



**Shri Shikshayatan College**

# LITERATI

***A Journal of the  
Department of English***

**2025**

# LITERATI

JOURNAL OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



**SHRI SHIKSHAYATAN COLLEGE**

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## **FOREWORD**

It gives me immense pride to present the Literati 2026, Vol. 10, the anthology published by the Department of English, Shri Shikshayatan College.

This volume contains scholarly articles written by our current undergraduate students of the Department of English, and by an alumna.

Literati 2026 features articles with fresh re-readings of major authors, book-reviews, and interestingly, quite a few comparative studies — each article comparing texts across languages, cultures, or time periods and critiquing themes, narrative styles, and literary influences.

I congratulate all the contributors and thank the members of the editorial team of Literati 2026 for compiling this wonderful collection.

Thank you!

*Tania Chakraverty*

**DR. TANIA CHAKRAVERTTY**

Principal

**SHRI SHIKSHAYATAN COLLEGE**



# INTRODUCTION

"Nothing made me forget the world like reading did. Nothing made me think about the world like reading did."

–Arundhati Roy, *Mother Mary Comes to Me*

With immense pride and enthusiasm, we present the tenth volume of *Literati*, the journal of the Department of English, Shri Shikshayatan College. It is the result of the academic interactions and contributions of our students. This edition, like all the previous ones, aims to foster a passionate pursuit for academic and intellectual excellence while encouraging research and the culture of collaboration. This edition reflects the department's endeavours during the academic year to contribute to the enhancement of knowledge and intellectual curiosity. The section 'Alumni Speak' provides our illustrious alumnae an opportunity to narrate their experiences and observations about our institution. *Literati* provides a much-needed platform for our students, brimming with opinions and potential, a space to share the findings of their academic enquiries. In the host of articles we have a few film reviews as well, underlining the expressive and experimental disposition of agile young minds.

We are immensely grateful to our Principal, Dr. Tania Chakraverty, for her invaluable support and unwavering faith in our potential for progress. This edition is a testament to the department's varied interests in myriad literary fields, providing each of us with a collaborative learning experience. Our sincere thanks are due to the Student Members of the Editorial Board. We hope this academic interface will prove enjoyable for our readers and will instill in our students an unflinching commitment towards academic excellence.

**Faculty Members**  
Department of English  
Shri Shikshayatan College



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## **DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS**

### **Exploding Text : An Afternoon of Poetry**

The collaborative event was organized by the Department of English (U.G. & P.G.), Shri Shikshayatan College and the Departments of English and Bengali, New Alipore College on September 18, 2025 (Thursday). The poetry session was held at the seminar hall of New Alipore College, with the presence of notable American poet, Bob Holman, eminent Bengali poet, Shri Subodh Sarkar, poet and Principal of New Alipore College, Dr. Jaydeep Sarangi, amongst several other dignitaries. The session commenced with a welcome address by the Principal of the host college, followed by screenings of Holman's poetry and musical videos. One U.G. and two P.G. students from Shri Shikshayatan College, along with one U.G. student from New Alipore College read out poems by Holman, much to his appreciation. The engaging session ended with a Vote of Thanks by the Head, Department of English, New Alipore College, Dr. Neela Sarkar. The chief outcome of the event was to make the students of U.G. sections of both the colleges and the P.G. section of Shri Shikshayatan College familiarize themselves with the poetry of the eminent American poet, Bob Holman in a session chaired by another notable Bengali poet, Shri Subodh Sarkar. The active participation from the students was meant to inculcate the skills of performing poetry and developing interactive skills. The experience was enriching and a treasured one for the students of literature.

### **Institutional Visit to the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Kolkata.**

The event was organized by Department of English (P.G.), Shri Shikshayatan College in collaboration with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and Central Research Committee (CRC) on November 11, 2025 (Tuesday).

The students of the Under-graduate and Post-graduate sections of the Department of English, Shri Shikshayatan College, accompanied by the faculty members visited the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute for the making the students explore and be oriented on the nuances of film making, technicalities and procedures of the same, and the possibilities of research and studies relating to the same. The visit included first a visit to the museum where various exhibits reflected the culture of film making and provided valuable information about several preserved artefacts of the world cinema. Various departments like EDM, PFT et cetera were explored by the students, followed by visits to the shooting floor and the sound room. This was a trilling as well as enriching experience for the students. The art of film making spanning across the films of various international legends were brought to the understand of the students of the department and as literature students they could connect with the process of film making, artistic representation and performance interpretation. The chief outcome of the event was to acquaint the students of a literature department like English at both the UG and PG levels, about Films, especially the domain that shall be useful for them in the subsequent days- Film and Literature, for research and other academic and scholarly explorations. The students benefitted from the visit as this opened up avenues of thought, perceiving film making as not just an art form but also to realise about the potential and the craft: its narrative and dynamics.

## **MeetEng : The Alumni Interface of the Department of English 2025**

The event was organised by the Department of English (U.G. & P.G.), Shri Shikshayatan College on December 12, 2025 (Friday).

'MeetEng', the Alumni Interface of the Department of English (UG & PG) marked the homecoming of several batches of our proud alumnae in the 70th year of the departmental establishment. The alumnae spread across decades had joined the call of the department for a meet up and interaction that reflected exchange of words, ideas and innovations in the upcoming trends of their respective current fields. A special talk cum interactive session was organised by the department that was conducted by Ms. Annesha Ghosh, notable international sports journalist and a proud alumna of the 2011-14 batch of U.G. English. Ms. Ghosh reflected on her journey as a sports journalist, addressing and inspiring the current students and motivating them towards a goal driven objective in whichever field of profession they choose in future. The interaction with the different batches commenced after that. There was a fun quiz and a brief presentation by the students of the P.G. section of the Department of English, representing Imprint Literary Society titled: 'Return Gift'. The day ended on a note of a promise of reunion every year, an initiative by the Department of English in the absence of a registered alumni association of the college. The chief outcome of the Alumni Meet was to create an environment of homecoming for the alumnae of the Department of English spread across decades with the objective of not just documenting their records but also to build up a community of learning and sharing of ideas and resources around. There are many such alumna, who are right now very well-established in their respective fields, and stand as an inspiration to the current students in terms of building up focus, determination and goal-oriented outlook amongst the juniors and the current students of the Department. This shall be an annual event of the department now which shall add up to the development of community building and resource development centering on our proud alumnae.

## **Bibliophile's Secret Santa**

The event was organised by Imprint Literary Society, Shri Shikshayatan College Date on 19th December, 2025.

A meaningful effort, titled, "Bibliophile's Secret Santa" involving all the literary enthusiast and avid book readers was successfully organised by the Imprint Book Club, under the Imprint Literary Society, marking its opening event as the first official literary circle of Shri Shikshayatan. While Imprint, has been a flourishing society for the literature enthusiasts for many years now, the book club was created not so long ago and in true sense was an attempt by Jemika Sultana and Meghna Ganguly, Vice President and Art Department Specialist respectively, of Imprint to bring together the ardent bibliophiles across all departments of the college. Rules were simple : "If you love living different lives through the printed words, you are welcome". To bring this vision to life, Jemika and Meghna, worked through their ideas and planned to make this club more than just a literary circle but a place which also instills the losing love for reading in the present generation of tech slaves. Hence a proposal was drafted and thanks to the supportive professors, the club came to existence. Its inaugurating event was held keeping true to the Christmas spirit. Gifts were none other than, books, of any choice, regardless of genre. Participants were to bring a book, that has been sitting on their shelves for a while but once brought them joy by simply turning its pages. To elevate the Christmas effects, they were requested to cover their books with glittery wrapping paper and a small note to describe the same, so as to maintain the lighthearted and "gifts under mistletoe" spirit Each book was labelled with numbers and participants were to select small papers, carrying the same numbers, out

of the lot, without the knowledge of the books inside. It was as our professor said rightfully, “like picking up a chocolate from an assortment not knowing the filling”. Eager bookaholics collected their own shiny parcels as “Jingle Bell Rocks” by Bobby Helmes played in the background and after every one of them had received their gifts from their secret Santas it was time for unwrapping. The participants flaunted their tastes by gifting legendary classics like, “1984” by George Orwell and “Pride and Prejudice” by Jane Austen, to some cozy heartwarming reads like, “Before the Coffee Gets Cold” by Toshikazu Kawaguchi. Some got books that has been in their reading lists for some time while others got introduced to some “never before read” genres. Participants posed with their books after the events and it concluded with happy bibliophiles taking home the books which once provided their presenters with either heartwarming joy or introspecting thoughts through their exhilarating plots and characters. Overall, this bibliophilic Secret Santa was a successful and memorable opening event for Imprint Book Club which not only proved that avid book readers still exist in this “iPad generation” but also provided the participants with an exciting holiday read. As a part of Imprint, this reading club proved to be a qualified extension and in future promises to bring even more such events that will keep the thirst for books alive and provide a platform for bibliophiles to showcase their tastes and ideas.

### **“From Gurukul to Google : The Digital Turn of Indian Education” (A part of the events for the Observation of Students' Week 2026)**

The event was organised by the Department of English (U.G. & P.G.), in collaboration with Imprint Literary Society, an extended collaboration with IQAC and Students' Council, Shri Shikshayatan College on January 6, 2026 (Tuesday).

The Students' Week event undertaken by the Under-Graduate and Post-Graduate sections of the Department of English was mainly aimed at orienting the students towards Digital and Hybrid forms of learning: to know its types, forms, advantages and limitations in functioning. As one of the key features of NEP 2020, Digital Education or proficiency in the same marks a vital turn from the age-old traditional method of physical classroom teaching. The talk titled: “From Gurukul to Google : The Digital Turn of Indian Education” marked a focus on this shift which is prevalent and relevant in the contemporary context. It dealt with a focus on Indian Knowledge Systems and the traditional forms of learning to the contemporary scenario that is spreading across the urban and gradually into the rural and remote areas. The students of the Department of English, had arranged for a poetry reading session, representing the Imprint Literary Society, which had been a collaborator for the said event. The event marked an extended collaboration with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell and Students' Council, as a part of the Students' Week Observation for the year 2026, spanning from January 2 to January 8. The chief outcome of the event was to orient the students of the Department as well as across streams towards digital modes of learning, that is not just the need of the hour but also stands sustainable in the current context. It shaped up the minds of the students and prepared them for a hybrid mode of learning that makes the process of teaching-learning convenient and accessible to all. As the orientation of NEP 2020 is more towards the practical and skill based learning, using digital tools is one of the most effective and convenient ways to do so. As a part of the Students' Week programme this theme was chosen by the Department of English for its strategic purpose, requirement and effective outcome in the contemporary society. The student presenters of Imprint Literary Society reflected great enthusiasm and awareness amongst the students for the said theme which they crafted out in their own way to reflect on a literary methodology of the same.

## **Contemporary Female Poetic Voices Across the Globe**

The event was organised by Department of English in collaboration with Imprint Literary Society on 6 March, 2026.

There were two international women poets of global repute, Marta Eloy Cichocka and Christine Chen accompanied by an author, Anindita Bose and Biswajit Mukherjee, a photographer based in Kolkata visited our college from 10:30 am to 12 pm. Ms Cichocka spoke of a war-ravaged world, reading her original Polish poems which were then read out in English and Bengali. Similarly, Ms Chen read her original work in Cantonese Chinese which were followed by their translations. Ms Chen writes about the diaspora experience as a Hongkong Chinese-origin woman who has lived in New Zealand for three decades. Ms Bose moderated the readings with insights about what it means to be a poet, and for readers to meet the writers when they read their words. The session was brought to an interesting end with Mr Mukherjee providing a hands-on workshop experience for students in the basics of photography techniques. The session ended with the hope that all four of the engaging resource persons will be back in the future for more extended interactive sessions. The session provided an opportunity to students studying literature prescribed by a set syllabus to experience live poetry read in foreign languages and then in translation by the poets themselves. It brought a different dimension to their perception and reception of what a poetic text means, how it is created, and the lived human experience which informs it – an element missing when reading verses printed in their textbooks.

## **Echoes of the Foremothers, an Intra-Departmental Quiz Competition**

It was organised by the Department of English and Imprint : English Literary Society on March 18, 2026 (Wednesday)

The Intra-Departmental Quiz Competition was an initiative to commemorate Women in Literature through fun, engaging interaction and teamwork. There were a total of nine teams each in pairs across the UG and PG even semesters of the Department of English, competing against each other for a total of five rounds namely, Who am I ? Two Truths and a Lie, Plath or Taylor Swift, Bidding, Am I the Villain ? respectively. The questions were met with enthusiasm by participants and the audience immersed in the exchange. The competition was exciting and competitive with participants challenging each other in buzzer and tie-breaking rounds to determine the qualifying teams and position holders. The quiz was headed by the investiture ceremony of the new office bearers of Imprint: English Literary Society and inauguration of the wall magazine on Gabriel Garcia Marquez to honour his death anniversary. The three winning teams were awarded with eco-friendly stationery and certificates by the faculty. The day ended in high spirits, with zeal to organise more interesting events in future. The chief outcome of the Intra-Departmental Quiz Competition was to hold a contest in honour of the women writers for whom reading, writing, learning Women in Literature is at all possible. At the same time creating a space to recognise respective knowledge gaps and quick thinking ability through entertaining trivia while fostering team spirit and confidence, encouraging students to broaden their horizons beyond curriculum.

The Department of English and Imprint: The English Literary Society organized an Investiture Ceremony for the office-bearers of Imprint: The English Literary Society. The event was organized on 18 March 2026. Dr Tania Chakraverty, Principal Shri Shikshayatan College graced the occasion and handed over the badges to the students.

## REPORT ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES : (July '24–June '25)



## EXPLODING TEXT : AN AFTERNOON OF POETRY



# “FROM GURUKUL TO GOOGLE : THE DIGITAL TURN OF INDIAN EDUCATION” (A part of the events for Observation of Students’ Week 2026)



## IMPRINT INVESTITURE CEREMONY



## MEETENG : ALUMNI INTERFACE



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## ECHOES OF THE FOREMOTHERS : A QUIZ CELEBRATING WOMEN WRITERS



## SECRET SANTA : AN IMPRINT INITIATIVE



## INSTITUTIONAL VISIT TO SRFTI



# THE PERFORMATIVE ASPECT OF THE EPIC IN DUTAVAKYAM ATTRIBUTED TO BHASA WITH REFERENCE TO NATYASHASTRA

Aaratrika Ghosh

Department of English Batch 2022-25

## Abstract

Sanskrit dramas are the first known part of classical Indian theatre. These plays relied on the *Natyashastra*, the foundation of classical Sanskrit dramaturgy to perform detailed, highly stylized dramas. The plays were usually based on excerpts from the Indian epics of *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* or well-known historical figures and events. These narratives were then arranged into the structured form of Sanskrit plays to be performed as prescribed by Bharata Muni. Sri Bhasa, one of the first known Sanskrit playwright has also used the epics as his plot source. In his *Dutavakyam*, he uses the epic narrative of Bhagavat-yana-parva of *The Mahabharata*, where Krishna goes as an envoy of the Padavas for peace talk with the Kauravas and adds some of his own innovation to transform it into the play. The verse is remodelled into a performance such that it has dramatic effect and invokes the *rasa* out of the bhavas from its actions. This paper aims to examine the performative aspect of the epic in *Dutavakyam* attributed to Bhasa focusing on the structure, characterization and dialogue, dramatic technique and the *rasa* with reference to *Natyashastra*.

