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Echoes of Uncharted Narratives

The Department of English
St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Mumbai

The Team behind Ithaka 2023-24

Faculty, Department of English (L-R)

Dr Prasita Mukherjee, Dr Rashmi Lee George, and Ms Amrita Shenoy

Editorial Team (L-R)

Janis Vaz, Leah Monteiro, Jeremy Varghese, Divyadarshini Ramanathan, Aditya Shiledar, Sailee Lopes, Regina Pellissery

Creatives (L-R)

Varada Sathe, Soniya Shanbhag, Aastha Lalan

Public Relations (L-R)

Astha Dhal, Sara Wadekar

ITHAKA
C.P. Cavafy
Translated by Edmund Keeley

As you set out for Ithaka
hope your road is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.
Hope your road is a long one.
May there be many summer mornings when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you enter harbors you're seeing for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind—
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to learn and go on learning from their scholars.
Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you're destined for.
But don't hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you're old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.
Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you wouldn't have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.
And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

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Academic Advisors

Dr Rashmi Lee George

Dr Prasita Mukherjee

Ms Amrita Shenoy

Editorial Team

Divyadarshini Ramanathan (TYBA) - Editor in Chief

Leah Monteiro (TYBA) - Editor

Sailee Lopes (TYBA) - Editor

Regina Pellissery (TYBA) - Editor

Janis Vaz (TYBA) - Editor

Aditya Shiledar (SYBA) - Editor

Jeremy Varghese (SYBA) - Editor

Cover Design

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https://www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/en/wanderer-travel

Creatives and Layout

Varada Sathe (TYBA)

Aastha Lalan (TYBA)

Soniya Shanbhag (SYBAMCJ)

Public Relations

Aastha Dhal (SYBAMCJ)

Sara Wadekar (FYBAMCJ)

Printing

Rahul & Co., Mumbai.

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Foreword

Be it through the filter of a phone camera or journals, periodicals, songs, manuscripts and the like, humanity has always aspired to document life. Yet, across the ages, collective archives of history have often been painfully limited to what Karl Marx once called “the ideas of the ruling class in every epoch”. In this regard, literature can be viewed as a powerful resistant archive, one that has often featured stories of lives that were elided, misread or lost in dominant histories.

In Powers of the False, Doro Wiese pays tribute to this critically important archival function of literature. She writes, “when a history is too painful to relate to [...] when there is no one who will listen to the witnesses, when the testimonies are repressed by the dominant forms of historical representation—then literature might configure a space in which unvoiced, silent, or silenced difference might emerge”. Through the theme “Echoes of Unchartered Narratives”, this issue of Ithaka therefore turns to how literary aesthetics and imagination facilitate the articulation of the historically silenced and marginalised.

Furthermore, using a wide range of theoretical frameworks such as Subaltern Studies, Hauntology, Gender and Ecocriticism, the articles in this issue also present a more psychological unpacking of the spaces we dub ‘unchartered’—often, our complex reflections, desires, memories and sensations. Inevitably, such feelings have found many a remarkable expression in the fluidity of the written word. This once again emphasises how literature departs from the dehydrated pages of official, factual or linear histories towards a realm more subjective and variegated, thereby being closer to human experience.

In being a microcosm of our disparate yet connected lifeworlds, literature is immensely loaded with social potential; to inspire reflection, shape resistances, document narratives or build solidarities across communities. As this issue of Ithaka reinforces, we must not let this go untapped.

Amrita Shenoy
Assistant Professor, Department of English.

Editorial

There once was a multitude of stories ready to be unearthed in the wide reaches of human imagination. A few remained concealed within long-forgotten writings, while others hovered around the periphery of awareness, aching to be revealed. These wild and unexplored stories had the ability to take us to far-off places, alter our perspectives, and spark our imaginations.

Like sailors drawn to the sea's seductive voice, we lovers of literature are pulled to these untrodden tales. Because they contain stories, but also truths, observations on the state of humanity, and echoes of our own experiences. As Neil Gaiman so eloquently put it, "Stories you read when you're the right age never quite leave you. You may forget who wrote them or what the story was called. Sometimes you'll forget precisely what happened, but if a story touches you it will stay with you, haunting the places in your mind that you rarely ever visit." And so, as we embark on this journey into uncharted narratives, let us remember that it is not only the stories themselves that matter, but also the journey of discovery that brings them to life.

The theme 'Echoes of Uncharted Narratives' issues a resounding clarion call, urging us to confront the biases, omissions, and exclusions staining the canvas of our collective storytelling. By delving into narratives consigned to the fringes of history, we unfurl a kaleidoscope of perspectives, each a mosaic of the human experience. Within the pages of this issue, we present 16 papers, a global tableau interwoven with the rich tapestry of diverse voices, including a notable contribution from our homeland, India.

From the hallowed halls of academia to the bustling boulevards of life, our exploration of subalternism traverses continents and epochs. Radheye Thakkar's penetrating analysis of American classics peels back the layers of marginalization, while Srishti Gotiwale's odyssey through Russian and colonial Indian literature unearths tales of defiance and resilience. Closer to home, Amruta Doke casts a spotlight on 19th-century subaltern literature, resurrecting the forgotten voices of Tarabai Shinde and Pandita Ramabai. Meanwhile, Dhiya Prasanth's foray into the indigenous resilience of the Munda Tribe serves as a poignant reminder of cultural identity's enduring spirit. Feminist narratives are discussed in Namya Shukla's paper dealing with the feminist appropriation of the representation of bodies in Tanushree Podder's "Ambapali". Additionally, Sreelakshmi Nair throws light on Tagore's 'Aparichita' as it embodies the emancipation and liberation of a man

through the woman in a patriarchal setting. And on our own city turf, Mansi Devani's paper takes us through the darkly dim dynamics of the red-light area in Mumbai as portrayed through Manto's *Bombay Stories*.

The theme of identity takes center stage as we navigate the labyrinthine interplay of gender, religion, and sexuality. Akriti Banerjee's exploration of the transgender experience in 1960s New York echoes the quest for selfhood amid societal constraints, while Mohsina Sakriwala's scrutiny of Chugtai's short stories delves into the intricate tapestry of individual identity. And in the realm of horror, Rishika Pangam unveils the primal terror lurking beneath the veneer of motherhood, while Aditya Shiledar's application of Derrida's hauntology reveals the spectral manifestations of personal trauma. Finally, Riva Harani bestows a novel perspective on classic pieces of children's literature, showcasing the mysterious absurdist nature of the genre.

Beyond the confines of literature, our exploration extends to the boundless vistas of other artistic realms. Geenia Fernandes' examination of the symbiotic relationship between visual arts and literature casts a luminous glow on the canvas of human expression, while M. Zaid's elucidation on companion pieces in literature brings to light the unsung heroes lurking in the shadows of literary giants. Ramprasad Mahurkar's ecocritical lens challenges the romanticized notions of the unexplored, while Shania Dsouza's poignant interpretation of war through the prism of human experience bears witness to the indelible scars etched by history's tumultuous upheavals.

