mehta in the following years with *A Life Apart* and *Quarantine* respectively. It also has to be noted that with this growing consciousness of the problems faced by the LGBTQIA community and the willingness to liberate them from the same has also led to academics, the very class of people who had been accused of being silent, to come up with relevant research and talk about the experiences of the marginalized homosexual. An important work of this respect was Shakuntala Devi's *The World of Homosexuals* which not only included personal narratives of "closetedness" but also surveyed the amount of research done on the issue of homosexuality in academic fields. It called for decriminalization and full acceptance of homosexuals so that they are rightfully restored to their place in mainstream, respected society. Therefore, with a little bit more respect accorded to them than in society, such relationships have found a place in the art and literature of 20th century India, more often than not in their real state.

To elaborate on the 'real state' one had to mention that up until then and for a few more years come, the homosexual was forced to live his life in secrecy if he chose to live it according to his own preferences at all. They were given two alternatives- one of resignation wherein they suppress and forget who they are and what they want and the second of being who they are in secret. The society would not and could not care about them as long as homosexual relationships went on out of their sight. It was acceptable only if it was hidden. This part of the narrative finds a special place in the works of Mahesh Dattani and Ismat Chughtai. Both of them had a knack for tackling social issues through their works be it drama or the short story and the issues regarding sexuality have always been uniquely handled by both. As has been mentioned before, the conversation about gender has gone on in two levels, the first in context of women and the second and more latent level was that of the homosexual. This treatment can be traced in Ismat Chughtai's 1942 short story '*The Quilt*' and Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen*. Being well-aware of the (dis)taste and appetite of Indian reading-public, Dattani and Chughtai have not attempted to preach, instead they have simply made us aware of what the reality was and compelled them to acknowledge and accept the relationships that have been forced to go on behind closed doors and under quilts throughout India.

### **Homosexual Relationships as Depicted in Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* and Ismat Chughtai's *The Quilt***

Although the theme of homosexuality has found a platform in both the works of Dattani and Chughtai, it has to be noted that the treatment of this theme has been very different in both. Dattani has been more determined in his portrayal of homosexual relationships in his plays, that is his has been a bolder representation of homosexuality in Indian literature. He not only addresses the theme of homosexuality, he pries it, pokes it and lays it out for the readers to see. His motive is to make the readers and audience empathize and understand the plight of the homosexual in Indian society. He does so quite masterfully in some of his plays, namely *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Do the Needful* and a serialized play called *Night Queen*. In fact, Dattani's film *Mango Souffle* is considered to be the first gay male film from India. Although the representation of homosexuality varies in degree and kind in each of the aforementioned plays, it is to be noted that all of them manage to leave a lasting impact on the minds of both the readers and the audience. Chughtai on the other hand has been rather symbolic to the point of being vague about her representation of the issue of homosexuality in her work – *Lihaaf* or *The Quilt*, so much so that it has led to certain critics questioning whether it deals with homosexuality at all. However, a reading of the text makes it quite clear that in the story of Begum Jaan there are certain homosexual connotations even though it is never admitted by the character or the author. Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* too, is one of those texts that deals with the theme of homosexuality in a way akin to Chughtai's. There is allusion to only one homosexual relationship- that of Nitin with the auto-rickshaw driver and even then it is treated in such a way that it resembles reality. Therefore, both these texts explore the trope of homosexual relationships having to go on in secrecy, the causes and consequences of it and the grave effects of it on the psyche, sexuality, identity and relationships of the individual that has been forced into being closeted by his circumstances dealt by the people who are the closest to him.

The trajectory of such relationships has been depicted in such a way in both the texts that it becomes easy to imagine such relationships with the backdrop of contemporary reality. In both the texts, the narrative starts with arranged, rather forced, marriages where the idea of emotions, desire or even sexuality is not only stunted but disregarded completely. In *The Quilt*, Begum Jaan is married off to one Nawab Saheb and in Dattani's text Nitin is married to Alka. None of them had any say in their respective marriages and both Nitin and Begum Jaan are closeted homosexuals. They find that their real identities have been unhinged and desires unaccommodated, so much so that they can no longer tell themselves. Judith Butler proclaims that gender is a performance and that stands proven in Nitin's womanly nature and Nawab Saheb's inexplicable attraction to "young, fair, slender-waisted boys" (Chughtai 14). This leads to an inevitable break in the very norm of social order that has been imposed upon these individuals as both Begum Jaan and Nitin have found partnership beyond their marriages. The only difference in the situations of these two characters is that Begum Jaan, the woman, finds her partner when she is a widow to a husband who was unfaithful when he lived; whereas Nitin, the man has strayed outside of his marriage leaving his poor wife Alka trapped in a loveless marriage. Thus, the marriages and vows that society forced upon these characters are broken and we discover that Begum Jaan has found Rabbu and Nitin has found an auto-rickshaw driver to satiate their desires. The notable aspect, however, is that even though these characters have broken all social codes, they keep up appearances as they are afraid of being casted out by the society that they inhabit. As a result, we find that both Nitin and Begum Jaan have sought out partners who are in one way or another socially inferior to them: that is, they have sought out partners who are just as easy to be kept quiet as they are to use. Secondly and most importantly, we find that these relationships have to go on in a secrecy that ensures that these men and women of the Indian middle class can maintain their reputation. As a result we see Nitin going to the servant's quarters while Begum Jaan chooses the darkness and privacy under a quilt. Chughtai writes using the point of view of the child narrator as the medium, "It was pitch dark and Begum Jaan's quilt was shaking vigorously, as though an elephant was struggling inside." (17). However, both Dattani and Chughtai also teach us that matters as serious as one's very identity cannot be kept a secret. Both Nitin's and Begum Jaan's secret are outed in one way or another. Begum Jaan's affair with Rabbu is projected as a secret that goes on under the quilt. However, the young narrator of the story, quite significantly, finds it out. In a similar way, Nitin's homosexuality is hidden only under the guise of the sham that is his marriage with Alka- that he has had feelings for Alka's brother Praful and the affair he has with the auto-rickshaw driver is revealed through the course of the play. Sanjukta Das opines, "In *Bravely Fought the Queen* Nitin's attraction for the auto driver with powerful arms could be construed as a symptom of his insecurity as the son of a wife-beater and the younger brother of a bully. Nitin who is gentle towards Alka and resists pressure from Baa and Jiten to get rid of her is shown to be the best of the Trivedi men. Yet his connivance with Praful to use the heterosexual marriage with Alka as a camouflage for their homosexual relationship reveals how the institution of marriage is used to hide all sorts of aberrations." (249). It is ominous, wishful thinking on the parts of the authors- they hope that our society finds it in itself to accept such relationships totally and wholeheartedly so that there may be no need to keep them secret. It is idealistic but also necessary.

## Conclusion

Homosexual relationships have found a rather dark corner in Indian society. Forced into secrecy, identities have been subjugated, voices silenced and choices and preferences disregarded. Individuals have had to resort to the darkness to be who they are. They have been forcefully bound in loveless marriages and emotionless relationships, while their true selves disintegrate and more often than not, so does their families. Nitin's repression leads to him denying Alka a chance at a loving family. They are both trapped in an empty, childless marriage. Begun Jaan, on the other hand, has been treated with leniency for she would not survive the blame of having an extra-marital affair, being a woman. Chughtai deems NawabSaheb dead and Begum Jaan is free. Obviously not free enough, hence the quilt. It is this secrecy that is protested against in these texts. Both Dattani and Chughtai seem to be hinting at the same thing- how every individual has an undeniable right to live however they want to live and with whomever. They have given us a true and real picture of how homosexual relationships were before the LGBTQIA Community found a movement of their own in India. This was how homosexuality mustered whatever respect they could accord themselves before society decided they had never been undeserving of it. This was Pride before Pride. Thus, authors like Dattani and Chughtai have given us the courage to an entire generation of readers who have wholeheartedly accepted the Empowerment of the LGBTQI community and embraced the concept of Pride. Dattani and Chughtai have mirrored the reality of homosexual relationships in their texts- how such relationships were considered unnatural and how every individual was forced into the moulds of heterosexuality deviation from which would make them abnormal, which in turn compelled them to prevent them from being their true selves. Dattani and Chughtai have emphasized how it is the job of artists and authors to acknowledge and make space for very narrative, even and especially the ones that are neglected by the society. They simply spoke the truth of their characters through their characters. And in doing so, they have not only depicted how homosexual relationships looked before Pride was a known concept, but also given immeasurable courage to artists of following generations to do the same. As a result, we find that artists have made space for such narratives with a little bit more bravery than was accorded to both Dattani and Chughtai. The courage provided by the likes of Dattani and Chughtai along with the influence of the LGBTQI Liberation Movement in the Western World has given artists working in the 21st century Indian society a license to start discussions and produce art that accommodates the narratives of the LGBTQI community. The most prominently mainstream efforts has been made by the Indian film industry who have availed this opportunity to create a platform where such sensitive issues can be voiced out more openly with Hindi films like *Shubh Mangal Zyaada Savdhaan*, *Ek Ladkiko Dekha Toh Aisalaga*, *Aligarh*, along with Bengali films like *Chitrangada*, *Nagarkirtan* and *Aar Ekti Premer Golpo*, all of whom portrayed both the plight of this community and did a splendid job at spreading the awareness that there is no reason to shun the theme of homosexuality into darkness as has been done by the society for long. It is only right that it be incorporated amongst the mainstream. Therefore, the contribution made by Mahesh Dattani and Ismat Chughtai with their depiction of homosexual relationships in their aforementioned works and the general argument on representation of homosexuality can be summed up with Vikram Seth's 'Dubious' –



“Some men like Jack and some like Jill  
I'm glad I like them both but still  
I wonder if this freewheeling  
Really is an enlightened thing,  
Or is its greater scope a sign  
Of deviance from some party line ?  
In the strict ranks of Gay and Straight  
What is my status : Stray ? Or Great ?” (54)

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# **DEGLAMORIZING 'THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE' AND BREAKING 'THE FEMININE BOUNDARIES' IN *PUPHEJMO : A DOLL'S HOUSE* BY HENRIK IBSEN**

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## **Abstract**

The main subject on which the drama *A Doll's House* is written is the issue of women. Its subject is of women's status in the society and their treatment by men, the lack of true love and respect for a wife by a husband, and the lack of justice and dignity in the treatment of women in the society. *A Doll's House* is a blooming field for feminist criticism. Feminist critics have seen Ibsen as a social realist, a revolutionary thinker, and a benefactor of the suppressed women of the nineteenth century Europe. The play depicts a woman's journey to freedom and the ways in which a stifling marriage thwarts the individuality of a woman who has all the potentials that her husband has. Nora, like most women of our contemporary society, has all the inherent talents for developing into a successful member of the society, as much as her husband or any man. In fact, her critical mind, sense of justice, readiness to change, absence of hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness in relation to what is called tradition, and such other positive qualities would help her to make more progress and contribute to the development of her personality, her family and her society, if she is to get the opportunities.

The play deals with a woman's predicament. It is about the disillusionment of a wife, about how she has been dominated and how her basic right, her right to be someone, has been ruthlessly destroyed in the name of love by her husband. It is the drastic step taken by a wife and mother, with which the play ends; it is the woman in the play who wins the audience's support and sympathy. The drama is about the real and a burning social issue of a revolution that had become essential for the society to progress. The very title of the play emphatically suggests the treatment of a woman as if she was a lifeless doll. She has a house and now needs to search for a home, on her own.

This paper deals with the portrayal of deglamorization of 'the angel in the house' and the breaking of feminine boundaries in *Puphejmo : A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen.

## **Introduction**

Mary Wollstonecraft stated,

**"I do not wish women to have power over men but over themselves".**

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) has an undeniable impact on drama throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ibsen developed the problem plays or drama of ideas. These plays deal with the theme of the duties of a person towards themselves and achieving individuality and individual rights in society.

Henrik Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House* triggers an espousal of woman's freedom in a stiflingly conventional provincial Norwegian society. Ibsen's man and wife, Torvald and Nora Helmer, the couple in this play, is a parodic, bourgeois version of the **pan-cultural ideal of marriage** as a relation of naturally superior and inferior. In such a relationship, the wife is considered a creature of little intellectual and moral capacity whose right and the proper station is subordination to her husband. Predominant themes in Ibsen's plays : an untrue system of marriage, heredity, platonic love, motherhood and women's detrimental position in the family and society. Nora's exit from her doll's house has been the international symbol of women's issues, including many who far exceeds from their small confined world. After doll's house has been made famous, Ibsen has explained that the actual name of the character is 'Eleanora', but she has been called 'Nora' from childhood.

The intention in the play was not primarily to promote the emancipation of women as Michael Meyer, Ibsen's biographer says, "It was to find out who she is and to become that person". The conflict between love and law, heart and head, masculine and feminine revolves around the play *A Doll's House*.

### **Deglamorizing 'The Angel in the House' and Breaking 'The Feminine Boundaries' In *Puphejmo***

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) has a unique place among the most significant modern dramatists. He is famous not only for his plays and poems but also for his deep philosophical and revolutionary ideas, which had an undeniable impact on the development of literature in general and drama in particular throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

He is considered as the father of modern drama and the first dramatist who wrote tragedies about ordinary people. Ibsen developed the problem plays or drama of ideas. George Bernard Shaw, in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, remarks that, "[t]he Norwegian's significance lay in his having introduced social-political discussion into the drama through the agency of a villain-idealist and unwomanly woman."

Feminist criticism challenges the patriarchal attitudes in literature; the traditional male ideas about women and their nature. Thus, it questions prejudices and assumptions made by the dominant male writers and their tendency to put women in stock character roles.

According to Wallace, it was necessary for the would-be woman writers to kill "the angel in the house" (from Patmore's poem) which represents the embodiment of the late 19th century expectation of femininity; that is, the expectation that women "should be nice and sympathetic rather than forceful, outspoken, or intellectually vigorous" (Wallace).

The aim of the feminist literary theory (and feminism in general) "must be to break down the public/private split and the binaries of masculinity/ femininity, mind/body, reason/ feeling" (Rice and Waugh).

In his play, Ibsen did not put his female characters into the typical stock roles that associate women with supernatural creatures; be it angels or demons. He might have wanted to show that it is not necessary to portray women as supernatural; as angels, or demons. Women, no matter how good or bad, are neither one nor the other; they are human beings with virtues as well as faults. It is the realization that Nora is not a doll with the duties of a wife and mother "but before all else [...] a

reasonable human being" (Act 3: 92) with duties to herself that causes her to leave her family and home. At one point in the play Nora tells Helmer, "We have never sat down in earnest together to try and get at the bottom of anything." This assertion is one of the key sentences in the Feminist approach, since it expresses the moment of revelation when Nora notices that she has been treated as an object and her indisputable rights have been ignored. She refuses to submit to her husband anymore and wants to face the world on her own. As a middle-class woman in ordinary circumstances, Nora is brave enough to do the unthinkable.

The poetry of Nora's leave-taking lies in the hint of strength and the certainty of struggle as she shuts the door on the doll house to enter the night of the open world. The famous last stage direction is the final flourish in the play's consummate destruction of the ideology of the two spheres through its systematic exposure the foolishness of the chivalric ideal and the of notion of a female mind.

In inventing the metaphor of the doll house, Ibsen captured the quintessential nature of the "woman's sphere," described twenty years later by Charlotte Perkins Gilman : "The man, spreading and growing with the world's great growth, comes home, and settles into the tiny talk and fret, or the alluring animal comfort of the place, distinct sense of coming with a down. It is pleasant, it is gratifying to every sense, it is kept warm and pretty and soft suit to the needs of the feeblar and smaller creature who is forced to stay in it" (Women and Economics, ed. Carl Degler [New York : Harper, 1966] 263).

### **Ibsen and Feminism**

Ibsen never really identified himself as a feminist. However, several characters and plot developments in his plays prove that he was concerned about the cause of women. In a preliminary note for *A Doll's House*, on October 19, 1878, Ibsen wrote – "A woman cannot be herself in the society of the present day, which is an exclusively masculine society, with laws framed by men and with a judicial system that judges feminine conduct, from a masculine standpoint." A crucial element of Ibsen's relationship to feminism is the role played by actual feminists in his life. Their influence began within his own family, with his wife Suzannah Thoresen Ibsen and her stepmother and former governess Magdalene Thoresen. Ibsen supported the petition for separate property rights for women, and while explaining why women and not men should be consulted about the married women's property bill, Ibsen commented that 'to consult men in such a matter is like asking wolves if they desire better protection for the sheep.'

***The significance of the Tarantella*** – Ibsen bears witness to a larger nineteenth-century historical strategy which Michel Foucault has termed 'hysterization', or the process of defining women in terms of female sexuality, the result of which was to bind them to their reproductive function. There are chinks in Nora's Doll's House image which are evident in behavior which can be termed as hysterical. Her nervousness increases when Krogstad threatens to reveal her crime when she feels that she might go mad. Her hysteria culminates in the rehearsal of the tarantella, when she dances with wild abandon, in a manner perceived by Helmer as "sheer madness". Catherine Clement's traces the tarantella's origins to southern Italy, where it serves as a form of hysterical catharsis, permitting women to escape temporarily from marriage and motherhood into a free, lawless world of music and uninhibited movement.

## Marriage as a Means to Restrict

Ibsen used two different couples in his play to show how the fate of a marriage is based on the equality of both spouses Krogstad and Christine as two equals deciding to unite and form a family. Torvald and Nora's marriage is shattered after eight long years due to a lack of effective communication and understanding. The sham of marriage as an institution is exposed in this play. Patriarchy's socialization of women into servicing creatures is the major accusation in Nora's painful account to Torvald of how first her father, and then he, used her for their amusement, and "played with her". She play-acted for the past eight years of her marriage, having no right to think for herself, only the duty to accept their opinions. Women/Wives were then considered as expensive pets. Torvald, the dominating, righteous breadwinner calls his 'weaker half' a "lark", a "squirrel", a "feather brain", and a "spendthrift bird" several times. He teasingly regrets, "It's incredible what it costs a man to feed such birds". Torvald's belittlement clothed with affection and his assumption that he monopolizes the judgment and strength in the household are characteristic of husbands, not wives. Torvald illustrates, the truth of a statement by Ibsen's contemporary John Stuart Mill : "the generality of the male sex cannot yet tolerate the idea of living with an equal." In Ibsen's plays belief in differences between masculine and feminine character is placed in the mouths of narrow, hypocritical characters, such as Torvald Helmer. Ibsen recognizes the subtle psychological means by which society conditions women to conform to the belittling stereotype which men make of them. Many English thinkers like John Stuart Mill and Charles Darwin, through their essays, have promoted the segregation of the male and female spheres. Frederic Rowton, in his preface to the anthology *Female Poets of Great Britain*, stated, "Man rules the mind of the world; woman its heart". *A Doll House* is the greatest literary argument against the notion of the **"two spheres"**, the neat, centuries-old division of the world into his and hers that the nineteenth century made a doctrine for living.

*A Doll's House* was overwhelmingly seen as an outrage with his seminal notion that a woman could walk out on her husband and children. Ibsen wrote many of his heroines as women who stood up for themselves; women who did not do what their husband or society thought was proper. At the end of the play, Nora leaves Helmer's house, slamming the door to her past life, and heads out into the world of new possibilities. She goes off to fulfill her responsibilities towards herself. This kind of self-realization, which usually leads to a new beginning, is one of Ibsen's main ideologies posed in his play. Nora opens her eyes and observes that her freedom had been kept away from her in her life with Helmer. She decides to not live like that any longer.

As the drama's title suggests and as Nora herself confirms in the last act, marriage and motherhood have been for her a kind of existence in a doll's house in which she has played with her children, and has been toyed with by Helmer and even her father before her marriage. In order to reach the real maturity, she must leave this life behind. Hence, after passing a long bitter experience, she comes to the conclusion that it is worthwhile to leave her family to achieve her independence.

No other work illustrates as powerfully the truth rediscovered by recent feminist scholarship that the conception of the two spheres reflected neither "natural" competencies nor the reality of men's and women's lives, but was an ideological construct that masked inequality and forced segregation

on the basis of sex; no other work insists so explicitly on the hypocrisy, waste, and the basis of sheer stupidity of isolating women from the work of the world as it reduces to nonsense the psychosexual rationale poeticized by Ruskin: "Man is eminently the doer, the discoverer, the defender ...By woman's office and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation. The man, in his rough work in the open world, must encounter all peril and trial" (Sesame and Lillies [Chicago : Homewood Homewood, 1902] 143-44).

### **The Social Construct of Motherhood as a Constraint on Women**

For Nora, marriage and motherhood are not a sign of adulthood, but a kind of protracted doll's house existence. She confesses that she has played with her children just as her father and Helmer have played with her. Critic Joan Templeton says : "Ibsen does not separate Nora as a mother from Nora as a wife because he is identifying the whole source of her oppression, the belief in a 'female nature' an immutable thing in itself whose proper sphere is domestic wifehood and whose essence is maternity". Nora's leaving is, in her husband's words, 'outrageous' and 'insane' because it denies the purpose of her existence, a reproductive and serving one : 'Before all else, you're a wife and a mother.' Nora is the tragic protagonist who embodies the tragedy of modern life. The play triggers an espousal of woman's individual freedom in a stiflingly conventional provincial Norwegian society. Quitting her matrimonial bondage evokes a turn-of-the-century revolution, breaking the bars of conventionalism. While describing the impact of this "disproportionate confinement in the private sphere" her character was often called out as "doll child", whose sheer existence was dependent upon performing tricks for her emotionally cold husband. Julia Kristeva writes, it is not a woman as such who is oppressed in a patriarchal society, but the mother. A focused look at Ibsen's mother figures discloses a similar message : maternity is viewed most positively by those who are not biological mothers, whereas his actual or prospective mothers either deny their pregnancy, abandon their children, give them away to be cared for elsewhere, raise them in an atmosphere of deception, or neglect them. The victimization which these mothers inflict is a result of their own victimization by a powerful social norm that equates anatomy with destiny. While Nora achieves her self-realization by turning her back on her husband and children, Mrs. Linde finds purpose by caring for Krogstad's children.

### **Dichotomy of 'The Angel in the House' And 'The Madwoman'**

Gilbert and Gubar identified 'the angel of the home' and 'the madwoman in the attic' as the main stereotypical images of woman in literature. Relinquishing the image of 'the angel in the house' / 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'.

The commodification of women is questioned when Nora transforms from a doll into a 'resourceful and masculine life provider'. She saves her husband from the clutches of death while the strong and protective husband turns out to be a "fainthearted weakling" who with his "sensitivity and sharp distaste for anything ugly" must be protected from reality.

This is where the tables turn, and the 'two spheres' merge to produce a ground-breaking reality. Bold statements like "I must educate myself; you are not the man to help me with that. I must stand on my own feet if I am ever to understand myself and my surroundings" asserts her independent

predicament. Roles were reversed, Stereotypes were shattered, and the sexual table was overturned in Henrik Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House*.

Women's personal and subjective understanding of social reality also entails how women used literature to present wrong womanhood; they advocated for their rights, rejected male standards, and dealt with women's texts as autonomous art.