**Keywords :** Bhasa, epic, performance, *rasa*.

## Introduction

Performance takes place as action, interaction and relation. (Schechner, 30)

Although the classical Sanskrit form of theatre does not exist outside of *Koodiyattam* anymore, the play in itself speaks a lot about the performance of the drama. Thus, Schechner words on performance as action, interaction and relation can easily be related to the epic plot in *Dutavakyam* which is very active in action and becomes precise but interactive between Krishna and Duryodhana, in comparison to the long verses of the original epic text. The theory of drama in itself is focused on performance. According to *Natyashastra*, the drama is also 'a mimicry of actions and conducts of people'. The drama is called *rupaka* or *rupa* which means representation. This play represents the Bhagavatparva of Mahabharata where Krishna goes as a messenger of peace to the Kauravas before the Kurukshetra war. The epic's narrative is taken and transformed into a performance.

'It is an established practice of the dramatists of the world that they prefer to erect the edifices of their plays on the foundations of well-known stories as an old story lends itself more easily to the creation of dramatic effect.' (Venkatachalam, 27) The plot is kept the same but minor alterations and addition of the portrait and the humanisation of the *Sudarshan chakra* creates suspense which is the very essence of drama. Even *Natyashastra* talks of this as the basic principle of drama. All types of play except the prakarana, draw their plot from myth or history. Especially "once a line of

performances is established, the “source” becomes not the event itself – frequently exactly what happened is in dispute or cannot be determined with any historical clarity – but other performances.” (Schechner, 249) Additionally, every performance is different from the other. There are always some minor alterations. Performance itself has a very fluid nature.

### **The structure of Dutavakyam**

Unlike the other playwrights, Bhasa did not follow the Natyashastra strictly. He has made many improvisations in his plays. Likewise, Dutavakyam is supposedly a nataka but it is a one-act play in contrast to the tradition of multiple-act drama. Yet the plot consists of a single day and a particular incident. The name of the play is determined by the principal plot, *adhikarika*. In this case Krishna is the envoy who has come with peace speech to the Kauravas to make a last attempt at stopping their destruction, thus, the name Duta-vakyam.

The performance of the drama is always started with a puja or nandi, the Indian equivalent of invocation. It is not attached to the play but definitely performed before it begins for the play's success. After that a *prastavana* or prologue is recited by the *sutradhar*, understood as the holder of the string or threads because they are the director or stage-manager of the play. According to *Natyashastra*, the *prastavana* was separate from the play but Bhasa uses it to introduce the plot of the play and directly get into it. As the play revolves around Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu, respect is given and Vishnu is invoked. “May Vishnu's foot protect you- the foot that brings joy to all the worlds.” (Bhasa, 4) Immediately after, the premise of the play is introduced in the prologue talking of the hostile situation between the Pandavas and Kauravas leading to the actual act. The act is simple enough revolving around the conversation between Krishna and Duryodhana with the exception of the dramatic effects.

### **The dramatic techniques**

Plays are meant to be performed and thus, innovations are brought into the plot line for dramatic effect. Bhasa is best known for his use of dramatic techniques. In *Dutavakyam*, he makes Duryodhana the king and keeps Dhritarashtra in the sideline until the end when he pleads to Krishna to forgive his son. Additionally, Duryodhana carries all the conversation for his brothers and uncle, Sakuni to maintain a unity of impression in the play and possibly make the stage less crowded. Bhasa shows his creative genius through the employment of the painting of the dice game, Draupadi being shamed as the whole Sabha watches. It serves as a reminder of Duryodhana's participation in evil acts and puts him in greater negative light.

Another innovation here is the humanisation of all Vishnu's weapon, particularly the Sudarshan chakra. When an enraged Krishna assumes his infinite form (*Vishvaroop*), he summons his weapons and Sudarshana in human form converses with Vasudev Krishna and calms him down as he was ready to kill Duryodhana for the insults. “Pardon, blessed Narayana. Thou didst descend upon the earth, O God, to ease its burdens; if now this man should pass like this, thy trouble would be in vain.” (Bhasa, 13). Sudarshana also makes sure all the other weapons are sent away one by one. These addition causes an exaggeration of events and visual awe amongst the audience. The *rupaka* or representation avoided stark realism and gave utmost scope to imagination and fancy. These technicalities are projected as a performance.

## Dialogue, style and characterisation

According to *Natyashastra*, *abhinaya* is based on *angika*, *vachika*, *aharya* and *satvika*. The language or dialogues are taken from the *Rigveda* while *abhinaya* is taken from *Yajurveda*. “*Vachik* is equally important, (as) one should take care of words for these are known as the body of the dramatic art.” (Bharata, 250) In fact the other types complimented with the *vachika*. *Dutavakyam* has very simple dialogues and it was written completely in Sanskrit as the conversation is going on between elites. The dialogues are witty and in connection with the epic narrative. Additionally, the style of dramatic production is of four types verbal, grand, energetic, graceful. Among them the style of verbal (*Bharati*) which uses speech extensively and employs male characters exclusively, and energetic (*Arabhati*) which presents a bold person speaking, falling down and bragging, deeds of magic and conjuration can be felt in *Dutavakyam*.

It is verbal because 'vakyam' is present in the title itself and the play only has male characters present like Krishna, Duryodhana, Dhritarashtra, Sudarshana and the Chamberlain named Badarayana by Bhasa. It is energetic because arrogant Duryodhana speaks very boldly against Krishna, tries to insult him by not respecting him and standing up when he enters. Consequently, falling down because of Krishna's *leela*. Krishna conjures Sudarshana and the other weapons due to his anger. As far as characterization is concerned Krishna is the grand, divine being while Duryodhana is human filled with hatred and lust for bloodshed and power. He acts as a foil to Krishna. The convention of the aside in the play is also very notable.

## The *rasa* and the *bhavas*

*Rasa* (sentiments) is the core of the Sanskrit plays and arises out of the emotions or *bhavas*. Thus, the *rasa* theory looks at different emotions and observes how they are portrayed, proposed and communicated through a work. One has to be sensitive enough to connect with the emotion of the work and experience the Indian aesthetics. *Rasa* was taken from *Atharvaveda* and means poetic pleasure, the 'extract' and the 'taste' upon listening, here it is after reading the play. The primary goal of *rasa* is to take spectators (*prikshak*) into a different reality filled with wonder and delight where one can reflect on the core of their perception. According to *Natyashastra*, “*vibhavanubhava vyabhichari samyogat rasa nishpattih*”, the realization of *rasa* results from the union of *vibhavas*, *anubhavas*, and *vyabhikaribhavas*. When *sthaibhavas* unites with others, the three *bhavas*, one attains the quality of *rasa*. He further says that 'no meaning proceeds (from speech) without (any kind of) *rasa*' (Bharata, 105).

In *Dutavakyam*, *rudra*, *vira*, *bibhatsa* and *adbhutarasas* are evoked out of the eight *rasas* at different instances. The insults hurled at Krishna by Duryodhana leading to him becoming enraged and calling upon his weapons in his *Vishvaroop* (infinite form) shows the essence of *rudra rasa* out of *krodh bhava*. Additionally, Bhasa is adept at the portrayal of *Vira rasa*. The diplomacy of Krishna, his reputation of might, influence, presence of mind during the negotiation and rightly reacting to Duryodhana's attempt at imprisoning him all evokes heroic sentiments. Along with the sense of *bibhatsa rasa* or disgust when Duryodhana seeks pleasure upon seeing the painting of the dice game evoked out of us and Krishna rising from *jugupsa bhava*. There is a feeling of awe or *adbhuta rasa* emerging from the *rismaya bhava* when we see the divine form of Krishna and his *leela*.

## Conclusion

Bhasa identified great scope of story-telling in *The Mahabharata* as majority of his plays are excerpts from this epic. The epic has its own way of performing as an oral literature more than the written epic but the transformation of the narrative to the play takes the performative aspect to new heights. Bhasa's genius and the performative nature of the extracted portion of the epic frame in *Dutavakyam* lies in his shrewd editing and adapting of the tales from the epic by only retaining familiar characters of Krishna and Duryodhana and Krishna going as a messenger to the Kurus but the talk is unsuccessful and war is inevitable episode. Hereby, presenting them on an altogether fresh canvas with dramatic effects and theatrical values. Thus, the culture is etched into public memory through these performing arts.

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# THE TRAGEDY OF BOUNDLESS AMBITION : 'DOCTOR FAUSTUS' IN THE LIGHT OF ARISTOTLE'S POETICS

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## ABSTRACT

Aristotle defines tragedy in *Poetics* in chapter six. He defines tragedy as : “A tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in several parts of the play; in dramatic, not in narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.” Tragedy, like all other forms of art, is a form of imitation but it deals with serious actions only. Therefore, Aristotle considered tragedy as a highest poetic form that is not a mere slavish coping. Therefore, tragedy differs from comedy because comedy lacks serious actions and imitates grotesque actions. According to Aristotle, the term complete means the plot of a tragedy should have a proper beginning, middle and an end. The sequence of the incidents should be logical. Aristotle defines tragedy as the imitation of a serious and complete action that arouses pity and fear and finally results in catharsis, or emotional purification. He also outlines important elements of tragedy such as plot, character, and tragic error (hamartia). One of the most important ideas in the *Poetics* is that the tragic hero should not be completely good or evil but someone admirable who falls because of a mistake or flaw. This paper analyses Christopher Marlowe's play, “Doctor Faustus” in terms of Aristotle's concept of a tragedy, as he defines in his *Poetics*.

## INTRODUCTION

Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (around 1589-1592) is one of the most significant tragedies of the Elizabethan age, dramatizing the Renaissance conflict between medieval Christian morality and humanist aspiration. While the play is often examined through theological or Renaissance humanist lenses, it can also be fruitfully analyzed using Aristotle's theory of tragedy as outlined in the *Poetics*. Although Aristotle's framework was developed for Greek tragedy, many of its principles – such as hamartia, peripeteia, anagnorisis, and catharsis – remain applicable to later tragic forms. This paper analyzes *Doctor Faustus* in light of Aristotle's conception of tragedy, evaluating how far the play conforms to or diverges from classical tragic norms. Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is one of the most powerful tragedies of the Elizabethan age. It tells the story of a brilliant scholar whose desire for unlimited knowledge and power leads him to make a fatal bargain with the devil. Although the play is deeply rooted in Christian ideas of sin, repentance, and damnation, it can also be examined through the lens of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Aristotle's theory of tragedy, originally meant for Greek drama, still provides useful tools for understanding Faustus's rise and fall. When viewed in Aristotelian terms, *Doctor Faustus* shows many of the key features of a tragedy, even though it does not follow classical rules perfectly.

## Aristotle's Concept of Tragedy

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle defines tragedy as “an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude,” presented in dramatic rather than narrative form, and designed to

arouse pity and fear, thereby achieving catharsis. Aristotle emphasizes six elements of tragedy, ranked in order of importance: plot, character, thought, diction, spectacle, and song. Among these, plot (*mythos*) is paramount.

A tragic hero, according to Aristotle, is neither wholly virtuous nor villainous but a person of high status whose downfall results from hamartia – a tragic error or flaw – rather than moral depravity. The ideal tragedy includes peripeteia (reversal of fortune) and anagnorisis (recognition or discovery), often occurring together, leading to the hero's downfall and emotional purification of the audience.

### **Faustus as an Aristotelian Tragic Hero**

Faustus closely aligns with Aristotle's conception of the tragic hero. He is a man of exceptional intellectual stature – “graced with doctor's name” – and thus socially and intellectually elevated, satisfying Aristotle's requirement that the tragic hero be a figure of significance. Faustus is not evil by nature; rather, his downfall stems from hamartia, which in his case can be identified as overreaching ambition and intellectual pride.

Faustus's error lies not merely in his desire for knowledge but in his rejection of moral and spiritual limits. His decision to practice necromancy is a conscious choice, yet Aristotle allows for tragic error to arise from misjudgement rather than pure wickedness. Faustus mistakenly believes that limitless power and sensual pleasure will bring fulfilment, underestimating both divine justice and the consequences of his pact with Lucifer. This miscalculation aligns well with Aristotle's notion of hamartia.

### **Plot Structure and Unity**

Aristotle stresses that a tragedy must have unity of action, with all events contributing logically to a single plot. *Doctor Faustus* broadly satisfies this requirement: the central action is Faustus's pact with the devil and its inevitable consequences. The opening scenes establish Faustus's dissatisfaction with traditional disciplines, leading directly to his fatal choice. The final catastrophe – the damnation of Faustus – follows necessarily from this initial decision.

However, the play partially diverges from Aristotelian ideals due to its episodic middle sections, which include comic scenes and relatively inconsequential magical pranks. Aristotle criticizes episodic plots in which events follow one another without necessity or probability. The comic interludes involving Wagner, the Clown, and the Horse-Courser weaken the structural unity of the tragedy, though they may serve a thematic purpose by trivializing Faustus's misuse of power and heightening the final horror through contrast.

### **Peripeteia and Anagnorisis**

Doctor Faustus includes elements of peripeteia, though they are less sharply defined than in classical Greek tragedy. Faustus's fortunes reverse not abruptly but gradually: the power he gains through magic fails to bring the satisfaction he anticipates. Instead of commanding empires, he performs cheap tricks for nobles and peasants. This slow reversal underscores the hollowness of his ambitions.

Anagnorisis occurs most powerfully in the final scene, when Faustus recognizes the full extent of his error and the reality of eternal damnation. His anguished soliloquy – “O soul, be changed into little water-drops” – reveals clear self-awareness and recognition of truth, fulfilling Aristotle's requirement that recognition arise logically from the plot itself. The delayed nature of this recognition intensifies the tragic effect, as it comes too late to avert catastrophe.

## **Catharsis : Pity and Fear**

According to Aristotle, tragedy must evoke pity and fear in the audience. *Doctor Faustus* achieves this effect convincingly. The audience feels pity for Faustus because his suffering is immense and because he possesses qualities – intelligence, aspiration, dissatisfaction with limits – that are admirable and relatable. At the same time, the audience experiences fear because Faustus's fate serves as a warning: his flaws are recognizably human, and his punishment suggests the terrifying consequences of moral error.

The final scene, in which Faustus desperately begs for time and mercy as the devils approach, is particularly effective in producing catharsis. The audience's emotional response culminates in a purging of fear and pity, aligning closely with Aristotle's model of tragic effect.