In our relentless pursuit of the 'Echoes of Uncharted Narratives', our esteemed authors have illuminated the forgotten corridors of history, infusing life into narratives long consigned to the dustbin of obscurity. Through their collective endeavors, they have carved out a sacred space where every voice resonates, where every story finds solace. In these echoes, we not only reshape the contours of literature but also pave the path towards a more inclusive and enlightened future.

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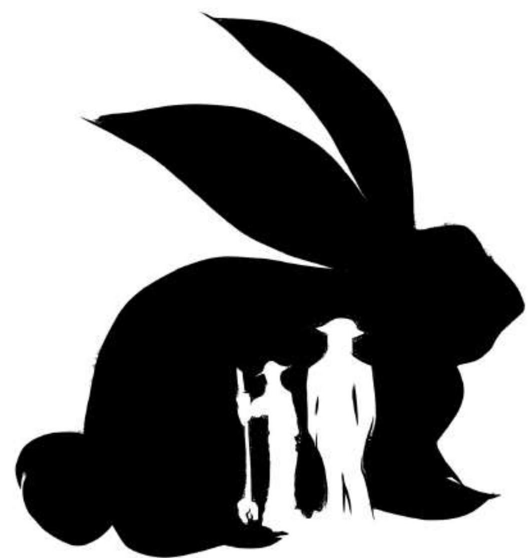
Inherent Limitations and Subaltern Voices in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*

Radheye Thakker

Spivak defines subalterns as "those who don't give orders; they only receive orders" (qtd. in Maurya). Of Mice and Men speaks of subalterns and highlights how the Western world represents a space wherein hegemonic structures were reproduced and hence reinforced, the consequences of this being 'deadly'. Exploring the storyline of the two migrant labourers, Lennie, a naive character with poetic goodness and George, a pragmatic character whose life purpose is to protect Lennie, the paper analyses the effect that the American Dream had on commoners. While fostering dreams of home ownership and safety, it offered a safe but illusory space for the characters to console themselves with, throughout the ups and downs of the text. The paper undertakes an in-depth analysis of each character in this light to bring out the shortcomings of the American Dream and its ultimate collapse while also exploring the form this message takes when the medium is changed from books to cinema.

A narrative is defined as "the complex unfolding of different layers of discourse that allows for poly-perspectival resp. meta-representational effects on the textual macro-structure" which essentially explains that there are multiple facets to a storyline and one doesn't grasp all these in one reading, leading to the emergence of uncharted narratives (Zeman 1).

John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, a novella published in 1937, exemplifies this concept, as it chronicles the journey of George and Lennie, itinerant labourers, as they seek employment within the backdrop of the Great Depression in America. By representing subaltern viewpoints and untold stories of marginalised communities through his depiction of socially, politically, and economically disadvantaged individuals, Steinbeck provides a non-teleological glimpse into the "powerlessness of the California laboring class" (Shillinglaw xvii). The narrative is hyper-focused on two seemingly ordinary workers to urge the readers to "slow down, look closely" at how the American Dream represented an idealised objective



for the characters, even under the most challenging circumstances (Shillinglaw xvii). To fully understand the text, one must also note that it is at the cusp of two genres, novels and plays - "one moribund, the other alive" (Shillinglaw xvi). The literary aspect aided creative visualisation for its

readers and the theatrical one is manifested through concentrated characters, showcasing a microcosm of American reality. Through this, he created a new genre - a "playable novel", consisting of writing in a manner that could be "scened and set" to bring it to life (qtd. in Shillinglaw xvi).

> The title of the novel comes from Robert Burns' poem "To a Mouse", wherein he says, "The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men/ Gang aft agley,/ An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,/ For promis'd joy!" (lines 39-42)

He essentially writes about an incident in which a farmer accidentally ruins a mouse's nest which leads him to question the unpredictability of life for both mice and humanity alike. This is not just reminiscent of the crucial role that mice and men hold in the text but it also talks of fate as a factor that leads to Lennie's demise. Additionally, George is left with the "grief and pain" of losing Lennie, and therefore the "promised joy" of owning a ranch together (Burns 41; 42).

The locale of both, the poem and the text, is the Great Depression which was the culmination of the American Dream era, characterised by creative and economic advancements during the 1920s. However, this period abruptly ended around 1929, plunging American society into a state of crisis. Amidst this abrupt change, numerous individuals experienced a sense of being caught off guard. This viewpoint is mirrored in George and Lennie's determination to pursue their vision of a tranquil and self-sufficient life, despite being immersed in a severe economic downturn that jeopardises not only their aspirations but also their survival. George aspires to achieve autonomy and establish a reputation for himself. Lennie aspires to lead a modest life on a farm, where he may care for pet rabbits. Upon initial observation, it is evident that the workers' state is extremely destitute. Despite possessing the solitary freedom to dream, their aspirations are limited to the mere desire of not having to toil for others, or even something as trivial as owning pet rabbits. Another character, Candy, is seen being swept up in their dream. This idea, even though far-fetched, holds much importance as is seen in various instances where George uses the narrative to pacify Lennie. The novella ends with the demise of Lennie at the hands of George while he envisions their dream - "le's do it now, le's get that place now", illustrating the inherently unattainable character of this desire and its collapse (Steinbeck 105).

Upon preliminary examination, it becomes apparent that the first section of the text presents the protagonists in an idealistic environment which foreshadows the futility of perfection in the world as indicated by the events which unfold. But on closer examination, one can spot other indications used to dismantle the utopian facade, including the clever use of the location 'Soledad' which means 'solitude' in Spanish, highlighting the inherent loneliness felt by the characters. Other subtle hints include - "rabbits sat as quietly as little gray, sculptured stones" and the dead mouse in Lennie's pocket (4). Steinbeck's recurrent analogies between Lennie and other animals serve to strengthen the imminent feeling of impending tragedy because all the animals mentioned, be it field mice, Candy's dog or Lennie's puppy, meet their demise prematurely.

The idealisation extends beyond the facade of a utopian setting. The author romanticises male friendship and elevates them to a significant level to depict the reality of the time - "it is the constant

craving for human company, for friends that is so strong among the floating class … this feeling can only be partially satisfied through the institution of partners" (qtd. in Shillinglaw xii), while also allowing for a more impactful depiction of their subsequent downfall. The novella's inevitable despairing progression becomes even more apparent when one takes into account George's proactive insistence on establishing a meeting point in case any issues develop.