Simone de Beauvoir, the famous French writer, intellectual and feminist, in her work,

"*The Second Sex*" (1949) declared that "Our societies are patriarchal and a woman must break the bonds in order to be herself as a human being".

### **Slamming the Door on Patriarchy's Face**

Some critics speak depreciatingly of 'reduction of the play into a feminist drama'. They summarize the major theme of the play as 'the need for a broader view and a condemnation of a static approach'. In *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, Shaw believes : "Ibsen gives us not only ourselves but ourselves in our own situation [...]. They are capable both of hurting us cruelly and of filling us with excited hopes of escape from idealistic tyrannies and with visions of intense life in the future." In their discussion of female protagonists "trapped by architecture," "literally confined to the house," Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar maintain that "dramatization of imprisonment and escape are so all-pervasive in nineteenth-century literature by women that we believe they represent a uniquely female tradition in this period" (*The Madwoman in the Attic : The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* [New Haven : Yale University Press, 1979] 60). If this is so, then *A Doll House* is the great male exception. And while the female heroes of the women writers flee the confining house through the vicarious acts of an imagined double, Nora exits in her own flesh and blood through a very literal door. At the close of the play, Nora slams the door thereby shutting off all her doll-like traits and establishing herself as a new and mature woman. Quitting her matrimonial bondage evokes a turn-of-the-century revolution, breaking the bars of conventionalism. Upon finishing *A Doll's House*, Ibsen wrote to his publisher : "I cannot remember any work of mine that gave me so much satisfaction during the working out of the details as this one has" (*Letters and Speeches*, ed. Evert Sprinchorn [New York: Hill, 1964] 180). Joan Templeton describes the impact of this scene on the original nineteenth-century audience : "When Betty Hennings, the first Nora, slammed the door in Copenhagen's Royal Theatre on December 21, 1879, her contemporaries were not, in what we have come to identify as the usual Victorian way, 'shocked'; they were deeply shaken." *A Doll's House* does not end in reconciliation, but it pronounced a death sentence on accepted social ethics.

### **Conclusion**

Michael Meyer, Ibsen's biographer rightly states :

"No play had ever before, contributed so momentously to the social debate, or been so widely and furiously discussed among people who were not normally interested in theatrical or even artistic matters."

After more than a century now, in an undoubtedly different society, the core of the story remains

centered on the faithfulness of life thus, addressing the deep-rooted catastrophe, without which there is no chance of salvation. The power of *A Doll's House* lies not beyond but within its feminism; it is feminist *Bildungspiel* par excellence dramatizing the female hero's realization that she might, perhaps, become someone other than her husband's little woman. Those who dismiss *A Doll House* as dated should re-examine what Nora left behind her. To shut the door on a husband was insufficiently audacious for Ibsen; he gave Nora three young children as well. Elizabeth Hardwick comments : "Ibsen has put the leaving of [Nora's] children on the same moral and emotional level as the leaving of her husband and we cannot, in our hearts, assent to that. He has taken the man's practice... that where self realization is concerned children shall not be an impediment" (*Seduction and Betrayal : Women in Literature* [New York : Vintage, 1975] 48-40). Ibsen's treatment of social problems is consistent through all his works. In *A Doll's House*, Ibsen is concerned with the problem of women's position in the male-dominated society. He especially probed the social problem of the passivity assigned to women. The play deals with the theme of the duties of a person towards themselves and achieving the individuality and individual rights in the society. In a patriarchal society, Nora is a woman, who tries to get her rights. "Helmer : What duties do you mean ? Nora : my duties towards myself".

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# BOOK PREDICTIONS THAT CAME TRUE

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## Introduction :

Predictions about the future have been made since time immemorial. From the Mayan civilization to Thomas A. Edison, many people have predicted events from the future way ahead of their time. Humans have always been fascinated about the future and there seems to be a certain obsession about predictions about the future in every society. The Greek consulted the Oracle to know what their future holds. The Chinese used bones to predict the future, and witches are still accredited with fortune-telling today. However, the predictions that really stand out in history is the ones that have been written down, i.e. Predictions made in books. These predictions are unique because their origin is irrefutable, and often the details come into play. Moreover, it is also possible that these texts might even have influenced the events of the future. The moon landing, the changing climate, the sinking of the titanic, has all been predicted in books way before the actual events happened.

In general it is surprising to think that a book could contain the description of a future event that would be world famous, but it has been observed time and time again in many books. Perhaps it brings the question of whether or not the dystopian predictions made in books today may one day become the reality.

## Book predictions that came true

### The Titanic sinking :

As we all know, Titanic is a luxury ocean liner sinking into the freezing Atlantic Ocean on its maiden voyage, dooming over 1,500 people, makes for a tale charged with pathos and danger. This tragic incident took place in the early morning hours of 15th April, 1912 in the North Atlantic Ocean. But a way before that in the year 1898, Morgan Robertson's novella *The Wreck of the Titan, or Futility* introduced its reader to a large 'unsinkable' ship that foundered after it crashed into an iceberg.

So, it's clear that Morgan Robertson's novella was eerily similar to the significant tragic event that happened after 14 years of his book got published. And surprisingly there were a lot of similarities between the matter of the novella and the actual tragic incident, the crash of RMS *Titanic*. Like, both the ships were described as unsinkable, and each hit an iceberg and sunk in mid-April. Both ships were very close to each other with size (the *Titanic* only measured 25 meters long), with the capacity of passengers (for both the ships, it was about 3000), with the speed of impact (the difference was only of 2.5 knots) and with the number of life boats. Also, the *Titanin* Morgan's novella and the *Titanic* sank 400 nautical miles from Newfoundland.

So, naturally a question comes in our mind i.e., did the author have some type of clairvoyance into what would happen to the ship ? Or was this just good writing about a subject the author knew a lot about or was it just an amazing feat of coincidence ?

### **The Two Moons of Mars :**

The year is 1726 : Jonathan Swift publishes his classic text *Gulliver's Travels*. The main character visits the fictional island of Laputa, a floating world full of scientists and astronomers who tell him that the planet Mars, as we know it, is orbited by 2 tiny moons. Fast-forward to 151 years later, August of 1877, the world confirms, Jonathan Swift was right. Besides this admittedly premature claim, the writer also managed to come close to reality in his descriptions of the orbital distances and revolution periods of the planet's two moons. The implication is that Swift somehow knew about the moons of Mars, Phobos and Deimos, a century and a half before they were discovered. It turns out that his predictions, if you can call them that were accurate enough to be an interesting coincidence.

After Liliput and before Brobdingnag (the diminutive and giant lands shown in the movies), Gulliver visited Laputia, a floating island of crazy scientists. Gulliver was speaking of the Laputian astronomers when he noted :

"They have likewise discovered two lesser stars, or satellites, which revolve around Mars, whereof the innermost is distant from the center of the primary exactly three of his diameters, and the outermost five : the former revolves in the space of ten hours, and the latter in twenty-one and a half." *Gulliver's Travels* certainly seems to have stood the test of time.

The two moons of Mars, Phobos and Deimos, were discovered by Asaph Hall, Sr. on August 12, 1877. He was actively looking for Martian moons so it was no accident. This was 151 years after *Gulliver's Travels*. 'Phobos' means fear and 'Deimos' panic – the names of the horses that pulled the chariot of the God of War – Ares. Ares is the Greek name for the Roman god Mars. To honor Swift, and also Voltaire, who wrote in *Micromegas*, published in 1752, about Mars having two moons, two craters on Deimos are named after Swift and Voltaire. This is a fitting tribute. It is cool that one day people living on Mars will be familiar with many geological features of their world and its moons that have curious names with interesting histories. Future scholars will enjoy knowing how the Swift crater got its name, like people today like such place-name trivia as how the state of Connecticut got its name.

### **From Earth to the Moon :**

A pioneer of imagination, Jules Verne published his popular science fiction 'From Earth to the Moon', in 1865. It predicted the United States to be the first nation to launch its spacecraft to the moon. 104 years later, in 1969, this prediction was realised. Not only did the structure of the spaceships in the book and in reality bore resemblance, the crew members were also the same number. NASA launched its spaceship, Apollo 11 from Florida, and it plunged into Pacific Ocean on its return. Both the locations were correctly mentioned in the book. Surprisingly, Neil Armstrong mentioned the book on a television broadcast, on his way back to the earth.

## **The World Set Free**

Published in 1914, H.G. Wells wrote in '*The World Set Free*' –

"The bomb flashed blinding scarlet in mid-air, and fell, a descending column of blaze eddying spirally in the midst of a whirlwind... When he could look down again it was like looking down upon the crater of a small volcano...the building...crumbled before the flare as sugar dissolves in water"

His vision inspired figures like Winston Churchill and physicist Leo Szilard and after 31 years, Hiroshima became witness of the gruesome effects of a five ton atom bomb. His futuristic prediction of an inhuman war changed the historical course of the world.

The atom bomb was one of the defining inventions of the 20th Century. So how did science fiction writer HG Wells predict its invention three decades before the first detonations ?

HG Wells first imagined a uranium-based hand grenade that "would continue to explode indefinitely" in his 1914 novel *The World Set Free*.

He even thought it would be dropped from planes. What he couldn't predict was how a strange conjunction of his friends and acquaintances – notably Winston Churchill, who'd read all Wells's novels twice, and the physicist Leo Szilard – would turn the idea from fantasy to reality, leaving them deeply tormented by the scale of destructive power that it unleashed.

The story of the atom bomb starts in the Edwardian age, when scientists such as Ernest Rutherford were grappling with a new way of conceiving the physical world.

Wells was fascinated with the new discoveries. He had a track record of predicting technological innovations. Winston Churchill credited Wells for coming up with the idea of using airplanes and tanks in combat ahead of World War One.

Author HG Wells wrote in his novel, about the future use of the atomic bomb. Back then, scientists knew about this kind of energy, but were clueless as to how it could be released. Wells detailed the chain reaction that could be produced by nuclear fission. The events in Nagasaki and Hiroshima confirmed this 32 years later.

## **Fahrenheit 452**

'Fahrenheit 451', by Ray Bradbury, mentioned "seashell thimble radios" that characters carry around in their ears. This device provides music and information to the user. The book was published in 1953, and at the time seemed to be an absurd fantasy to people. However, in today's world, earphones and Bluetooth ear buds have become a common gadget. Other technological predictions were large television screens at home covering entire wall. This modern version of television was not prevalent at that time. Communications through digital walls were also mentioned and now Facebook has used the term "digital wall" for its platform. Bradbury's imaginary inventions really unfolded into what we know today as reality.

## **Covid-19**

Lastly we would like to point out the fight against pandemic in which we all are together. The Corona virus has already claimed around 37.9 Lakhs lives and infected more than 17.5 Crores people globally. A calamity this sudden and huge in proportion was certainly beyond expectations. But was it beyond imagination? Almost 40 years ago, in a 1981 crime-thriller novel, titled 'The Eyes of The Darkness', suspense author Dean Koontz mentioned a virus called Wuhan-400, created as a bio-weapon in a laboratory with the capability to wipe out an entire city or country. Skip some three decades later and Author Sylvia Browne publishes her "End of Days: Predictions and Prophecies about the End of the World." The 2008 book reads, "In around 2020 a severe pneumonia-like illness will spread throughout the globe, attacking the lungs and the bronchial tubes and resisting all known treatments." Let's add one more to the list and we have got the most renowned of these sources. Few of us are unaware of the 2011 Contagion. This Hollywood movie is about a virus, not much different in its characteristics from Covid-19 itself, that begins its spread from China to the rest of the world. The strangest coincidence, if coincidences are to be believed, is that the movie traces back the cause of the infection to a bat, which hits pretty close to home given the scientific consensus on the origin of the current pandemic.

From books, movies to the prophetic writers of 'Simpsons', this has been a low down of creepily accurate predictions of incidents, existences and disasters.

## **Conclusion**

As we already know, a good book can transport us to another time and place, letting us briefly inhabit another world – or a different version of the one we're living in. And whether the books are set in the past, present, or future, the authors of fiction can create their own societies, and the rules, technologies, and social and political situations that come with it. Given how much literature has been written throughout history, it makes sense that some of it would include events or inventions that were not around when the author wrote about them.

But the quest to predict the future is not a new phenomenon. From traditional fortune telling to tarot card readings, there are many ways by which humans have sought some form of guidance or reassurance about the future that lies ahead. Beyond tea leaves and constellations though, we are often spooked to discover works of fiction that have unintentionally yet accurately predicted the future. It's almost as if these authors had a crystal ball to peer into.

The Titanic sinking, discovery of the two moons of Mars, launching of the first spacecraft to Moon, destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and also the present day villain, that is, the outbreak of corona virus, all these were present to us by the authors even before we could dream about these things. But even with all the facts presented, we must also say that some learned scholars have challenged the authenticity of these predictions and premonitions. According to them, Future only shows its hand when 'Future' has already become the present 'Act'. But we should consider that there

are several things in this world which even science cannot answer and which remains a mystery throughout. These writers had penned down their imagination which predicted the world's biggest events, achievements, and calamities, sometimes centuries before they occurred in the real world.

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# **LUCIFER : FROM TEXT TO THE SCREEN**

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*Semester VI, 2021*

## **Abstract**

Lucifer is a name which is known to all; however what differs is his perception. For some he is the Devil – 'The Evil Incarnate' where as to others he is the 'King of Hell' appointed by God who has no choice but to be burdened with the misunderstandings and accusations thrown his way. Therefore, in this paper we have tried to understand the different versions of Lucifer as were portrayed in different texts before and as a series now.

## **Introduction**

In Judeo-Christian tradition there are many characters, especially in the Bible that have helped to make Christianity among the most practiced religions in the world today. Other than God himself, there are many other characters that illustrate exemplary behavior such as Abraham, Moses, King David, Virgin Mary and Jesus himself. However, there are also negative figures who drive God's people away from the path of righteousness and lead them towards sin. Among all these figures, no one has a more devilish appearance other than Satan. But now the question arises as to how Lucifer, the loyal arch angel of God became the sole enemy of the Divine Power. The concept of Lucifer thus creates a different genre for various researches. This fallen angel had the power of terrorizing the creation- turning virtue into vice. The concept of 'evil' revolves around the idea of Satan. Thus, the negative progress in the journey from Lucifer to that of Satan creates a lot of speculations and simultaneously, gives rise to various different aspects in which the character has been portrayed over the ages.

Lucifer, once who had been the most glorious amongst the angels, became so impressed with his own beauty, intelligence, power and position that he began to desire for himself the honour and glory that belonged to God alone. This pride represents the actual beginning of sin in the universe- preceding the fall of human – Adam, by an indeterminate time.

Lucifer shares the same power with God. Therefore, he revolted against the autocratic authority of God and refused to accept the divine benevolence of almighty. The Book of Isaiah 45:7, reads, "I from light, and creates darkness, I make will and create woe: I the lord do all the things." (Sweeney 2021). According to the Old Testament, God alone controlled all the events and was responsible for all conditions within the creation, both good and evil – this gives rise to another query whether God himself creates Satan. It is debatable if Satan epitomizes the concept of evil to maintain the balance between Good and Evil and the urgency to feel the necessity of God as a primary aspect to live in the world.

However, the development of Satan was a slow and gradual process. It took hundreds of years to make him the merciless king of Hell, who as the New Testament Book of revelation has it, will ultimately fall to God at the end of time. This mythological character had been the source for many literary works over the ages. The creative brains of Dante, Milton and many others had contributed their imaginative power to make the evil more powerful and vibrant. Thus, Lucifer has been portrayed by many authors which perhaps elevates his position from 'the ruler of Hell' to that of the 'Prince of Darkness'. While the authors had come up with their creative texts following the mythology and the origin, Lucifer, as he is portrayed on screen, sometimes deviates from the original context. The Netflix series attempts to humanize his character and ignites the spirit of re-telling the original story by portraying the mythological character with a modern twist. Now in this endeavor, we are trying to feature some of the important areas of literary creations which will explore the development of Lucifer from the text to the screen which ultimately sum-up the entire concept into one fine line :

“When angels fall, they also rise.”

### **Lucifer's journey from texts to the screen**

We begin our paper with Dante's *Inferno*. Dante illustrates a less powerful Satan than most standard depictions; he is slobbering, wordless, and receives the same punishments in Hell as the rest of the sinners. In the text, Dante vividly illustrates Satan's grotesque physical attributes. Satan is portrayed as a giant demon, frozen mid-breast in ice at the center of Hell. Satan has three faces and a pair of bat-like wings affixed under each chin. As Satan beats his wings, he creates a cold wind that continues to freeze the ice surrounding him and the other sinners in the Ninth Circle.

Here's a small guide to the nine circles of hell as mentioned in Dante's *Inferno* :

Circle 1 Limbo

Circle 2 Lust

Circle 3 Gluttony

Circle 4 Greed

Circle 5 Anger

Circle 6 Heresy

Circle 7 Violence

Circle 8 Fraud

Circle 9 Treachery where Satan is imprisoned in ice from waist down in the very center of hell.

Cocytus is the ninth and the lowest circle of the Underworld. This frozen lake originates from the tears of a statue called the Old Man of Crete who represents the sins of humanity. Dante describes it as the home of the traitors and those who committed acts of complex fraud.

This final canto is the climax of the *Inferno*, the meeting with Satan. The sinners in this final round, Judecca, keeping with the theme of retribution, are permanently frozen in the ice; they were treacherous to their masters, the ultimate sin of malice, and are forever encased in their sin of coldness.



Dante's two-fold theme of religion and politics is found in the very mouths of Satan. The ultimate sinners of this kind of malice spend eternity being chewed and flayed by Satan's teeth.

The image of Satan is a startling one, beginning with its three faces, which symbolize the perversion of the Holy Trinity. Dante says that Satan is as ugly as he was once beautiful, recalling his former incarnation as an angel. Satan, here, seems less powerful than traditionally depicted; he is dumb and roaring, trapped in the ice, punished as the rest of the sinners, perhaps worse.

Dante's Lucifer is a parodic composite of his wickedness and the divine powers that punish him in hell. As ugly as he once was beautiful, Lucifer is the wretched emperor of hell, whose tremendous size stands in contrast with his limited powers: his flapping wings generate the wind that keeps the lake frozen and his three mouths chew on the shade-bodies of three arch-traitors, the gore mixing with tears gushing from Lucifer's three sets of eyes (Inf. 34.53-7).

Lucifer's three faces – each a different color (red, whitish-yellow, black) – parody the doctrine of the Trinity: three complete persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) in one divine nature – the Divine Power, Highest Wisdom, and Primal Love that created the Gate of Hell and, by extension, the entire realm of eternal damnation. With the top half of his body towering over the ice, Lucifer resembles the Giants and other half-visible figures; after Dante and Virgil have passed through the center of the earth, their perspective changes and Lucifer appears upside-down, with his legs sticking up in the air.

Lucifer's three mouths chew on the three greatest traitors of human history, as Dante sees it; two are from Roman history (the betrayers of Caesar, namely Brutus and Cassius) and one is from biblical history (Judas, the betrayer of Christ). Once more, here at the end of *Inferno*, we note the interweaving of the classical with the biblical that is an absolute signature of Dante's imaginary practice. This practice will continue into *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*.

The next text is one which cannot be ignored while studying Lucifer – *The Bible*. In the *Bible* we find Lucifer as the shape-shifting Satan. In Genesis, we see him as a serpent convincing Eve to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge, saying, “your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (3:5). Again, in the chapter twelve of The General Epistle of Jude, Satan is shown as a “wonder” of heaven- a red dragon with seven heads, ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads.

But Satan was once Lucifer, an angel of heaven. He fell from heaven as he, along with one-third of the angels, revolted against the “justly punitive God” on the ground that they held similar powers as Him yet, He was supreme- “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:13). God forbade him knowing he might influence others against Him. Being a brilliant orator, Satan even tried to tempt Jesus by showing him the glory of the kingdoms. He tells him – “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9). According to the Gospels of St. Luke and St. John, Satan also entered into Judas, the twelfth disciple, to betray Jesus.

In the *Bible*, we find God and Jesus to be equated with light and everything that is good and pure, while Satan or the devil is compared to darkness. After innumerable problems were caused by Satan on God's land, an angel comes down from heaven with a great chain and the key to the "bottomless pit", "the lake of fire and brimstone", and "he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years... that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season" (John 20:2-3).

In King James' Bible Lucifer is referred to as the "morning star" and the "Devil". Lucifer is banished to Hell after his fight with God for his Rights. Despite being forbidden by God, he is then seen taking the form of a basilisk and seducing Eve, the unique Creation of God to have the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge and defy God. Thus, in the *Bible* Lucifer is shown to fight for his Rights but when God banishes him to Hell, he turns evil and ultimately leads to the Fall of Man.

It is absolutely impossible to discuss Lucifer without mentioning John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Apart from the biblical story of the Fall of Man it mainly focuses on Lucifer or Satan. In *Paradise Lost* Lucifer is portrayed to be a tragic Hero whose hamartia was being overambitious whereas in *Paradise Regained* he is portrayed to be malicious who has no regret for his actions. Through various depictions Satan is seen as the one who deliberately acts in opposition to morality. So Milton challenges this notion in *Paradise Lost* and depicts Satan as the one who was treated in an unfair way. In a way "Milton uses Satan as a mirror for the reader to view his own faults and passions, and by doing so he places the reader on the same platform as his character."

One of the major questions suggested by Milton in *Paradise Lost* is whether Lucifer or Satan should or should not be seen as a hero of sorts. Milton himself answers this question through his depiction of Satan as it is notorious, provoking reactions from readers that are religious and morally sound, on the one hand, and an obligation to strict literary understanding, on the other. To some extent, Satan's manipulating rhetoric perverts the reader's mind. Milton proposes a conflict of ideas for his readers as to whether Satan is truly heroic or not. However, the reader sides with him owing to Milton's appeal to humanity.

Through illustrative depictions, Satan is seen as the one who undermines, destroys and deliberately act in opposition to morality. However, Milton challenges these notions in *Paradise Lost* depicting him as the one who has been undermined, the one who has been treated unfairly and has been destroyed, as the narrator insists that God "created evil", shaped the place "where all he will dies" and allows "all monstrous and prodigious things" to pervert good, portraying God as a tyrant and the one responsible for all the evil that exists.

The Satan of *Paradise Regained* however, is constructed by Milton in a less sympathetic manner in order to correct the image of himself and bring out Satan's true nature. Here, Satan refutes the earlier sentiment found within his soliloquies in Book 4 of *Paradise Lost* and portrays him to be devoid of any emotions and no longer apologetic for his rebellion and with no respect for the position of God. Here, Milton educates the reader of the faults of Satan's depiction in *Paradise Lost* and establishes the fact that he should not be envied but treated with disgust. While Satan managed to

tempt the reader in *Paradise Lost*, here he is seen in all his glory with his flaws glaring at our faces. His corrupt nature is unleashed and the sympathy and familiarity evoked in *Paradise Lost* is replaced by resentment and fear.

Thus, the character of Lucifer/Satan can be seen in lights both good and evil and can be analyzed in a variety of ways.