## **Thought, Diction and Spectacle**

In Aristotelian terms, *thought (dianoia)* refers to the ideas and themes expressed in the play. *Doctor Faustus* is rich in philosophical thought, exploring free will, predestination, knowledge, power, and repentance. These themes are conveyed through Faustus's soliloquies, which reflect Renaissance humanist concerns.

*Marlowe's diction* – notably his use of blank verse – exemplifies Aristotle's emphasis on elevated language appropriate to tragedy. Faustus's speeches are rhetorically powerful and contribute significantly to character development and emotional impact.

*Spectacle*, though the least important element for Aristotle, plays a notable role in *Doctor Faustus*. Devils, apparitions, and magical effects enhance dramatic intensity. While Aristotle warns against relying too heavily on spectacle, Marlowe generally subordinates visual effects to character and theme.

## **CONCLUSION**

Viewed through the lens of Aristotle's *Poetics*, *Doctor Faustus* emerges as a largely successful tragedy, though one adapted to Elizabethan dramatic conventions rather than classical Greek norms. Faustus functions as an Aristotelian tragic hero whose downfall results from hamartia rather than inherent evil. The play achieves catharsis through pity and fear, incorporates recognition and reversal, and maintains a coherent tragic action despite episodic deviations.

Ultimately, *Doctor Faustus* demonstrates how Aristotelian tragic principles can be reshaped within a Christian and Renaissance framework. Marlowe's tragedy affirms the enduring relevance of Aristotle's theory while also revealing the flexibility of tragic form across historical and cultural contexts.

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# “THE SHRINKING EARTH” : VOICES OF DECAY AND DISCONNECTION IN RIMBAUD, ELIOT AND MOHINER GHORAGULI

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores how Arthur Rimbaud's "Asleep in the Valley" (originally "Le Dormeur du val") (1870), T. S. Eliot's "Preludes" (1910–11), and Mohiner Ghoraguli's Bengali song "Prithibita Naki Choto Hote Hote" (1979) reveal a common concern with social fragmentation, alienation, and moral decline across changing historical timelines and cultures. Rimbaud's war poem reveals the moral horror of violence. Eliot's urban montage captures the spiritual hollowness of modern industrial life; while Mohiner Ghoraguli's modern Bengali rock song laments the shrinking space for emotional intimacy in an age of mass media and alienation. Each work functions as a symbol of civilizational decline. Their tone remains elegiac yet humane, offering not only despair but also the ache of awareness – an emotional resistance to the world's slow forgetting.

## INTRODUCTION

Across centuries and continents, artists have wrestled with the central idea of social decay. Arthur Rimbaud, a nineteenth century French poet, writing about the Franco-Prussian War, posed it through the corpse of a soldier lying peacefully among the beauty of nature. T. S. Eliot, in the early twentieth century, presents it through the exhausted rhythm of repetitive urban life. Nearly a century later, in post-colonial Bengal, the band Mohiner Ghoraguli sang of a planet made smaller by media, yet lonelier than ever. All three works foreground fragmentation as a symptom of civilizational decline.

In "Asleep in the Valley," (originally "Le Dormeur du val") the beauty of nature surrounding the Soldier becomes cruel and unbearable once the reader realizes it hides death. In "Preludes," Eliot's urban imagery set in winter symbolizes death, hollowness and decay which dissolves the self into repetition and grime. And in "Prithibita Naki Choto Hote Hote," the voice reveals :

“তারারাও যত আলোকবর্ষ দূরে...তারো দূরে / তুমি আর আমি যাই ক্রমে সরে সরে...”

(“Even though the stars are light-years apart, you and I are eventually moving farther away”).

These works form a chain of moral perception stretching across time – from the battlefields of Europe to the smoky streets of the Western cities to the electric loneliness of modern Bengal. They confront social breakdown through the moral feeling of witnessing human life getting degraded by war, industry, or technology. In this sense, all three are elegies – not for individuals, but for societies losing their capacity for empathy. This comparison demonstrates how literary and musical texts repeatedly return to alienation as a defining symptom of modernity.

## RIMBAUD'S JUXTAPOSITION OF INNOCENCE AND DEATH

Arthur Rimbaud's "Asleep in the Valley" (originally "Le Dormeur du val") presents one of poetry's most devastating contrasts between peace, violence and death. Written in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War, the sonnet lures the reader into a false sense of security through its peaceful depiction of nature's beauty and tranquility, only to shatter that illusion with a brutal final revelation. Rimbaud's craft is portrayed through the masterful manipulation of perspective, exploiting the gap between appearance and reality.

The poem opens with an idyllic pastoral scene:

"C'est un trou de verdure où chante une rivière,  
Accrochant follement aux herbes des haillons  
D'argent..."

("A small green valley where a slow stream flows.../  
...from the mountain top stream the Sun's rays;")

The imagery evokes repose, abundance, and the innocence of rural France. But the final line shatters this tranquility:

"Il a deux trous rouges au côté droit."  
("In his side there are two red holes.")

Critic W. M. Frohock notes, "Rimbaud turns pastoral into indictment; the repose of the scene becomes unbearable." The "sleeping" soldier, on a "sun-soaked bed," lies not in rest but in eternal stillness – a casualty of a war waged by nations that claimed to protect their society. The poem's brevity intensifies its emotional force, yet it conveys a powerful message about the fragility of life and the devastating impact of violence. It depicts a serene natural setting contrasting sharply with the horrific aftermath of war.

According to Thomas Connolly, Rimbaud's poem represents a horror that is not abstract, but carnal. The young soldier, possibly no older than Rimbaud himself, becomes the victim of politics. Nature's beauty mocks civilization's brutality. Rimbaud's juxtaposition of the peaceful valley with the fallen soldier symbolizes the shattered hopes of an generation.

## ELIOT'S POTRAYAL OF DECAY AND HOLLOWNESS IN SOCIETY

Forty years later, in T. S. Eliot's "Preludes," the setting shifts to the metropolis. The war is over, but another kind of decay has begun – the slow erosion of the individual self under the weight of modern life.

"The winter evening settles down... /  
The burnt-out ends of smoky days."

In these fragmented images, Eliot gives us not heroism but habit. Robert Archambeau describes the subject matter of the poem as "urban and inelegant" – featuring "broken blinds and chimney pots" and "the yellow soles of feet." As modernity intensifies, the repeated phrase 'Six o'clock' suggests mechanical temporality, hints at the progressive atomization of the world.

Eliot's modern city is a graveyard without bodies – a site of spiritual and emotional extinction. Where Rimbaud's soldier dies once, Eliot's people die daily, losing their sense of soul in a cyclic

world. "Preludes" ends not with redemption but with a kind of bleak hope, as though one can only "wipe your hand across your mouth and laugh."

The laughter, however, is hollow – a survival reflex. Like Rimbaud's fallen youth, Eliot's citizens are casualties of a modern civilization. Both poets thus mourn the moral price of modernity : the loss of intimacy, of inner coherence, of the ability to feel wholly human.

This sense of exhaustion reaches fuller expression in Eliot's later poem, "The Hollow Men":

"This is how the world ends  
Not with a bang but a whimper"

The poet envisions the end of the modern world and the collapse of the spiritual life as anticlimactic rather than catastrophic. The repetitions of the lines mirror the fragmentation of the world. The poem reinforces the sense of moral and spiritual disintegration. The contrast between the expected "bang" and the final "whimper" encapsulates the modern condition of civilizational collapse not through dramatic destruction, but through gradual erosion. The poem becomes a formal embodiment of hollowness, capturing the existential fragmentation of the post World War I generation.

## **FRAGMENTATION AND THE SHRINKING OF THE WORLD UPHELD BY MOHINER GHORAGULI**

In 1975, seven middle-class Bengali young men from Calcutta came together to form a rock band, including the band's noted lyricist, Gautam Chattopadhyay. As the world witnessed two World Wars leaving the human mind and body devastated, in post-colonial Bengal, the band Mohiner Ghoraguli (often called India's first urban rock band) rearticulated similar anxieties in a world of mass media. The song "Prithibita Naki Choto Hote Hote" ("The World, They Say, is Getting Smaller") begins almost ironically :

“পৃথিবীটা নাকি ছোট হতে হতে  
স্যাটেলাইট আর কেবলের হাতে...  
ড্রইংরুমে রাখা বোকা বাক্সে বন্দী”

("The world, they say, is getting smaller,  
In the hands of satellite and cables...  
Imprisoned inside the dumb box in the drawing room.")

Here, the "dumb box" refers to television – a glowing screen that promises connection and information only to offer isolation. Mohiner Ghoraguli's songs turned the mirror inward, locating decay not in war or politics but in the numbness of modern city life. The song captures the paradox of modern progress:

“তারারাও যত আলোকবর্ষ দূরে...তারো দূরে  
তুমি আর আমি যাই ক্রমে সরে সরে...”

("Even though the stars are light-years apart...farther than that  
you and I are eventually moving farther away").

The idea of light years gives the modern isolation a cosmic scale. The song transforms technological achievement into emotional hollowness. It mirrors the detachment portrayed in twenty-first century contemporary song "Modern Loneliness" by Lauv where the person reveals:

“Modern loneliness, we're never alone  
But always depressed”

As the souls try to “find a reason to get up”, the song reflects the lack of motivation to carry out the monotonous, lifeless duties in the modern society. Like Eliot's poem, it mourns the spiritual consequences of a mechanized, commercialized world.

## **WITNESSING THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN ALIENATION**

In Rimbaud, the body lies still in nature, a casualty of human violence. In Eliot, the body becomes mechanical, a soulless vessel, while Mohiner Ghoraguli presents the human mind as suffocating and losing itself within the cage of satellite and wires.

This evolution mirrors the historical movement from physical violence (war) to industrial fatigue to electronic emptiness (technology). Each stage represents a systematic loss of humanity. Interaction and intimacy decrease in this world gradually, putting an end to what it really means to be human. Art and literature become a mere escape as well as representation of the reality. The Theory of Depersonalization, as introduced by Eliot in his seminal essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” separates the “man who suffers” from the “mind which creates”:

“Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape these things.” This idea helps explain why emotional restraint intensifies, rather than weakens, the force of alienation in all three works.

Though time operates differently in each work, one thing remains constant – progressive decay and disconnection. Rimbaud's decay is death wearing the guise of tranquility. Eliot's decay is cyclical; making each morning repeat the same fatigue. Mohiner Ghoraguli's decay is progressive: each generation grows more connected yet more alone. The poems and song become acts of resistance, preserving emotion in the face of automation.

All three works heavily focus on the gradual alienation through decay engraved in humanity's progress. They demand that we feel the distance, the loss and the numbness which culminates itself into an image of survival.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through Rimbaud's still soldier to Eliot's sordid cityscape and finally, with the Mohiner Ghoraguli's progressive loneliness, we see the emergence of a single idea – civilization's relentless decline. Each work documents the different stages of humanity's slow forgetting of itself. Yet, these artists do not merely chronicle decline, they resist it through artistic articulation of disseminating. By making decay visible, they preserve what civilization threatens to erase: moral consciousness, empathy, intimacy and the ability to recognize the sufferings of the soul.

In tracing this movement from battlefield to broadcasting, we see not three separate crises but one continuous fall. The body once violated in war, then numbed by routine, finally disappears into screen. Humanity, in advancing, risks forgetting how to feel.

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# INSIDE OUT, UPSIDE DOWN : A PSYCHOANALYTIC DIVE INTO CHILDREN'S MEDIA FROM CARROLL TO PIXAR

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## ABSTRACT

Children's media often have this sort of an ineffable charm, which is difficult to quite put a finger on. As a child, it is only obvious that everything feels overwhelming, especially if you are unfamiliar with the cardinal rules of mortal cynicism. Children's media, with their steadfast optimism and extensive lexicon of gibberish, have managed to achieve a level of relatability by giving them a ticket to a realm where the obstinate rules of reality simply refuse to apply. Their allure lies in their strength in capturing and communicating complex ideas in easily digestible, witty plots and visually attractive imagery.

However, as it turns out, convoluted concepts do not suddenly become more coherent once the clock strikes 12; if anything, they only grow more convoluted, as now you possess the conscious awareness of them without necessarily gaining true understanding. Mental illness happens to be among many such other concepts. The sensitivity and complexity of the matter hardly daunts the architects of children's media and as a result, the portrayal of mental disorders in children's media have been consistent. This paper attempts to examine the depiction of mental illness and how it shapes our character's identity in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass* and Pixar's *Inside Out 1 & 2*.

## INTRODUCTION

According to **Freud**, most of us spend a good chunk of our daily lives moderating between the primal instincts of our "id" and the demands of our "ego" and "superego". In simple terms, **Id** is the instinct-driven, pleasure-seeking part of the conscience, focused on the pleasure principle, **Ego** is the reason and common sense that balances the Id's impulses with real-world impediments and **Superego** is the moral prescription representing societal demands and parental agency, often motivated by the need to cater to socially accepted behavior. In Carroll's magnum opus, the psychoanalytic theory finds a natural manifestation in its main characters : **Alice**, the **Queen of Hearts** and the **Cheshire Cat**. Carroll himself describes the Queen as "sort of embodiment of ungovernable passion – a blind and aimless Fury". The Cheshire Cat is associated with an authoritative and guiding figure similar to the **Superego** and acts as a constant reminder of Alice's life back at home. Like the **Id** and the **Superego** who are constantly locking horns, Alice too struggles to reconcile her instincts and morality on several occasions while simultaneously preserving her agency in Wonderland.

The child psychoanalyst **Erik Erikson** is often recognized for his **psychosocial stages of development**. This theory posits that we all encounter a certain crisis that contributes to our

personality development at specific stages throughout our lifespan. When we experience such crises, we equip ourselves with core psychological strengths and qualities such as hope, purpose, confidence and wisdom. In *Inside Out 2*, a 13-year old Riley is tasked with carving herself a unique identity amidst external pressures from peers and society in a new competitive environment. When **Anxiety** takes the front seat in our emotions, as it does for Riley, it inevitably leads to **identity confusion** – a state where the individual prioritizes social conformity over personal authenticity. Rather than owning her personal values and beliefs, Riley's **Anxiety** guides her to a proclivity towards an artificial persona shaped by external validation and the desperate need to be accepted by her more "cooler" peers. Riley rejecting her true self in favor of a more socially palatable mask interferes with the natural process of identity formation and self-confidence in adolescents.