As the text progresses, one discovers that there is a notion of the weakest becoming the scapegoat and outlet for society's frustrations. Lennie, despite his imposing physique, is shown to exhibit a childlike nature. Within the first section, he is portrayed as intellectually disabled and entirely dependent on George. Such portrayals of cognitive impairment in literature mirror the prevailing social perspectives during the periods in which the literary works were created. Of Mice and Men was written when the bulk of society showed a lack of sympathy for mentally disabled individuals. From society's point of view, because Lennie's appearance and nature don't conform to societal standards, he is unfairly treated. He is described as - "a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders" (Steinbeck 4). Aberrant conduct and diminished levels of economic output were perceived as a detriment to society. This is reinforced by the fact that Lennie believes that George's life would improve if he were to escape and reside in a cave. Conversely, George has a strong inclination to safeguard Lennie due to his desire to provide him with an opportunity to thrive in life. Lennie's misunderstood perception is seen when his desire to feel the fabric of a girl's dress leads to a false rape accusation. His prodigious power, coupled with his lack of control over it, renders him both a spectacle and a danger. Ultimately, George is forced to confront the reality that he, too, had a role in Lennie's downfall. By disregarding, minimising, or mocking his infirmity, he had hindered Lennie's comprehension of his essence, intensifying the isolation and marginalisation of his companion.

Often reality is veiled by fantasy, to protect one from facing things how they truly are. Considering this, it can be said that George protects himself from the reality of his failures by clinging to his fantasy of a ranch and projecting his anger onto Lennie. This could also be seen as a good reason why an ideological concept like the American Dream was popularised. His frustration was with the capitalistic system of the time which perpetuated the hegemony of the powerful, but it was displaced and projected onto Lennie as seen by - "You can't keep a job and you lose me ever' job I get. You do bad things and I got m get you out" (13). George blames him rather than confronting his reality, which in turn protects the rags-to-rich fantasy.

Steinbeck gained inspiration to write this book from his time working on ranches. In an interview with a New York Times reporter, he said, "Lennie was a real person" and went on to explain that this person had killed a foreman but the tragedy had such an impact on him that it provided the plot for his new book (qtd. in Shillinglaw xiii). The person was said to be in an "insane asylum" (qtd. In Shillinglaw xiii) at the time. One can perhaps question why Steinbeck decided to kill off the character in his book and whether the sole purpose was to broaden the impact on his readers.

Crooks, the African-American stablehand, is the ranch's second person to experience the junction of two types of marginalisation. African Americans were among the populations most hit by the

Great Depression's economic devastation. His boss and the other ranch workers made disparaging remarks about him so much so that his moniker was a consequence of a spinal abnormality caused by a horse accident. This goes on to show how his identity was established based merely on his failures. Also, Curley, the boss's son, is shown to express his irritation by resorting to physical aggression towards Crooks - "The boss gives him hell when he's mad" (Steinbeck 21). His tendency to avoid social engagements, his lack of enjoyment in others' presence, and his preference for isolation in his room indicate a defence mechanism he had developed against perceived threats. Such is the extent of this that he didn't allow himself to entertain the idea of participating in Lennie and Candy's shared aspiration. He accepted it at first, but retracted his statement - "I didn' mean it, jus' foolin'," to prevent any detrimental repercussions resulting from treachery towards his present employer (82). The existence of this oppression further adds to the power dynamics inside the ranch.

Candy was the 'swamper' - responsible for miscellaneous tasks and was retained only out of his boss's compassion because he lost his hand on the job. The emblem of Candy's dog, an aged and odorous sheepdog, both blind and lame, clearly represents his unfortunate situation. The dog symbolises not just a companion, but also mirrors Candy's own identity. It exhibited signs of advanced age, physical impairment, and diminished utility, similar to Candy, who was likewise experiencing a decline in his abilities and relevance within the unforgiving environment of the ranch. This harsh reality seemed to be heightened when Slim said - " I wisht somebody'd shoot me if I got old an' a cripple" (46). Hence, the dog serves as a portent of the destiny that awaits persons deemed unproductive or lacking value in society.

The portrayal of women in the text is unkind. Indeed, the female characters in the book are consistently subjected to disdain. Steinbeck typically portrays women as instigators who cause upheaval in men's lives and drive them to insanity. Curley's wife, who strolled around the ranch as a temptress, appears to exemplify the harmful inclination in the manner that Curley's volatile temperament had worsened since marriage. In addition to this, it provides restricted, sometimes sexist portrayals of women who are either deceased motherly figures or prostitutes. The height of sexism is that she is not portrayed as an individual, but only referred to as 'Curley's' wife, having no individuality or identity outside of her marriage.

The subalterns in *Of Mice and Men* symbolise the broader divisions in American society and reflect the then-prevailing mood of dread, instability, and suspicion. Due to the scarcity of employment opportunities, even those who were Caucasian and physically capable were unable to secure jobs. Consequently, society was under significant strain as a result of widespread disenchantment. The act of blaming minorities, such as disabled individuals, people of colour, and women, served as a means for socially dominant groups to assign responsibility and alleviate their feelings of humiliation over their inability to succeed within a deteriorating system. Steinbeck delves into the core of these issues and consistently showcases conflicts between the powerful and powerless, cautioning society against targeting its most vulnerable individuals to appease the arrogance of its most influential members.

The playable aspect of the novel was so relevant that Steinbeck produced a play version of the

book with famous playwright George Kaufman; followed by various cinematic renditions including a movie released in 1992. The film's visual portrayal boosts the representation of locales and people, influencing the audience's viewpoint. The film faithfully adheres to the narrative, encompassing nearly all facets, including mundane ones, to effectively communicate the novel's message. However, as with any book-to-cinema transition, the film includes additional sequences to enrich the narrative. An important addition to the film is its initial sequence, which is a prolepsis depicting George and Lennie escaping from an angry mob at their Weed, their previous workplace, a scene that is not in the original book. A notable detail in the film is the infantilisation of Lennie. In the novella, there is no description of Lennie's voice, leaving it up to the reader's imagination completely. But in the film, Lennie is seen to speak in a childlike manner to portray naivety and innocence.

Moreover, several instances are either condensed or even omitted, which impacts the depiction of Crooks. The film enriches the portrayal of Curley's wife by incorporating further scenes that provide a more profound comprehension of her background and ambitions, which are not as extensively expounded upon in the written work. The concluding scene has been embellished with further visual elements and nuanced particulars, effectively delivering the desired impression to its audience. A major change that it makes concerning the viewer's perception is that when reading the novella, it takes time and various situations to elicit sympathy from the reader but the film dramatises the character to an extent that the viewer cannot help feeling pity for him from the very start.

This can be used to explore the fact that "the visual and auditory information that enters our brain is distorted by experiences, thoughts, circumstances, wild fancies, prejudices, preferences, knowledge, awareness, and countless other workings of the mind" (Kawaguchi 189). The book transforms into a cartographic representation of uncharted emotional and intellectual domains, with our interpretation acting as a navigational aid for these undiscovered places within ourselves. The director and author have the platform to highlight certain components that align with their own experiences or creative ideals, exploring facets of the tale that have not been explored before in literature. This has the potential to either explore uncharted narratives or delve into aspects that resonate with the majority.