We finally come to series of Lucifer where is no longer in the pages of a book but looking at us from the screen. We feel his presence much more and are forced to listen to his side of the story.

The series "Lucifer" starring Tom Ellis revolves around the story of the banished angel Lucifer Morningstar. The series "Lucifer" shows the character of Satan "the fallen angel" in completely different view point from Dante's *Inferno*, the Bible, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

It follows Lucifer, who has become dissatisfied with his life in hell. After abandoning his throne and retiring to Los Angeles, Lucifer indulges in his favourite things -women, wine and music.

For the first time in billions of years, a murder outside his upscale nightclub awakens something unfamiliar in Lucifer's soul that is eerily similar to compassion and sympathy. Lucifer is faced with another surprise when he meets an intriguing homicide detective named Chloe who is apparently a gift of god, appears to possess an inherent goodness – unlike the worst of humanity, to which he is accustomed. Suddenly, Lucifer starts to wonder if there is hope for his soul.

Throughout the show we see how the good-humored devil is deeply hurt and full of hatred for himself. At one point it is seen how Lucifer hates himself for being what he is and finds it difficult to forgive himself. It is at this point Chloe makes him realize that even though he is the devil he is not responsible for all that is bad. Throughout the series we clearly see Lucifer's urge to change the perspective of people for blaming him for all their atrocities and their pain for which they were to be held responsible. Viewers see how Lucifer is angry because of the lack of attention and love which he did not receive from God that led to his hamartia of over ambitiousness and his rebellion against God. He feels betrayed and misunderstood.

Helping Chloe solve various murder cases by using his power to manipulate humans into revealing their deepest desires; he finds crucial answers that bring him peace and help him recover from the pain and confusion in his life. In Chloe the devil finds love, peace and support. While working as a consultant to the department, they encounter all sorts of supernatural beings while solving crimes together and developing their relationship. The last season of the series shows a Lucifer who is capable of love, forgiveness and sacrifice which is quite the opposite of the biblical description of the devil.

The series metaphorically portrays Lucifer's journey from hatred to love. From being the lord of hell he becomes God incarnate, who is the symbol of goodness.

## **Conclusion**

It seems as though there are as many interpretations of Lucifer as there are interpreters. Dante and Milton have interpreted him in their own way and so has every reader who has read their books. It

seems Lucifer is a mirror, we see him as we see ourselves. It could also be that it is our values that influence our perceptions of the Lord of Hell. Which is why while some of us see him as an unfaithful being who rebelled against his master, some of us also see him as a rational being who wanted to fight to have his own will and that of others.

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# **COMMEMORATING THE 107TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF JOHN HERSEY THE WRITER WHO LET HIROSHIMA SPEAK FOR ITSELF**

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## **Abstract**

The First World War affected the entire world, as well as the basic foundations of civilization. People all over the world were curious to learn more about the truth of such a massive disaster. While the majority of the facts remained suppressed by the mainstream media, the catastrophic scenarios and the harrowing cries from the devastated areas found refuge in literature. The manner in which the war touched upon literature, it casted a profound impact on the cultural arenas. Many writers came up with their interpretations regarding the atrocities of the wars and criticized them.

John Hersey was one such writer who made a concerted effort to expose the realities of the atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the world's attention and demonstrate how the atomic powers annihilate lives. 'Hiroshima ' testifies to the unnatural, unbelievable power of the atomic bomb. The bomb turns day into night, conjures up rain and winds, and destroys beings from the inside as well as from the outside. The narrative conveys the unsettling sense that the creation and use of the atom bomb crosses an important line between the natural and unnatural world. Also, the images of the greenery growing in Hiroshima show that even if the unnatural occurs, and mankind tries to control nature, nature will regain control in the end.

Owing to his background in journalism, he was able to examine the disaster more closely and unveil the truth.

This dissertation is an attempt to celebrate John Hersey's birth anniversary, as well as serves as a grim reminder of the atrocities performed by the human race on each other, just in the name of power and greed. Through his work 'Hiroshima', that fateful day in 1945 remains imprinted in the minds of many.

It is not just a literary work , but a crucial piece of history which gives us , as readers – a heart-wrenching account of the tragedy, of thousands of innocent, unassuming lives that were lost for no fault of their own. Most importantly the work consists of the accounts of six unfortunate victims who survived the atomic bomb and its after effects, giving us a window to how the events panned out before their eyes on the calamitous day.

## John Hersey : Biography

“Journalism allows its readers to witness history ; fiction gives its readers an opportunity to live it” – says John Hersey , the renowned American Writer and Journalist . Born on June 17th 1914, 6 weeks before the First World War, the Second established John Richard Hersey as the Flag-bearer of the New Journalism Movement . This legend might not be breathing now but his phenomenal work on Hiroshima insists on being his chef d' oeuvre. Hersey's report on the aftermaths of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki is still considered as one of the masterpieces of American Journalism of 20th century, describing the cataclysmic effects of the bombing through the eyes of the survivors : “...their faces were wholly burned , their eyesockets were hollow, the fluid from their melted eyes had run down their cheeks”(Hersey).

His early novel *A Bell for Adano* (1944) , depicting the Allied occupation of a Sicilian town during World War II, won a Pulitzer Prize. Hersey's next books demonstrated his gift for combining a reporter's skill for relaying facts with imaginative fictionalization. Both *The Wall* (1950) , about the Warsaw ghetto uprisings , and *Hiroshima* (1946), an objective account of the atomic bomb explosion in that city as experienced by survivors of the blast, are based on fact, but they are also personal stories of survival in Poland and Japan in World War II. Hersey's later novels encompass a wide variety of subjects and range from treatments of contemporary political and social issues to moral parables set in the world of the future. These works interweave social criticism and their author's moralistic aims with imaginative plots and premises.

The novel *The Call* (1985) is largely the expression of its protagonist, an articulate missionary in China whose journals and letters make up much of the book. *Blues* (1987), a series of dialogues between characters identified only as Fisherman and Stranger, echoes Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler* (1653) in its exploration of the practice and philosophy of fishing. Hersey also received honorary degrees from various elite institutes such as “Yale University” , “The New School of Social Research” , “ Wesleyan University” and many more. He breathed his last at his winter home in Key West , Florida , on March 24, 1993 .

## Hiroshima : A Noiseless Flash

“At exactly fifteen minutes past eight in the morning on August 6, 1945, Japanese time, at the moment when the atomic bomb”( Hersey 1) called “Little Boy” flashed over Hiroshima , it killed over 80,000 people. Three days later, another atomic bomb called “Fat Man” was dropped over Nagasaki , killing more than 40,000 people. In the final year of World War II, the Allies prepared for a costly invasion of the Japanese mainland. This undertaking was preceded by a conventional and firebombing campaign that devastated 67 Japanese cities.

The war in Europe concluded when Germany surrendered on 8 May 1945, and the Allies turned their full attention to the Pacific War. By July 1945, the Allies' Manhattan Project had produced two types of atomic bombs : “Fat Man”, a plutonium implosion-type nuclear weapon; and “LittleBoy”, an

enriched uranium gun-type fission weapon. The 509th Composite Group of the United States Army Air Forces was trained and equipped with the specialized Silverplate version of the Boeing B-29 Superfortress, and deployed to Tinian in the Mariana Islands.

The Allies called for the unconditional surrender of the Imperial Japanese armed forces in the Potsdam Declaration on 26 July 1945, the alternative being "prompt and utter destruction". Japan ignored the ultimatum.

Harry S Truman, the US President of the time, had thus translated his warning to the Japanese into reality which is if they do not now acknowledge the Allies' terms, then they may expect a rain of ruin from the air. Hence the Manhattan Project, cloaked the entire Hiroshima with an "impenetrable cloud of dust and smoke" and plenty of "black rain".

Finally, Japan surrendered to the Allies on 15 August, six days after the Soviet Union's declaration of war and the bombing of Nagasaki. The Japanese government signed the instrument of surrender on 2nd September, effectively ending the war.

### **The Six Survivors**

"The Atomic Age was born...Carnage unparalleled...The Sickness sparing none...Few Survived ... Still ill for Eternity ...". "A hundred thousand people were killed by the atomic bomb, and these six were among the survivors. They still wonder why they lived when so many others died. Each of them counts many small items of chance or volition a step taken in time, a decision to go indoors, catching one street-car instead of the next that spared him. And now each knows that in the act of survival he lived a dozen lives and saw more death than he ever thought he would see. At the time none of them knew anything" (Hersey). Six of the victims survived to voice the Horrors of August 6th, 1945.

#### **\*Toshiko Sasaki**

Toshiko Sasaki was a clerk in the personnel department of the East Asia Tin Works. On the day of the bomb, she was at her office desk, setting up for the work day ahead.

A flash of light engulfed the entire room, at which point, she lost consciousness. When she came around, she found herself surrounded by grotesque bodies in various stages of death and decay. She was rescued 3 days later, and was diagnosed with a broken leg, and other injuries. She lost her entire family and everyone she knew to the atomic bomb.

In the years after the bomb, she was converted to a nun, by the name Sister Dominique Sasaki, and travelled the world, spreading my story of hope and survival in the face of disaster.

#### **\*Dr Masakazu Fujii**

Dr Masakazu Fujii, ran a hospital on the banks of a river. On the day of the bomb, he was reading the morning newspaper on the porch of his house. As the bomb hit the ground, he was flung off into the river, from where he could see his house and his hospital topple and disintegrate before him. He escaped the heat of the fire by staying submerged in the river water for as long as possible, after which he went to his parents' house.



In the years after the bomb, He rebuild his clinic in 1948. He was found unconscious in his bedroom in 1963, because he inhaled the gas, leaking from his heater. He slipped into a coma and was unresponsive up until his death in 1973.

#### **\*Hatsuyo Nakamura**

Hatsuyo Nakamura was a tailor's widow. In the few moments following the siren which preceded the bomb, she decided to stay put in her house along with her children, who were asleep. When the bomb hit, her house turned to rubble around her, but she escaped unhurt along with her children , to Asano Park, the evacuation area. Here, she found out that the rest of her family has not survived the bomb.

After the bomb, she spent her days in extreme poverty, working in a mothball factory. It was only after 30 years of the bomb that a law was passed for the survivors where she was entitled to a monthly allowance.

#### **\*Father Wilhelm Kliensorge**

Father Wilhelm Kliensorge, was a German Jesuit priest stationed at a missionary house in Japan. At the strike of the bomb, he am mostly unharmed, along with the other priests, as the mission house was heavily secured against earthquakes.

In the years following the bomb, he converted himself to a Japanese citizen, and took the name Father Makoto Takakura. However, the radiation has played havoc on his body, and he eventually succumbed to exhaustion and overwork.

#### **\*Dr Terufumi Sasaki**

Dr Terufumi Sasaki ,was an idealistic surgeon at the Red Cross Hospital. On the morning of the blast, he took a train earlier than his usual one. This turned out to be a decision that would save his life, because based on the timing and the location of the blast, he would have not survived had he taken the later train. During the bomb, he was at the hospital, and finding himself unhurt, he immediately began helping others.

In the years following the blast, he spent most of his time at the Red Cross hospital, which he eventually left in order to build and set up a clinic in Mukaihara.

#### **\*Reverend Kiyoshi Tanimoto**

Reverend Kiyoshi Tanimoto, was a community leader and an Amercian-educated Methodist Minister. He was in Japan on a mission to organize air-raid defences. On the morning of the bombing, he had been helping his friend with menial jobs. They were two miles away from where the bomb dropped. Miraculously, his wife and daughter were unhurt, as well.

He spent the rest of his life working for peace, travelling to America to raise money for a peace center in Japan.

## **Aftermath of Hiroshima**

After the bombing of Hiroshima, nearly a third of the population was killed and 70% of the city was wiped out from the face of the earth. The city's devastation extended from destroyed buildings reduced to rubble and a mere few dead trees standing to its several thousand people either wandering around or laying on the ground severely injured. Several of them had jumped into the waters in hope of relieving some of their horrendous pain. While help was sent as soon as possible, the Japanese government did not recognize the plight of the survivors until 1950.

The survivors of the bombing faced physical diseases and mental trauma for the rest of their lives. Radiation sickness and radiation poisoning began killing many who had survived the initial attack. The people who did not die during the bombing or in the few months after it were plagued with leukaemia, other forms of cancer, heart and liver problems, cataracts. Those who had been burnt in the blast and the firestorm that followed developed lesions known as keloids on their scars that left them in pain for the rest of their lives.

Unfortunately, those efforts were hampered in Hiroshima's case when disaster hit the city for a second time.

Just as power, water, transportation and telephone lines had been restored, a devastating typhoon hit what was left of the city on the 17th of September 1945. A further 3,000 of Hiroshima's beleaguered citizens were killed and many of the city's bridges were destroyed.

Plans were drawn up to rebuild the city in five years, with a memorial garden at the city's heart centered around the blasted remains of the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall.

It wasn't until 1949 that the government accepted the city needed a lot more help than could be provided at local level and passed the Peace Memorial City Construction law.

Hiroshima memorialized those who lost their lives with the construction of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. Designed by architect Kenzō Tange, the park was completed in the late 1950s. Covering three acres of land in what used to be the city's main business and residential area, the park contains a number of memorials, museums and lecture halls dedicated not just to the memory of the dead, but also to the promotion of world peace and an end to nuclear weapons.

## **Conclusion**

The effect which this bombing had on the people of Hiroshima, especially the children is intangible. The survivors still wonder why they lived when so many others died. A single decision to stick to their daily routine or to deviate from the same spared their lives. Yet, lives of so many others were snatched away, so many dreams shattered, so many other lives spared yet destroyed and so many generations to come already cursed.

But 'for what ?' is the pertinent question which has remained unanswered and ignored for decades. Wars were fought by power mongers, to quench their ego and greed and common people

had been crushed under the weight of their choices. It is the innocent men who suffer and deal with the consequences of the mindless warfare. The people of Hiroshima believed that they were dying for their country, and that it was an act of sacrifice and bravery. A group of 13 year old girls were sitting beside the heavy fence of a Buddhist temple, when they were crushed by the weight of the fence after the atomic bomb was dropped. Moments before they breathed their last, they began singing 'Kimigayo', their national anthem.

People from two conflicting countries can't be friends or cannot communicate without the fear of being ostracized by their own people. No humanity can survive in a world of manmade boundaries and borders and wars. Mr. Tanimoto who had studied in America and had American friends was questioned several times by the police and also his community had almost shunned him.

John Hersey's novel *Hiroshima* is as blatant as its title. Hersey does not mince his words but presents an authentic and true account of the bombing, the aftermath and also mentions six of the survivors.

*Hiroshima* was the best narrative in the 20th century in the history of American journalism , painting a picture of the horrors and the experiences of the six survivors in order to create an unadulterated impact on the readers.

The amazing thing about this account is the fact that the author gives such a vivid depiction of the event without showing a bias or discussing the great question of whether the bomb should have been dropped. The book shows the effects and the mixed reactions of the people of Hiroshima, but never does the author condemn the decision to drop the bomb, nor does he condone it. This is powerful in that the central question which the book poses is not answered, but rather Hersey gets the audience to contemplate the moral issues of this kind of warfare and leaves the answer up to the reader's judgment.

“Of a hundred and fifty doctors in the city, sixty-five were already dead and most of the rest were wounded. Of 1,780 nurses, 1,654 were dead or too badly hurt to work. In the biggest hospital, that of the Red Cross, only six doctors out of thirty were able to function, and only ten nurses out of more than two hundred” ( Hersey ) . Therefore , The crux of the matter is whether total war in its present form is justifiable , even when it serves a just purpose. Does it not have material and spiritual evil as its consequences which far exceed whatever good might result ?

When will our moralists give us an answer to this question ?

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**INDIVIDUAL PAPERS  
BY STUDENTS**

# A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE TO ROALD DAHL'S *CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY*

Aishwarya Bhutoria, Semester VI, 2021

## ABSTRACT

Roald Dahl has been referred to as one of the greatest storytellers for children of the 20th century. A celebrated fantasy *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, is the story of young Charlie Bucket who comes from a poor but loving family. He gets the dream chance of entering the amazing chocolate factory of Willy Wonka and inherits the grand prize at the end. Imperialism was an integral part of the literature intended for the future rulers of the world. The text works as a paradigm of imperialism, with Willy Wonka exercising imperial power over the colonized Oompa-Loompas. The text adheres to the ideologies of nineteenth-century novels of colonial adventure though Dahl wrote it in 1960s, well after the disintegration of the British Empire. The depiction of Wonka and Oompa-Loompas underscores the existing binary between the idolized and idealized imperialist and his ignorant, illiterate and colonized workforce.

## INTRODUCTION

“Outside academia, the term 'Children's literature' has a largely unproblematic, everyday meaning” (Kimberley 1). Children's Literature includes everything from folk and fairy tales, myths and legends, ballads and nursery rhymes- many of which dates back to preliterate epochs – to such embodiments of our transliterate age as e-books, fan fiction and computer games may come under the umbrella of children's literature.

Over the years it has been found that *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964) is one of the most common books that children had read, it has always been popular and considered a children's classic by many literary critics. The book was first made into a feature film as a musical, titled *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (1971) which was directed by Mel Stuart. There was another film version, titled *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) directed by Tim Burton.

Roald Dahl, employs a lot of imagination in order to create a world of phantasmagoria throughout the novel. He uses poems, dialogues, onomatopoeia, similes, metaphors and imagery to portray the story and to enrich the idea readers form of the chocolate factory, Wonka, Charlie and the other characters of the novel. Some of Wonka's creations are even personified to a high degree, notably the square candies that look round. He employs symbols, themes and the element of fantasy, adventure and morality to highlight the features of a complete Children's Literature text.

Dahl's treatment of the Oompa-Loompas exactly conforms with Edward Said's description of the ways in which the West has rationalized colonial processes with claims that colonized people

were provided with “order and a kind of stability” (Said 23) that they were not able to provide for themselves. Within this idea of Western benevolence and generosity, colonized people are made recipient of the favours of the whites who rob them of their individuality. Rudyard Kipling in 1899 wrote “The White Man's Burden” commending and glorifying the philanthropic civilising mission of the white men who were trying to enlighten the “Half devil and half child” (Kipling 111) and also meet their “captives' need” (Kipling 111) Dahl also shows the mass displacement and transportation of the Oompa-Loompas to the imperial centre as cheap labourers.

The Oompa-Loompas have undergone major transformation in their portrayal from the original publication in 1964 to the presentation by Tim Burton in 2005 however Wonka remained consistently white and in power, civilized well-dressed and towering over his slaves. Dahl has created a land of 'delightful mystery' (as Joseph Conrad had stated in *Heart of Darkness*) he represents Loompaland as jungles where lurks dangerous creatures such as hornswogglers, snozzwangers, and whangdoodles who “would eat ten Oompa-Loompas for breakfast and come galloping back for a second helping.” (Dahl 56), and where the Oompa-Loompas can find nothing but green caterpillars to eat. In this way, Dahl constructs the home of the colonized as a place characterized by scarcity and savagery, so that the Oompa-Loompas voyage to Willy Wonka's factory(imperial centre), at an insignificant price of cocoa beans. There are implicit references to cannibalistic instincts as well as benighted, unsophisticated and untamed condition of the Oompa-Loompas. The Oompa-Loompas reject the clothing offered to them by Wonka and instead wear their traditional deerskins for men, leaves for women, and children are naked, this could be seen as an attempt to resist the influence of the 'other'. Oompa-Loompas become objects of Wonka's colonizing gaze(racialized and objectified) thus the process of otherization and marginalisation continues.

Wonka shrouds the illegality of “smuggling” Oompa-Loompas from their native land in the air of benignity, containing the black population of men, women, and children within his factory walls as a humanitarian effort to save them from starvation and sickness. They learn to “speak” English. The little beings were “shipped” and “smuggled” like any other commodity in large packing cases. The power dynamic between Wonka and Oompa-Loompas is that of a master-slave and the colonizer-colonized relation. Willy Wonka exercises hegemonic control over his workers “imported direct from Loompaland” (Dahl 56) who appear at the click of his fingers like menial servants. The exotic element associated with Oompa-Loompas becomes evident as Veruca Salt demands “I want an Oompa-Loompa”(Dahl 57) and her father readily agrees to get her “one before the day is out”(Dahl 57), thus accentuating the commodification of the non-europeans. Their condition presents idea of displacement and mass transportation of colonized people to the imperial centre. There are two kinds of displacement presented in the text- the employees of Willy Wonka who were mere cogs in the capitalist machinery and dispensed with easily and the Oompa-Loompas brought from Loompaland to the chocolate factory.

The class distinction and discrimination is engraved in the system of society, it is explicitly seen in the attitude of the crowd that had gathered to catch the glimpse of the five good-fated children.



They think highly of Veruca Salt, Augustus Gloop, Violet and Mike have access to luxurious lives. Charlie is therefore an ignoble character in their eyes undernourished and destitute. Despite being poor in economic capital as compared to the other children Charlie has the cultural capital in abundance and Wonka rewards him accordingly. Dahl has addressed “the socio-economic inequities, attributing the economic problems of Charlie's family to the growing modernisation and globalisation of big business”(Stratyner and Keller 4).

The idea of unemployment and starvation is entwined. Mr. Bucket loses his job and the situation grows from worse to worst. The basic requirements for subsistence is denied to them. Charlie sleeps on mattress, has to skip his meals and he does not have sufficient clothes. The Oompa-Loompas were willing to work in the factory as their work supplied them with their loved cocoa beans instead of the green caterpillars they hated. Food therefore becomes crucial. The Bucket family does not have the means to ensure a wholesome and good life. They are impoverished and throughout the day there was a “horrible empty feeling in their tummies”(Dahl 5) Charlie is malnourished, he is referred to as “skinny little shrimp” (Dahl 67), he looks like a skeleton, even in the freezing cold weather he does not have a coat on.

The lands and indigenous people in the far reaches of the British Empire are 'othered' in order to produce and sustain an idea fundamental to colonial discourse : that Europe is the norm by which the other countries and people are judged. In *The Secret Garden*, Frances Hodgson Burnett represents India as a space marked by disorder, danger, and sickness, so that Mary's return to Britain restores her to physical and psychic health. The attitude of the civilized whites towards the Indians is demeaning and subjugatory, the natives are commanded to complete a task like slaves. In Dahl's short story "Poison" Harry Pope abuses Dr. Ganderbai, and refers to him as “you dirty little Hindu sewer rat”(Dahl 115) and “you dirty black”(Dahl 115). Through the confrontation between the two, the hidden and dark facets of Pope's personality becomes explicit.

## CONCLUSION

The trope of journeying and travel are prominent in postcolonial texts, many of which rehearse, re-examine, and parody the historical journeys of colonialism. In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the Oompa-Loompas travel from Loompaland to the imperial center, Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. The novel with ideologies of colonial adventure written in 1964 by Dahl post-decolonisation and the disintegration of the British Empire underscores the existing binary between the idolized and idealized imperialist and his ignorant, illiterate and colonized workforce. Slavery and capitalism coexist, people had to be maintained in subjection by systematic degradation and by deliberate efforts to suppress their intelligence. Oompa-Loompas' intelligence of the outside world is suppressed by the chained gates of the factory and they are not paid in monetary terms, like Wonka's former workers, but in cocoa beans. The land which is represented in the novel is an urban space which carries on class and racial discrimination, slavery and exploitation. It is in the grasp of poverty, starvation and unemployment and the dichotomy between moral and immoral is blurred. The unbalanced development of economic and social condition is reflected through the different characters.