### **ALICE'S SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IN THE WONDERLAND**

Before her adventures, Alice feels a dreadful sense of loneliness from which she can find no refuge, no place to latibulate. Prior to entering the Looking-Glass World, her only companions are her cats, to whom she attributes human qualities to keep her company which is unattainable to her in the real world. As isolated as she is from the people around her, Alice's imagination is anything but idle, constantly conjuring up dreams so lifelike that they blur the lines between facts and fiction, achieving a verisimilitude so convincing that even the sanest of minds might waver in discerning the difference. During her time in Wonderland, Alice encounters an eclectic bunch of characters with bizarre logic and peculiar norms that do not align with rules of our world. Alice readily complies with irrational etiquette of Wonderland such as the anthropomorphic animals smoking hookah, the caucus-race or illogical conversations that follow the daily 6 o'clock tea-party. On the contrary, she willingly indulges in some of these peculiarities which display her gradual distortion of cognition and perception. Her incapacity to differentiate between reality and fantasy appears to result from underlying cognitive abnormalities, which are indicative of symptoms commonly associated with personality disorders and schizophrenia. Though her extraordinary behavior can be attributed to an unprejudiced mindset towards oddities, characteristic of childhood, or even just a quirk essential for a compelling protagonist of a fairytale, it is difficult to overlook her constant forgetfulness and confusion as a stylistic choice.

Alice fails to recall any of her bookish knowledge, and she is left even more perplexed when her arithmetic and geography fails her. Her attempts to re-establish an identity which hints at familiarity in a foreign world proves to be futile and only reiterates her discomfort in a hostile and unknown environment. This discomfort is also reflected in the dialogue between Alice and the Caterpillar. When asked about her identity, Alice answers: "I am not me anymore"; this statement hints at the difficulty of growing up and trying to find your own individuality and beliefs in a world full of adults where nothing quite adds up.

### **ANXIETY AND THE TURMOIL OF "FITTING IN" IN INSIDE OUT**

During the early stages of making *Inside Out 2*, Pixar consulted psychologist Dr Lisa Damour, who discussed the movie in a recent podcast called "The Making of *Inside Out 2*." Damour, like several mental health professionals, holds that Anxiety is a double-edged sword and is a natural and sometimes beneficial response that, when kept in balance, can work in our favor. Occasionally, anxiety prepares us for the future, prompting us to brace ourselves to deal with intimidating scenarios

and enhance our overall performance under high-pressure environments. Anxiety herself goes on to say in the film: "He (Fear) keeps Riley safe from things she can see. My job is to keep her safe from things she can't see." This quote foreshadows the role Anxiety will go on to play in Riley's turbulent transition to teenage hood while also going through puberty. Besides the conspicuous physical changes, puberty brings for Riley a gratuitous bundle of constant mood swings, bursts of inexplicable anger and irritation and all-consuming need for social acceptance from her peers and teachers. A marked difference from its predecessor is the diminishing role her family plays in Riley's life, once the very nucleus of her core personality Family Island is now just a tiny chunk of a larger emotional landscape, overshadowed by the growing importance of Friendship Island and Riley's social life.

After Anxiety literally bottles up Riley's existing emotions and singularly focuses on winning a spot in the Fire Hawks and making new "cooler" and older friends, her anxiety-fueled train of thought initially bears fruit. Riley wakes up earlier than her friends to practice ice-hockey, steadily improves as a result, quickly adapts to a challenging environment and befriends several new girls, however, this also leads her to develop an unhealthy dependence on gaining approval from people around her. She goes on to cut off every aspect of the old Riley, including her best friends and favorite band, and finds herself doing things she once would never have thought of, including breaking into the coach's office. Negative beliefs overcrowd Riley's subconscious: "If I'm good at hockey, I'll have friends." "If I make the high school team, I won't be lonely." Despite Anxiety whole heartedly believing she is protecting Riley by forming a better "sense of self", all it gives in return is a ruthless self-critique that is all too familiar to many of us : "I'm not good enough." In a moment of *éclaircissement*, Joy acknowledges that the only way Riley can become truly better is by accepting all aspects of her personality, both the good and bad. *Inside Out 2* puts forward a simple yet impactful lesson, while Anxiety is a natural and unavoidable aspect of life, we cannot let it choose who we become as a person.

## CONCLUSION

Children's media possess a special talent for simplifying complicated matters such as mental disorders and turbulent changes during adolescence, presenting them in a manner so easily digestible, that children and adults alike understand it effortlessly in just a matter of seconds. A tedious task, indeed, one that no renowned psychiatrist or thick textbooks of flowery jargon can claim to achieve with equal finesse. In their respective stories, both Alice and Riley come across challenging situations where they must reconsider everything that they consider an integral part of their personality.

children, we often have to carry the unwanted burden of the social performance so guilelessly expected by the people around us: our peers, our parents or by society in general. Alice, after tumbling down the rabbit hole, enters a strange universe in which logic is malleable, identities are in constant flux, and her very self is in doubt; a symbolic, realistic depiction of growing up. Similarly, Riley in *Inside Out* too is forced into emotional turmoil when she leaves home and must navigate a completely unfamiliar environment where her abilities are constantly questioned. Both tales demonstrate how children's media elegantly portrays the intricacies of identity construction and emotional depth in whimsical storytelling, giving us a necessary reminder that maybe psychology and fantasy are more similar than we think.

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# “FRAGMENTED TIME AND PARALLEL REALITIES IN DEATH OF A SALESMAN – INTERPRETING WILLY LOMAN'S HALLUCINATIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF QUANTUM THEORY.”

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## ABSTRACT

Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* can be interpreted not only as a psychological play but also as a work that resembles the structure of the Quantum Consciousness theory. Willy Loman, the protagonist of the play, has recurring audio-visual hallucinations that are more than mere memories; they are immersive, emotional realities that overlap with the present. This paper analyses how his cognitive hallucinations allow blurring the line between objective reality and the quantum state of his mind. By exploring the concepts of superposition, wave-function collapse and Orch-OR theory, this paper examines how Willy inhabits the temporal realms of reality and multiple dimensions of time, challenging the conventional literary perceptions of time and reality.

**Keywords** – Quantum consciousness, cognitive hallucinations, superposition, wave-function collapse, Orch-OR theory.

## INTRODUCTION

Willy Loman is portrayed as a man trapped between the memories of the past and the demands of the present. He does not merely travel through different time shifts but he acts according to them. These experiences are not simply memories, but cognitive hallucinations. Willy, being 'unconsciously conscious' slips into these states where he is completely immersed in a different realm. His mental state represents a mental superposition where he is physically present in the modern day but mentally conscious in the Quantum past, which functions similarly to the principles of quantum physics.

Physicist Roger Penrose and anesthesiologist Stuart Hameroff argue that human consciousness involves a non-computable process, which arises from Orchestrated Objective Reduction (OrchOR). It occurs when quantum states in microtubules collapse in a coordinated and meaningful way. Applying this framework, Willy inhabits those memories rather than just recalling them. His brain serves as a bridge, allowing him to move between different coherent worlds, and every decision serves as an alternate outcome.

## Cognitive Hallucination: Reality of Willy's vision

Cognitive hallucination occurs when the brain creates experiences that feel real. Unlike regular hallucinations, these utilize memory, emotion, and imagination to create a coherent and immersive structure. In *Death of a Salesman*, whenever Willy is hallucinating, it always feels real and intact

because his brain combines perceptual experiences of past and imagined future possibilities into a single coherent experience. This explains why Willy's vision possesses vivid sensory and emotional realism. His hallucinations are often triggered by specific objects or sounds that dissolve the boundary between present and past. Whether he is reliving moments with the younger.

Biff and Happy, or when he slips into a conversation with his older brother, Ben, during a card game with Charley, for him, these 'real world' experiences hold more weightage than his actual surrounding reality.

"BEN : I must make a train, William. There are several properties I'm looking at Alaska.

WILLY : Sure, sure! If I'd gone with him to Alaska that time, everything would've been totally different.

CHARLEY : Go on, you'd froze to death up there." (Miller, *Death of Salesman*, Act One)

This reflects his emotional regret that he didn't go with him, and Ben represents the only opportunity Willy had to reach the heights of his dreams. So, when he hallucinates about Ben, he is not merely thinking about him; his mind produces a perceptual experience that causes him to react physically, overriding the normal cognitive system and intensifying the realism. Therefore, his hallucinations become indistinguishable from reality, explaining why Willy behaves and responds to them as if they are present in the 'real world.'

### **Quantum Consciousness: Architecture of Willy's Hallucination**

According to the theory of Orch-OR, Penrose suggested that the wave-function collapse in quantum mechanics is not random but objective, governed by the structure of space-time itself, and Hameroff proposed that microtubules (tiny protein structures inside neurons) orchestrate these quantum collapses to produce moments of conscious experience. "Consciousness is to do with the actual collapse" (Eagleman 00:35:32). Unless a collapse happens, all memories, desires, and fears remain in superposition, i.e., coexistence of multiple possible narrative realities, and these superposed states remain in quantum entanglement, where two or more particles become linked so deeply that their quantum states can not be described independently.

In Willy's mind, until a collapse has happened into a definite state, many possibilities remain in superposition, such as Ben being successful and validating, Willy going to Alaska, or Willy as a worthy person versus Willy as a failed salesman. Every possibility is present and entangled, without which his hallucinations would feel fragmented, chaotic, or disconnected, which the play does not suggest.

"WILLY : If you hadn't flunked you'd've been set by now!

BIFF : Now, look, I'm gonna tell you what happened, and you're going to listen to me.

YOUNG BERNARD : Mrs. Loman!

BIFF : I waited six hours-

HAPPY : What the hell are you saying ?" (Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, Act Two)

In this scene, while Willy is physically present at the restaurant, his cognitive responses are governed by the past scenes. He answers within his hallucination while his speech, tone, and emotional reactions are shaped by both realities at once. If a wave-function collapse has happened, his present reality would have dominated the hallucination or vice versa. Therefore, his hallucination

exists in a state of superposition, maintaining multiple conflicting realities until a definitive observation is made, while entanglement explains their internal structure. The stage direction also shows a fluidity in transition rather than any clear cuts; he occupies both states at the same time. Quantum consciousness gives existence and structure to his hallucinations, but it does not provide Willy with the first-person experience within them.

### **Collapse of Consciousness : Immersing into Reality**

Quantum consciousness explains the existence of his hallucination, but the Many-Worlds consciousness theory provides the idea of Willy inhabiting those hallucinations with the first-person experience. "The choice you make as to which one is controlled is a quantum choice." (*Eagleman 00:35:19-00:35:22*) When Willy forces a choice between his hallucination and reality, he becomes submerged in the world he ultimately chooses to inhabit. When observed, only one reality remains because the wave-function loses its quality as mentioned, "But once measured or observed, the superposition collapses, and the particle settles into one state." (BlueQubit)

“WILLY : Will you stop laughing ? Will you stop ?

THE WOMAN : Aren't you going to answer the door ? He'll wake the whole hotel.

WILLY : I'm not expecting anybody.” (Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, Act Two)

In this scene, Willy seems to be alone when he slips into the experience of meeting the woman with whom he had an affair. He experiences this without any interference from the real world; his hallucination becomes his perceived reality. Here, he is self-contained within his hallucination as a single outcome, much like when a wave function collapses, and the alternate realities diminish.

“WILLY : Oh, Ben, how did you do it? What is the answer ? Did you wind up the Alaska deal already ?

BEN : Doesn't take much time if you know what you're doing. Just a short business trip.

### **Boarding ship in an hour. Wanted to say good-bye.**

WILLY : Ben, I've got to talk to you.” (Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, Act Two)

Whenever Ben appears, he always speaks with a certain tone and logic, which suggests that his hallucinations are not scattered dreams but complete realities. In both scenes, Willy's awareness becomes localized in one mental world, and he inhabits one reality rather than splitting between two different realities.

The collapse of consciousness results in a single hallucinated world, dissolving the superposition that allows him to inhabit that reality fully. "Instead of consciousness causing the collapse, Penrose suggested that wave-functions collapse spontaneously and in the process give rise to consciousness." (Hameroff) As the play progresses, these collapses become more unstable and frequent as his life becomes harder, so Willy is swayed back to those 'good days' in his mind until he can no longer return to reality.

### **CONCLUSION**

Willy Loman's hallucinations can be interpreted through the lens of quantum physics, in which every possible outcome of a decision occurs in a separate, coexisting branch of reality. His subconscious mind stores the unfulfilled desires, regrets, and imagined outcomes, resulting in

multiple versions of reality existing simultaneously. Therefore, his hallucinations are not merely symptoms of mental instability but reveal a complex interplay of consciousness, perception, and multiple possibilities. The concept of Cognitive Hallucination explains why these hallucinations feel real and vivid, while quantum consciousness elaborates on the different possibilities that exist within his mind. Furthermore, the collapse of consciousness elucidates how he is forced into a single reality due to the collapse of the wave-function, destroying the superposition that once acted as a window into multiple existing possibilities.

Willy's tragedy emerges from his inability to reconcile these realities. His suicide marks the final collapse of all these worlds, and his final attempt to resolve the tension between lived and imagined realities acts as the ultimate decoherence, terminating further branching and collapsing the system into a single, irreversible outcome.

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# REWRITING OPHELIA FROM SHAKESPEARE TO MODERN FEMINIST LITERATURE AND POPULAR CULTURE.

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## ABSTRACT

*Ophelia*, the name appearing frequently in numerous contemporary realms, first presented itself on stage in William Shakespeare's play *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* or simply *Hamlet* (c. 1599-1601), a tragedy which has become one of the most continually reinterpreted works in English literature. Be it modern pop culture, literary works or even the masculine inquisitiveness in the female psycho-analytics, Ophelia has been under the microscope of several critics and is famously a popular muse, inspiring artists ranging from Pre- Raphaelite painters to modern day folk bands like the *Lumineers*. But the "bard" wasn't very descriptive about his heroine. Appearing in only five of the play's twenty scenes and overpowered by domineering figures around her, she suffers more than anyone but her tragedy is subordinated to that of Hamlet and is constantly constrained by patriarchal authority, silenced by male discourse and ultimately destroyed through emotional repression and loss of agency. Feminist critics and contemporary writers have since reclaimed Ophelia as a site of resistance, reinterpretation and narrative empowerment. Drawing on feminist literary theory, psychoanalytic criticism and revisionist literature, this study explores how Ophelia's character has been rewritten to challenge traditional representations of female passivity. Through close readings of *Hamlet*, feminist scholarship (notably Elaine Showalter), modern reinterpretations such as Lisa Fiedler's *Dating Hamlet* and the emergence of Ophelia as an icon in popular culture, this paper argues that Ophelia's transformation reflects a broader cultural shift toward recovering marginalized female voices and recentering women's subjectivity in literary and popular culture.