Consequently, conversations about a book frequently expose a multitude of perspectives, showcasing the fundamental variety in human existence. This occurrence highlights the depth that emerges when individuals from diverse backgrounds engage with the same tale, developing a deeper comprehension of the human experience. The interplay between the reader's perception of the book and the film adaptation fosters a dialogue between the subjective exploration of the reader and the creative vision of the director. This dynamic enhances the multiplicity of interpretations, emphasising the fluid and ever-changing manner in which we interact with literature in its diverse manifestations.

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Tragedy of Historical Structures: Locating the Significance of Infrastructure in Literature

Srishti Gotiwale

The 19th-century Indian socieThe crumbling remnants of a utopian nation that was the Soviet Union and the ongoing destruction of significant histories in India, guide us into an unsure future. A timeline in which consequential infrastructures are demolished and their stories are forgotten as a result of oppressive authorities. As background settings bear the faults of humanity, and exist as a reminder of glorious and depressing days, they pass on legacies and tales to people willing to listen. Infrastructure is a crucial component of stories written in distinct eras. They are silent observers, unnoticed by many readers, yet are a significant aspect of shaping histories of literary worlds. This paper explores the unknown narratives of historical structures with the help of The Master and Margarita by Mikhail Bulgakov, a Russian and later a Soviet writer and E.M. Forster's A Passage to India.

The tragic, fateful and often interesting narratives of humanhood are embedded within structures in our society. One concern as avid readers is to locate the significance of infrastructure in literature that becomes crucial for our understanding of the future. This exploration reveals a profound connection between structures, their histories and the tragedies encapsulated in their walls. The study of literary structures is integral to the collective human experience.

1. Master and the Margarita

The Soviet Union was a failed state. The faults of the communist regime in this nation are accurately depicted in its surroundings. While the Soviets were still getting familiar with its socio-cultural and political landscapes, its literature sought to envision a grand vision for a socialist utopia; this included the literature not only of novelists and poets but also of government propaganda pamphlets and posters. Writers like Vladimir Mayakovsky were celebrating the introduction of colossal developments and creation of urban spaces and transformations of rural sweeps.

Gradually, with the emergence of outsider influences and interactions with foreign countries, Soviet literature saw more nuanced depictions of modernisation. Academics, activists and even the common people started to see, literally and metaphorically, cracks in their systems of establishments and viewed the unusual pace of development as alarming. Authorities began to exhibit their coercive actions towards collectivisation and industrialisation. The foundation pit of their infrastructure became a graveyard for utopian dreams.

The brutal nature of political structures which embodied itself into inhumane architecture in the Soviet Union predicted the fall of the empire. Despite having harsh settings of buildings and spaces looming in multiple instances of Soviet/Russian literature throughout the years, why was this brutalist infrastructure left unnoticed?

Between satire and fantasy, Mikhail Bulgakov tries to record the distinction of infrastructure and the stories entwined in them. The Master and Margarita takes place in Moscow, a city that was an epicentre of radical changes taken by the Soviet government. In Moscow, the physical transformation of the urban landscape such as the construction of wide boulevards, the proliferation of administrative structures and conversion of sizable residential areas into dense living spaces mirrored the relentless pursuit of modernity and the remaking of societal norms and the ideological shift of the Soviet state

The eventful arrival of Professor Woland, who appears to be human but is satan, incites chaos and upheaval in the book's version of Moscow. Beyond the realm of the paranormal, his deadly deeds are a reflection of the disruptive elements such as the Soviet's pursuit towards becoming an economic competence and bridging their pecuniary lag among the other developed capitalist countries, this ensued the Union's push for industrialisation and infrastructure expansion. His disappearing actions parallel the hasty demolitions of old structures to make way for the new and "improved" ones. The aspiration of improvement came at the cost of destroying historical and cultural foundations.

One of the main settings of this book is the concept of Patriarch's Pond (an actual location in Moscow). This park/pond was once an idyllic scene but as a background anchor, they act as witnesses to transformation. There are instances where authorities demolish old houses around the pond to make space for unhackneyed and spacious buildings that were meant to accommodate a considerable number of citizens. This leading idea of Patriarch Ponds captures the tension between preserving the past and embracing the future. Additionally, it highlights the sacrifices made in the name of progress, an imperfection prevalent in the Soviet state that led to its eventual downfall.

Further, the author recalls the marginalised spaces of individuals who were obscured by the authorities and their ostentatious promise of progress. The basement of the 'Variety Theatre', a location in the book, where Woland resides, serves as a figurative space for those excluded from the mainstream narratives of the Soviet communist dream, this ideal holds an eerie similarity to the American dream, which was a curated lure to those prepared to pay for a life in the United States and contributed unduly to their economy but prevented impoverished groups from pursuing their aspirations. The unseen infrastructure symbolises the hidden penalty of breakthroughs, including the sacrifices of those relegated to the margins of society. The residents of this uncertain community were victims of the oppressive and forceful nature of its surroundings and the Soviet authorities and were deprived of basic resources and education.

The black horse in The Master and Margarita expresses the sentiments of frustration between ordinary natives and totalitarian leadership in the Soviet Union. The horse's flight was a rejection of tyrannical Soviet realities and a refusal to accept domineering infrastructure. Their pursuit was of individual freedom and creativity, but the buildings forced collectivism on its people who were not ready to change over a fortnight.

> "Once there was a certain lady . . . And she had no children,
> and generally no happiness either. And so first she cried for a long time,
> and then she became wicked . . ." (Bulgakov 144)

The Master's novel about Pontius Pilate, within Mikhail's fictional universe becomes a counter-narrative that challenges the prevailing ideologies, offering a space for intellectual and artistic resistance against the homogenising forces of the Soviet system. It is the Master's artistic rebellion in a grey system that is bound to restrict imagination. His aversion towards state-governed literary infrastructure and being unable to scrutinise the complexity of being a human as a consequence of intense censorship is communicated through his repudiation of bourgeois fiction. Woland is especially notorious for becoming a symbol of rebellion against the regimented Soviet infrastructure. He and his entourage disrupt the apparent tranquillity of Moscow, they interfere with mundane existence.

2. A Passage To India

It has been a long-standing Westernist trend to depict the Orient (especially Indians) as savages and barbaric people, a population that is too tribalistic to effectively organise and structure their political, social and economic landscapes. The superficial "liberal" ideology of the West proposed "freedom" to not identify with any religion and liberty for the body. They intended to veil the propaganda of Western superiority, stealing resources and fuelling terrorism among the subcontinent. However, the particular ideals were directly at odds with what Indian society stood for, a place with a heavy disposition towards religion and an economy which excessively relied on agriculture and a barter system. Brawls between two vastly different beliefs were often the milieu of Colonialism.

> "Aziz was exquisitely dressed, from tie-pin to spats,
> but he had forgotten his back-collar stud, and there you have the
> Indian all over; inattention to detail, the fundamental slackness that reveals the race…." (Forster 39)

At its core, A Passage to India scrutinises the despotic rule of the British on Indian land. But it also seeks to share the colonial experience in India through the fictional city of Chandrapore. The infrastructure of the city parallels the tyrannical character of the British authority. Forster describes the bigoted aspect of the Raj by never making Chandrapore a place of peace or beauty. Instead, the streets lack character and after being acquired by the colonists, the indigenous population is shown to have lost any desire to enhance the city. The natives of Chandrapore are confined to the city, both physically and psychologically. The spatial divisions within Chandrapore become a narrative device, reflecting the administrative fragmentation imposed by colonial infrastructure between the Eurasians who resided in the city and the proletarian Indians.