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# **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK* : A TRAGEDY WITHOUT CATHARSIS OR OTHERWISE ?**

**Ankita Saha, Semester VI, 2021**

## **Premise**

Catharsis is an important element in many pieces of tragic literature today. To understand its importance, first, let's understand its etymology. It comes from the Greek word *Katharos* which means pure. *Katharos* evolved into *Kathairein* which meant cleanse. Catharsis has come to mean to cleanse or purge one's soul through self-realisation. Aristotle was the first person to mention catharsis; he spoke about it in his seminal work on Greek theatre, *Poetics*. The concept of catharsis was introduced by the Greeks and is, in fact, the most important element of Greek tragedy. At the end of each play, the protagonist has a catharsis- a realisation that his 'damnation' was brought about by his own actions and how to improve from that moment on. As a result, his soul is cleansed and he is whole again. The actor's catharsis, in turn, translates onto the audience who feels the same intense emotions as the actor, and ultimately leaves the theatre feeling washed and cleansed once the play is over. The use of catharsis as a way to cleanse one's soul is prevalent even today, and the mark of a good playwright or author is to successfully make his character relatable to the audience or reader. "Function of Tragedy is Catharsis." Catharsis means Purgation or Purification.

"The Rest Is Silence." Hamlet (Act V, Scene ii)

## **Introduction**

Tragedy revolves around human suffering and its main aim is to create a reaction on the audience. It is an imitation of action and life, which juxtaposed both happiness and misery throughout. Tragedy wants to create a sense of pity and fear, and transmit this to us, the audience, mainly by the main protagonist's (who always seems to be a male character like Oedipus, Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello...) fall as the action evolves in the play until it reaches its climax. As Emma L. E. Rees says 'Shakespeare's tragedies follow the misfortunes of a central figure, the central man will often be a person in a position of power' (Rees, 2010).

According to Aristotle, the aim of *tragedy* is to evoke the 'catharsis' of the audience, in order for them to feel emotions towards the plays being acted. What Catharsis mainly consists of is to help us understand that watching characters suffer is not only worthwhile but necessary too, in order to do this playwrights allow the audience to witness the main events occurring in the play, which will then create a very dramatic change in the way the action is being presented and therefore impact the

protagonist by unfolding a reversal which will be continued by a discovery. In *Hamlet*, for example, we mourn the death of an intelligent and troubled young man but nonetheless we are reassured by characters such as Horatio and Fortinbras that his death was not in vain and that after all he will be an honourable man. By doing this, and having this sudden swift of action in the play the playwrights manage to capture and emphasise the degree of suffering of the main protagonist of the tragedy and it lends to their 'fatal fall'. This is something, which is present in both Shakespeare's '*Hamlet*' and Sophocles' '*Oedipus the King*', which is shown immediately after the main discovery of the plays. Plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and music are the six main elements, which according to Aristotle tragedy should have.

*The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* by William Shakespeare is one of the best tragedies ever written. Hamlet is a prince whose Hamartia sets in motion a series of tragic events among his family and the family of the woman he loves. The rising action causes very strong emotions to build in the audience, the climax of the play leads to Hamlet's complete downfall, and the play has a cathartic ending which provides an emotional release for the audience. According to Aristotle's *Poetics*, "Tragedy is an imitation not only of a complete action, but of events inspiring fear or pity" (Aristotle). In *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, the plot involves relatives and close friends: Claudius has murdered his brother, King Hamlet; Prince Hamlet kills the father of the woman he loves; Ophelia goes mad and falls into the stream, killing herself; Claudius accidentally poisons the woman he loves, Hamlet's mother Gertrude; and Ophelia's brother kills Hamlet. The intimacy of these relationships heightens the audience's pity for Hamlet, and the fact that Hamlet falls from royalty makes his descent that-much-more-poignant. Hamlet wants to be absolutely certain that the ghost's allegation is true before exacting revenge upon Claudius. Once Claudius' reaction to the play supports the ghost's allegation, Hamlet is driven to seek revenge and justice. He has an opportunity to kill Claudius immediately after the play, but decides that killing Polonius during prayer would send him straight to heaven. Hamlet is doing his best to effectively manage the uncertainties in his life, to find justice where there may be none, to consider the actions he may take. He ponders the meaning of death and what comes after. He is likable, if somewhat gloomy, but is at times consumed by the emotion of it and unable to act rashly. He is someone that audiences-can-identify-with: 'we-have-all-done-this.' An argument might be made that Hamlet's tragic flaw is that he believed in ghosts. If he had not believed the ghost of King Claudius, he would never have sought revenge for the murder of his father; however, this argument would not have directly led to the tragic events of this play. Another argument might be that his indecisiveness is his flaw; unfortunately, this is supported because the series of tragic events do not unfold when he is being indecisive.

It is an act of rashness in an otherwise thinking man that is Hamlet's Hamartia. When Hamlet speaks to his mother in her room, he is angry that she does not see the situation his way and frightens her with his passion. When Gertrude calls out in fear, Hamlet rashly kills the man he hears behind the tapestry, only to learn that it is not Claudius. Hamlet's action sets in motion events that lead to the deaths of seven more people including himself. In a sense it also leads to the death of Denmark itself,

as the only royal left standing at the end is the Prince of Norway who happens onto the scene at the same time as the British ambassadors.

Catharsis comes when Fortinbras happens upon all the dead bodies in the palace, is briefly informed of what has happened, and says "Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage, for he was likely, had he been put on, to have proved most royal; and for his passage, the soldier's music and the rite of war speak loudly for him" (Shakespeare 287). After all of the tragic events, the audience is allowed release from the emotions they have been building up through the play : Hamlet is treated as a hero by Fortinbras.

"To Be, Or Not To Be :  
That Is The Question."  
Hamlet (Act Iii, Scene I)

### **Catharsis in Hamlet**

William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* expresses several elements of tragedy. In the play, Hamlet's character reveals flaws and instances of emotional purging. Catharsis and Hamartia are some of the elements of tragedy that he definitely expresses in *Hamlet*.

Catharsis can be defined as a cleansing of emotions for the sake of the audience as they sympathize with the main character, also known as the tragic hero. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, catharsis takes place when Hamlet engages in a sword fight with Laertes in ACT 5. sc. 2 because the audience is well aware of the fact that Laertes and Claudius have conspired against Hamlet by agreeing to have him drink from a poisonous cup and to poison the blade as another precaution to insure Hamlet's death in ACT 4. sc. 7. This causes the audience to sympathize with Hamlet because he does not deserve to die in such a deceiving manor, especially because he has agreed to play a fair game, unlike his contenders, Laertes and Claudius.

Another reason why the audience is forced to feel sorry for Hamlet is because he had the chance to kill Claudius but declines because he does not want to kill him in prayer for the sake of preventing Claudius from going to heaven in ACT 3. sc 3. Clearly Hamlet's indecision is the cause of his own tragic death because if he would have killed Claudius, Polonius and Ophelia would not have died. It is the deaths of Laertes's family members that forces Laertes to cheat in order to kill Hamlet. After Hamlet's mother drinks the poison, and Hamlet is struck by the poisonous blade, it drives the audience to deeply sympathies with Hamlet because it becomes apparent that he has lost everything, including his father, his mother, his woman, and his very own life all because he wanted to avenge his father's undeserved death. Hamartia, which can also be defined as a tragic flaw can be identified in Hamlet after the death of Polonius. The irrational slaying of Polonius expresses his tragic flaw because it results in the disasters that are soon to come in ACT 3. sc 4. Although the killing was an accident because Hamlet thinks that Polonius is Claudius, Hamlet's actions ignites a series of tragic events that take place because of his horrible mistake. Hamlet's obsessive pursuit to avenge his father's death causes him to become careless because of his blind passion. His heated obsession

forces him to react in haste, which results in the death of an\_innocent\_man. The play definitely provides the audience with an emotional release, especially when the audience sees that Hamlet mourns for Ophelia and reveals himself and his feelings for Ophelia to Laertes in ACT 5. sc. 1. When Laertes conspires with Claudius to murder Hamlet with poison, the audience is forced to sympathize with Hamlet because it becomes apparent that he is an honourable and compassionate person who is suffering tremendously because of the unjust death of his father. The audience is also forced to feel bad for Hamlet when he tells Horatio to inform Fortinbras of the events which led to his death. The fact that Fortinbras orders a military funeral for Hamlet gives the audience an opportunity-for-an-emotional-release-in-ACT-5.-sc.-2.n.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* successfully reveals catharsis and hamartia through Hamlet's indecision, and by highlighting the tragic losses he endures because of the unfair death of his father. The audience is guided to believe that Hamlet did not deserve to die or suffer the great losses that he did in the tragic play. In criticism, Catharsis is a metaphor used by Aristotle in the *Poetics* to describe the effects of true tragedy on the spectator. Catharsis is the process of strong emotional release of pent-up emotions through art. In *Hamlet*, catharsis is most definitely present; it is developed throughout the play in Hamlet's exceptional suffering, and is achieved during his death in the last scene.

### **The Meaning of Catharsis : What is Catharsis In Hamlet ?**

According to Aristotle's dictum, a tragedy should arouse in the readers or spectators the feelings of pity and terror. Pity is produced by the hero's tragic fate, while terror is aroused by the dreadful events which occur in the course of the play and which bring about the tragedy of the hero and of certain other characters too. By arousing these feelings of pity and terror, a tragedy brings about the catharsis or purgation of these emotions. According to the homeopathic system of medicine, cures like : that is, a sick person is given doses of a medicine which, if given to a healthy man, would produce in him the symptoms of the ailment from which the sick man was suffering. In the same way, a tragedy, by arousing pity and terror, treat us of these hidden feelings which always exist in our breast in a dormant condition, and thus afford emotional relief. As a result of this emotional relief, the spectators of a tragedy rise at its end with a feeling of exhilaration and pleasure. This, according to Aristotle, is the artistic function of tragedy.

### **Pleasure Based upon Human Ill-will**

Aristotle's theory of tragedy is not very widely accepted now. Various opinions regarding the nature and function of tragedy have been advanced and exposed. One critic, points out that the pleasure we find in a tragedy is due to the fact that we receive a malicious satisfaction from witnessing the sufferings and misfortunes of others. According to this view, our nature is essentially evil and, therefore, we feel happy at the misery of others. This is not how-ever, a convincing views because it is difficult to believe that the great tragic writers of the world wrote their tragedies in order to appeal to or satisfy human ill-will or malice.

## **Man's Helplessness in This Universe**

Another critic says that tragedy exhibits the helplessness of man in the universe and it shows that man is born to suffer and that there is no hope for him. But if this be so, how can we explain the feeling of pleasure that we experience in witnessing the performance of a tragic play ?

## **Human Endurance**

According to still another view, tragedy affords us pleasure by virtue of its exhibition of human endurance and perseverance in the face of calamities and disasters. In other words, when we see a man like Hamlet or Lear or Brutus facing his misfortunes bravely or heroically, we begin to think that human nature is noble and great and therefore we experience a feeling of pleasure.

## **A Moral Order in the Universe**

Still another view is that, by witnessing a tragedy, we get the feeling of the existence of a moral order in the universe and that this gives us moral satisfaction. In other words, we begin to believe that a man suffers chiefly on account of his own errors and faults, so that the sight of eternal justice enables us to accept our misfortune calmly.

## **Several Feelings Are Aroused**

The fact is that tragedy arouses a variety of feelings in us. The heroic manner in which human beings undergo their sufferings and misfortunes fills us with admiration for human nature. The greatness of human character gives rise to a feeling of self-confidence in us and arouses a new hope in our hearts. The grandeur of verse and rhetoric, the splendour of eloquence and the beauty of words in a tragedy give us a keen artistic pleasure.

Hamlet's soliloquies, for instance, have a wonderful appeal because of their splendour of language as well as their depth of meaning. In short, a whole multiple tragic feelings and impressions are aroused in us when we witness a tragedy. That is why we never rise with a feeling of despair or cynicism after seeing or reading a Shakespearean tragedy. It must, however, be admitted that every great tragedy excites also the feelings of pity and terror, and that these feelings are more dominant than others; and *Hamlet* is no exception to this.

## **The Feeling of Terror**

The reference of the guards to the appearance of the Ghost which has been seen by them on two occasions creates a feeling of fear in our minds. Marcellus refers to the Ghost as "this dreaded sight, twice seen of us." The feeling of tragic fear is intensified when the Ghost actually appears on the stage. Horatio's reaction to the Ghost is : "It harrows me with fear and wonder. Horatio supports this view with reference to the aggressive designs of Fortinbras on the State of Denmark. Horatio also recalls the supernatural omens that were witnessed in ancient Rome "a little ere the mightiest Julius fell." Horatio, who was sceptical about the existence of ghosts, trembles and looks pale. The Ghost re-enters, though it refuses to speak to anyone. Thus the very first scène of this play strikes terror and



tragic in our hearts. The feeling of terror or horror is expressed again when the Ghost reveals to Hamlet the circumstances in which Claudius committed the murder of the late King. This revelation is shocking not only to Hamlet but to us also.

In Act III, Scene ii, the feeling of terror is aroused in us when Hamlet says :

“Tis now the very witching time of night,

When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out Contagion to this world; now I could drink not blood”.

These words of Hamlet make us think that he will now commit some bloody deed (though he does not do so). In Act II, Scene iv, the feeling of terror is again aroused when the Queen thinks that Hamlet is going to murder her and when she shouts for help : “what wilt thou do ? Thou wilt not murder me. Help, help, ho ?” And, when, Hamlet, wittingly or unwittingly, slays the hidden Polonius, we are horrified beyond description.

‘We are gripped by the feeling of fear or terror again when we hear of Claudius's plan of sending Hamlet to England and having him murdered there. Claudius reveals his murderous plan to us in his soliloquy in Act IV, Scene iii. Another situation that horrifies us is the revolt of Laertes against Claudius. Laertes bursts in upon Claudius and says : “O thou vile king, give me my father.” Although the King remains calm, Laertes continues to use insulting language and to utter threats.

The climax of horror is reached, of course, in Act V, Scene ii, when a number of deaths take place before our very eyes on the stage. The Queen, Laertes, the King, Hamlet—all of them fight an end which is terrifying because of the circumstances in which they die and the manner of their death.

## **Usage of Catharsis in the Tragedy : Hamlet, Prince of Denmark**

### **The Feeling of Pity**

There are several situations that arouse the feeling of pity. There is, in Act II, Scene ii, the First Player's recitation of a speech describing the death of Priam, and the grief of Hecuba over his death. This account is so moving that the First Player himself is seen shedding tears of pity after he has recited the speech. But the scenes which describe Ophelia's madness and her death are even more poignant and more moving. In Act IV, Scene v, we are told that Ophelia, in her crazy condition, beats her heart, spurns enviously at straws, and speaks things that carry only half sense, and so on. When Ophelia appears in this scene, she is singing snatches of old songs. It is obvious that Hamlet's “madness,” and, even more than that, the murder of her father, have driven her crazy.

This is a deeply touching scene. Equally touching is her second appearance in this mad condition in Act IV, Scene v, when she is again harping on the death of her father. In Act IV, Sconce vii we learn of her death by drowning when the Queen gives us a most pathetic descriptions of the manner in which Ophelia met her end : “Her clothes spread wide, and, mermaid-like a while they bore her up ;Till that her garments, heavy with their drink.”

Hamlet's fate also arouses a deep pity in us. We pity him because we find that the Ghost has

imposed upon him a task which he is incapable of accomplishing. We pity him when he, in his soliloquies, castigates himself again and again for not being able to carry out that task. We pity him when he puts on a disposition behaves in a manner calculated to create an impression that he has gone mad. We pity him when we find him thinking that he has been betrayed by Ophelia, the one person from whom he sought\* support and solace. And we pity him when he meets a terrifying end. Indeed, our hearts are filled with intense pity and anguish at the thought that a great personality, a man of many parts, an intellectual genius endowed with a high sense of honour and cherishing high moral ideals, should meet a premature end because of the machinations of a rogue and villain, King Claudius. The death of Hamlet creates in us a feeling of tremendous waste, and this feeling certainly has a saddening effect on us.

### **The Catharsis of Pity and Fear Really Effectuated and Reflected**

There is no doubt that the play of *Hamlet* arouses in the audience and the readers deep feelings of pity and fear and brings about the catharsis of these emotions, although the effect of pleasure produced by this tragedy, as by every other tragedy by Shakespeare, is due also to several other reasons which have been stated above.

Before dying, Hamlet requests that Horatio tell the true account of the episode to the public. After Hamlet's death, when Fortinbras and the English ambassadors arrive, Horatio says to them:

Let me speak to th'yet unknowing world  
How these things came about. So shall you hear  
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,  
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,  
...All this can I  
Truly deliver.(V.ii.372-379)

Horatio also says to Fortinbras, "But let this same be presently perform'd / Even while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance / On plots and errors happen" (V.ii.386-388). These lines assure the audience that Horatio will relate the truth to the people of Denmark, thus relieving a great deal of tension. Fortinbras also helps restore the audience's spirits. The responsibility of leading Denmark falls upon Fortinbras, the headstrong and decisive Prince of Norway. When Fortinbras hears of the strange events that have come to pass, he says:

Let us haste to hear it,  
And call the noblest to the audience.  
For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.  
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,  
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.  
(V.ii.379-383)

Fortinbras quickly takes control of the situation, and the audience is reassured that Denmark and its people will be in good, reliable hands. Also, he has Hamlet's "dying voice" to help him

succeed as king; Horatio, as ordered by Hamlet, will relate to Fortinbras every single detail of the incident. The emotions of fear and pity that are developed throughout the play are purged after Hamlet's death, as the audience experiences relief and a sense of reconciliation through the characters of Horatio and Fortinbras. Catharsis is developed throughout the play by Hamlet's character development and his exceptional suffering, and finally comes to a head in the last scenes of the play, following Hamlet's death.

## Conclusion

"*Hamlet* is a tragedy without catharsis, a tragedy in which everything noble and heroic is smothered under ferocious revenge codes, treachery, spying and the consequences of weak actions by broken wills." In truth, this statement is not a legitimate contention. The Aristotelian definition of "catharsis" is the purging of emotions of pity and fear that occurs when the hero falls. In *Hamlet*, catharsis is most definitely present; it is developed throughout the play in Hamlet's exceptional suffering, and is achieved during his death in the last scene.

Hamlet's character development plays a major part in creating catharsis in the play. In the first part of the play, Hamlet is perceived as highly egocentric. When the Ghost asks him to avenge his father's death, Hamlet feels he has to do more : he believes that he has been born to restore moral order to the wretched state Denmark has become. Driven by this belief, he misjudges Ophelia; he takes it upon himself to be his mother's conscience, going expressly against the Ghost's orders, and most significantly, he postpones killing Claudius because he presumes that he is to decide if Claudius is to receive salvation. Hamlet assumes too much in his egocentricity, but by the last act of the play, after his reappearance following his voyage to England, Hamlet has transformed. He has finally learned that life is a mystery that man can never fully understand, and that "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will" (V.ii.10-11). He learns that roles in life are not entirely self-assigned – that there is a higher being controlling men's lives and that man can only do so much to achieve his intentions. Here, the audience sympathizes with Hamlet as he finally understands the inevitable complications of being a man; the audience's anger and antipathy against Hamlet for his earlier indecisiveness are overcome by sympathy. Before the final duel in which he meets his end, Hamlet expresses no fear of what is to come, and says to Horatio, "If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it / be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will / come. The readiness is all" (V.ii.205-207). Hamlet at last understands that it does not matter when death comes, and that he will be ready for it whenever it arrives. Now that Hamlet is not afraid of his future, he is no longer afraid of the death that the audience is sure awaits him in the next few scenes; this instils the audience with a measure of fear and suspense with regards to Hamlet's future. This development of Hamlet's character makes the audience feel a sense of catharsis at the end of play, arousing emotions of fear and sympathy that are purged immediately following Hamlet's death. Hamlet is an exceptional individual: he is noble and kind, and is regarded as "the observed of all observers". He also has a sensitive conscience that prevents him from doing evil acts. This man is fated to suffer through the

entirety of the play, and witnessing the constant suffering of such a remarkable person makes the audience feel that the element of good has been wasted. It is Hamlet's fate to see his father murdered, and to avenge his death. Hamlet knows that he will prove incapable of carrying out this work successfully, and remarks, "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right" (I.v.196-197). The task itself drives him to such great mental agony (until his death) that the audience is compelled to feel empathy towards Hamlet; there is the sense that a brilliant mind is being wasted by being forced to endure perpetual suffering. Further along in the play, Hamlet accidentally kills Polonius, an act that results in his exile to England; fate again intervenes when his ship is attacked by pirates, and he returns to Denmark to meet his tragic death. A fatalist himself, Hamlet comments on his own fate when talking to Horatio before the final duel: "There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (V.ii.204-205). Though Hamlet and the audience know that his end has already been shaped, the sense of a good man being wasted still exists. Hamlet is presented as a prince of nobility, honourable and brilliant, and to see him fail to fulfill his father's ghost's wishes is almost intolerably tragic. Had he remained alive, we imagine, Hamlet could have done a great deal of good for his country. The hero's exceptional suffering produces a sense of wastefulness that greatly contributes to the catharsis that is achieved at the end of *Hamlet*. The most significant factor in creating catharsis at the end of the play is Hamlet's death. Throughout the play, the audience feels sympathy and fear for the titular protagonist. This emotional tension is purged by Hamlet's death, which invigorates the audience with a sense of relief and reconciliation. When Claudius is killed, tension is released as the audience is assured that no more evil can be done. Furthermore, in Hamlet's and Laertes' dying exchange, they forgive one another: Laertes does not blame Hamlet for his and his father's deaths, nor does Hamlet blame Laertes for his own death. Even though each character has made blunders and acted treacherously, they forgive each other, and the audience is relieved that they die peacefully, their souls free of guilt. Horatio, who acts as the voice of the audience throughout the play, plays a major part in bringing relief to the spectators. Catharsis is an emotional discharge through which one can achieve a state of moral or spiritual renewal, or achieve a state of liberation from anxiety and stress. Catharsis is a Greek word meaning "cleansing." In literature, it is used for the cleansing of emotions of the characters. It can also be any other radical change that leads to emotional rejuvenation of a person. Catharsis is the purification or purgation of the emotions (especially pity and fear) primarily through art. In criticism, catharsis is a metaphor used by Aristotle in the *Poetics* to describe the effects of true tragedy on the spectator. The use is derived from the medical term *Katharsis* (Greek: "purgation" or "purification"). Aristotle states that the purpose of tragedy is to arouse "terror and pity" and thereby affect the catharsis of these emotions. "*Hamlet* is a tragedy without catharsis, a tragedy in which everything noble and heroic is smothered under ferocious revenge codes, treachery, spying and the consequences of weak actions by broken wills." In truth, this statement is not a legitimate contention. The Aristotelian definition of "catharsis" is the purging of emotions of pity and fear that occurs when the hero falls.