**(Keywords :** Gender, madness, modern narratives, female sexuality, feminist critics, pop culture icon.

## INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c.1599–1601) remains one of the most frequently studied and performed plays in the English literary canon. While the stage limelight majorly falls on the psychological and existential turmoil of Prince Hamlet, the play also presents one of Shakespeare's most frequently illustrated, cited and haunted portrayal of femininity : *Ophelia*. Traditionally seen as fragile, obedient, and ultimately a "*document in madness*" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act IV Scene 5), Ophelia has long been interpreted as a tragic victim of love and circumstance whose only function is restricted to reflecting Hamlet's turmoil. It is impossible to reconstruct her biography from the text. Yet the tragedy of this damsel who was pushed to distress by the very patriarchal figures who should've protected her, is the most represented of Shakespeare's heroines. Her visibility as a subject in literature, popular culture and painting, from Millais who paints her drowning, to Bob Dylan who places her on Desolation Row to modern day pop icon Taylor Swift who sings about saving her from, "*The Fate of Ophelia*" is in inverse relation to her invisibility in Shakespeare's critical texts and has

been challenged by modern feminist criticisms and creative reinterpretations. Why has she been such a potent and obsessive figure in our cultural mythology? Or does she represent the textual archetype of woman as madness or madness as woman?

Feminist critics have offered a variety of responses to these questions. Thus, the “rewriting” of Ophelia refers to both creative adaptations and critical reinterpretations that challenge male-centered narratives. Her place as a butt, reserved and quiet is not distinctly interesting to either a modern or contemporary audience, as she'd be the typical frame of an Elizabethan woman, compliant to all her father's demands. This paper explores how Shakespeare originally constructs Ophelia in *Hamlet*, how feminist criticism recovers her silenced subjectivity and how modern feminist literature rewrites her story to restore agency, voice, identity and finally how Ophelia becomes a global pop-culture icon symbolizing female vulnerability, rebellion, and identity struggle.

### **OPHELIA IN SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET: GENDER, AUTHORITY AND OBEDIENCE**

Polonius's daughter, Laertes' sister and Hamlet's lover. Along with Gertrude, Ophelia is the only other female character in the play, and her actions and trajectory are unfortunately defined by the men around her. From her first appearance in *Hamlet*, Ophelia is positioned within a network of male control. Her father Polonius and her brother Laertes dictate her emotional and moral choices. Laertes warns her that Hamlet's love is unreliable because he is bound by royal duty:

*“For he himself is subject to his birth . . .  
His greatness weighed, his will is not his own”* (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act I Scene iii).

Laertes frames Ophelia as sexually vulnerable and morally fragile, reinforcing early modern ideas about female chastity and obedience. Polonius intensifies this control by instructing Ophelia to reject Hamlet and to view his affection as deceit :

*“Do not believe his vows . . .  
They are brokers, not of that dye which their investments show”*  
(Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act I Scene iii).

Ophelia responds with absolute submission:

*“I shall obey, my lord”* (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act I Scene iii).

This moment is crucial. Ophelia does not negotiate, resist, or question. Her identity is defined through compliance. Later, Polonius uses her as bait to spy on Hamlet. She becomes an object of surveillance rather than a person with privacy, constantly overpowered by her masculine figures and suffering more than anyone. She loses her love, her father and eventually her mind. The great tragedy of her life is not, in fact, her premature death, but the treatment she received in life, used as both a sexual and a political pawn, by which the men enact their evil manipulations. She is a victim of physical as well as emotional abuse from both her overbearing father and her former lover, Hamlet. This reflects what Gilbert and Gubar describe in *“The Madwoman in the Attic”* as *“the reduction of women to symbols rather than subjects”* (Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, pp.17).

### **AMLET, SEXUAL ANXIETY AND CONTROL OF THE FEMALE IDENTITY**

Hamlet's sadistic and abusive treatment of Ophelia is not merely the product of emotional instability; it is the outward expression of a deeper sexual anxiety rooted in his obsessive response to

his mother's marriage to Claudius. Gertrude's "incestuous" union shatters Hamlet's ideal of feminine purity, and this disillusionment with female sexuality is displaced onto Ophelia. Sigmund Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex is especially useful here: Hamlet unconsciously desires his mother and resents Claudius for fulfilling that desire. Because he cannot confront this forbidden impulse directly, Hamlet redirects his rage and disgust toward Ophelia, the woman who is emotionally closest to him. In psychoanalytic terms, Ophelia becomes the *surrogate object* upon whom Hamlet acts out his repressed sexual conflict.

What is most significant, however, is not only Hamlet's cruelty but Ophelia's response to it. In the "nunnery scene", Hamlet subjects her to sustained verbal humiliation. He questions her honesty, mocks her affection, and repeatedly commands her to enter a convent:

*"Get thee to a nunnery.  
Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?"* (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III Scene i).

This language is not simply dismissive; it is sadistic. Hamlet reduces Ophelia to a sexual function. She is either a womb that produces corruption or a body that must be hidden away. Yet Ophelia does not retaliate. Instead, her response is marked by emotional vulnerability and quiet devastation. After Hamlet exits, she laments :

*"O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!"* (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III Scene i).

Her speech reveals grief, not anger. She mourns the man Hamlet was, even as he has psychologically destroyed her.

Ophelia's reaction exposes the imbalance of power in their relationship. While Hamlet uses language as a weapon, Ophelia internalizes the damage. Freud's Oedipal model helps explain this cruelty: Hamlet's obsessive fixation on Gertrude's sexuality makes him see all women as morally tainted. His hatred of Claudius for "usurping" the maternal body transforms into hatred of Ophelia for possessing a sexual identity at all. He tells her that beauty and honesty cannot coexist :

*"Virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but  
we shall relish of it"* (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III Scene I).

In other words, no woman can escape sexual corruption. This logic is born not from rational ethics but from Hamlet's unresolved maternal fixation.

Ophelia's response to this abuse is not resistance but collapse. She absorbs Hamlet's cruelty into herself. Her later madness is not sudden but cumulative, built from obedience, rejection, humiliation and emotional isolation. While Hamlet externalizes his conflict through sadistic speech, Ophelia turns suffering inward. Her songs in Act IV finally articulate what she could never say directly. Thus, Ophelia's response becomes the tragic counterpoint to Hamlet's sexual anxiety: where he lashes out, she disintegrates. His oedipal conflict produces aggression; her silence produces madness.

In this way, Hamlet's sadism is inseparable from his sexual anxiety and Ophelia's response through grief, loyalty and eventual psychological collapse reveals the devastating cost of being the emotional victim of a man who cannot confront his own forbidden desires.

## **MADNESS, COLLAPSE OF IDENTITY AND RECOVERY**

After Polonius's death, Ophelia loses the male authority that structured her identity. Her

madness emerges not suddenly, but as the result of cumulative repression, grief, and abandonment. In Act IV, she appears singing fragmented songs :

*"Before you tumbled me  
You promised me to wed"* (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act IV Scene v).

These lyrics express sexual betrayal, knowledge she was forbidden to articulate while sane. Elaine Showalter argues that Ophelia's madness is not simply illness but "*a cultural representation of female powerlessness*" (Showalter, *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, 79). Madness becomes her only mode of expression. For the Elizabethans, Hamlet was the prototype of melancholic male madness, associated with intellectual and imaginative genius; Ophelia's affliction was *erotomania*, or love madness. Biological and emotional in origins, caused by her unrequited love and repressed sexual desires. Although melancholy itself propagated itself as a fashionable disease among London youths around the 1580s, yet this melancholy, associated with intellectual and imaginative genius, "*curiously bypassed woman*". (Showalter; *The Female Malady*, pp.1837).

Ophelia was dressed in virginal white to contrast with Hamlet's scholarly black. "*Of all the characters in 'Hamlet', Ophelia is persistently presented in terms of symbolic meaning and are specifically feminine*". Ophelia dresses herself in white and decks herself in "fantastic garlands" or wild flowers and enters according to the stage directions of the "Bad Quarto", distracted, playing on a lute with her "hair down singing". Her speeches are marked by extravagant metaphors, lyrical free associations and "explosive sexual imagery". She sings bawdy ballads and ends her life by drowning. All these conventions carry specific messages about femininity and sexuality. Her virginal and vacant white with wildflowers suggest the discordant double images of female sexuality as both innocent blossoming and whorish contamination. "She is the "green girl" of pastoral, virginal "*Rose of May*" and the sexually explicit madwoman who, in giving away her flowers and herbs, is symbolically deflowering herself" (Showalter, *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, pp.70).

Drowning, too, was a symbolic feminine death, associated with female fluidity. In his discussion of the "*Ophelia Complex*", the phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard traces the symbolic connection between woman, water and death. Drowning, he suggests, becomes the truly feminine death in dramas of literature and life, one which is a beautiful immersion and submersion in the female element. "*Water is the profound and organic symbol of the liquid woman use eyes are easily drowned in tears, as her body is the repository of blood, amniotic fluid and milk*" (Showalter, *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, pp.70) Ophelia has also long functioned as a symbolic figure in psychiatric and cultural discourses on female madness, particularly where femininity and sexuality intersect with mental health. In the nineteenth century, Ophelia was frequently medicalized as the archetype of "*hysterical*" womanhood, reflecting how female emotional expression was pathologized (Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 1980). Elaine Showalter argues that Ophelia's madness became a cultural script through which women's grief, desire, and rebellion were translated into illness. On the stage, Ophelia's madness was presented as the predictable outcome of erotomania. From 1660, when women first appeared on the public stage, to the beginning of the 18th century, the most celebrated actresses who played the part were those whom rumor credited with disappointments in love. Thus, Ophelia remains significant in psychiatry as a case study in how feminine sexuality and mental health have historically been conflated and controlled.

Feminist critics have thus, powerfully "recovered" Ophelia from the stereotype of passive madness by re-reading her through psychiatric, medical, and sexual politics. Elaine Showalter

argues that, “*Ophelia’s insanity is not biological weakness but a cultural construction, produced by patriarchal control over female emotion and sexuality*” (Showalter, *The Female Malady*, pp.1832). For Showalter, Ophelia becomes a script through which women’s grief and desire are medicalized. Similarly, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar interpret Ophelia as “*a victim of ideological confinement, whose madness reflects the silencing of female voice under male authority*” (Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 1979). Her breakdown is thus a political and psychological consequence, not a natural disorder.

## **REWRITING OPHELIA IN MODERN FEMINIST LITERATURE : LISA FIEDLER’S ‘DATING HAMLET’**

Modern feminist culture has actively rewritten Ophelia as a way of challenging traditional narratives of female passivity, silence and victimhood. Shaped by patriarchal authority and ultimately destroyed by emotional repression, feminist critics and writers have since reimagined Ophelia as a figure of resistance, intelligence, and narrative agency. The critical insights of Elaine Showalter, Mary Pipher and Gilbert and Gubar laid the foundation for creative rewritings that place Ophelia at the center of her own story.

One of the most important feminist revisions is Lisa Fiedler’s novel *‘Dating Hamlet’* (2002), which retells *Hamlet* from Ophelia’s point of view. In Fiedler’s version, Ophelia is not a fragile bystander but a clever and decisive heroine. The plot follows Ophelia as she uncovers the truth about King Hamlet’s murder and actively helps Hamlet expose Claudius. Instead of going mad or drowning, Ophelia survives and participates in the resolution of the political crisis.

*“The novel blends mystery, romance, and historical fiction, transforming Ophelia into the narrative engine of the story.”*

This feminist rewriting reclaims Ophelia’s agency by giving her intelligence, voice, and emotional complexity. As Mary Pipher suggests, “*Ophelia has become a cultural symbol for women whose identities are suppressed by social expectations*”. (Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia*, 21). By rewriting Ophelia in literature and popular culture, modern feminist culture resists the romanticization of female suffering and replaces it with narratives of survival, self-definition, and empowerment. Thus, Ophelia’s transformation from tragic victim to active subject reflects a broader feminist effort to recover women’s stories from the margins of literary history.

## **OPHELIA AS A POPULAR CULTURE ICON**

Over the last two centuries, Ophelia has moved beyond Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* to become a powerful symbol in modern popular culture. No longer seen only as a tragic victim, she now represents emotional sensitivity, aesthetic beauty, rebellion and youth vulnerability. Artists, musicians, designers and filmmakers repeatedly return to Ophelia because her story captures the tension between inner life and social control, an issue that remains deeply relevant today

### **➤ OPHELIA IN VISUAL ARTS AND FASHION :**

Ophelia’s most iconic visual representation is John Everett Millais’s painting *Ophelia* (1851–52). The image shows her floating in the river, surrounded by flowers, merging death with beauty and nature. Pre-Raphaelite artist’s model Elizabeth Siddal was required to pose for hours in a bathtub of water, kept warm by lamp underneath. This painting fixed Ophelia as a visual archetype of

fragile femininity and has inspired fashion editorials, photography and runway aesthetics. Designers often echo the “Ophelia look” with flowing fabrics, floral motifs, pale tones and dreamlike styling.

By the 18th century, leading female actors were becoming celebrities and merchandise such as decorative tiles was sold to theatre-going audiences. One such famous example is cotton-tiles portraying Jane Lessingham (1738/38-1783) in the role of Ophelia from *Hamlet*.

When Charles Kemble made his Paris debut as Hamlet with an English troupe in 1827, his Ophelia was a young Irish ingénue named Harriet Smithson. Her performance was captured by a series of paintings by Eugene Delacroix, which show a strong romantic interest in the relation of female sexuality and insanity. The most innovative and influential of Delacroix's lithographs is *La Mort d' Ophélie* (1843), showing Ophelia half suspended in the stream as her dress slowly slips from her body.

Arthur Hughes also paints her in 1852, as a sickly, pale, almost girlish figure who looks down into the water and idly drops blossoms into the stream. Elaine Showalter's distaste for the work is obvious. The painting, “shows a tiny waiflike creature—a sort of Tinker Bell Ophelia—in a filmy white gown, perched on a tree trunk by the stream. The overall effect is softened, sexless and hazy, although the straws in her hair resembles a crown of thorns” (Showalter, *The Female Malady*, pp.1837)

#### ➤ **OPHELIA IN MUSIC AND YOUTH CULTURE :**

In music, Ophelia becomes a metaphor for emotional confusion, longing, and identity crisis. Taylor Swift's reference to the “Fate of Ophelia” in her songwriting draws on the idea of a young woman overwhelmed by love and expectation, making Ophelia a symbol of romantic vulnerability in youth culture. Similarly, The Lumineers' song *Ophelia* uses her name to represent emotional attachment and nostalgia, connecting Shakespeare's figure to modern experiences of loss and longing.

In youth culture, Ophelia is often embraced as an emblem of feeling “too much” in a world that discourages emotional openness. She resonates especially with young audiences who see in her the struggle between personal truth and social pressure.

#### ➤ **OPHELIA IN FILM AND VISUAL MEDIA :**

Ophelia's image appears across cinema and television. In Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948), Franco Zeffirelli's *Hamlet* (1990) and Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996), Ophelia is portrayed with increasing psychological depth. More recently, the film *Ophelia* (2018), starring Daisy Ridley, retells *Hamlet* from Ophelia's perspective, transforming her from a tragic object into a narrative subject.