Though fictitious, the Marabar Caves are a crucial site in the narrative. These caves exist as a testament towards the rich and sensitive history of post-colonial India, but they also express dissent towards the destruction of monumental infrastructure in India. To reach the Marabar hills, travellers have to use the Marabar Express. Railways were an emerging form of transportation in India during the Raj. The railway was an organised system created by the British to boost trade and transporting resources within the Indian borders, used thereafter as a figure of class separating the colonisers from the colony. Train tracks once more stood as a witness to the further segregation of the masses, while imperial structures like the train become a catalyst to augment dominance.

Dr Aziz, an Indian Muslim man, introduces the Marabar Caves to the visiting Englishwoman Adela Quested, this interaction becomes a turning point for the characters in the story. Their relationship is a microscopic version of the broader cultural clash in A Passage to India. The caves symbolise the intrinsic strangeness and otherness that the British characters perceive in India. This becomes a cogent comparison between the distortion and misinterpretation inherent in cross-cultural interactions, particularly those between the colonisers and the colonised. It becomes exceedingly difficult for Adela and Dr. Aziz to bridge their relationships and disentangle their miscommunication because of the restrictive physical and mental spaces created by the British.

The lost narratives within the infrastructure are bygones solely because the ones in power could not understand the nuances in the historical context of India and inherently, the Marabar Caves. The complexity of relationships within the novel is further illuminated by the legal actions followed by Adela's accusation towards Aziz. The courtroom reveals the nature of "justice" as a concept in a colonial world. The British law, in this case, only seeks to protect its own from the 'pervasive' and 'vicious' nature of accused Indians. The legal institutions seek to suppress the voices of the marginalised as they struggle to be heard in a system which is biased against them.

In Forster's work, he uses the site of Marabar Caves to represent the dynamic relations between the colonists and the Indians. This relationship is deeply complex because of the prolonged imposition of the Britishers in India. Indians being held in captivity for more than a century by 'outsiders' left immense shock to comprehend, and an abundance of ramifications that had to be dealt with after Independence. India is still a victim of the colonial hangover, this is evident by the lurking presence of the Raj in the British-made infrastructure that exists in various parts of the country. Something as small as kitchen utensils to the entire transportation system of the Railways was a consequence of colonialism. The nuance of the affinity between the colonists and the colonised is explored through physical edifices and spatial differences.

The city of Chandrapore and the Marabar Caves represent the cultural and traditional conflicts between people from dissimilar circumstances. The inability of Adela to understand the plights of Aziz embodied the failure of their relationship with each other. The caves are an active participant in the aftermath of their miscommunication. They shape the narratives of these characters and represent the unstable politics and deranged sociology of Indian society under colonisation, as experienced by the community and reflected in the novel. Forster scrutinises and, at the same time,

invites the readers to gain an in-depth understanding of the convoluted cooperation of the visible forces that shape our lives.

3. Conclusion

Both Mikhail Bulgakov and E.M. Forster exhibit profound levels of perceptibility that exist beyond physical spaces and structures. In The Master and the Margarita, the infrastructure of Moscow is shown to mirror and almost replicate the affairs of the Soviet state. Bulgakov uses Woland to expose the absurdity of the system that suppresses creativity and dissent. It is an emblematic sign of societal decay and moral erosion along with the disappearance of humanity within the Soviet authorities. Their constant attempts to make their land a utopian dream blind them when it comes to basic paradigms of understanding. Bulgakov uses supernatural intervention in a 'normal' portrayal of the Socialist Republic to observe the tyrannical nation of forces and their upsetting impact on vulnerable individuals.

The infrastructure in both novels becomes a powerful metaphor for the invisible structures that govern society, whether they be supernatural forces, colonial hierarchies, or the unseen threads of power. Both authors explore these ideas through symbolism in common surroundings, human embodiment and experience and societal critique. In these works, infrastructure plays a substantial part that goes beyond the material to the immaterial, shedding light on how social structures influence the daily lives and interactions of individuals. By examining the world through the prism of infrastructure, Bulgakov and Forster force us to face the problems with our social institutions and enable us to comprehend the complex interactions that exist between people and the systems that govern the world around them.

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Reclaiming Feminist Narratives In 19th Century Subaltern Literature

Amruta Doke

The 19th-century Indian society witnessed the emergence of deeply orthodox social evils that restricted the expression of freedom and mobility of individuals. With the rise of several reformist and revivalist movements that sought to eradicate and purify the masses from these rigidities, several writers began to provide a realistic depiction of the horrors of society in their literary works. The elitist representation in Indian literature was deconstructed to incorporate several significant voices of the society which had been deliberately suppressed so far, including those of the subaltern women and lower classes. While several male Marathi writers such as Baba Padmanji and H. N. Apte raised questions on the customs of widow exclusion and child marriage through their stories Yamuna Paryatan and Pan Lakshat Kon Gheto, these representations continued to be male-dominated and presented a rather narrow view of the truth. To instil inclusivity and reclaim their narratives in Marathi literature, women writers such as Tarabai Shinde and Pandita Ramabai undertook the process of re-writing and re-telling to present an honest yet brutal portrayal of the oppressed conditions of women. This paper will critically analyse Shinde's Stri Purush Tulana to provide a glimpse into the lives of women of this period. It seeks to provide further insight into the lives of the widows through a comparative analysis with Ramabai's The High-Caste Hindu Woman. A study of these women-written narratives will re-establish their significant positions in history and liberate their voices to be rightfully heard and acknowledged by all.

In the colonial history of the Indian subcontinent, the 19th century is often regarded as one of the darkest periods for the social and intellectual development of the nation. The society was deeply corroded by the widespread practice of social evils such as caste oppression, child marriage, illiteracy, a ban on female education, exclusion of widows and the practice of Sati. These religious superstitions and matters of rational deprivation proved to be major hindrances in the path towards reason and modernity. With a double collective imposition to rid society of these regressing forces and to instil contemporary European ideals in the Indian context, the mid-19th century witnessed an upsurge in reformist and revivalist movements led by the newly educated middle-class progressive thinkers. The emergence of these movements can be attributed to the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy who exposed the role of religion as a major factor in this declining society. In the domain of literature, several writers transformed the act of writing into a political statement of resistance and action by urging their readers to confront reality and protest against it. In a way, the elitist hegemony over the written word was deconstructed to incorporate several significant voices of the society which had been deliberately suppressed so far, including those of subaltern feminism. This

paper aims to analyse the realist literary works of two 19th-century Marathi women writers: Tarabai Shinde and Pandita Ramabai. A critical study of Shinde's *Stri-Purush Tulana* (1882) in comparison with Ramabai's *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* (1887), these texts trace the beginning of conscious inclusivity in Marathi literature through the rise of women writers who sought to rid the masses of their ingrained sophistry.