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# THE LACK OF STRONG FEMALE CHARACTERS IN MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN*

SrijitaDatta, Semester VI, 2021

## Introduction :

The lack of potential female characters in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is quite evident. Amidst the overreaching and ambitious male characters of Victor Frankenstein and Robert Walton, the women are extremely submissive and fragile, most of them succumbing by the end of the novel. The women of *Frankenstein* are helpless and suffering in the hands of the cruel society, especially the men they love and adore.

## The Women of *Frankenstein*

There are three notable women in the novel : Elizabeth Lavenza, Justine Moritz, and Safie. Elizabeth was adopted by the Frankenstein's after her mother's death. She is portrayed as the 'ideal' woman, adorned with adjectives like "heaven-sent", "garden rose among dark-leaved brambles", and a "living spirit of love". She comes as a "pretty present" for Victor when he was a child, who believes that she was actually his "possession". She is the perfect romantic "Angel of the House", who is more of a governess than a thinking, feeling woman.

Another powerless character is Justine Moritz, an orphan girl adopted by the Frankenstein household when Victor was young. She was wrongly accused for Victor's brother William's murder, and eventually executed. She failed to assert herself and her soft pleas confirming her innocence fell in deaf ears. Victor could have saved her, but neither did he defend her, nor confess his misdeeds that led to Justine's peril. In the world of men judging and executing innocent women, spineless men like Victor hardly come to their rescue.

In contrast to Elizabeth's docile nature, Safie stands as a woman who broke her boundaries for love. Unlike Elizabeth, whose love involved long waits and tender feelings, Safie's love is full of passion, taking on the arduous journey to a foreign land. Witnessing an outsider blending so easily with the De Lacey household gave the monster some hope for acceptance. Safie is the example of the New Woman, breaking barriers to reach her goals. Through her, Shelley instills a hope in the hearts of women who are passionate enough to follow their heart.

## Implication of the Feminine Subversion

Through the portrayal of women whose duties are confined to care-givers, nurses and housewives, and their fateful death, Shelley makes some covert implications. She takes on a man's voice as the narrator, diminishing the women into marginal characters, bringing out the blatant

discrimination. The men have jobs and a public life, while women are confined to their houses with domestic duties. According to critic Anne K. Mellor, the separation of male intellectual work from emotional affectations is the cause of Frankenstein's fated downfall. It is because "Frankenstein cannot work and love at the same time, he fails to feel empathy for the creature he is constructing" (Mellor 115-24). His lack of paternal love drives the monster to his gruesome deeds, finally leading to Victor's downfall.

Anne K. Mellor observes, "By stealing the female's control over reproduction, Frankenstein has eliminated the female's primary biological function and source of cultural power. Indeed, for the simple purpose of human survival, Frankenstein has eliminated the necessity to have females at all". Nineteenth century society viewed childbirth and rearing as the conventional utility of women. Frankenstein's deed is the ultimate patriarchal dream: the usurpation of a woman's power to give birth. Victor's self-absorption and lust for glory takes the place of sexual intimacy with Elizabeth, ultimately creating a saga of fatality of the male ego. Many English thinkers like John Stuart Mill and Charles Darwin, through their essays, have promoted the segregation of the male and female spheres. This idea existed even in the literary sphere for centuries. Frederic Rowton, in his preface to the anthology *Female Poets of Great Britain*, stated, "Man rules the mind of the world; woman its heart" (Rowtonxiv). He observed that none of the poems in the anthology "can accelerate man's political advancement", but surely "stimulate his moral progress". Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a tight slap to the literary society that tagged political and scientific genres as a man's niche.

As Mary Poovey puts it, Shelley creates "a myth of powerlessness". Part of it is created by her frustrations that emerged out of her married life with Percy. Victor destroying the monster's female companion was a decisive moment of the novel, signifying the creator and the father figure killing his child. The impact rings true in Mary's life. Her little daughter Clara had died on a tedious journey from Este to Venice, suffering from diarrhea, dehydration, and mild convulsions. But so absorbed was Percy with his 'stimulating conversations' with Byron that he failed to find reliable medical advice on Clara. This makes Mary's representation of Victor clearer as the impersonation of Percy who chose knowledge over family and his child's health. This resulted in Mary repressing her anger towards Percy which supports the interpretation of Frankenstein as her personal insurrection and critique of her self-centered, insensitive husband.

Devon Hodges had observed, "Like the monster, woman in a patriarchal society is defined as an absence, an enigma, mystery, or crime, or she is allowed to be a presence only so that she can be defined as a lack" (Hodges 155-164). It is through this lack that Mary brought forward the need of strong women to prevent a world like that of *Frankenstein*. She implies that a world full of passive and marginalized women (like Elizabeth and Justine) and self-absorbed, privileged men (like Victor) is responsible for creating monsters.

## Conclusion

Mary Shelley, through the portrayal of passive and marginalized women in *Frankenstein*, actually criticizes the society. *Frankenstein* is her way of protest against the politics and social



dynamics that deprived women and created monsters instead. In an age that discarded women's intellect on scientific and political thinking, Mary Shelley went against the current to create her version of protest.

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# CONCEPTUALIZING POST-COLONIAL THEORY IN THE LIGHT OF MULK RAJ ANAND'S NOVEL *UNTOUCHABLE*

Pritha Chakraborty, Semester VI, 2021

## Abstract

The aim of this research paper is to examine Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) novel in the light of post colonialism. This novel shows a realistic picture of all the oppressed section of the society during the pre-independence period of India. The pre-independence seen through the curious eyes of young boy Bakha and as the story unravels, it brings out the multiple post-colonial themes like loss of culture, identity crisis, and the discrimination.

## Introduction

Mulk Raj Anand was one of the most prolific writers of the period who is best known as a social realist and a humanist. He is an innovator in Indian Literature. He is one of the first Indian authors to write in English about the humanitarian dilemmas facing India during the mid-twentieth century. His compassionate objective is to produce an awareness of the cruelty and in humane practices of untouchability and social class distinctions and to seek the enlightening process of progress and modernity. Many of his works address the concerns of colonized as well as post colonial India including issues of the collision of two cultures, the observation of the "other" by the natives, the function of racism and the dilemma presented by the Indian caste system. Anand's most famous work, *Untouchable*, was written in the similar fashion as here counted the going son of an angle day in the life of the protagonist, Bakha.

## Post-Colonial Theory in *Untouchable*

Of the most exciting features of English Literature today, is the exploitation of post colonial literature. Post-colonial literatures come from Britain's former colonies in the Caribbean, Africa and India. If we keenly observe many post-colonial writers, they mainly focus on common themes such as struggle for independence, emigration, national identity, alienation and childhood. It is a literary theory that deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries. It may also deal with literature written by citizens of colonizing countries that takes colonies or their people as subject matter. The theory is based around concepts of otherness and resistance.

The theory of post colonialism doesn't only confine to English Literature but it also becomes a prevalent subject in Indian Literature. We have to realize the fact that it doesn't only talk about white men oppressing the blackmen, but it has several other faces to this relation. Dalit's in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* can be taken as the subjects of colonialization under the rule of Savarna

Hindus. Caste is “the most telling reminder of the post colonial character of India's contemporary predicament” (Dirks 294). This binary relation between classes and castes, dominating and dominated, can also be studied under the lens of colonial structure. Anand's purpose behind the creation of the novel was as he states: “Untouchable was in its sources a ballad born of the freedom I had tried to win for truth against the age old lies of Hindus by which they upheld discrimination.” Someone in the great Mahabharata had cried, “Caste, Caste- There is no caste !” “And I wanted to repeat this truth to the dead souls” (George 19).

*Untouchable* deals with Bakha, an eighteen years old sweeper in pre-independence period. It also examines the depression of outcasts or working-class people and their anger against the upper caste. The story depicts the grave and stressed relationships among untouchables, upper caste Hindus, Muslims and Christian British colonizers. Bakha and other characters suffer due to the fact that they belong to the lower caste. We get a bleak picture of their place in the beginning of the novel. The novel opens with a description of the outcast society, where they live without any facilities, since thousands of years. He paints a stark picture of the condition in which these people live – “the outcastes' colony was a group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows under the shadow both of the town and cantonment but outside their boundaries and separate from them. They lived the scavengers, the leather-workers, the washer-men, the barbers, the water-carriers, the grass-cutters and other outcasts from Hindu society” (Anand 6).

Anand demonstrates the idea of colonialism and caste discrimination through the eyes of Bakha. E.M. Forster describes him in the Preface to the novel: “... Even his physique is distinctive; we can recognize his broad intelligent face, graceful torso and he does his nasty job on steps out in artillery boots in hope of a pleasant walk through the city with a paper packet of cheap sweets in his hand” (Forster 2). The novel begins with an autumn morning in Bakha's life. He is in bed, half-awake “covered by a worn out greasy blanket, on a faded blue carpet which was spread on the floor, in a corner of the cave-like, dingy, dark, one-roomed mud house (Anand 10). The morning abuses start his day and he is welcomed by his father and is forced to clean the latrines with a brush and a basket. Bakha comes out of his reverie as he hears the shout : “Ohe, Bakha ! Ohe, Bakha ! Oh, scoundrel of a sweeper's son. Come and clean a latrine for me! (Anand 15) When Bakha goes to the streets for sweeping, unfortunately, he touches a Hindu merchant, who, in turn slaps him, alleging that his touch had polluted him – “you son of a bitch why don't you call, you swine, and announce your approach! Do you know you have touched and defiled me ?” (Anand 51) Anand thus demonstrated the idea of colonialism through this incident. For the first time in his life, Bakha is made aware of his status as an untouchable. The cruelty and orthodoxy of the Hindus is thus sharply focused.

We witness the worst situation of Bakha in the streets of Bulandshahr. With his own money he buys 'jelebis' from the sweets shop but the owner of the shop has thrown it at him, as if he was a street dog, in belief that by direct touch of untouchable would be defiled. E.M. Forster comments on this aspect : “The untouchable in this case is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free, but the sweeper is bound forever, born into a state from

which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and consolations of his religion (Forster 7). We also come across an instance when Bakha's sister Sohini was sexually assaulted by Pandit Kali Nath who called her to clean the courtyard of his house. He was attracted to her youthful beauty and tried to touch her but when Sohini shouted the Pandit turned the situation by claiming that he was touched by an untouchable and puts the blame entirely on Sohini. Here we see that Mulk Raj Anand had brought to limelight the artificiality and hypocrisy of the upper caste men especially men like Pandit Nath who preaches good things in life but is himself corrupted to the core.

We also notice the submissive nature of Bakha's father Lakha as a symbol of passive submission to the exploitation by the higher castes. He represents the forced tradition, orthodoxy and conservatism. He believes that his birth in the lower caste is the result of their sins committed by him in the previous birth. This ideology makes him a passive supporter of injustice and thus "othered". His speech – "They are superiors. One word of theirs is sufficient against all that we might say before the police," justifies the same. Bakha worked in the barracks of British regiment for some years and was "caught by the glamour of white man's life." Perhaps the psychology behind Bakha's acceptance of white man's culture and system may be his desire to beat his oppressors at their own game. "In Bakha's scale of values, the White Sahib is far superior to a caste Hindu and so in his land of the heart's desire, he would like to be not a caste Hindu but a White Sahib" (Anand 34). Anand feels that somehow Hindu religion is itself responsible for this social discrimination. He condemns the temples for being the instruments of exploitation. While going to the temple, Bakha feels, "the temple seemed to advance towards him like a monster" (Anand 82). He is a child of twentieth century and eager to accept modern way of dressing as "he has secure a pair of old boots; he would, if he could, like to look the white foreigner and so be in the fashion" (Iyenger 54).

Mulk Raj Anand's works give an immediate visualization of B. R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi's ideology. In fact, Anand is a great admirer of Gandhi and Ambedkar. Anand himself has observed as "The connection between my life and my writings is more intimate than in any other novelists. I write as I like. My life is my message" (Anand 95). Eventually we have to acknowledge the truth that, Mulk Raj Anand came under the influence of Gandhi. Gandhi comments that Untouchability is the "greatest blot on Hinduism" and regards it 'satanic' to think that Hinduism is born as an untouchable.

## Conclusion

The primary concern of Post-Colonial Literature is to demonstrate the consequences of the domination or colonization. In the novel Mulk Raj Anand vehemently traces out the significant consequences, after the Hindu domination over the untouchables. It is a pathetic plight of untouchables who are subjected to inimitable social indignities, "only because of their lowly birth." The novel has a tragic beauty of its own. The will to revolt and sheer impossibility of successfully doing so under the circumstances constitute the basic tension in the novel. Ultimately, we notice that the theory of post colonialism is the most prevalent subject matter in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and simultaneously we have to agree that this novel establishes post colonialism in the significant manner.

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# **'SATAN AND HIS HELL' AS SHOWN IN *PARADISE LOST* AND *THE INFERNO* : A CONTRAST BETWEEN MILTON'S AND DANTE'S 'HELL' AND 'SATAN'**

**Anyaja Mondal, Semester VI, 2021**

## **Introduction**

Milton's *Paradise Lost* is considered by many scholars as one of the very prominent works of English Literature. It tells the biblical story 'Of Man's first disobedience' and by extension, of all humanity, in a language that is a supreme achievement of rhythm and sound. The twelve-book structure, the technique of beginning in medias res, the invocation of the muse and the use of the epic question are all classically inspired; although the subject matter is distinctly Christian. The main characters are God, Lucifer, Adam and Eve. Much has been written about Milton's powerful and sympathetic characterization of Satan. His detailing of Satan and his Hell has given a whole new dimension to the piece.

In Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*, the poet and the pilgrim Dante embarks on a spiritual journey. Led by the soul of the Roman poet Virgil, Dante travels down through the nine circles of Hell and witnesses the punishments eternally suffered by the souls of deceased sinners. The nine circles of hell appear vastly different from John Milton's design of it, whereas both their Satans carry only faint familiarity between them. Despite being different from each other, both these works have a few uncanny similarities between them.

'Satan and his Hell' as shown in *Paradise Lost* and *The Inferno* :

The two epics, *The Divine Comedy* by Dante and *Paradise Lost* by Milton were written about the Biblical hell and its keeper : Satan. Both these authors had different views about what hell and Satan constituted.

Milton portrayed Satan as the Archangel of God, Lucifer, who later on turned out to be the 'infernal serpent'. The devil believed that he was equal to the omnipotent Lord, and wanted to be greater than him and finally rule Paradise. Whereas, in retaliation to his revolt, the Lord banished him with His thunder to Hell where 'bottomless perdition' awaited him.

Milton's description of Satan's appearance is interesting. Since he used to be an angel, he still had wings, his eyes were ablaze and he had a scaly skin. To quote Milton, he says,

'With head up-lift above the wave, and eyes  
That sparkling blazed, his other parts besides  
Prone on the flood, extended long and large  
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge  
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,

Titanian, or Earth-born, that warned on Jove,  
Briareos or Typhon, whom the Den  
By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast  
Leviathan, which God of all his works'

A contrasting view of Satan was written in Dante's *The Inferno*. Satan is sketched here as a slimy, puss filled demon. He has three heads, which is attached to his body. Inside each of the three mouths are the souls of people, three notorious betrayers – Judas, Brutus and Cassius simultaneously being chewed. He details Satan's size saying,

'Emperor of the Realm of Woe stood forth  
out of the ice from midway up his breast;  
and I compare more closely with a Giant,  
than merely with his arms the Giants do;  
consider now how great that whole must be,  
that with such parts as these may be compared.'

Dante also tells his readers about the wings that cause the wind, and the wind causes the freezing temperatures. However, Milton's Satan is not numb and frozen, instead he begins to speak of his own motivations for his actions, giving him more complexity as a character than Satan in *Inferno*. On one hand is Dante's Satan who is mostly visually symbolic and on the other is the Satan by Milton who is a realized character within the work. As Fowlie notes, Dante 'avoids any attempt to dramatize the story of Lucifer or to make him into a character as Milton does in *Paradise Lost*'. Instead of weeping, as Dante's Satan does, Milton's Satan remains boastful even after being banished from heaven. Both Dante and Milton's view follow the *Genesis* and symbolizes Satan as a betrayer, and they both share the detail that Satan was physically hurled from Heaven. They are most different when it comes to how each writer sketches the conscience of Satan. With Dante, it is implied but not dramatized. Whereas, Milton's Satan is a lot more dynamic and complex; he has his voice and motivation for his actions.

Both Dante and Milton described the geography of Hell, but Dante's ultra-detailed vision is far more prominent in popular literature. Milton's map of Hell is a diagram of the greater cosmos, showing Satan's journey, which does not tip the scales. In fairness, the geography of Hell was never the focus of *Paradise Lost*, and was only covered in the broadest of strokes.

Dante's Hell, on the hand is obsessively detailed, with punishments exquisitely described across nine circles and dozens of bolgia (pouches). The upper levels of the *Inferno* hold sinners guilty of a lack of control, while the lower levels are reserved for the purposefully sinful. There are nine such circles designed by Dante in his Hell.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton describes the breath-taking Infernal Capital Pandemonium, being built in a single day. Though Milton was aware of the Renaissance concept that heaven and hell are no specific topographical locals, but states of the mind itself, he clings to the medieval concept of hell having topographical entry. He presents Hell as a place made for the eternal punishment of the fallen



angels. The medieval notion that the flame of Hell gives no light is derived by Milton, and it instigates that the damned and the doomed are deprived of the sight of God, who is the form of light. Dante describes Inferno with freezing temperature whereas Milton's Hell is always burning. C. S. Lewis observes that Milton's description of Hell is never concrete, there being no definition of such things that define it, such as the size of the Hell, the exact nature of its tortures or the degree of heat that Satan feels. It should always be remembered that Milton's graphic description of Hell intensifies the tragic intensity and causes an overwhelming effect in the reader.

## Conclusion

Both *Paradise Lost* and *Divine Comedy* are very prominent epic poems in English Literature. The themes of the both these compositions rely mainly on classical and Biblical allusions. Therefore, they have many familiar characters, situations and settings close to each other. Along with the similarities, there are also certain dissimilarities which can be plotted in a neat way. Very flexible and dynamic themes have been used in both the works; which can be clearly understood from the intricate but unique descriptions of 'Hell' and 'Satan' in both the texts.

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# **TINTIN IN THE CONGO AND CHANDER PAHAR : A STUDY ON THE DEPICTION OF AFRICA**

**Shatabdi Roy, Semester VI, 2021**

The image of Africa that most European writers portrayed in the nineteenth century was that of chaos and barbarity. This supposedly “Dark Continent” was not enlightened by the light of Western civilization, culture and education. They were shown to lack intelligence and morality. Due to the negative depiction of Africa, the Westerners started to believe that it was the “white man's burden” to civilize these barbaric people. While in *Chander Pahar*, Africa has been shown as a mysterious land with life and places still waiting to be discovered. Apart from the outsider's view into the continent of Africa, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has shown us Africa from the point of view of an African. Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* depicted African slavery in the hands of European colonialists. However, when it comes to Children's Literature Africa will never fail to be the land of Romance, mystery, uncharted territories occupied by unknown tribes. The mystery of Africa has always been a major attraction for children towards adventure. This paper compares *Tintin in the Congo* with *Chander Pahar* and analyses both of these stories critically from many perspectives, to unearth the secrets which children are not meant to discover.

Georges Prosper Remi's, popularly known by his pen name Hergé, *Tintin au Congo*, the second volume of *The Adventures of Tintin* was first published in French in the year 1931 in black and white and later in 1946, the coloured and revised version was published.

*Chander Pahar* is a novel written in the year 1937 by the Bengali author Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay. The book was later translated into English and is called *The Mountain of the Moon*. The beauty of nature is described with great detail in this novel. The author does not only show us the delicateness and softness, but has also admired the ferocity of nature. He has compared something as great as an erupting volcano with something as trivial as a *kulfi*. This violent beauty of nature fills Shankar and Alvarez with awe and admiration and thus highlights his majestic professionalism as an author.

*Chander Pahar* is a story about a young man, Shankar Roy Chowdhury, whose fate takes him to a journey across Africa. In the beginning of the novel, we see him working alongside the black skinned labourers without getting disrupted by any racial thoughts. Being a brown skinned individual and a prey to colonialism himself, he feels oneness with his colleagues.

Tintin, the protagonist of the series *The Adventures of Tintin*, is a Belgian journalist of *Le Petit Vingtième*. In the graphic narrative, *Tintin in the Congo*, Tintin is shown to visit the African country of Congo. In the book, all servants are black and speak in broken English showing that they are

uneducated. In the black and white version of the book, the servant showing Tintin his cabin carries his bag and addresses him as “MASTER”. The revised and coloured version shows Tintin carrying his own briefcase.

All the people of Africa in this comic have ape-like features. Their faces are so similar that it is hard to distinguish one from another. They also cannot stand upright like the white-skinned people but are shown stooping. Similar descriptions of the natives of Africa can be seen in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. He depicts them as “creatures” who cannot be distinguished from each other, while the Europeans are described with great detail : “One of these creatures rose to his hands and knees and went off on all fours towards the river to drink.” (Conrad 26)

When Snowy's tail becomes septic, the doctor asks a black-skinned ship's carpenter to get his tools for him. The man, being ignorant brings tools for carpentry and not those used for an operation. Snowy almost drowns; to help him, a black servant in the ship throws a life belt towards him which hits him, while brave Tintin jumps into the water, unarmed, to fight against sharks and save him.

When Tintin arrives in Africa, we can see that all the natives of the land know him and treat him like a celebrity. They seem to be royalty to them when they shout: “LONG LIVE TINTIN!” “LONG LIVE SNOWY !” (Hergé9)

In *Tintin in the Congo*, the people are often referred to by their skin-colour. The carpenter of the ship is referred to as “THAT BLACK” and Coco is often called as a “LITTLE BLACK BOY” while the people refer to Tintin as the “WHITE MASTER”. While Alvarez in *Chander Pahar* refers to Shankar as his son even though Shankar is brown-skinned. The author has shown us a friendship the does not succumb to racial differences.

The train shown in the comic breaks down on coming in contact with Tintin's car. He refers to the train as “YOUR ROTTEN LITTLE ENGINE” (20);even Snowy calls it a “ROTTEN LITTLE THING” (20). Although it was Tintin who drove into the railway track and told the people that he would fix their engine, he makes the natives of the place work. Even Snowy, a dog, orders them : “COME ON, YOU LAZY BUNCH, GET WORKING...” (20).

The army of the Ostrogoths are not feared by Tintin. He goes to fight them alone. Their ruler is confident that they will defeat the Ba Baoro'm as his army is trained and equipped just like the European army. But even though these men consider themselves to be above the other tribe, they believe in superstitions thus showing their actual backwardness which cannot be removed through physical strength and war strategy. When they fail to understand Tintin's use of electro-magnet, they accept defeat and sing praises of him.