Across art, music, fashion and film, Ophelia has become more than a Shakespearean character. She is now a cultural icon of emotional intensity, youth identity, and feminist reinterpretation in modern popular culture

## **CONCLUSION**

This research has traced Ophelia's transformation from Shakespeare's tragic, silenced heroine to a powerful symbol in modern feminist literature, psychiatry, and popular culture. In *Hamlet*, Ophelia is defined by obedience, emotional repression, and patriarchal control; her madness and death

function less as personal failure than as the consequence of being denied agency and voice. As Elaine Showalter argues, “*Ophelia's insanity becomes a cultural “script” for translating female suffering into illness rather than resistance*” (Showalter, *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, pp.80). Shakespeare's Ophelia, therefore, is not weak by nature but weakened by the structures that govern her.

Feminist criticism has recovered Ophelia from this narrative containment. Gilbert and Gubar demonstrate how her breakdown reflects “*ideological imprisonment rather than psychological defect*” (Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, pp.54). Mary Pipher's modern psychological analysis shows that Ophelia's story still “*resonates with adolescent girls whose identities are shaped and often distorted by social expectations of sexuality and obedience*” (Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia*, pp.21). These theorists collectively reposition Ophelia as a figure whose madness exposes the violence of silencing rather than its inevitability.

Contemporary literature and media further rewrite Ophelia as an agent of her own narrative. Lisa Fiedler's *Dating Hamlet* and similar revisions transform her into an intelligent, active protagonist who investigates truth and survives political and emotional crises. Such rewritings refuse the romanticization of female suffering and instead emphasize survival, autonomy, and voice. As Showalter notes, “*feminist reinterpretation must move from representation to responsibility changing how women's stories are told*” (Showalter, *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, 94)

Ophelia's rise as a modern pop-culture icon confirms the enduring relevance of her figure. From Millais's haunting visual legacy to music, film, and youth culture, Ophelia symbolizes emotional depth, vulnerability, and rebellion against imposed silence. Her reappearance in art, fashion, cinema, and feminist discourse reflects a “*response to social invalidation rather than mere pathology*”.

Ultimately, Ophelia's journey from Shakespeare to modern feminist culture is not just literary but political and psychological. She stands as a reminder that women's suffering is historically constructed, culturally managed and critically recoverable. By rewriting Ophelia, feminist culture does not erase tragedy; it transforms it into testimony, agency and resistance.

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# LOVE BEYOND TIME : JOHN DONNE AND MIRZA GHALIB IN CONVERSATION

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What happens when two poets, separated by centuries, languages, and cultures, speak about the same emotion ? Romantic love has always been one of literature's most enduring themes. Yet the way it is expressed often reflects the time and place in which a poet writes. When we place John Donne's *The Sun Rising* alongside the romantic ghazals of Mirza Ghalib, we discover that love can be both deeply rooted in culture and surprisingly universal.

At first, Donne and Ghalib may seem worlds apart. Donne was a seventeenth-century English poet associated with metaphysical poetry, known for intellectual wit and bold argument. Ghalib, writing in nineteenth-century India, stands as one of the greatest voices in Urdu literature, blending emotional intensity with philosophical reflection. Yet when we look closely at how they treat romantic love, a meaningful conversation begins to emerge.

In *The Sun Rising*, Donne stages a dramatic and intimate scene. Two lovers are disturbed by the rising sun, and the speaker directly addresses it. He criticizes the sun for intruding upon their private world. The sun – often a symbol of order, time, and authority – is reduced to something almost trivial. The lovers' shared space, the speaker insists, contains everything that truly matters.

This boldness defines Donne's portrayal of love. Love is not fragile or dependent; it is confident and self-contained. The speaker does not simply celebrate love – he elevates it above kings, wealth, honour, and even time itself. The external world fades into insignificance. In this poem, love creates its own reality.

Ghalib approaches love from a different emotional direction. In his romantic ghazals, love is rarely playful or triumphant. Instead, it is intense, overwhelming, and often painful. The lover is not someone who commands the world but someone transformed by love. Worldly concerns do not disappear because they are challenged; they disappear because love consumes the inner self so completely that everything else feels distant.

Where Donne's speaker confronts the sun, Ghalib's lover turns inward. Love in Ghalib's poetry is deeply connected to longing, suffering, and reflection. It challenges reason and exposes the limits of logic. Love becomes not only an emotion but a philosophical experience—one that reshapes identity and perception.

Despite these differences in tone, both poets ultimately place love above the external world. Donne does so through wit and confident assertion. Ghalib does so through emotional depth and surrender. One voice is commanding; the other is vulnerable. Yet both suggest that love reorganises reality around itself.

Time and nature further reveal this contrast. In Donne's poem, the sun represents the passage of time and the duties of daily life. By addressing and dismissing it, the speaker symbolically resists

time's authority. Love appears strong enough to create its own sense of time—a private universe untouched by routine.

Ghalib does not attempt to defeat time in the same way. In his poetry, time and fate often deepen the experience of longing. Love does not conquer time; it endures within it. The passage of time intensifies feeling rather than diminishing it. Here, love is not rebellion but persistence.

These differences become clearer when we consider context. Donne wrote in a literary culture that valued argument, intellectual play, and originality. Metaphysical poetry often used dramatic address and bold reasoning. His treatment of love reflects this spirit—assertive, imaginative, and confident.

Ghalib belonged to the classical Urdu ghazal tradition, where poetry frequently explores love, loss, and existential uncertainty. The ghazal form allows for emotional layering and reflection. Love is rarely simple or victorious; it is complex and transformative. Ghalib's tone reflects this depth and inwardness.

Yet beyond these contextual differences lies something shared. Both poets treat love as a central organising force in human life. Whether expressed through confident defiance or quiet surrender, love becomes more significant than social structure, ambition, or material power. In both traditions, romantic love reshapes how the world is seen and understood.

Reading Donne and Ghalib together also reminds us that literature travels across boundaries more easily than we sometimes imagine. English metaphysical poetry and Urdu ghazal tradition differ in form and expression, but they meet in their exploration of universal emotion. When we place these poets side by side, we are not erasing their differences. Instead, we are recognising how those differences enrich a shared human theme.

In today's interconnected world, such comparisons feel especially meaningful. They remind us that emotional truths do not belong to one language or culture. Love, longing, vulnerability, and confidence appear again and again in different literary traditions. Across centuries and continents, poets return to the same questions about intimacy and meaning.

Ultimately, *The Sun Rising* and the romantic ghazals of Mirza Ghalib offer two distinct yet complementary visions of love. Donne presents love as triumphant and self-assured, capable of challenging time and authority. Ghalib presents love as transformative and consuming, shaping the inner life with emotional intensity. One asserts; the other reflects. One commands; the other surrenders. Yet both affirm that romantic love has the power to redefine reality.

In bringing these poets into conversation, we see that while literary forms and cultures may differ, the language of love continues to connect human experience across time. That continuity may be one of poetry's most enduring gifts.



# ROMANTICISM IN DIFFERENT MILIEUS-SIMILARITIES IN THE WORK OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH AND J.P CLARK AND JIBANANANDA DAS AND PABLO NERUDA

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## Abstract

Poets mirror their specific eras, yet brilliance emerges when history repeats. Despite geographic shifts, literary similarities create a profound attachment, connecting art to the introspective lives of common people. This shared experience bridges cultures and centuries, proving emotional resonance is not bound by a single calendar, allowing readers to find deep connections in texts that reflect their own unexamined feelings.

The Romantic Movement, celebrating nature, solitude, and individualism, departed from previous ages by breaking rigid social norms. Notably, the essence of Romanticism transcends its original timeline, appearing in diverse global works. It is no longer just a European historical period but a recurring spirit that manifests whenever a poet turns toward the natural world and the inner self to find truth.

William Wordsworth explored the common world's beauty in *The Prelude*. This spirit resonates in Jibanananda Das's *Dhushar Pandulipi*, Pablo Neruda's intertwining of nature and love, and J.P. Clark's localized environmental details. By synthesizing these voices, this paper analyses how the "magic of the ages" creates a unified Romantic perspective transcending temporal and geographical boundaries.

## Introduction

The world around us is heading towards a drastic change; the more we weave our lives into the concept of digitization – or rather, to be more precise, urbanization – the more we are losing our love for nature. The importance of joy in little things is simply being eradicated with time. Simple aspects of life are losing their value in the eyes of people. The era of Romanticism, where Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley reigned and marked the influence of natural views to a profound extent, is now missing like a lost puzzle piece.

The condition of the 21st century is obviously quite different from what it had been earlier. What has not been updated in the last few decades? We have seen the arrival of laptops and the emergence of pocket-friendly smartphones, which took the place of cordless and corded landline phones. The scenario is such that these telephones will soon become pieces of antique and cultural identity within the next few years.

The world around us is moving in a fast-paced motion, developing miracles now and then. The age of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has provided us with several platforms for the successful completion of tasks, but somehow and somewhere, the exact purpose that was required to be served has gone

missing. In the first half of the year 2025, the trend of "Ghibli Art" took over the internet. The background and the existence of that art were superficially ignored to the worst possible extent. The artist behind this form, Hayao Miyazaki – the Japanese filmmaker and animator – made this art form livelier through years of hard work and perseverance; yet, just a few instructions, known as a "prompt," now simply disrupt the hard work behind it.

The study of literature is incomplete without the History of Literature. Literary ages or periods in the realm of literature are often named after great personalities for their contributions, or due to the major historical and political backgrounds that unleash the "anatomy of ideas." This twenty-first-century world would rather be termed "The Age of Setbacks." It is an age where art forms lose their existence, and where the basic form of expression is hindered, as seen these days due to the overuse of technologically equipped apparatus.

Coming to the very part of existence : the small components of our lives make our existence much more beautiful. The childhoods we spent playing different games in a park or a playground hold more memorable incidents. Minute objects often depict deep emotions. Colours that pave the path to colour the world around us hold significant weight; through the medium of colours, our world is more mesmerizing. In the era of the "rat race," the minimum amount of time required to think about certain things is just getting erased.

Social media has become our new form of existence. The most ironic fact is this: nature, which has the power and capability to heal people without any specific demand, is now accessed through the medium of social media. A drizzle of rain, a sultry summer afternoon, or the pinkish and orangish glow of the sky during dusk – all of this is captured and expressed on social media but not experienced in person. Our love for nature is fading away, and so nature is providing us with the impacts for us to repent.

## **SOLITARY STRAIN AFFECTING THE OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDIVIDUAL**

Poetry is one such branch of literature that provides the quintessential overview of every detail in a more mesmerizing manner. The different ages of literature, be it of any language, have witnessed poets showcasing their inner charisma in a compact way. Different types of poetic traditions flourished over the ages. The history of English literature has such ages where different themes are explored according to the needs and choices of people. Coming directly to the Age of Romanticism, the socio-political background has much to contribute to embody the flavour of nature. The lenses of the poet are highly magnified in observing the minutest of details of nature and drawing a comparison with their beloved or with the beauty of imagination, imagining the natural world as someone who is close to their heart. In the eighteenth century, imagination was not a basic point in poetical theory... but for the Romantics, imagination is fundamental, because they think that without such involvement poetry is impossible (Bowra 2). The Romantic period had stalwarts like William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats, who redefined the age in a greater manner. The late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth century were the time period where intense political vigour was present, as well as the French Revolution, which took place from 1789-1799 and was a significant point to be marked behind this age (Long 370).

Individualism and imagination can be considered as the main themes of Romanticism. Wordsworth's poetry, as stated by the man himself, is 'emotions recollected in tranquillity,' and such was the effect of his poetry on the later ages. But the most awe-striking part of literature, or even poets

and authors, is they have the power to make people realise the worth of certain things in a very distinct style. Their style of approach and certain themes fail to fade, even after the passage of two centuries. William Wordsworth, the leading figure of the Romantic Age, was known for his poems written in the countryside of Scotland, along with his sister Dorothy Wordsworth and his bosom friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. J.P. Clark, who was an African poet of the twentieth century, famous for his nature poems and details of nature in his poems, with a deep connection to nature, is what makes the reader find a sense of similarity between William Wordsworth and J.P. Clark.

The main motive behind this research is to provide a cross-connection between the poems 'The Solitary Reaper' by William Wordsworth and 'Night Rain' by J.P. Clark. The tone in both poems is a sadistic and emotional one. 'The Solitary Reaper', as the title suggests, is about the life of a reaper in the fields and the daily turmoil that she has to face. 'Night Rain' as well provides the sufferings of the common people in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. As class differences were a turning point in both English literature and African literature, it is well evident in the poems as well. Wordsworth in 'The Solitary Reaper' focuses on the working class, toiling daily in the field, and the song she sings acts as the barrier to overcome the pain she endures. J.P. Clark's use of certain imagistic views in the poem 'Night Rain,' such as the wet wings of that of owls and bats, are used to depict the condition in which the speaker's family members are living. The most creative aspect of both poems are the gender dynamics that are discussed in a deeper context. The solitary aspects are the first point to be noticed. The usage of the terms like 'alone' and 'single,' as well as the phrase "Alone she cuts and binds the grain" in 'The Solitary Reaper,' provides the idea that, being a woman, she has to work in the fields to earn a living, and that too alone. The similar sight is experienced in 'Night Rain' as well; the family experiences a horrifying condition in the turbulent weather and the mother is present trying to protect them in that weather; no reference of a fatherly figure is stated there, showing the whole responsibility solely lied on the shoulder of the mother. In spite of having a family, she has to experience things in solitude and has none to share the burden with. The background on which the poem is set is related to that of the war. One of the lines in the poem suggests :

"For the plaintive numbers flow,  
For old, unhappy, far off-things,  
And battles long ago." (Wordsworth 85)

Despite the heart-wrenching incident occurring a long time ago, it still makes the woman think about it twice. The underlying factor of that section is poverty. The war condition weakens the society and brings out the skeleton that persists inside. The theme of nature being highlighted is the main focus that needs to be referred. The use of rhetorical devices such as hyperbole is well evident here. The line :

"No Nightingale did ever chaunt  
More welcome notes to weary bands  
Of travellers in some shady haunt,  
Among Arabian Sands;" (Wordsworth 85)

the imagination of the poet is remarkable. The usage of far-off imagistic places like that of "Among the farthest Hebrides" (Wordsworth 85) denotes Wordsworth's love for travelling as well as nature. The most innovative of all things in Clark's poem is the attention that the speaker pays to minute things. The use of imagery in the riverside area, as the poem is set in the Niger Delta, provides us an idea of the situation. The choice of appropriate words like that of 'fish,' 'owl,' and 'bat' made the speaker

compare his life to that of the animals. The line, "Falling like orange or mango" (Clark 81), portrays a simile depicting the intensity of rainfall. In both poems, the poets are of different regions and time periods, but their way of portraying nature has made the readers feel they both belong to the same era. The nature that we often neglect is brought up by them.