A feminist analysis of these two texts focuses on the concept of the subaltern and the efforts for their liberation in the modern world. The marginalisation of communities on all fronts of political, religious, social and economic boundaries was brought into the post-colonial South Asian context by Ranajit Guha in his *Subaltern Studies I* by referring to it as "a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way" (35). In the Indian context, the women of the pre-Partition times could be categorised as subalterns in two aspects: under the authority of the Indian men and the political repression of the British. Restricted by the ancient patriarchal norms and the oppression inflicted by the British, they suffered hegemony on both accounts. When it came to representing these 'lived experiences' of women, the narrative continued to be predominantly male-dominated and caste-restricted. The lives of women of this period were documented through the works of male authors such as Baba Padmanji and H. N. Apte who raised questions on the customs of widow exclusion and child marriage through their stories *Yamuna Paryatan* (1857) and *Pan Lakshat Kon Gheto (But who takes any notice?)* (1890). While this may be counted as one of the first steps towards inclusive Marathi literature, the ability of the subaltern to speak for themselves and re-write the misrepresented narratives continued to be a matter of concern. Gayatri Spivak echoes this in *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), wherein she states, "If in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (82-83). However, this inability of the subaltern to express their voice can be partly refuted in this study through the works of women such as Tarabai Shinde and Pandita Ramabai whose education challenged this status quo and paved the way for the emergence of indigenous Marathi literature by women writers.

Tarabai Shinde's rage against societal and gendered injustices led her to pen the acclaimed essay *Stri-Purush Tulana (A Comparison Between Men and Women)* which addressed the Brahmanical patriarchy rooted in 19th-century society. It was inspired by the infamous trial of Vijayalakshmi, a victim of child marriage and early widowhood, who was convicted of killing her illegitimate child and was charged with transportation of life. The hypocrisy and unfair judicial treatment between men and women drove Shinde with a degree of urgency to pen this down in one of the very first

Marathi women's writings. She begins her 'controversial' pamphlet by asserting her reasons and objectives to do so. The first lines of her foreword state:

> God brought this amazing universe into being, and He also created men and women both. So is it true that only women's bodies are home to all kinds of wicked vices? Or have men got just the same faults as we find in women? I wanted this to be shown absolutely clear, and that's the reason I've written this small book to defend the honour of all my sister country women. (75)

Her education and liberal upbringing led her to disregard societal distinctions and by doing so, she established a shared solidarity between women of all castes and classes. As a member of the 'weaker gender', she accepts the due criticism that her work will fall under and makes a plea and asks the readers to judge the realities depicted here with due diligence and honesty. This text can primarily be analysed according to two distinct aspects: a source of lived experiences of women and the utter neglect and indifference of the male upper class to progress their conditions further. While painting the lives of most subaltern communities, Shinde aptly intertwines the root causes of their degradation with orthodox religious norms. This is evident when she questions the concept of *stridharma* (women's religion) and *pativrata* (virtuous wife). The deification of one's husband becomes a means for the unequal power dynamics in a marriage, whether it be in the softer sentiments between a couple or in the patriarchal voice that dominates the household. Shinde draws a border across this 'tolerant' attitude towards men by probing their deserving nature for the same, "If the husband is really to be like a God to the wife, then shouldn't he behave like one?" (81). She justifies her argument by questioning the necessity for the willing blindfold of Gandhari after her marriage to the blind Dhritarashtra in the Hindu epic *Mahabharata* and Mandodari's dutiful adherence to carry out Ravana's wish to persuade Sita to marry him in *Ramayana*. If the meaning of Pativrata is all about obeying the wishes of one's husband with blind reverence, does it not become the sole reason for "upper-caste women's subaltern consciousness, of being subjected to the most coercive patriarchal norms and practices"? (Kosambi 4)

The strength of this essay lies predominantly in the use of direct and sharp language with which she confronts her expected readers: the Brahmins and upper-class men who overlook the plight of widows and work for their further exploitation. She does not hesitate even slightly when she puts forward the provocative question in the lines, "Why won't any of you come forward and put a stop to these great calamities?" (79). Herein, the indifference of the government as well as the educated men to bring about a real difference in the lives of their counterparts is looked upon as the sole obstacle to women's progress. She points out the great hypocrisy that underlines the social behaviours of these 'intellectual' reformers who have turned themselves into "real live sahibs…(who) turn round and claim you're great defenders of dharma" (94). This profound accusation finds reflection when an appeal was made to the government on the Vijayalakshmi case and was met with a mass protest against the British intervention in matters of religious customs. The vested intentions of the saints who manipulated the scriptures are also highlighted when one undertakes spiritual acts to cleanse one's spirit and repay for the misdeeds:

> Oh yes, you put strings of sacred tulsi beads around your necks, you go round reciting the virtues of Viththal, posing as servants of Hari, famous beggars, you take yourselves off to Kashi. But do you think you can wipe it all clean by going off there and shaving your beard and moustaches as penance? (108)

One of the most influential points discussed by Shinde, which also finds due mention in Pandita Ramabai's work *The High-Caste Hindu Woman*, is the then-highly controversial issue of the social exclusion of widows and their remarriage. Along with their advocacy, they also bring to light the hypocrisy that underlines the societal forbiddance of widow remarriage for women but its permittance for men. This is echoed in Ramabai's *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* wherein she brings to light the pitiful plight of the widows by referencing selected texts from the Code of Manu, a scripture which was "too sacred for feminine lips to utter" (10). After earning her right to these scriptures through her scholastic achievements, Ramabai used them to address the cause of widows and present this "worst and most dreaded period of a high-caste woman's life" with the utmost truth. She draws the stark contrast between the duties of a widow and a widower as inscribed in the Code of Manu:

> A virtuous wife who after the death of her husband constantly remains chaste, reaches heaven. (Manu v., 160)
> Having thus at the funeral, given the sacred fires to his wife dies before him, he may marry again, and again kindle the (nuptial) fires. (Manu v., 167-69)

With her knowledge of the scriptures, she reveals the falsehood of Sati as being inscribed in the Rig-Vedas and attributes the illiteracy and the vested interests of the priests in permitting this suffering for generations. According to the Vedic ceremonial written in the Grihya sutras, the widow is instructed to:

> Rise, woman, come to the world of life, thou sleepest nigh unto him whose life is gone. Come to us. Thou hast thus fulfilled the duties of a wife to the husband, who once took thy hand and made thee a mother (qtd. in Ramabai 105).

Despite the abolition of Sati in 1829, the widows have had no respite and were compelled to oblige with socially deemed actions such as shaving one's head, renouncing gold ornaments or brightly coloured clothes, secluding themselves on auspicious occasions and being publicly blamed as the instigator for the death of one's husband. Even a mere glimpse of what awaited them can be regarded as the sole reason for what led them to follow their husbands and choose death over the living.