The missionaries came from the colonialist country to establish schools, hospitals and chapels in the place which was but a “BUSH”. Tintin, in the school teaches the children that there country is Belgium and not Congo. Later, in the revised version this changes to a simple math problem.

In *Chander Pahar*, Shankar, coming from the village of a colonized country, was filled with awe at the sight of an aeroplane that he has only seen pictures of in books. He describes the city of Salisbury as Europe-like with its big houses, banks, hotels, shops, pitched wide roads and electric trams.

There is shown plenty of violence toward wildlife through game hunting in *Tintin in the Congo*. While Coco puts up the tent, Tintin goes hunting and kills fifteen antelope instead of one and says, “ANYWAY, WE’LL HAVE FRESH MEAT THIS EVENING!...” (16). To save Snowy from a monkey he says that he has to shoot carefully lest he hurts him instead of the monkey. But later, he does not hesitate to kill another monkey to use his skin and save Snowy. Even the colonialist’s dog is braver than the lion who fears him after the dog attacks him. When Tintin fails to kill the rhinoceros with his rifle, he calls it a “MONSTER” because his bullets fail to penetrate its skin. He then bore a hole into its hide and inserts a stick of dynamite. But this was too much for the Scandinavian publishers and they demanded that the author substitute it with an alternative page.

The animals, in *Chander Pahar*, are killed or harmed solely for the purpose of survival and not as a sport. They killed lions and other ferocious wild animals to protect themselves. They killed baboons and other small animals so that they could consume them and stay alive. When Shankar sees a lion closely for the first time, he describes it as something majestic. He is amazed by its magnificence.

The exoticism of Africa has been emphasized in this novel. It speaks about the Rhodesian monster referred to as 'bunip'. This mythical creature is considered to be a demigod protecting gold, silver and the riches of the land. The monster is not shown in the novel but Alvarez and many others have died confronting it. It has three-toed feet and is not afraid of fire like the other animals. It is intelligent and possesses the capacity to reason. In a reply to Shankar's letter about this strange animal, the South Rhodesian Museum's curator, J. G. Fitzgerald, wrote that it was nothing but a species of anthropoid ape. They are closely related to gorilla but are greater in size. In the letter by the author, he says, “...the mentioned myth of the Rhodesian monster and the bunip in Central African Richtersveldt mountain range is still prevalent in many forest areas of the Zululand.” (Bandopadhyay, translation mine, 176)

The two texts dealt with in this paper are by two authors who lived miles apart. While Hergé, a Belgian cartoonist belonged to the nation of the colonizers, Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay belonged from the colonized country, India. Therefore the two books are written with two different perspectives, that of the colonizer's and the colonized. While Tintin has the basic 'colonizer' instinct to perceive the Africans as inferiors and thinks of the people as barbaric, needing to be civilized; Shankar goes into the vast wilderness of Africa in search of an adventure. He sees them to be of his kind, that is, human beings. However, both of these stories are masterpieces of their own kind, and their depiction of the land of Africa nonetheless Romantic.

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# THEMES AND SIMILARITIES IN MAHESH DATTANI'S PLAYS *TARA AND DANCE LIKE A MAN*

Ushasi Sarkar, Semester IV, 2021

## Introduction

The title of the play *Dance Like a Man* mainly focuses on whether a man can dance or not. It's a man's struggle for freedom and happiness under the weight of tradition, cultural frame of gender and repressed desire. It also explores issues like stereotypes and conflicting demands of marriage and career.

Whereas in the play *Tara*, Dattani questions the patriarchal society the way it treats the children of the same womb in two different ways which slowly leads to their emotional separation which grew stronger. It comments on the predicament of woman in the past, reflects the status of women in the present and dramatizes the complexities of social set up.

Gender is something inseparable from the structure of Indian society and considered as a universal phenomenon. It was believed for long ages that the different roles, status and characteristics assigned to men and women in society are determined by sex, and that they are natural, therefore cannot be changed. Gender is often considered to be a grammatical commodity as it exists in most languages and divides up objects into masculine, feminine and neuter.

In *Dance Like a Man* contemporary Indian societal scene is reflecting in the aspirations of a middle class South Indian couple who by their choice of profession as dancers, reflect the past and present Indian culture; identities and gender roles. Similarly, *Tara* has two sides to it with respect to the time frame- the past and the present and also reflects the virtual and real. This play is an exhortation to the society to shed age old prejudice against woman and have a progressive look.

The play *Dance Like a Man* is considered as an exposition of an important question on the very constitute of a man's identity in terms of sexuality, as the head of the family and as an artist. In *Tara*, Tara tells Chandan her conjoined brother that their twin form stands for two sides of the same concept – for instance “gender.” And mostly how man and woman complement each other and where each is incomplete without the other (rukhsa).

The society considers a woman's beauty above all things; her exterior beauty judges her capability and not her talent or career. Tara is a talented dancer, which would not please her mother rather, as per Biswas his mother would acknowledge her cooking skill and the way she dresses – “She'll even check to see how far your legs are tanned...mini skirts or not !” (Dattani 12). Quite similarly Bharti explains that when Tara would grow up to become a lady, society won't accept her the way she is even though she proves to be witty and intelligent.

Innocent Jairaj, by his obstinate father made himself think he was worthless, thus he ended up lowering his self-esteem and confidence which he blamed on his wife. The same issue of marginalised women is seen where Patel was more concerned about Chandan's future over Tara's.

Jairaj's and Ratna's mind caught between their present self and young self, when Amritlal refused Jairaj to dance. Similarly, Chandan's guilt dominated his personality in order to deny that he created his alter ego – Dan, which caused another divide in his self. The identity of the diaspora caught between his native culture and foreign cultures as signified by Chandan and Dan. So, the flashback technique is used in both the plays to show the past.

Both the plays put a question on a man's identity and his sexuality. Gender plays a specific role for Jairaj, as to whether a man should dance and for Tara whether a girl should be preferred over a boy. It also brings in light the patriarchal society; Chandan was scolded by Patel because he was helping his mother to knit instead of studying or accompanying him to office, because his father feared that he would become woman like under his mothers' influence. "I am disappointed in you...see you rotting at home" (Dattani 31).

When speaking about gender; society plays a very important role and moreover holds an important position in everyone's life. In one case, the question is whether the society should accept a man dancing. And in *Tara*; Roopa who acts as a society brings in the thought that, should physically challenged children be accepted? Where the male child always gets the preference over the female child, Chandan was preferred over Tara. This applied to both, his life as also his future career and in the other instance, Jiaraj who was not granted his choice as a dancer had to carry the burden of regret throughout his life.

Along with the gender binary, there is also a strong undertone of caste binary (grin). Since Bharti and Patel both belonged to different castes, Patel's father didn't approve of their wedding so Patel had to leave his parents' house to get married. Even Viswas feared the consequences of marrying an outcaste, "My father almost died when I told him I'm marrying outside the caste...." (Dattani 6). Lata agreed to marry Viswas on the condition that she would be allowed to dance after their wedding.

Another major similarity observed with both the couple is that; at one end Jairaj, Ratna and Patel, Bharti were blessed with two children but lost one child – Shankar and Tara respectively.

Dattani's playscript casts its focus entirely on the urban space yet rooted in the dynamics of domestic setup. Identically, both the plays are set in the heart of the city; *Dance Like a Man* in Chennai and *Tara* in Bangalore.

The main theme of both the plays is gender discrimination in a society, the injustice done only on the term of gender and the preference given to a male child over a female in an Indian family. The play presents the deep-rooted patriarchal system in the society where women act as a key in the hands of patriarchy. But one has to remember God created human and human created gender hence, a successful life is possible only when one learns to give importance to both aspects, masculine and feminine.

Hence, *Dance Like a Man* is a play that does not present the character as pure White or Black but it shows their different shades in all possibilities. Whereas in the play *Tara*, Dattani questions patriarchal society that treats the children of the same womb in two different ways.

### Conclusion

Dattani makes abundant use of Indian traditions and juxtaposes them with contemporary problems of India's new generation. He raises these social concerns to such a higher level that they touch the human chords and emanates love, happiness while at the same time revealing identity crisis, feeling of self-guilt and remorse etc.

The theme of both the plays is dealt with tradition, relationship, career, and society. The plays are quite successful in portraying the hollowness of life and the way one is treated in society where the word "gender" play a very important role in the crux of life.

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# ACCEPTANCE OF THE PATRIARCHAL FATE BY WOMEN IN THOMAS HARDY'S *THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE*

Shatabdi Roy, Semester VI, 2021

A single man of a large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls !  
(Austen 3)

Young girls in the Victorian era needed to be learned in artistic talents, different languages like French and Latin and anything that would render them eligible for a well-established husband. Kathryn Hughes writes in her article, 'Gender Roles in the Nineteenth Century', "As Miss Bingley emphasizes, it was important for a well-educated girl to soften her erudition with a graceful and feminine manner. No-one wanted to be called a 'blue-stocking', the name given to women who had devoted themselves too enthusiastically to intellectual pursuits." Once married, the control of everything the women originally owned would go to their husbands. In England, before the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, a divorce could only be gained through a complicated process. While a man could divorce a woman on simple grounds of adultery, a woman was forced to show proof of cruelty and infidelity. While the husband could claim damages, the wife could not.

Critics have judged the female characterisation by Hardy in many ways. While some think that he has harshly punished women for going against the set social behavioural codes, many others believe him to be among the first feminists as he has written about several issues like illegitimacy, adultery, rape, premarital physical relations, which were a taboo.

In Hardy's novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, one comes across three major female characters- Susan, Elizabeth-Jane and Lucetta. Right at the beginning of the novel we see how a drunken Henchard sells his wife off to another man. Susan, although hurt, leaves with the sailor, Newson. Later in the novel when young Elizabeth-Jane and her mother think that Newson has passed away, she returns to her former husband and says :

I thought I owed him faithfulness to the end of one of our lives- foolishly I believed there was something solemn and binding in the bargain; I thought that even in honour I dared not desert him when he had paid so much for me in good faith. (Hardy 71)

In *Woman*, Harriet Martineau writes comparing women and slaves, "Her case differs from that of the slave, as to the principle, just so far as this; that the indulgence is large and universal, instead of petty and capricious. In both cases, justice is denied on no better plea than the right of the strongest. In both cases, the acquiescence of the many, and the burning discontent of the few, of the oppressed testify, the one to the actual degradation of the class, and the other to its fitness for the enjoyment of human rights."

On Elizabeth-Jane's mother's death Henchard finds out the truth about his daughter. Susan leaves the letter to be opened on her wedding day as she fears that her husband might not accept them if he finds out the truth.

To people like Henchard, helping the commoners was disgraceful. When he sees Elizabeth-Jane helping Nance, he says,

"Why do you lower yourself so confoundedly ?" He said with suppressed passion.

"Haven't I told you o't fifty times ? Hey ? Making yourself drudge for a common workwoman of such a character as hers! Why, ye'll disgrace me to the dust !" (130)

Elizabeth-Jane always takes the responsibility of her father's behaviour towards her. When she tells Lucetta about their disagreement, she says :

"Perhaps you were to blame," suggested the stranger.

"I was- in many ways," sighed the meek Elizabeth. "I swept up the coals when the servants ought to have done it; and I said I was leery- and he was angry with me. (136)

Although Lucetta loved Donald Farfrae, she married him in a hurry as she did not want to marry Henchard and feared that he might tell Farfrae of their previous relationship before she could marry him,

"It was like this," she explained, with tears in her eyes and quavers in her voice; "don't – don't be cruel ! I loved him so much, and I thought you might tell him of the past- and that grieved me ! And then, when I had promised you, I learnt of the rumour that you had- sold your first wife at a fair like a horse or cow! How could I keep my promise after hearing that ? I could not risk myself in your hands; it would have been letting myself down to take your name after such a scandal. But I knew I should lose Donald if I did not secure him at once- for you would carry out your threat of telling him of our former acquaintance, as long as there was a chance of keeping me for yourself by doing so. But you will not do so now, will you, Michael ? for it is too late to separate us." (211)

In the year 1392, Chaucer wrote about Alyson in *The Canterbury Tales*, who has been married five times and is looking for a sixth husband. She argues that even though being a nun is spiritually uplifting, marrying is also fulfilling God's commandment subverting the social norms of the time which were patriarchal in nature. Shakespeare's women- Portia, Cleopatra, and Lady Macbeth have immense strength of character even though the plays were written in late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Christina Rossetti in her 1859 poem, *Goblin Market* explores the forbidden female sexuality.

Whenever Hardy's female characters deviate from a socially acceptable path, the result is disastrous. Fate seems to play an important role as the characters believe that their downfall is of supernatural origin because of their past "sin". Like Tess in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Susan and Lucetta know that they should confess their "sins" to their loving husbands but do not do so as they

fear it would jeopardise their future happiness. According to Sarah Nicholson, "In Hardy's novels, as may be expected, women who have extra-marital sex suffer an early death. Almost without exception, Hardy heroines who taste the forbidden fruit come to a sticky end, even when there is some ambiguity about their crimes...Lucetta fornicates with Henchard; the skimmity-ride ridiculing their coupling leads to her death. Susan, Henchard's wife, naively accepts being sold to Newson and dies after remarriage to Henchard." (31)

In as early as 1529, Henricus Cornelius Agrippa writes in his *Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex*, that woman was created as much superior to man as the name that she received was superior to his. For, Adam means earth, but Eve translates to life. He argues that woman was the ultimate creation and it is unreasonable to think that God will complete his creation with something imperfect. He writes further that we have sinned in Adam, as he ate the fruit knowingly, and not in Eve, who was deceived by the devil. Moreover, it was to the man that the fruit from the tree of knowledge had been forbidden, and not to the woman who was yet unborn. God, from the beginning, wished her to be free. He notes that it is the excessive tyranny of men and not the laws of nature that has restrained women through unjust laws and reduced her to domestic chores and upbringing of children.

In the year 1776, Abigail Adams writes letters to her husband John Adams, who was then a delegate to the Continental Congress, urging him to "remember the ladies". In 1996, Levin calls her the "colonial foremother of the twentieth-centuryfeminist movement ... [and] America's first suffragette, who championed both the rights of women and the abolishment of slavery".

With reference to his predecessors, Hardy was rather inconsiderate and unsympathetic towards his female characters. Although his women tried to be progressive, Hardy immediately shut them off and made the readers feel a cold chill which was associated with the decisions of the characters. In spite of these facts, Hardy addressed certain social injustices towards women, which makes some critics admire him.

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# TRAVERSING POST-WAR AMERICA AND THE GENESIS OF THE BEAT MOVEMENT THROUGH *HOWL*

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## **Abstract**

"We are blind and live our lives out in blindness. Poets are damned but they are not blind, they see with the eyes of the angels" (William Carlos Williams). An era of capitalism, exploitation, repression and subjugation, the 50s were a period when the axioms of the upright in America were belief in God, family, and the manifestly benevolent international ambitions of the nation. "Americans still conceived of themselves as innocent democratic warriors, protectors of a holy chalice that contained a magic elixir of progress in technology, cleanliness and order" (Julie Aelbrecht, *Classical myth in Allen Ginsberg's Howl*). It was amidst this traditionalist and bourgeois framework that there transpired the birth of a new generation- of people, who bonded for they saw in each other the potential of the American youth that could exist beyond the conformist enclosures of post-World War II America. They were the Beats, who resisted internal constraints, assaulted external boundaries and authorities, and sought to expunge harmful gaps between inner and outer, self and power, experience and expression, and being and doing. A pioneering member of the beat generation and one who, with others, to all intents and purposes spawned the movement, is of course, Allen Ginsberg.

**Keywords :** 1950s America, Beat Generation, Allen Ginsberg

## **Introduction**

"I refuse to give up my obsession  
America stop pushing I know what I'm doing  
America, the plum blossoms are falling."

Possibly one of the most scathing critical portrayals of the 1950s American society, these few lines from *America* (1956) by Beat Generation pioneer Allen Ginsberg seems to consolidate the ideas of rage and collective apprehension that were adrift at a time of great discord in a war-drained nation. Ironically and interestingly, it was the post-war era, a time which was supposed to be about nothing but glorious homecoming that the Beats became a symbol for withdrawal and protest against conformist society, giving voice to the nagging sense of alienation felt by the American citizen.

Historically, the WWII era was a draining time economically, socially and culturally, as all wars are. Amidst these conditions arose poets with a strong faith in American democracy, perhaps partly due to the indoctrinated belief in American prepotency. The literature was optimistic, patriotic and hopeful for the future that was to soon arrive. Soon, once the war ended, it was finally a time of

euphoria, celebration, reuniting families and liberation. The beliefs in everlasting global peace were strengthened and the love for the Land of Dreams only grew.

Yet, as time passed, the dark sides of the war began to reveal themselves in the form of the disastrous consequences of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the horrors of the Holocaust in Germany and soon the emergence of the Cold War era. What was supposed to be a time of ecstasy, quickly devolved into a stark disillusionment with society. The dark sides of humanity having revealed themselves, the poets were busy once again, albeit this time to portray quite the opposites of what had been reflected by the society prior to the end of the War. A sense of existential frustration pervaded the air, but the worst was far from over.

The American government was desperate to preserve the long-awaited peace that had finally been achieved in the nation and were prepared to remove any barriers of radical thinking. Writers and artists were regularly jailed, with Dylan Thomas and Arthur Miller being alarmingly investigated by the FBI before being offered visas. The American institutions slithered a branch of inquisition and surveillance into every artistic cohort that seemed to sparkle with ideas of innovation. Authors themselves, including W.H Auden, preached against innovation at a time and age when conformity was apparently a necessity. Fuelled by McCarthyism, the anxiety and panic of the 'other' existing somewhere amidst genteel society seemed to drive an entire generation of elected officials to paranoia.

Added to this was the emergence of a new class of American millionaires, a group that was termed as the “Babylonian Plutocracy” (Raskin, 5) by Tennessee Williams. Writers were underpaid and regularly struggled to survive. Amidst these circumstances, America continually turned towards the commercialisation of anything that could possibly have a market. And as American culture turned increasingly commercial, the elite led society into the throes of mind- numbing conformity. The few who dared to write independently with no institutional ties were regarded as dangerous renegades. Kerouac himself wasn't published for five years due to his innovative and inimitable style and content, which came across as a threat to a society still reeling under the effects of the War.

In the academic world, the predecessors of the Beats such as T. S Eliot and Ezra Pound were indeed modernist in their ironic texture yet they were formal in their insistence on specific cadence, rhythm and metre. Succeeding generations chose to turn away from the dignity of the

Metaphysicals and chose to turn to more romantic and prosaic models, as is evident in the work of Walt Whitman and William Carlos Williams. Robert Lowell led the way to colloquial 'confessional poetry' in the aftermath.

Under these circumstances, Allen Ginsberg stepped foot into the poetry scene of San Francisco, California. As Raskin says, Ginsberg entered “a world that was preoccupied with atomic bombs, hydrogen bombs, blonde bombshells, and the classified secrets of the bomb— almost everything but poetical bombs” (Raskin, 3). Over the years, along with fellow-pioneers William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac, the Beats advocated for personal release, from conventionality and

conformity, encouraging purification and illumination through reaching a heightened state of consciousness through jazz, drugs and sex. Academically, they intended to liberate poetry from preciousness, instead choosing to harp upon the immediacy and chaos of life, sprinkled with the obscene.

When Ginsberg first performed *Howl* at the Six Poets at Six Gallery reading at San Francisco, he was a fretful, unpublished poet approaching his thirtieth birthday and with a nagging sense that time was running out. The poet Gary Snyder predicted that the night would be a “Poetickall bombshell” and that is exactly what happened- Ginsberg's poem was an incantatory epic, emotionally and sexually explicit and intent on exploding the anxieties of the atomic age. No one, especially not Ginsberg himself, could ever have imagined the impact this particular poem would have on his life, and on the world as a whole; it helped jump start the counter-cultural revolutions of the next decade and its author was hailed as the voice of the beat generation. In the words of Greil Marcus, “If ‘Howl’ is a catalog of flame outs and collapses, it is ecstatic in its lamentation. And that is the basic measure of its strength : it is a list of . . . leprous epiphanies as redoubtable as Homer's catalog of ships, but rather than stopping at that, it seizes the opportunity to realize all the botched dreams it enumerates. It envisions every broken vision, supplies the skeleton key that reveals the genius of every torrent of babble, reconstitutes every page of scribble that looks like gibberish the next morning.” (Marcus, *Classic Beat*).

The theme of *Howl* is the struggle of the individual in the face of the crushing conformity that perfused post World War II America. Its references, however, are personal, mostly the incidents drawn from Ginsberg's life as a student and a penurious poet, as well as the lives of his friends and acquaintances- the “angel-headed hipsters” (Ginsberg 25) of the poem. United States in the 1950s was a place where the most dominant element of the decade was the homogenized society with its white, male, heterosexual, middle class and Eurocentric ideals, a culture that was propagated through the increasingly popular medium of television.

Dedicated to Carl Solomon, a writer whom Ginsberg met in the waiting room of the New York state psychiatric institute, *Howl* concerns itself with the issue of mental illness, and its frequent result in poverty, a sentiment especially present in the famous first line – “I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked” (Ginsberg 25). Considered by society to be insane and therefore unfit for inclusion in mainstream art and literature, “poverty and tatters” (Ginsberg 25) is the state in which poets and artists existed.

The beats were a generation unflinching in the face of discussing their sexual orientations or their sex lives; “they wrote about sex as inevitably as Shelley did eternity” (Stimpson 374). They never held back from that which the conformist society of the age considered scandalous; in letters, journals, memoirs, essays, fiction and poetry, they expressed their preferences – be it celibacy, heterosexuality, bisexuality or homosexuality. Their confessions- that Ginsberg slept with Burroughs, Cassady, Peter Orlovsky and on occasion even with Kerouac, and that Kerouac and Cassady shared Cassady's wife Carolyn- are public knowledge now. A true work of the beat era, *Howl* openly

discusses Ginsberg's homosexuality, wherein he talks about sex as a way to lift people out of the spiritual muck created as a result of capitalism and wealth in America. Drugs too, are used to represent an expanded consciousness, freedom, and a kind of spirituality unshackled from religious dogma- from 'heroin' to 'peyote', the beats 'purgatoried their torsos'(Ginsberg 25), seeking a deeper vision beyond what traditional religions and mores allow.

In an era when liberal artists, scholars, writers and poets were reeling from groundless accusations of espionage amongst their peers and there prevailed the widespread fear of anything but mainstream art, *Howl* was a raging manifesto against the repression of those who wanted to create true art, seek enlightenment, and suffered for wanting to express themselves freely. The shadow of the Korean war and the ever-present spectre of American capitalism and industrialisation finds representation in the figure of Moloch – the “sphinx of cement and aluminum” who “ate up their brains of imagination”, the “Moloch whose mind is pure machinery ! Moloch whose blood is running money” (Ginsberg 29), bringing together the evils of the oversized wealth of the rich at the expense of the working class, the children and the elderly and the forced enlistment in the military to fight wars that made no sense. The Moloch of the Hebrew bible, a Canaanite deity, one of the many gods the Israelites were forbidden to worship and whose worship entailed the act of child sacrifice, here emerges as a system that embraces everything, even the murderous judiciary- the “heavy judger of men” (Ginsberg 29) perhaps being a reference to the unfair trial and consequent execution of the Rosenbergs in 1953. We can almost taste Ginsberg's anger at society for having swallowed whatever is handed down by the authority – to him Moloch represents the greed and jealousy devouring society, and even he himself cannot be free from its grasp. An internal drag, Moloch keeps people from moving on, and destroys all possibility of happiness and spiritual fulfilment- we come to the realisation that the evils Ginsberg fights are so ingrained in the American society that he has to fight them not only outwardly but also inside his own psyche.