## **THE ART OF FINDING ONE'S BELOVED AMIDST THE BEAUTY OF NATURE AND IMAGINATION :**

Nature is often considered as the medium through which the poetry of humanity often blossoms into love. The capability of nature to capture the essence of the human mind is something definitely beyond imagination. The most fascinating part of the Age of Romanticism is obviously the imaginative power blended with the love for nature. The way of imagining one's beloved with certain components of nature is often beyond imagination, but the poets have the superpower to bring forth these imagistic views. The Age of Romanticism has already provided us with an idea based on solitude, imaginative power and the love for nature. The most attractive part in the case of literature is that the ideas transcend any kind of boundaries and are overflowed; there is no obstruction. As we all know, despite the poets belonging to different ages, often the outlook on different topics turns out to be similar. Considering the case of love, the most common approach that we have found among poets is that they often resort to expressing their inner joyous feeling of love by finding their lady love in places where she is not usually found. Imagination of the poets plays a significant role in providing a space for the lady love.

Coming to the topic of the 'beloved,' the poets have crafted the art in a different approach. Considering the two poets of different regions and ages, they are similar in their instincts or ideas. Jibanananda Das, a renowned figure in Bengali Literature, had the capability to weave narratives from the surrounding areas which were based on ground reality and the socio-political conditions that prevailed at that time. Being an active figure from the 1920s to the 1950s, the underlying conditions that made a huge chaos among the commoners made a disturbing effect on the poet as well. This particular time period was known to mankind for the Partition of Bengal and also for The Bengal Famine. Wordsworth was the pioneering figure of the Romantic Age in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. We find almost the same taste in the early twentieth century of Bengal. The ardent love for nature is well evident in the works of Jibanananda Das; for example, in the poem "What Else Before Death" he quotes:

'The dim women at the river sprinkling the flowers of fog;'  
'The moist smell of rice carried by the waves into the eyes  
of the solitary fish'  
'The shadow of the thatched roof is etched in the  
moonlit yard' (Das Gupta 16)

Pablo Neruda, a well-known Chilean poet of the twentieth century, is best known for his love poems, nature poems and political writings. He was also a political activist which made him confront military forces and other situations as well. The writings of Neruda provide us with a Latin American flavour. Also, his way of portraying nature differently can be found as well. But the main purpose is to find the similar aspects in both the poets of two different regions.

There is a motive behind selecting the poems 'In My Sky at Twilight' by Pablo Neruda and 'Banalata Sen' by Jibanananda Das. Both the poems have crafted an idea of self-exploration and that

of reimagination. The most engaging part of both the poems is the instillation of life in things which are not even perceived as beautiful if considered by an ordinary man, and also the depiction of things ordinary in use which constitute our lives (Das Gupta 20). Other poets often produce the perfect of things in front of us, sketching the best of humans or other things in the most appealing way possible, but the perspective with which both of them have presented the readers the imperfect of things has proved to be more perfect in this case. The solitary nature that persisted in both the poets is well evident from the way it is described. The description transcends any kind of boundaries; the line :

"For aeons have I roamed the roads of the earth  
From the seas of Ceylon to the straits of Malaya  
I have journeyed, alone, in the enduring night," (Das Gupta 31)

This line in "Banalata Sen" portrays the usage of allusion which has provided more depth to the line. The presence of a similar kind of lonely entity has trespassed every age is what is being meant here, and also the depiction of the love that the poet has for his beloved which doesn't get affected by any kind of distance. The same goes with the poem "In My Sky at Twilight"; distance plays a pivotal role in the culmination of the idea:

"You are mine mine, I go shouting it to the afternoon's  
wind, and the wind hauls on my widowed voice" (Neruda 61)

The presence of the lady love is inevitable but the speaker's way of conveying love is absolutely different. The solitary strains that affect both the poems are the careful usage of the times of the day; "Night" and "Twilight" are the exact times used. Often both these terms are denoted with that of darkness. What darkness often shows is loneliness and that is what is being discussed here. Just like finding a stream of light amidst darkness, the poet imagines his lover to be present at that moment. The line:

"Your plunder stills your nocturnal regard as though it were water" (Neruda 61)

in the poem 'In My Sky at Twilight' delineates the concept of soothing the speaker during the lonely hours. The usage of the simile is what makes the right comparison. The choice of words depicts the uncompromising love that forms the main plot here. In the case of 'Banalata Sen' the line that provides the necessary information is:

"I saw her, as a sailor after the storm  
Rudderless in the sea, spies of a sudden  
The grass green heart of the leafy island.  
"Where were you so long?" She asked, and more  
With her bird's-nest eyes, Banalata Sen of Natore." (Das Gupta 31)

The concerning part that lies deep down is what makes the readers drag the similarity between them. The gender dynamic role that surrounds the poem is also of immense importance. The portrayal of the female figure in terms of nature as a timeless symbol of beauty and unwavering support is well narrated here.

"Her face the sculpture of Sravasti." (Das Gupta 31),

in Jibanananda Das's work showcases the enchanting beauty. "Huntress of the depth of my eyes" (Neruda 61), another phrase in the poem by Pablo Neruda, is the key factor in the poem. The usage of words like that of "fireflies", "cloud", "sky", "warm sun", and "grass green heart of the leafy island" in

both the poems provides the connection to nature in minute details. In spite of the milieu being different in both the poems, the thought process has proved to be of similar origin.

## Conclusion

Ages after ages pass by, but certain things that prevail in our everyday life often hold significance. Nature has been the basis of our existence. Every drop that falls and every tree that sheds its leaves has a connection in between. The one who notices that and questions the reason behind it provides the perfect link to think wisely. The introspection of thoughts reflects the inner sense of wisdom with the different concepts as well. Often the age changes, the time period is utterly different, and the socio-political background is subjected to changes, but the overall theme or point matches due to several factors at times. History repeats itself, and so do the conditions and concepts. Not everything remains outdated or goes away with time. Some things are said to remain forever. It is where memory plays a pivotal role. The literary personalities are the ones pointing this out in a larger and broader way for the audience.

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# MIDNIGHT MASS (2021) – A REVIEW

Debanshi Dey

B.A. Semester I, Department of English

## A Review

*“The cosmos and its infinite dreams. We are the cosmos dreaming of itself. It's simply a dream that I think is my life, every time. But I'll forget this. I always do. I always forget my dreams.”*

From the genius behind *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018) and *The Haunting of Bly Manor* (2020), Mike Flanagan, we achieved the 2021 Netflix horror mini-series of *Midnight Mass*. Created and directed by Flanagan, this series stands as one of the most intellectually ambitious works in contemporary horror television, blending a supernatural discourse with theological didacticism and philosophical navigation of faith, guilt, shame, redemption and human conscience. *Midnight Mass* proceeds to challenge human faith through Biblical symbolisms, introspection, dialogue and human ethics, questioning the nature of belief and faith.

Michael Fimognari's cinematography furnishes *Midnight Mass* visually and aurally, creating a striking premise for the storyline. It lays emphasis on symmetry and stillness, allowing scenes to unfold like an enigma. The official soundtrack is owed to the Newton Brothers, who created an ingenious mix of unsettling background scores with choral hymns. The musical element aligns the ideals of blinded religious faith with the dread and unease of fanaticism.

The storyline unfolds on the remote Crockett Island, where the inhabiting fishing community is contracting as an oil spill destroys its primary economic chain. The populace is predominantly Catholic and seeks refuge in their faith from despair. To this atmosphere returns a young man, Riley Flynn, haunted by guilt and shame after serving time for a fatal drinking under the influence accident. His return overlaps with that of Father Paul Hill, a charming priest replacing the old Monsignor Pruitt. The father's arrival is followed by a series of extraordinary occurrences, such as the reversal of paralysis, age, and the return of vision blurred by age and the disappearance of illness. This instils a renewed sense of faith in the divine with the Crockett congregation. Characters of unchecked faith and zeal, like Bev Keane, parallel the developments to notions of 'miracles' described in the New Testament, particularly the lore of Christ's healing powers featured in the Gospels. However, as the show progresses, the miracles become increasingly ambiguous, forcing the audience to question whether it was divine intervention at play or something further sinister.

A striking feature of *Midnight Mass* is the absence of reluctance in using biblical parallels, like the show's engagement with the symbolism of blood. Commemorating The Last Supper, where Christ instructs his followers to drink wine as a representation of his blood, a ritualistic practice central to the Eucharist sacraments, is portrayed in the island's church rituals; however, blurring the lines between literal consumption and metaphorical symbolism. The extraordinary miracles are a direct consequence of the actual consumption of blood by the islanders, transcending Eucharistic metaphors of “Blood of Christ” to supernatural realities, invoking reconsideration and interpretation of Christian theology and its metaphorical language.

Father Paul Hill's character maintains primacy throughout the show as he becomes a mediator between the didactic scriptures and the narrative sequences that unfold. His sermons, drawn from the Bible, revisit the Book of Revelation frequently, foreshadowing apocalyptic premonitions, divine judgment, and a promise of eternal life. His interpretation of the texts drives his congregation to believe that the miracles lead to a grander plan of God. The people of Crockett, amid the hopelessness, find comfort in accepting his ideals with little scepticism. This angle reflects an innate truth about mankind's need for religion and faith as crutches to navigate life. The endurance of harsh reality finds purpose and meaning in the cradle of Faith. This dynamic portrays how religious language can be mobilised to frame extraordinary experiences as divine miracles rather than potential dangers, inspiring fanaticism and irrational belief.

An astounding biblical parallel in the show's exploration of the concept of resurrection, as in the Gospels, we find Lazarus being raised by Christ, an ultimate demonstration of prowess over death. However, in the show, resurrection becomes morally ambiguous, resembling the act of necromancy and vampirism, stripping the "reborn" characters of their humanity, questioning whether eternal life equates to salvation of the soul. That is where the human desire and temptation for an elongated lifespan becomes a driving force. It echoes the biblical theme of "temptation", which challenges both Christ in the Gospels and Father Paul in *Midnight Mass*. Father Paul encounters the winged creature and interprets it as divine revelation, as his desires motivate his will.

The show's most contrasting take on biblical theology and history can be portrayed in the characters of Bev Keane and Erin Greene. Bev, a devout church member, reflects the historical context of religion itself. She recites biblical passages while simultaneously legitimising violence and moral superiority, representing the archetype of a self-righteous zealot using faith as a tool of mass mobilisation. Erin Greene, on the other hand, offers a more compassionate perspective, introspecting notions of death and existence that resonate with the biblical idea of humility before divine mystery. Her ideas suggest that the core of spiritualism lies in philosophical inquiry and doubts rather than extreme certainty. Erin Greene's questions and ideals open the viewers to focus more on the interpersonal relationship with God and faith instead of restraining it to convention and didacticism.

*Midnight Mass* uses biblical connotations and references not merely as aesthetic props to propel the setting or storyline of the show, but also enforces its viewers to reinvestigate the foundation of the philosophical core of their personal faith. By intertwining the sub-genre of mythical horror with Christian scripture, the narrative makes a subtle social commentary on how spiritual devotion can transcend into dangerous fanaticism. In the landscape of contemporary television, *Midnight Mass* finds its singularity due to its association with theology and symbolism. Horror, in this context, does not lie in the supernatural but in the humans who hold the power to weaponise sacred teachings, merely through misinterpretation, emphasising the perils of unchecked belief. It succeeds in frightening viewers intellectually, leaving them to question their faith and how it shapes notions of salvation and devastation.



# ASHA JAOAR MAJHE (LABOUR OF LOVE) – A FILM REVIEW

Eshanwita Paul

*B.A. Semester VI, Department of English*

Asha Jaoar Majhe (Labour Of Love) is about love forged by the distance of circumstance. It is about that which a couple endures to make both ends meet, to feed the demands of everyday existence. In the stillness of the city, their love continues to grow. Between the two, no dialogues are spoken and the film weaves through quiet observation, a delicate connection. There is a strange intimacy, forged through seemingly inanimate objects – the cooked food, the ironed shirts, the fan regulator, the groceries, the bindi and the laundry that waits quietly on the clothesline, for a moment's embrace.

Set against the backdrop of the recession, in Calcutta, the story traces the life of a lower middle-class couple working in alternative shifts at their respective firms. The film that spans the length of a single day, is about every unending day that starts to look like every other and their separation too, is endless. The only brief moment of warmth is when the man (Ritwick Chakraborty) comes home and the wife (Basabdatta Chatterjee) is getting ready, to leave for work. A fleeting moment is all they can afford to cherish and it is here that the household reality is juxtaposed with the dream-like sequence of the foggy woods, reminding us more emphatically of the life they are compelled to live, away from each other.

The short-lived moment of togetherness amplifies the chasm between them. There is no time for words and they must separate again. The shehnai, symbolic of love, speaks to us and the film leaves us, suspended in the continuity of it all. The day dissolves into the night, the sky wears separate hues. The beginning and the ending converge.

Every hour away is an attempt to come closer, no matter how briefly so. Away from the soundscapes of the city, it is a small world of their own, that they carry within. It is a little life and we try to cling on.



# DEN STYGGE STESOSTEREN (THE UGLY STEPSISTER) A REVIEW

Debanshi Dey

*B.A. Semester I, Department of English*

## Review

“Twice or thrice, I loved thee, before I knew thy face or thy name, but a voice and a shapeless flame. Thine angelic song must worshipped be. And all that issues from thee. So for God's sake hold your tongue and let me love thy sacred body without sin.” How this film commences, with a modified narration of John Donne's “Air and Angels” and “The Canonization”, a rose-tinted dreamscape, with a handsome Prince and a fair maiden, characterises the immediate transportation of a viewer to a land of fantastical romance in fairy tales. However, for Emilie Blichfeldt's directorial debut, *The Ugly Stepsister* (2025), it would be a hasty decision to make, for this Norwegian-origin film is anything but a fairy tale. The film has been generically categorised into body horror, black comedy and satire, with a disclaimer needed for sensitive viewership.

Cinematographically, the film creates an environment that resembles the aesthetic richness of classical European fairy tales, featuring baroque costumes, candlelit rooms, and picturesque landscapes. These minute elements evoke a seemingly magical setting, similar to 19th - century folklore. However, the enchantment of the setting is starkly contrasted and disrupted by graphic scenes of mutilation and anatomical transformation that serve the greater purpose of an idealistic beauty, disturbing the audience and causing unease. With the number of sugar-coated versions of the tale available in both text and filmography, Blichfeldt's film is a respectful nod to the original Grimm Brothers' version of “Cinderella”, owing to the grotesque features and the cruelty portrayed in both. However, “The Ugly Stepsister” takes a stance in favour of the stepsister who is defeated in the bloody battle of beauty, allowing space for satirical social commentary, which holds profound relevance in the present-day context. It all boils down to notions of idealistic and unrealistic physical standards imposed on young women, deeply rooted in the social evils of misogyny and patriarchy.