If Shinde and Ramabai successfully laid the groundwork for the emergence of debates on gender in the Indian context, their revolutionary work was carried forward by other successive women writers who re-wrote the female narratives in fiction and poetry. The efforts to establish the subaltern voice were evident through the depiction of strong and fierce female characters in fiction; whether it be the construction of an ideal, egalitarian society by Rewati and her sisters in Kashibai Kanitkar's *Palkhicha Ghoda* (1928) or the absolute freedom of profession of Shalini in Indira

Sahsrabuddhe's *Keval Dhyeysathi* (1928). This period also witnessed the emergence of Dalit Feminism through Mukta Salve's work *Mang Maharachya Dukhvisayi (About the Grief of the Mangs and the Mahars)* (1855). The movement of liberation for the lower class women was inextricably linked with their caste and Salve reflects on this after witnessing the misery of her parents and their community members. Considered one of the earliest pieces of Dalit women's writing, Salve stressed on the importance of education, for lower-caste women and men alike, in breaking free from the chains of caste oppression and reclaiming their dignity and status in society. The first 'untouchable' student in the Jyotirao Phule's school for girls, her essay becomes "a great example of the Phules' belief in the potential explosiveness of education" (Mani 71). However, Salve's record of the lived experiences of Dalit women remains forgotten and her work continues to be unacknowledged amongst modern women's literature. A discourse of these uncharted narratives proves to be a gentle reminder of the responsibility that lies on us to revive the voices lost in history and bring them back to life. In its essence, these works provide a glimpse of the several undiscovered lives, tales of which remain lost between the pages of history, contributing to our understanding of a richer and more humane perspective.

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"I had but that one arrow" Examining the ways of folklore within *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*

Dhiya Prasanth

Mahasweta Devi's Chotti Munda and His Arrow is a novel that prima facie explores themes of indigenous resilience, cultural identity, and pulls into focus the position of the 'tribal' in the national consciousness. Beyond that, it is also an intriguing delve into the cultural and social intricacies of the Munda community and it allows them a space to present their way of being unburdened by oppressive structures. In this paper, I will be examining the traditional knowledge repositories of the Munda tribe showcased in this novel, i.e. the canonization of their histories into songs, stories and folklore. Furthermore, this paper will also be delving into the subsequent mythologization of the protagonist as he and his community endeavour into post-colonial India.

In recorded history, the tribal narrative has always been relegated to the margins by the dominant discourse. Even though India today would look different without the influence of its original and most enduring inhabitants, their identities have been considered inconsequential when recounting grand chronicles of civilization. In Ramayana, the popular villain 'Ravana', being a tribal character, is not just ignored but he is also actively portrayed as a Brahmin (Siva). Similarly in Mahabharata, we can observe the tribal characters being hardly mentioned despite the legendary battle that the Kshatriyas and Pandavas fought over tribal land.

The aftermath of this systemic exclusion has had far-reaching ramifications on our understanding of the past, present and future for the 'tribal'. To analyse the popular understanding of the tribal consciousness, this paper will explore the significance of the unwritten narrative by looking at the folklore contained within Mahasweta Devi's 'Chotti Munda and His Arrow' as translated from Bengali to English by Gayathri Chakravorthy Spivak.

In Chotti Munda and His Arrow, we are transported to the heart of colonial rural West Bengal and specifically of the Munda tribe where the protagonist, Chotti, is a famed and gifted archer. The book takes us chronologically through the transformations and tribulations that he and his tribe go through during his lifetime, overseeing three generations that eventually culminate in a violent showdown as the indigenous workers struggle to enforce the shift from bond to wage labour.

Devi's writing has consistently attempted to create a "sustained aura of subaltern speech devoid of the loss of dignity" (Athista and Baskaran 291). In the original Bengali version of this book, the specific Mundari dialect of the indigenous characters is conserved. While the age-old Italian aphorism declares every translation to be an act of betrayal, this becomes especially complex when applied to translating not just languages but also distinct indigenous voices.

Thereby, Spivak's primary objective as the translator becomes to distinguish between the indigenous and the non-indigenous characters as seen in the rendering of the Munda and Oraon vernacular in the English translations of the dialogue. To a reader without the necessary context, the Munda speech translates to a vaguely Yorkshire accent but this contributes towards remaining faithful to the original text and maintaining a continuous separation from their linguistic identity. In the translator's preface, it is mentioned that Devi too praises Spivak for showing "that dialect can be dignified" (Spivak vii). While the translated texts might be unaesthetic to Western standards, this commitment to the untranslatable nature of indigenous literature is an unique resistance to the aggressive temperament of mainstream languages. Consequently, this encourages an acceptance of "the heterogeneity and plurality of subversive elements latent within alternative ways of expression" (D. Behera 99).

We are introduced to the novel with the sibylline proclamation "All's a story in Chotti Munda's life," (Devi 22). This has both literal and figurative meanings. The Mundas do not have a script to their language, therefore their folklore and rituals are recounted as popular songs and poetry (Hoffmann 85). Throughout the novel, we can observe Chotti Munda's tribe composing songs about impactful incidents that happen to their tribe, both personal and political, from when Chotti goes on to win his first archery competition, or when a White man visits their village to study them, to many songs about their plight under bonded labour and agitations against their landlords. However allegorically, there is a mythologisation that happens to the protagonist's life as he comes to represent his tribe's hopes as well as resistance against the indentured labour system. This also alludes to the general nature of Mundari songs where the individual is dissolved in the community, a culture "entirely identified with the communal system in its original form" (Hoffman 116).

The first occurrence we see of the process of 'becoming song', is when Chotti's mentor and archery trainer Dhani Munda, goes against police orders by visiting the area he previously worked in to create an uprising with legendary Birsa Munda against the Daroga. By doing so, he signs his death note, joyfully laughing while rubbing his face in what he calls 'home dirt' as the police constable shoots him. Chotti, who was aware of his mentor's passing, finds himself unable to process

this information until the story of Dhani Munda's last act of truth reaches him in song form. Only when he receives the story once again, in song this time, does he come to terms with it. As Sem Topno notes, Music grows out of life in the Munda tradition therefore the 'perception, conceptualisation and articulation' of their ideas and values are purely rendered through their music (D. K. Behera 724).

"Dhani, Father Earth called ye
On the day of his body's death in Sailrakab….On sailrakab stone now flowers bloom Ye are those flowers" (Devi 23)

The novel notes Chotti's reaction to hearing the song for the first time. "When he got Dhani back in song and story, he became human again" (Devi 23). In becoming a song, Dhani Munda was born again eternal, intertwined with Birsa Munda's story to remain forever with Chotti this time.

An incident that impacts their tribe greatly is when one of Chotti's archery students murders a landlord in anger. The consequence of any Munda uprising is death, which is reasserted as Dhakia gets hanged for his crime. With this murder of a high landlord by an Adivasi along with Chotti's undeniable rise in popularity, the shaken daroga demands a ban on Chotti from participating in any archery contests for the next few years in fear of another Adivasi uprising. At this point, we arrive at our next song that gives away the larger feelings of the Munda population that the daroga and the government have been in fear of.