There being very little understanding of mental illness in 1950s America, the mentally ill found themselves desperately lonely and ostracized by a hypocritical society unwilling to embrace all its members. It is in the last part of *Howl* that Ginsberg addresses Carl Solomon directly, who, suffering from depression, was locked up in the “armedmadhouse” (Ginsberg 30) of a mental hospital, referred to here as 'Rockland'. In a 1959 radio interview, Ginsberg explained that the phrase 'I'm with you in Rockland' (Ginsberg 30) didn't mean that he was putting Solomon down. Instead, he was trying to say that it is, in fact, okay to have a mental illness. Rockland here, symbolizes the fact that physical walls, as those of mental institutions, serve as barriers to keep the mentally ill invisible, pointing out how necessary it is to collapse those walls and have compassion for fellow human beings - “the hospital illuminates itself imaginary walls collapse” (Ginsberg 30).

In May 1957, Officer Thomas Page and Officer Russell Woods from the Juvenile Division of the San Francisco Police Department arrested Shigeyoshi Murao who was an employee of City Lights Bookstore, when they had entered the store to buy a copy of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems*. City Lights Bookstore was owned by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who was also the publisher of



*Howl*. After Ferlinghetti returned to San Francisco, he surrendered. However, both Ferlinghetti and Murao were bailed out soon. The charges on Ferlinghetti were for the violation of obscenity laws by the publication of Ginsberg's *Howl*. This dug up an old issue of local censorship concern. Ginsberg's *Howl* rekindled this entire issue of juvenile delinquency and the discourse that whether exposure to these supposedly obscene texts had adverse effects on the youth.

A bizarre number of things were considered deviant, and were speculated to cause juvenile delinquency. Certain types of clothing were labeled as delinquent. Clothes like oversized jackets and "baggy, high-waist pants" were considered to make the wear look racially and culturally 'other' (Black 30). Narcotic use was an offense, punishable by law. The media started associating juveniles, narcotics and delinquency together. Comics that dealt with "crime, horror, and sexual content" were vehemently protested against (32), and were accused of being a cause of juvenile delinquency. Some authorities saw rock music as "the embodiment of juvenile delinquency" (32), and was pronounced illicit, savage, uncivilized and inappropriate. Despite an active production code, several motion pictures were suspected of propagating delinquent practices.

The trial of Ferlinghetti made California the heart of the entire juvenile delinquency discourse. He was tried in San Francisco Defense Court. The attorney prosecuting him, Ralph McIntosh, highlighted the use of sexually explicit statements like "fucked in the ass by saintly motorcyclists, and screamed with joy" (Ginsberg 26). He could gather witnesses such as David Kirk (a graduate student at Stanford University) and Gail Potter (who used to be a high school teacher), who declared *Howl* to be "worthless" (Black 35). However, Mark Schorer, the prolific Berkeley scholar, when asked to explain certain lines from the poem, said that it was foolish to translate and thereby question poetry.

On 3rd October 1957, Judge Hornup held Lawrence Ferlinghetti's right of publishing *Howl*, after carefully "formulating an opinion that was shaped in powerful, and sometimes contradictory, ways by conceptions of freedom during the Cold War" (36). The outcome was not only the victory of Constitutional law but also the victory of individual freedom. 1950s America witnessed, if we may put it that way, a sort of Renaissance, where in the end, art won.

With *Howl and Other Poems*, Allen Ginsberg paved the way for many future artists. A married man under the pseudonym of Donald Webster Cory wrote that the Beats were the voice that he sought even though the Beats were, perhaps, more dramatic than he would have liked (Stimpson 374). Ginsberg's poems and essays not only reflect the world around him, but also let us peek into the very soul of the man; the man who unwittingly changed literature for a multitude of people – artists or not – after him. His compassion for the people whom the society disowns is genuine because of his own personal experiences. His works fought not only for art but also for people – people who need affection and help. That is why, even so many years after the publication of *Howl*, it continues to be relevant in almost all parts of the world.

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# **FACULTY PAPERS**

# DESIRE AND PERFORMANCE : THE MORPHOLOGY OF FEMALE BODIES IN ZOFLOYA AND VILLETTE

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Writing ...is one of the extensions of the body. It is a kind of birth process in which an emission from the body repositions a portion of the body outside the already amorphous boundaries of the self...<sup>1</sup>

The above statement happens to be more than true in case of a handful of courageous and extremely creative women in the 18th and 19th century England, who achieved social recognition, economic security and mental emancipation in the creation of an authentic selfhood through writing. The social background of 18th and 19th century England makes one realise that as far as social construction of gender, the roles thrust on women and their economic and cultural status are concerned, women live the condition of artistic production differently from that of men. However, from about 1750 onwards, English women writers steadily infiltrated the literary market mainly as novelists. Charlotte Dacre and Charlotte Brontë belong to this group.

With *Zofloya*, or *The Moor* (1806), Dacre launched a steely – eyed intention to shock. A novel that featured as its heroine a murderous nymphomaniac who barter her body and soul to the devil disguised as a black servant had no dearth of audacious sensationalism.

The 19th century writer who gave the most passionate expression to the latent subversive message of women's psyche and its associated feeling of angst was Charlotte Brontë. *Villette* (1853) is a novel of subversive and shifting perspective.

According to Judith Butler, " Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being."<sup>2</sup> Laura Mulvey reinstates women's objectification in the patriarchal gender hierarchy. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), she describes woman's position "as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning".<sup>3</sup> Woman's entry into such a dominant scopophilic paradigm signifies her consignment to passivity: she is to be the beautiful object of contemplation, while her body finds itself thus eroticized for the male gaze, subjected to a paradoxical role of exhibition and chaste retreat in order to stimulate the sexual desire of the male subject. This gives birth to the confusion of 'me' and the 'Other within me' as women's most terrifying experience of themselves. Ambivalence in the nature of the I and the Other manifested in the morphology of female bodies in *Zfloya* and *Villette* make these two texts interesting studies in gender

and shift of power. The obsessive use of boundaries and barriers in these two novels betrays an impatience with limits. This brings in the concept of transgression, the most audacious form of gazing beyond in the quest for self.

In *Zofloya*, the struggle underlying female subjectivity dissolves boundaries between proper and improper, natural and unnatural. The heroine Victoria is a Faust figure, archetypal transgressor of the dividing line between the human and the superhuman. Bending on revenge for her mother's sexual transgression and her father's consequent death, Victoria wants to take it out against the world. Her primary weapon being her sexually attractive body, she uses it uninhibitedly to ensnare men and fulfil her mission. Victoria's other instrument is Zofloya, the black servant who is, literally, Satan in disguise. The submission of Victoria to the infernal agent through a barter of her body and soul is a conscious deal to achieve power and erotic transcendence.

After five years of uneventful married life, Victoria is all of a sudden roused from her apathy by a new passion with the arrival of her brother – in – law Henriquez and his Moorish servant Zofloya. Desire in her becomes collateral with power lust as she contemplates her husband's murder and in answer to her subconscious desire, Zofloya appears, ready to serve her.

In the figure of the Moor, the novel explores the most taboo of all human sexual desires in Romantic Era England, the passionate desire of a beautiful white woman for the black male body. Once a slave, Zofloya occupies the position of the tempter and Victoria gradually comes to look at him as an object of intense desire. Zofloya's body is consistently treated as spectacle, thus objectifying him for Victoria. As such, the women in *Zofloya* strategically use their sexuality to enchant and command men. The language of erotic pleasure in this text is that of domination and submission. The women perform a masquerade of submission as a ploy to disguise their insurrectionary aims. Thus under the artful guise of “artificial delicacy and refinement,” the seductive Megalena Strozzi satiates “the tumultuous wishes of her heart” (Z105) of seducing Leonardo, the virginal youth. Dacre indicates that women's sexual agency of initiating and manipulating 'pure' men into 'voluptuousness' disrupts the categories of 'natural' gender difference, since Megalena is temporarily masculinized by the husbandry metaphor and Leonardo is feminized as pure and fertile :

...she had sown (as she believed) the first germs of love  
and passion in a pure, youthful breast ; she had seen  
those germs shoot forth and expand beneath the fervid  
rays of her influence, and she enjoyed the fruits with a  
voluptuous pleasure. ( Z106)

With Zofloya's guidance, Victoria murders and appeases her transgressive sexual desire without remorse. She uses her body as a crucial site of power and manipulation. From the standpoint of 18th century social and cultural ideology, Victoria's blatant and amoral seductiveness is out of the norms, diabolical and deranged passion of the nymphomaniac. Bienville's *Nymphomania, or, A Dissertation Concerning the Furor Uterinus* is the first medical treatise devoted to nymphomania. Bienville describes the malady as an incredible metamorphosis that can debase, afflict and

dehumanise women, bringing social disorder through corporeal disorder. Victoria transgresses the 'natural' difference between the sexes to such an extent that her increasingly cruel and violent actions gradually transform her into a larger, more powerful and decidedly unfeminine form.

When Dacre first portrays Victoria at 15, she is "beautiful and accomplished as an angel", with "graceful elegant form"<sup>4</sup>. After seducing her first lover Berenza into marriage, Victoria's angelic beauty begins to decline; she is described as possessing a countenance "not of angelic mould ; yet though there was a fierceness in it, it was not certainly a repelling, but a beautiful fierceness" (76). After the murder of Berenza, Victoria is drunk with power and is described as possessing a "masculine spirit" (189); her body too, suddenly becomes "unwieldy", when compared to the fairy delicacy of Lilla, Henriquez's fiancée. Desperate with desire for her brother – in – law, Victoria seeks Zofloya's help; together, they abduct and chain Lilla in a cave while Victoria acts the "angel in the house" to a grief – stricken and bewildered Henriquez. Drugged by the magic potion given him by the artful Victoria, Henriquez mistakes her for Lilla, as Victoria puts on the girl's veil and masquerades as Lilla. As it is, the most fearful aspect of the veil in general is the amorphousness it suggests about human identity. It not only conceals the female body and face, but marks the body as asexual. Thus, the veil morphs the masculinized body of Victoria into the elfish delicacy of Lilla, as she is bent on bewitching and winning Henriquez away from his beloved; for a degenerate, unwieldy and dark woman like Victoria, the process of masquerading as her frail and fair rival suggests the primacy of performance over a fixed notion of identity. In *Masquerade and Civilization*, Terry Castle comments on the disturbing notion of ambiguity within the act of masquerade : " The masquerade ... predicated the hallucinatory merging of self and other ; it set up magical continuities between disparate bodies "(Castle 101 – 02).

As the delusion ends in the morning, Henriquez's "phrenzied gaze", his act of impaling himself on his sword, Victoria's "black fringed eyelids" and "raven tresses hanging unconfined", turn her to a Medusa figure, deadly and castrating for the male victim. The irrational love of evil is shown by Dacre to constitute the ongoing struggle for power epitomized in the exultant gaze of Victoria who can proclaim that "there is certainly a pleasure ... in the infliction of prolonged torment ..." (206).

The contrasting characteristics of Victoria and Lilla in the novel serve as an illustration of a dialogic tension between self and Other. Delicate, symmetrical and of a fairy – like beauty, Lilla's "angelic" physical attributes represent the ultra – feminine bourgeois ideal of womanhood. Victoria, on the other hand, embodies the unrestrained, domineering, lustful woman: libidinally aggressive and violent. The degree to which the two women are depicted differently shows how the body of Woman can be morphed: elevated and idolized in fragile figures of chaste innocence and docility as that of Lilla, or degenerated into an unfeminine, untamed and unnatural body like that of Victoria. As Dacre demonstrates, both the virtuous and the vicious body are equally mutable and the cause of their destruction is female sexual desire.

The final confrontation between Victoria and Lilla is one of the most bizarre situations portrayed in a woman's novel, loaded with unnatural violence, sexual sadism and perversity. To despoil the

blonde hair and white bosom of Lilla is to attack the domestic ideal of femininity and nurturing motherhood (both of which elude Victoria). Her violent and pitiless slaughtering of Lilla brings out a tumultuous end to one half of her Self. Even as she comes down from the mountain after the murder, Victoria feels possessed by her victim and for a moment, turns into a ghastly image of the dead woman, with a “certain trepidation of spirits that she had never before experienced ...” (226). Alienated from her feminine nature which is either masculinized in herself or violated and destroyed in Lilla, the subversive exploits of women like Victoria reveal the dialogic struggle within female subjectivity. Dacre's heroine celebrates her defiance of social and cultural conformity by consciously choosing the Devil's way, using her body as a site of power to cross over boundaries.

In *Villette*, Lucy Snowe's confinement in Mme Beck's pensionnat is an emblem of her non – existence in the eyes of the world outside where her social status is nil. This gives her no other role in life but that of a mute, self – enclosed, almost invisible onlooker. So strong is the extent of her self – alienation, that it leads to an obsessive notion of evasiveness and self – denial in front of the mirror. There is one astounding instance in the text when attending a concert with the Brettons, Lucy sees their group reflected in a large mirror and for a moment, deciphers the images as that of strangers:

A handsome middle – aged lady in dark velvet ; a gentleman  
who might be her son -- ... a third person in a pink dress  
and black lace mantle. .... I noted them all ... and for a fraction  
of a moment, believed them all strangers, thus receiving an impar-  
-tial impression of their appearance. (V 274 – 75)

This sense of seeing one's physical self as another is one of the experiences that Freud lists as uncanny in his seminal essay on the subject. The familiar becomes unfamiliar through the unexpectedness of such experience, temporarily generating an eerie perspective on the self.

A quite opposite fantasy projection of Lucy's image of desire is the self – absorbed Ginevra Fanshawe. Bent on grabbing power, Ginevra is clear – sighted enough to set her goal in life: that is, marrying “rather elderly gentlemen ... with cash” (V68). By presenting her physical assets in calculated ways to emphasise her “to – be – looked – at – ness ” (to use Mulvey's term), Ginevra decorates her publicly presented image with such fetishistic props as 'curls', 'sash', 'dress', 'artificial flowers' and 'jewellery' ; she deliberately constructs her ultra – feminized body as a coveted object of male gaze. Ginevra's goal of higher social status and equality in relationship makes her prefer and choose the superficial, rich aristocrat Alfred de Hamal over the bourgeois doctor Graham Bretton. However, for quite a long time, she enjoys playing the diva, exercising her power over the two male hearts as she proclaims: “I do so like to watch them turn red and pale, and scowl and dart fiery glances at each other, and languishing ones at me. There is me – happy ME” (V 187).

Lucy's supposedly “ambitious wishes” and repressed desires forcefully assert themselves on the one occasion when she is empowered by society to adopt the role of actor on the public stage. One of the most notable aspects of the school play is its deliberate confusion of sex roles and gender identity. The role that Lucy is given to play is that of a “butterfly, talker, and traitor” (V172). In short, a



dramatic version of the eye – candy fop Alfred de Hamal, Ginevra's lover. Playing such a narcissistic tease, Lucy is to woo Ginevra in the play. Grabbing this opportunity to the fulfilment of its subversive potential, Lucy mixes and matches her feminine dress with masculine accessories such as vest, collar, cravat and palétot, thus giving an androgynous turn to her appearance. As she woos Ginevra, her initial shyness in performance gives way to a heady and reckless enjoyment. Cast as a man, Lucy brilliantly performs the initiative, the competitiveness, the courtship, the wit and the power that are denied her in real life. For once, she gazes from the other side of the mirror and acts upon that gaze as Ginevra does, making easy games of both Dr. Bretton and Alfred de Hamal.

Like Lucy and Ginevra, Madame Walravens – the old, domineering, avaricious hag of a woman, and Justine Marie, the passive, innocent and suffering nun are the twin contrasted mirror image, showing that obsessive egotism and masochistic self – abnegation are two faces of the same self – enclosure that defines Lucy. This relation is presented symbolically when in the gothic mansion of the old lady on Rue des Mages, the picture of Justine Marie on the wall gives way to a secret door and reveals the spectral appearance of Madame Walravens. The strongly 'unheimlich' experience brings Lucy face to face with her own impoverished and repressing instinct of self – enclosure, in the form of the uncouth, witch – like old lady.

One of the dangers of living out the conventional life of a woman in the 19th century is that it renders one spectral, unreal, 'none', as Ginevra Fanshawe asks Lucy : “Who *are* you, Miss Snowe?” (V406) and “... *are* you anybody ?” (408). The most enigmatic and multi – dimensional mirroring of Lucy's 'Otherness' is represented through the potent presence of the ghostly Nun haunting her in the pensionnat. Just as the demonic fury of Vashti in the opera mirrors Lucy's dormant passion, the Nun projects the haunting of her repressed/replaced desire. Lucy's savage destruction of the Nun's effigy on her bed is an enraged assault on those ideals of propriety that render women “bloodless, brainless nonentities” (V264). Lucy's attack on the ideal of feminine passivity (the 'None') also reveals a 'masculine' spirit. Ironically, the object of the attack turns out to be a bluff image created by a man; donning the robe of a nun, Alfred de Hamal used to have clandestine rendezvous with Ginevra in the convent. Lucy's attack on de Hamal's costume is an assault on her inner spectre : her androgynous nature that deprives her of fulfilment in a world that has no name for such a nature. Like Vashti in whom Lucy finds “something neither of woman nor of man” (V 339) or the Nun, whose veil of femininity conceals a masculine identity, Lucy's conflicted nature renders her in the eyes of society, a 'none', an un – definable blank in the scopic field of desire. What Lucy finds out as she shreds the veiled effigy of the Nun in pieces, is that the veil deceives the human eye to emphasise the shifting perspective of gender identity and the morphism of bodies. It is this paradoxical complexity that gives rise to the disjunction between signifier and signified, between body and essence.

Power is the ability to impose one's self on another or to defend one's self from imposition. The novels discussed here suggest ways in which 18th and 19th century women's writing may be considered both the locus of compensating fantasies and the site of resistance. The same is reflected in the self – created public image of both the novelists concerned. Like Aphra Behn/Astrea before her,

Charlotte Dacre (born Charlotte King) decided to give a makeover to her already controversial life and career under a fancy pseudonym 'Rosa Matilda'. It presented her to the reading public as a living epitome of dangerous seductive power (one may be reminded in this context that Lewis's demonic seductress in *The Monk* calls herself both Rosario and Matilda). From the publication of the collected poems until her death, Brontë was 'Currer Bell' on the printed page. A pen name of androgynous nature, it was hoped to gain an un – prejudicial reading for her novels. Brontë continued to publish as Currer Bell even after her identity came to be known and she became an extremely popular novelist; she continued to remind correspondents and acquaintances of the distinction between her social and professional roles. Camouflaging her gender identity, Currer Bell also gave Charlotte Brontë a liberating space to breathe.

Women novelists in 18th and 19th century England were writing in a society which looked upon female desire as something non – existent. In *Zofloya and Villette*, Dacre and Brontë give an outlet to such desire; this makes a huge difference in re – visioning women's experiences. It has produced ways of articulating the different facets of female psychic formations, sexuality and displaced desire, thus devising ways of combat against a gynophobic culture.

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# **‘LET’S MAKE A LITTLE CONVERSATION’ : EXPLORING THE INTERFACE BETWEEN BECKETT AND DALI**

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This article is an adaptation of a conference paper that originated from the course work for my Special Area in MA – Literature and the Visual Arts. Having chosen to work with postmodernism, I became interested in certain common areas shared by Samuel Beckett and Salvadore Dali – similarities in theme, technique, approach and effect – which provided a rich illustration of the crossovers between the two arts. The title of the paper is ambitious, as it is in no way a comprehensive comparative study of the two artists. The focus of this study is on some of the meeting points between Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* on the one hand and some of Dali’s best known paintings on the other.

The yoking together of the two names in the title might suggest a general sense of similarity in their respective frames and pages – the common anxiety of existence in an alien universe. On closer analysis, the axes of intersection are often very precise. Beginning with what is arguably the most famous Dali painting, *The Persistence of Memory*, one immediately notes its extreme austerity. The background is sparse, with just a solitary tree dominating the barren landscape, exactly like the backdrop of Beckett’s play. Beckett’s stage is absolutely bare; ‘A country road. A tree’ is the sum total of his stage direction. Time, too, is stripped down in the play. Its spatio-temporal location is a sort of ‘nowhere – no when’. Gogo and Didi do not know where they are, and the two protagonists are never quite sure of the time frame they inhabit, nor the time of the all-important meeting with Godot.

Time for Beckett’s characters is that uncertain and undefined concept symbolised by Dali’s watches. The two protagonists are caught in a cyclical stasis, where time passes without bringing any real change. As Beckett points out in his analysis of Proust, ‘There is no escape from the hours and the days. Neither from tomorrow, nor from yesterday because yesterday has deformed us or been deformed by us...’<sup>1</sup> ‘In the second act the tree sprouts leaves ‘not to show hope or inspiration, but only to record the passage of time.’<sup>2</sup> Beckett’s characters are forever captive in time like the objects suspended in mid-air within the frame of Dali’s paradoxically titled painting *Animated Still Life*. Each day is just like the previous one, or the next. Pozzo, who is obsessed with time in the first act, realizes its true essence in his last speech where he says : ‘Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time ?’ Time for Gogo and Didi is a meaningless and everlasting repetition of seasons, days and hours leading to loss and devitalization, which finds visual representation in Dali’s languid watches melting of their definite outlines.

Godot, the only possibility of escape from this trap, remains absent throughout the action of the play. The Play, of course, is based on this crucial absence, being not actually about Godot, but about

waiting for him. At the centre of the play is an emptiness that is both formal and semantic, which manifests itself in Godot.

This brings to mind Dali's experiment *Spain*, where he uses the figure of a woman of symbolize the Spanish Civil War. But it is an absent figure, a space without a definite outline. In this use of double imagery the woman's face may be seen as a face with large eyes and a red mouth, or it may be seen as horses and men engaged in martial action, one of whom carries a red banner. So too one may choose to read meanings that are very different, often contradictory, into the aporia that is Godot. He might be comprehended as the divine providential order, guiding and giving meaning to all action. He may equally be perceived as the mere aggregate of continuous ineffectual human activity that makes up the condition of man, with no teleological guiding power beyond it; the very name Godot might be read as an amalgam of the two names Gogo and Didi, who represent all mankind on Beckett's stage. When asked what Godot stood for, Beckett replied that he stood for nothing.<sup>3</sup> Every reader or viewer of the play can read his own meaning into this empty space, as Gogo and Didi do, fantasizing about their saviour.