The film revolves around Elvira, played by Lea Myren, the “ugly stepsister”, who is a young woman full of dreams, hopes and insecurities. In her infatuated, young heart, she wishes to marry Prince Julian, an ambition initially mocked by her manipulative mother, Rebekka, who did not hesitate to demean her daughter for her looks. The superficial contrast between Elvira and her stepsister Agnes, Cinderella's counterpart, is frequently emphasised for the audience as Elvira is subjected to constant humiliation and mockery by everyone around her. The narrative reveals that Rebekka's marriage to Agnes' father for money was futile because Agnes' father had hoped to rely on the widow's fortune before his untimely death. That is when the tale starts its descent into deplorable lows, as all hopes begin to ride on Elvira's shoulders as she is to ensnare at least a wealthy merchant, even if not the Prince, to save them from a fate of poverty. Thus begins the horrendous spiral into self-destruction.

This retelling differs from the traditional narratives of Cinderella not only because it centres Elvira as the protagonist, but also because all magic ceases to exist, leaving only the harsh brutality

of aesthetic surgeries. Her metamorphosis to meet the ideal standards is an agonising and humiliating process that grows darker with each step. Each procedure at “Dr Esthetique” involves painful cosmetic alterations, dental corrections and setting. She goes so far as to eat a tapeworm egg in an attempt to lose weight. Now, while these actions are backed by the desire to impress upon the Prince and only financed by her mother as a strategic ploy to come into wealth and status, Elvira feels herself getting chipped away as she allows more and more surgeries that make her “beautiful” but quite literally eat away at her being. These disturbing sequences have managed to reflect the truth of society, the unrealistic bodily standards, and their underlying violence. In the contemporary social context, the trends of plastic surgeries and Ozempic diets have become overly used tools to glamorise oneself, true to the most recent social media-driven calibre. The film is a powerful metaphor for the present social reality where outward appearance determines self-worth, exposing the physical and psychological burdens faced, through grotesque body horror imagery and gore. One of the most redeeming characters of this film remains Alma, the younger sister of Elvira, played by Flo Fagerli. She represents a breath of fresh air, who does not hesitate to question the absurdity and extremity of her sister's transformation and their mother, Rebekka's, cruelty. On a groundbreaking note, the narrative strays from the idolisation of a man as a saviour and portrays sisterly bonds that salvage Elvira from the doom of impairment she had wrought on herself.

The most iconic homage to the Grimm Brothers' version of Cinderella is the portrayal of Elvira self-mutilating to fit a shoe, another significant satirical metaphor on how the price of conventional achievement is paid with the loss of one's individualistic characteristics. It parallels how the “ugly stepsisters” in the case of the text, chop off their toes and heels to fit the shoe that would make them the Prince's bride. Another subtle symbolism that occurs in parallel, in both the film and the original text, is the support of nature towards the natural. Both Agnes and Cinderella are assisted by natural elements like silkworms and birds like doves and pigeons, respectively. In the book, the pigeons go as far as plucking the sisters' eyes out and rendering them blind for life as punishment for trying to impersonate “the true bride”.

The Ugly Stepsister turns a seemingly fairytale into a tragic parable centring on the brutal attachment to unachievable ideals that eventually lead to self-destructive ends. It offers not only a socio-analytical but also a deeply personal perspective on one's relation and acceptance towards their physical body. Its raw and graphic nature may be gruesome, but it adds to the essence of the film and gives it all the more impact on the viewers. And finally, at its end, the film allows Elvira to find a new beginning outside society's expectations.



## ALUMNI SPEAK

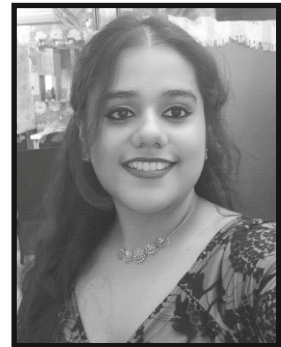


**AARATRIKA GHOSH**  
*UG Batch 2022-25*

The transition from school to college, when adulthood seemed daunting, the Department of English and Shri Shikshayatan College has been the nurturing space in my evolving into a well-rounded individual. With warmth, mentorship and trust, our erudite professors always gave us opportunities and encouraged us to constantly improve, create, grow, to question, reason and understand from literature to life and remain committed to our passions, often leading to excellence. The three years spent balancing my creative interests, academics and passion projects with friends have been one of the most beautiful moments of my life and this beloved environment being a favourite and so welcoming, I decided to continue with my postgraduate study of English here. I shall be forever indebted to them and aspire to make my teachers proud.



College has been a wonderful experience and being a student of the English Department was absolutely incredible! The environment is friendly. The professors are extremely helpful and kind. The shift from school to College is huge, but Shri Shikshayatan made it feel very easy through accessible faculty and a safe territory. The college focuses on both academics and personal development providing ample opportunities. The classes are extremely enjoyable with supportive and encouraging professors. The Department of English is vibrant and engaging, empowering students at every step. Being a part of it has been a delightful journey, full of good memories. Interesting seminars and lectures are held frequently. After attending the first few classes and knowing the professors it felt like home, very comfortable and peaceful. The professors are inspiring, the classes are interactive and interesting. The experience is truly rewarding. I thank the college and the department for every part of my beautiful journey that shaped me for my future endeavours. All thanks to the department that my college will remain a golden chapter of my life. It was truly an unforgettable and joyful experience! I feel extremely lucky and happy to be a student of the College.



**HRISHITA BISWAS**  
*UG Batch 2022-25*



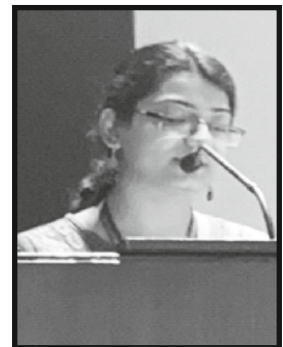
**ISHANI BASU**  
*UG Batch 2022-25*

Shri Shikshayatan College is not just an academic institute, but it is a space which moulds and shapes the dreams of several students. It provides holistic education coupled with discipline and a sense of sincerity in action. Three years of undergrad at Shri Shikshayatan College under the CBCS curriculum was indeed a memorable and enriching experience.

The Department of English is instrumental in inculcating authentic and thorough knowledge of the History of English Literature. It teaches us to deal with texts from different genres and forms, to understand the nuances of Literature, to appreciate the beauty of Literary Criticism, to imbibe the basics of Literary Theory, and to delve deep into the internal psyche of the characters. Most importantly, the Professors encourage the students to develop research aptitude and train the minds of the students to think critically and analyse the texts through multiple perspectives. The Professors are extremely helpful, and they solve all the doubts of the students. Shri Shikshayatan College feels like a sacred sanctuary of knowledge and personal growth. The Professors, with their wide knowledge and expertise in their respective domains, act as guides for the students' professional and academic journeys.



My years at Shri Shikshayatan College remain deeply formative, unfolding like a palimpsest of text and selves. In the English department, literature was never merely studied – it was lived, spoken, and contested. Engaging with diverse texts, from the tragic grandeur of *Oedipus Rex* to the modern squalor of “Preludes”, it has helped me develop a critical lens and continues to shape my thinking. Our professors turned each class into a space of effortless engagement, drawing us into discussions, debates, and presentations in the Imprint Society that shaped us in ways both subtle and enduring. I remain equally grateful to the ever-kind working staff, whose quiet generosity sustained us daily. The care and cleanliness of the campus only deepened the sense of belonging. Having spent three years here as an undergraduate, I have returned once more to the same corridors to pursue my Master's – continuing a journey that feels at once familiar and renewed.



**DHEEMOYEE DEB**  
*UG Batch 2022-25*



**SAHELI KUNDU**  
*UG Batch 2022-25*

My years at the college were marked by a strong sense of belonging and steady personal growth. The campus was not just a place for lectures, but a lively space where every corridor seemed to carry conversations, ideas, and aspirations. The college provided meaningful opportunities through well organised cultural programmes, academic events, and student led initiatives that allowed us to discover our strengths. What stood out most was the balance it maintained between discipline and creative freedom, helping students grow with both confidence and responsibility.

Within this nurturing environment, the English Department became the most defining part of my journey. The department had a distinct academic culture thoughtful, engaging, and deeply encouraging. The professors were not only knowledgeable but genuinely invested in each student's progress. Their lectures often turned into discussions, where every opinion was heard and respected, making learning both interactive and memorable.

A special mention must be made of how actively the professors encouraged me to participate in co-curricular activities. They did not see these as separate from academics but as an extension of our learning. With their constant guidance, I was able to plan, organise, and successfully manage several college events. From conceptualising ideas to executing them, their support was always present, yet never overwhelming.

Their faith in our abilities helped us grow into confident individuals. Looking back, the department gave me not just knowledge, but direction and a lasting sense of confidence.



Shri Shikshayatan College has been my second home, and the Department of English, my true place of comfort. Spending my college years here has been one of the most enriching experiences of my life. The professors not only impart academic knowledge but also offer valuable lessons about life, guiding us beyond the confines of textbooks. Their warmth and approachability make them feel more like friends than teachers.

The institutional visits, competitions, and seminars have provided us with countless opportunities to learn, grow, and broaden our perspectives. Each experience has contributed to shaping who I am today. My journey in this college has truly helped me evolve into a better and more confident individual.



**MUNIRAH AKHTAR**  
*UG Batch 2021-24*



**RAIMA GHOSH**  
*UG Batch 2022-25*

Shri Shikshayatan College has been a transformative haven for me over the past three years of my Undergraduate journey. As an English Literature enthusiast, I have been privileged to learn from the distinguished faculty of the English department, renowned for their erudition and exceptional teaching prowess. Without a second thought, the college's warm and inclusive atmosphere, has created an ideal environment for academic growth. The air-conditioned classrooms and other facilities like the cafeteria, library that are provided to us, has helped us to study in the best possible way.

The professors, with their unwavering support and guidance, have inspired me so much, that I am pursuing my Master's in English from the Postgraduate department of my alma mater itself.

The Non-Teaching Staffs has been consistently cooperative, providing assistance whenever needed.

The environment is so friendly, that ragging or bullying has never been a matter of disturbance in my academic journey.

My wonderful experience during my Bachelor's helped me take the decision to pursue my Master's from this college itself and I am thoroughly enjoying and learning as a Postgraduate student of the English department.



After passing out from school, I was always looking out for the undergraduate institutions in my favourite place, The City of Joy, Kolkata not because of the thrill to live alone in a big city, but the sheer glitter of cultural exposure it will offer and allow me to continue my cultural pursuits just the way I did in my hometown, Siliguri always.

So, when I chanced upon at Shri Shikshayatan college with my favourite degree, the place not only enriched me with a lovely academic life but the support to continue my cultural activities more. The departmental events helped me to gain good knowledge about my degree and to further it more in different ways, taught me class management and related duties. Beyond the room, the Bengali cultural society, Chorcha will always be dear to me and both my department and this society shaped me into a confident leader. Always wondered how could I have ever been able to manage so much, but now every moment I realize my professors, in and out of the department never allowed me to carry extra worries and never stopped encouraging into anything and everything.



**ARATRIKA BOSE**  
*UG Batch 2022-25*



**ANKITA DE**  
*UG Batch 2022-25*

College life is the crucial threshold between structured learning and the uncharted realities beyond, and I feel fortunate to have had the nurturing environment of Shri Shikshayatan College. As a student of the Department of English, my experience has been intellectually enriching and personally formative.

Having completed my undergraduate studies in English Honours here, I chose to return for my postgraduate education, primarily due to the remarkable dedication and expertise of the faculty. The teachers guide us with genuine care, patience and dedication. Even when I found myself approaching them at the last moment with doubts or confusion, they were always accommodating and willing to help.

The department also offers valuable opportunities for student publications, encouraging academic expression beyond the classroom, complimented by an expansive library that supports such pursuits.

While my primary academic engagement has been with the Department of English, my experience with the Departments of Political Science and Journalism and Mass Communication through generic electives has been equally enriching.

The college consistently offers a diverse range of events: cultural, literary, and social, housing vibrant clubs and societies; like Imprint, the English Literary society and Quidra, the quiz and drama society. Though I began as a rather reserved student, inclined to remain within my own shell; the warmth and encouragement extended by the faculty, along with the inclusive nature of the college's societies, gradually drew me out of that reticence. Participating in events such as Vidyasagar Diwas, Active Learning Day, and various programmes organised by Imprint became moments of genuine enjoyment and personal growth.

Another aspect I deeply value is the sense of security the college provides. Influenced perhaps by popular representations of campus life, I had initially anticipated a degree of distraction arising from student politics. However, my experience has been markedly different. The institution maintains a distinctly apolitical environment, allowing a sense of ease and assurance.

In its entirety, the institution lodges a nurturing environment that has an undeniable and irreplaceable role in my holistic development.



## EXCERPTS FROM THE QUIZ

### WHO AM I?

1. A. I have three older siblings, two of whom are accomplished writers  
B. My debut novel has the name of a colour in its title.  
C. My sister prevented the republication of my novel, as she considered its intense subject matter to be a 'mistake'.

Who am I?

Answer : Anne Brontë

2. A. I wrote a book on feminist re-reading of the Ramayana, focusing on Sita's perspective rather than the traditional patriarchal narrative.  
B. My personal life often drew public attention as I was once married to the Nobel Prize winner.  
C. I was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1999 and the Padma Shri Award in the following year

Who Am I?

Answer : Nabanita Deb Sen

### TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

1. Identify the lie about Agatha Christie :  
A. Her detective Hercule Poirot appears in exactly 29 novels.  
B. She once worked in a hospital dispensary during World War I, which influenced the detailed poison knowledge in her mysteries.  
C. One of her plays, The Mousetrap, became the longest-running play in the world.

Answer : The lie is option A. Hercule Poirot actually appears in 33 full-length novels, not 29.

### IS IT SYLVIA PLATH, OR TAYLOR SWIFT?

1. "I rose up from the dead, I do it all the time"

Answer : Taylor Swift

2. "I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead  
I think I made you up inside my head."

Answer : Sylvia Plath

### AM I THE VILLAIN ?

1. As the headmaster of a boarding school, I have long been accustomed to making difficult decisions for the greater good of the students entrusted to my care. Recently, I appointed a new professor to a subject which, I must confess, has never enjoyed great stability among its instructors.  
However, I cannot pretend to be ignorant of certain troubling rumours surrounding this man. In his youth, he is said to have associated himself with a racist and extremist movement, one whose influence has brought considerable suffering to our world.  
Yet people are seldom so simple as their past mistakes. My trust in this person is formidable and he has proved himself to be capable, albeit, rarely likable.  
What course of action do I pursue to be most prudent?  
A. Dismiss the professor at once, for the safety of the students must outweigh any potential advantage gained from observing him further.  
B. Permit him to remain in his post, while keeping him under careful and constant observation.  
C. Take no action for the present, and allow events to unfold without interference, trusting that time and its unyielding ways will make the truth apparent.

Answer : The character is Dumbledore from The Harry Potter Series. Option B is the correct course of action.