It is now a common critical statement that in Beckett's play nothing happens, twice.<sup>4</sup> Beckett has cannily doubled his play in the absence of play<sup>5</sup>, and the two acts are almost mirror images of each other. In Dali's *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* we have this effect of a mirror-image-but-not-quite. There are two similarly shaped structures in the painting, one being Narcissus seeing himself in water, the other a grotesque hand holding a cracked egg from which emerges a narcissus flower. If a double image rule this Dali painting, we find that *Waiting for Godot* also structures itself around sets of binaries. There are two sets of characters, where each set is a pair, namely Gogo-Didi, and Pozzo-Lucky. (The names themselves are all bisyllabic, including Godot). Even the messenger boy has a brother. The play's shape seems to be based on Beckett's favourite quotation from St. Augustine: 'Do not despair, one of the thieves was saved; do not presume, one of the thieves damned'.<sup>6</sup> Resembling a mathematical formula, the neatly balanced parts of this statement inform the configuration of Beckett's play, just as Dali's *Narcissus* employs a distorted double as its central theme.

The world portrayed by the Surrealist painter and the Absurdist playwright are often strikingly analogous. The barely suppressed violence of the *Narcissus* painting – the dog in the lower right hand corner devouring a bloody carcass while an orgy continues in the background – suggests the inhospitable landscape of Beckett. The play's atmosphere is one of all-pervasive sickness, pain and death where Lucky suddenly falls dumb while his master inexplicably loses his sight. It is a hostile world, but what is significantly more ominous is that the hostility cannot be traced to clear causes. Beckett's world is rendered incomprehensible opaque where violence is gratuitous and arbitrary. Gogo and Didi are punched without reason by complete strangers, the Boy looking after the goats is treated well while his brother who tends sheep is beaten. The topography is governed by chance and luck, a fact that finds ironical representation in Lucky's name.

This cruel universe is dotted by innumerable references to Christ and to salvation. It has already been mentioned how the idea of salvation tempts and taunts the protagonists through the parable of the Two thieves, with whom Gogo and Didi identify, as they do, perhaps more notably, with

Christ. When Didi exclaims, 'You're not going to compare yourself to Christ!', Gogo replies, 'All my life I've compared myself to him'.<sup>7</sup> This identification, almost too close for comfort, is what Dali aims at in *Christ of St. John of the Cross*. Using an unusual perspective, he forces the viewers to participate in Christ's intense physical suffering. We are not allowed the luxury of the usual distance that renders the crucified figure remote and dignified. Dali moves Christ close enough to the viewer to make him notice his taut neck muscles as his head strains forward. The unconventional point of view as well as the unrelenting glare of the light accentuates the distress of Christ to a level that compels the viewers to share it. The painting as well as the play employ this physical immediacy to achieve their effect.

Words of uncertain meaning, for example 'knook', pepper Beckett's works like an extended signature, as do Dali's indeterminate symbols. Groups of ants or crutches occur like leitmotifs in his works, often changing their import from one painting to the next as they are undefined to begin with. This arbitrariness informs the works of both artists at a deeper level. Both derived inspiration for their masterpieces from apparently trivial incidents. The messenger in Beckett's play, the only link Gogo and Didi have with the ever-evasive Godot, says 'Je ne sais pas, monsieur' (I don't know, sir) when questioned about Godot's identity. Beckett had once been stabbed by an apache who replied with the same words when the author enquired about the reason for his action. This apparently random and indifferent violence permeates Beckett's existential universe, as has been discussed earlier. Dali's crumbling watches, which have prompted decades of critical speculation, were reported by the painter to have been suggested to him when eating a ripe Camembert cheese.

Students of literature are often called upon to focus on the various points of congruence among writers of a particular period in order to arrive at a better understanding of the 'spirit of the age'. Expanding our perspective to include the other arts, particularly the visual arts, proves particularly rewarding. Awareness of the interfaces between artists working with different media who share matter and manner in complex but revealing ways allows a broader understanding of their age. Locating the sites of intersection between Beckett and Dali functions as a particularly relevant case study in this project while participating in the analysis of the ongoing conversation between the sister arts.

## NOTES :

1. Samuel Beckett, *Proust* (New York : Grove Press, no date), pp. 2-3.
2. Dierdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett : A Biography* (London : Vintage, 1978).
3. Bair notes now Beckett told Alan Schneider, 'If I knew who Godot was, I would have said so in the play'. He is also reported to have told Harold Hobson, 'If Godot were God, I would have called him that', Bair, *Samuel Beckett : A Biography*, pp. 405-6.
4. Vivian Mercier, 'The Uneventful Event', in *Irish Times*, 18 February 1956, reprinted in Lance St. John Butler, ed., *Critical Essays on Samuel Beckett* (Aldershot : Scolar Press, 1993), p. 29.
5. Hugh Kenner, *Samuel Beckett : A critical Study* (London : John Calder, 1961), p. 136.
6. Beckett told scholars like Adam Tarn that he liked the symmetry of this expression, Bair, *Samuel Beckett : A Biography*, p. 409.
7. *The Collected Works of Samuel Beckett* (Grove Press : New York, 1970), p. 35.

# RENEGOTIATING BINARIES : MEMORY, IDENTITY AND SPATIALITY IN DAVID MAZZUCCHELLI'S ASTERIOS POLYP

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## Abstract :

David Mazzucchelli's eponymous *Asterios Polyp*, a renowned 'Paper Architect', gives birth to ideas of award-winning spaces, that do not befit translation on to concrete. The Odyssean journey of Asterios Polyp is interspersed with an accompanying duality, as his movement from his urban residence in Manhattan to a small town called Apogee, is strictly to redefine his identity in consort with the changing geographical and cultural space; the narrative switches back and forth between his famed urban past and reclusive rural present, with memory acting as the thread of perpetual actual phenomenon, tying him to his eternal present (Nora). Mazzucchelli continuously reconstructs the identity of Polyp and his memories through distinct stylistic variations, with changes in societal and spatial conditions adversely affecting their representation on the page. Through an interdisciplinary focus on cultural studies and spatial production, this paper aims to posit that the shifting milieu of the social and cultural space inhabited by Polyp unremittably impinges on his identity, leading to a re-negotiation between his memories within the context of his mutating cultural space. This study will strive to look into how the construction of identities are produced not only in specific institutional and historical sites within the discourse (Hall), but also contingent on the spatial location of the individual. Polyp's spontaneous shift to the town of Apogee is not only a method to backtrack to his roots, but a mechanism to reconfigure his identity through routes that he traverses (Gilroy). A focus into the stark refusal to inhabit the urbanised city where his identity was set in established patterns marks the emergence of a new space, where all the power equations of the society, that of agency and hierarchy, and even that of personal and collective memory are reconstructed and reformulated. The paper aims to examine the web of interconnecting links that are formed between the aspects of identity, memory and cultural space in Mazzucchelli's *Asterios Polyp*.

## Keywords :

Identity, Memory, Spatiality, Binary

## ***Renegotiating Binaries : Memory, Identity and Spatiality in David Mazzucchelli's Asterios Polyp***

*Asterios Polyp* (2009), David Mazzucchelli's first full length graphic novel charts the life of the eponymous protagonist, a "Paper Architect," whose award-winning designs do not befit translation onto concrete (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*). Asterios, with his preference for functionality over

ornamentation, perceives life in terms of dualities. Afflicted by a lightning strike on his apartment building, Asterios instantaneously decides to leave behind his identity as a renowned Professor, and a comfortable urban Manhattan lifestyle to embark on an unprecedented journey to uncharted territories. Asterios' quest to reconfigure his identity, and in the process, his memories alike, through a shift in his spatial paradigm, is encapsulated efficiently in the first and only statement he utters in the first chapter – “How far would this take me ?”

David Mazzucchelli had earlier worked in mainstream comics, collaborating with other artists like Frank Miller, to produce works like *Daredevil : Born Again* (1985–86) and *Batman: Year One* (1986–87). In a later interview, talking about the scope of superhero comics in his oeuvre, Mazzucchelli admitted: “I had gotten to a point where I doubted I could go any further in that genre in a satisfying way”. He moved on to attempts at exploring different drawing and art styles in his anthology called *Rubber Blankets*. It is with *Asterios Polyp* that the author experiments with a full-length graphic novel format for the first time, without having to limit himself to the norms of mainstream comic books (McCarthy). Beginning from the uneven dust jacket of the book, to the absence of any page numbers, Mazzucchelli makes it clear in no uncertain terms that the graphic novel does not conform to any traditional notions and norms of print or spatiality.

His protagonist, Asterios, on the other hand, likes order and obedience to simplicity of forms, which is reflected in his binate view of architecture as well as his designs. The architect has a deep-seated binary outlook towards the world, which he rationalises as such : “Of course I realize that things aren't so black and white—that in actuality possibilities exist along a continuum between the extremes...It's just a convenient organizing principle. By choosing two aspects of a subject that appear to be in opposition, each can be examined in light of the other in order to better illuminate the entire subject” (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*).

This “eloquent equilibrium” of perceiving the world exclusively through dualities haunts the novel, as the narrative voice is that of Ignazio Polyp, the stillborn twin of Asterios. A binary strain also runs through Asterios and his ex-wife Hana, as he reminisces : “We couldn't have been more different and yet...our lives folded into each other's with barely a wrinkle” (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*).

The torn protagonist is in a constant renegotiation of his identity of self with that of his perceived identity of his twin, had he been alive. “If he had been the one to survive, would his life have followed exactly the path mine has ? Am I living his life now ?” wonders Asterios to Hana (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*). While identity can seem to “invoke an origin in a historical past”, Stuart Hall in his essay “Who Needs Identity ?” argues, “identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being... how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation” (4). Asterios too, through his own representation of himself and his binary other, Ignazio, constantly keeps designating to himself an identity, which is perhaps “a name given to escape sought from that uncertainty” (Bauman, 19), the uncertainty here of always feeling as if his existence can be attributed to “just mute luck” as he feels that each of them “had an equal chance in the womb” (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*).



The ghost of his past constantly keeps impinging on his present, as the architect is always aware of a constant presence – “But when I was alone, I felt - Well, I used to look over my shoulder all the time, expecting to see someone. It was a weird sensation...like searching for your reflection in the mirror” (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*). In a moment of faith, Asterios confesses to Hana the reason for him installing video cameras in all rooms of his apartment : “Somehow, though, it's comforting to know they're there, in the next room...my own video doppelgänger” (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*). On Asterios' fiftieth birthday, a lightning strike leads to a fire in his apartment. He sees this as an opportunity to rid himself of this unending search and leave behind all his ties. But his “phantom sibling” keeps recurrently manifesting in his dreams, no matter how far he traverses to evade it (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*). Memory, hence, as Pierre Nora suggests, keeps acting as a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying Asterios to his eternal present (8).

Apogee, a quiet suburban town, is the answer to Asterios' question of how far he can traverse with his limited resources. During a recollection of the past, Asterios admits in his conversation with Hana : “I'm a city person; you're a country person”. Having spent almost all of his life in either Ithaca or Manhattan, the suburban territory of Apogee, although an unfamiliar dominion for the tragedy-stricken protagonist, is conducive to finding mechanisms to redefine his identity outside the scope of his established patterns. With no money at his disposal, he finds himself a job at an auto repair shop owned by Stiffly Major, a local auto-mechanic. This emergence of a new space, where all the power equations of the society, that of agency and hierarchy, and even that of personal and collective memory are reconstructed and reformulated, renders Asterios out of his depth, and pushes him to begin anew. After spending a considerable time in the suburbs with the rustic Majors, the same Asterios, who was over-exacting of his architecture students as a Professor, upon looking at a plan for treehouse sketched by Stiffly, contently exclaims that it “looks great” (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*).

Through his use of colour, Mazzucchelli demarcates space as well as time, with blues and reds signifying Asterios' urban life in the past, and muted yellows along with purple to render his out-lying present in Apogee. Alternative chapters shuffle between his past and his present, interspersed with sequences of dreams where Asterios comes to face with his twin.

A strong undercurrent of ancient Greek myth and philosophy undercuts the novel, as if in an ode to Asterios' heritage. The spaces in which the “Paper Architect” finds himself transported, are more often than not, a homage to ancient Greece (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*). One such dreamscape would be a structure resembling the Parthenon of Athens, where Asterios finds Ignazio lying on his deathbed. Another one features Asterios being woken up to find himself at sea, by his doppelgänger, who has attached solely his head on to the architect's body, in a reversal of the conception of ancient humans, who, according to Athenian philosopher Aristophanes, “were spherical, with four arms, four legs, and two faces on either side of a single head” (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*) (fig. 1). These spaces, where Asterios finds himself transported to in his dreams, more than being simply illusory sequences, are “concretely represented” and thus part of our protagonist's “lived existence” (Soja, 46). While not strictly existing on a material level, these spaces



or sequences play a crucial role in the dynamics of the ever-mutating identity of Asterios. As Edward Soja, in his book *Thirdspace : Journey to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* states “Even in the realm of pure abstraction, ideology, and representation, there is a pervasive and pertinent, if often hidden, spatial dimension” (46).



Fig 1. Mazzucchelli, Asterios Polyp

In an interview with Bill Kartalopoulos, Mazzucchelli says that through the process of cartooning, he has arrived at “a system of mark-making that creates its own credible reality”. Throughout the graphic novel, the author assigns different nuances to each character, beginning from the colour scheme to the font of their speech. Mazzucchelli's approach to spaces, imagined or real, is also similar; he imbues them with individualistic traits, both in design and colour. His life bearing a strong resemblance to Greek mythology, Asterios, towards the end of the novel, embarks on an Orpheus-like journey to Hades, to unsuccessfully rescue his Eurydice (Hana), and the whole sequence is rendered in varying shades of purple, the darkest colour used in the book. While this rendition of Hades is clearly not only of a material space, but of a mental space too, it is, what could be termed as 'Thirdspace', a “transcending composite of all spaces” (Soja, 62).

Drawing from Henri Lefebvre's *Trialectics of Space*, Soja defines thirdspace as being beyond the “real' material world” as well as not being limited by “imagined' representations of reality”, instead, he deems thirdspace as “a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange

where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable" (Soja, 05). Asterios' experience thus, through the course of the novel, covers the expanse of spatial paradigms which cannot be encompassed simply in binaries (such as urban and suburban, or dreamscapes and nightmares), but rather, can be explored through "a multiplicity of real-and-imagined places," namely, the concept of Thirdspace (Soja, 06).

The page in itself, despite being devoid of traditional markers, unfurls on multiple levels, as Mazzucchelli leaves no stone unturned to utilise the space to its full potential. When Hana starts opening up to Asterios during their first conversation, the two dimensional page with traditional comic book panelling suddenly gives way to a three dimensional experience, with the page peeling off from the pair in the background, to give way to a page from Hana's life, charting her childhood through pictures and ending with a slowly shifting spotlight on her present (fig. 2). The exploration of the page renders it beyond the "concrete materiality of spatial forms, on things that can be empirically mapped", a "Firstspace", as well not limited merely by the scope of "Secondspace", which is "thoughtful re-presentations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms" (Soja, 10).



Fig 2. Mazzucchelli, Asterios Polyp

It is not only through creating illusions of an additional dimension that Mazzucchelli creates these Thirdspaces; he uses a multiplicity of techniques to give rise to spaces that contribute to the production of social identities of the characters. Ascribing individual base colours and geometrical constitutions for each major character; bold blue straight lines for Asterios, and blurry red sketched lines for Hana, the author engenders spaces which are contingent on the disposition of the characters which inhabit it. As they get to know each other, not only their forms and identities collapse onto one another, but also the space surrounding them, producing an overall purple tinted illustration with a uniform single-lined outline (fig. 3). The moment Hana and Asterios have a disagreement, their characters as well as the panels encasing them change colour and form. Their self-awareness and temperament dictate the physical space they occupy. The reverse also seems to hold true, as Ursula Major, (wife of the mechanic who hires and rents a room to Asterios), asks the architect his birth date before she hands over the room to him. Upon encountering furniture placed askew, she announces to Asterios : “This is the most auspicious arrangement I could come up with, so I advise you not to move anything”, implying that the positioning of objects in the space one inhabits has an effect on the individual (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*).



Fig 3. Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*

The dynamics of the absence of physical space is also not left unexplored by the author. In the precise centre of the unpaginated work, an imperceptibly minute Asterios stands facing a double-page spread image of a wide crater, exclaiming “Now, that’s a hole”, as if the enormous depression that lays in front of him is reflective of the void that lies within him; ascribing to the spatial paradigm a self-reflecting quality (fig. 4).



Fig 4. Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*

Space and memory act in concert as inextricably linked elements throughout the course of the graphic biography, questioning the constitution of the quintessence of things. After having built a tree-house with Stiffly Major, Asterios narrates the story of a Shinto Shrine in Japan, which, while dating back to the fourth century, is razed and rebuilt every twenty years. “At any given time, no single piece of the structure is older than two decades...but the Japanese will tell you the shrine is about two thousand years old” remarks Asterios; to which Ursula pensively replies “That makes perfect sense to me” (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*). Despite the mutating physicality of the Shinto Shrine, its identity remains unaltered, stemming from a “memory entwined in the intimacy of a collective heritage”, consecrating it perhaps not only as a *milieu de mémoire* (real environment of memory), but also simultaneously as a *lieu de mémoire* (site of memory), (Nora, 7-8).

Pierre Nora distinguishes memory from history by claiming “memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects”, while “history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative” (9). The fire in Asterios' Manhattan apartment causes a halt to continuities and progressions in his life, and makes him choose the three things he holds most valuable to himself. By choosing



those three physical “objects” to save, Asterios “installs remembrance within the sacred”, his choices reflecting the most revered memories of his life (Nora, 9). During the course of his journey to Apogee, only hours after the fire, a dishevelled Asterios is seen sitting next to an ex-convict in search of cigarettes. On seeing the protagonist thumbing through a lighter, the ex-convict thoughtlessly asks: “Kin I have it?”, to which Asterios, in what seems to be after a brief moment's consideration, replies, “Keep it.” (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*). One of the objects he saved, the lighter belonged to Asterios' deceased father; the only physical remembrance he retained of the patriarch. The second object, the first watch that he bought with his saved-up allowance of two years, he unceremoniously gifts to Jackson, Stiffly and Ursula's son. Asterios' move to Apogee can be construed as an attempt to redefine his identity by leaving behind his past, and by handing out two of his prized possessions, the architect's intentions to efface the memories of what he once held sacred become apparent. Steadily, Asterios seems to be renegotiating with his memories, laying off even the most consecrated ones; yet, the only object that he holds on to is a swiss army knife, which he serendipitously came across on a day out with Hana at the beach. His refusal to let go of that one object, the sole souvenir of his and Hana's relationship, betrays Asterios' lack of complete indifference towards his past. Infact, the graphic novel delineates a keen role of memory in the book, with the commencement of every chapter marked by an image, each of which pertain to significant memories of Asterios' life.

Perception, of space, of memory, and of identity in *Asterios Polyp* is in a constant state of flux. As Ignazio's narration divulges: “Every memory, no matter how remote its subject, takes place 'now', at the moment it's called up in the mind. The more something is recalled, the more the brain has a chance to refine the original experience, because every memory is a re-creation, not a playback.” The graphic novelist, while illustrating Asterios' past, engenders various iterations of him, constructed primarily in binary terms, with his “phantom sibling”, or with Hana. Through the course of traversing his present, Asterios' perception of the world and of his own identity, which were earlier inhibited by the filters of duality, are enhanced by his acceptance of the pluralities of possibilities. When Ursula, during the picnic by the large hole, tells Asterios : “Well, y'know, in life, things are seldom either/or. It's that kind of thinking that creates fanatics”, the previously staunch believer of dualities reflectively admits: “Now that you mention it, I've probably engaged in some of that simplistic thinking myself.” (Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp*). This acceptance entails that the shifting milieu of the social and cultural space inhabited by Polyp unremittingly impinges on his identity, leading to a re-negotiation between his memories within the context of his mutating cultural space. As Hall suggests “identities are never unified...never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions” (4).

Unlike most of Mazzucchelli's earlier creations, Asterios has no super power bequeathed to him, nor does he wear capes. Certain aspects of his voyage can be categorised as mythic, on levels comparable to that of Odysseus, as both traverse foreign terrain, which necessitates a shift of identity in both (Massak, 67). The loss of his eyesight in one eye in a pub brawl, and his “cut in half” family name (Polyphemus), refer to parallels with Cyclops. The resonance with Orpheus echoes throughout the novel; with Hana as his Eurydice, and his architectural tools as his lyre, Asterios descends to the

underworld, and likewise as Orpheus, loses his beloved at the last moment. But to simply regard the journey of the protagonist in mythic terms would amount to repeating the same mistake he makes in the novel; of limiting perception. At the end of the novel, Asterios finds himself driving an old solar powered Cadillac, wading through the snow, to reach Hana's abode. He returns to his beloved not as a Greek hero, but an altered man, who has learnt to look beyond binaries in life, and ceased to consider people as an extension of himself. Through the process of voyaging various spatial paradigms, reliving his memories, and redefining his binary perspective of life, Asterios traverses his own self, to re-acquaint himself with his identity. Set into motion by a lightning strike, and ending with an ominous meteorite approaching, Asterios Polyp's journey is neither super heroic nor mythic, but perhaps simply human to its core.

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## **ALUMNI SPEAK**





**Ramyani Sarkar**  
UG English department  
Batch of 2017-2020

The English department of Shikshayatan College provided the perfect balance between hands-on teaching and space for individual creativity. From guest lectures to cultural events, our department encouraged involvement in every sphere of learning possible.

It was an honour to study under professors who were not only knowledgeable but also caring and empathic educators. I will be forever indebted to them .



The English Department of Shri Shikshayatan College may just be a department in an academic institution to many but for me, it is my second home that has nurtured me for three years to not only help me enhance my academic prowess but also to make me a better human being.



**Shewta Ganguly**  
*Batch 2017-2020, Department of English*



**Pratiti Saha**  
*Batch 2017-2020, Department of English*

The English Department has been my second home for my entire college life. The faculty and my peers provided me with extraordinary knowledge and healthy competition. Their enthusiastic involvement in all co-curricular activities inspired me, gave me unexpected opportunities and that deserves a special mention.



**Srijita Datta**

*Batch 2018-2021, Department of English*

Literature has been my passion since childhood, and I was lucky that I could pursue it further under the English Department of Shri Shikshayatan College. Our lovely professors helped hone my skills, guided me all through all the difficulties and nurtured me with compassion and care. I will remain indebted to the department and the college for everything.



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**Tanisha Bhattacharya**

*Batch 2018-2021, Department of English*



**Srijani Sarkar**

*Batch 2018-2021, Department of English*

Shri Shikshayatan – the words suggesting a place of enlightenment and knowledge, my college. I got admitted in the largest department of our college, the English department. Then gradually started life at Shri Shikshayatan. Our department embraced us on the very first day of our orientation. Our professors made us believe in the path of righteousness through their lectures and gestures. The departmental journal “Imprint” gives us a platform to, as the word says itself, print the impressions of our mind.



**Aishwarya Bhutoria**

*Batch 2018-2021, Department of English*

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**Ankita Saha**

*Batch 2018-2021, Department of English*

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