"Ye raise t' bow, ye hit t' target
Makes Daroga mighty afraid mate —" (Devi 76)
"Ye taught Dukhia Munda ta shoot
Dukhia t'bonded slave, mate —
Dukhia cuts t' manager's head off
Makes Daroga scared mate —
So they didn' let ya play yer arrer" (Devi 77)

Therefore, despite the daroga's best attempt at quelling all feelings of the ulgulan, or the resistance, this ban placed on Chotti only furthers their hope that resistance might be possible. Inevitably, we see a certain mythos being imparted to the character of Chotti that transforms him into something greater than merely a man. He is not only an individual now, but rather, he represents an entire community's hope and resistance against the indentured labour system. In the song above, we can observe the Mundas' appreciation towards Chotti simply for being good at his craft because any success, any prowess or even any happiness of the tribal is deemed as an act of resistance against the state.

In another excerpt from the same song, "Which Munda knows t' bowspell / Only ye, mate —" (Devi 77) the specific word 'bowspell' is being used, revealing the larger sentiments of the tribe regarding Chotti's archery skills. At multiple points throughout the book, we see references to his archery that describe it as 'supernatural', 'special', and 'magic', and his arrow is described as being

able to travel even ten villages at one point. Underlying this, emerges Chotti as an unwilling hero, or rather, a sacrifice, to the cause. In response to people conflating magical abilities with his hard-earned skill, we can observe Chotti feeling dismayed and hopeless at his pedestalization. “There’s no spell Bharat. Only practice, an’ practice, an’ practice, an’ practice” (Devi 77). To dissuade this newly growing image of his, Chotti constantly reiterates the secret to his success, to no avail.

His frustration also comes from the stark contrast between the remarkable character he is portrayed to be in these songs versus the actuality of his life where even missing a single day’s labour could mean that his family would possibly go hungry - “Very powerful but can’t fill five bellies” (Devi 44). In the story of Chotti Munda, and many vulnerable indigenous communities, this hunger remains a commonality in their lives where many times despite living in resource-rich areas, all their labour is bonded by the landlords, making it near impossible for them to work for themselves.

Even though Chotti remained critical of his representation, both inside and outside his community, for most of his life in the showdown against the state, we see him leading an armed resistance hauntingly similar to many of his famous predecessors. “I’m raisin’ yer name and shootin’ yer arrer today. To stay true, meself to meself” (Devi 326). Chotti therefore seems to understand the need for the creation of his mythos but this still is not the reason for him leading the movement eventually. He emerges above his perceived character to choose to become the face of the resistance himself, and perhaps this final act of agency produces the most poignant instance of Chotti’s character being eternalised into the folklore of his community.

Another major theme that Devi explores is the many erroneous conceptions that arise between the Mundas and ‘dikus’ or in other words, the indigenous and the non-indigenous. The ‘dikus’ are unsympathetic to any tribal cause because their livelihood depends on the bonded labour that the indigenous give them. When resistance inevitably arises, the exploiters perceive it as mere disobedience, while those not directly involved brand the resisting group as unnaturally 'aggressive'. Devi explicates this profound lack of understanding by analysing the instance where Dukhia murders his landlord. The ‘manager’, angered by Dukhia’s attempt to sell off the peppers he grew without his consent, comes to the market and publicly humiliates him. Dukhia, in a fit of rage, beheads him with his spear. He later gets arrested and hanged for his crime.

“No doubt the judge had thought, what a weird people, they don't mind swinging for a basket of pepper” (Devi 64). The significant disconnect between these communities contends how distorted the incident of the pepper was, as Dukhia’s act of violence did not come from a vacuum but as a direct response to the generations of systemic oppression and terror he and his community suffered. Dukhia was aware that escape from something ascribed at birth and enforced through various unequal structures in society was impossible and therefore, chose to escape it through his act of truth, a last attempt at ‘meaning-making’ which immortalised him too into the consciousness of his community.

The tale of Chotti Munda and his arrow is a story of resilience and resistance but beyond that, this story is also a testament to the creation of a space for the subaltern – a space not merely defined concerning the hegemony but one that allows a community and its culture to exist organically. Chotti Munda's arrow not only pierces the immediate target but becomes a symbolic force, where the indigenous can thrive independently as well as foster a collective identity and most importantly, can have the ability to aspire. Thus, Devi's narrative mimics the Munda's process of capturing stories and songs by eternalising them in writing for the non-indigenous, giving us a glimpse into what we could begin to understand about their world.

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Semiotics of the Corporeal: Unraveling Imagery as to Deconstruct the Body in *Ambapali*

Namya Shukla

This research paper attempts a feminist appropriation of the representation of bodies in Tanushree Podder's Ambapali to contemplate upon their relevance for the modern world. The first section deconstructs cultural narratives that transform the body into a site of oppression. Secondly, by analyzing the narrative and linguistic strategies employed by the author, the paper highlights the interplay between power relations and gender identities which in turn also play a role in shaping the emotional subjectivity of the protagonist. Yet here the author points out how Ambapali is successful in turning her body into a site of contestation of hegemonic structures and institutions. The paper also explores religious beliefs and attitudes towards women's bodies and sexuality by taking a phenomenological approach. The conclusion opens up further areas of research and ways of developing intertextuality with respect to themes of nature, religion and sexuality.

Introduction:

Geraldine Brooks has said *"The thing that most attracts me about historical fiction is taking the factual record as far as it is known, using that as scaffolding, and then letting imagination build the structure that fills those things we can never find out for sure"* (Podder xi)

Tanushree Podder in her author's note has confessed of using multiple sources to "recreate life as it was during those days" in addition to creating supporting characters to "flesh out the story" (Podder xi). This attempt of developing a continued sense of the past and suggests a possibility to resolve the hermeneutical problems arising due to diversity in the experiences of a modern world (Vattimo). Thus historicity underpins not the form but also the creation of the novel and in the process uncovers deeper subjective realities. Over the years, retellings and interpretations of such traditional folktales and epics have proved to be ways of questioning hegemony and assist in negotiating ideals in ever-changing political and cultural contexts (Lathura 135). This research paper attempts a more feminist appropriation of Tanushree Podder's book by a discursive analysis of the "body" with a special emphasis on the imagery employed and

contemplating the relevance of these insights for a modern world.

Patriarchy, Male Fantasy and Objectification of the Body

"Body as an object cannot be separated from the body as a subject; they are emergent from one another" (Waskul and Van der Riet 510). The novel imitates this argument by portraying how Ambapali's body was transformed into an object through social processes operating in larger structures which gave her little to no autonomy over herself. In the initial chapters, a sixteen-year-old Ambapali is forced into competing for the title of a Rajnartaki (court dancer) at her teacher's insistence. Despite her reluctance, she felt "a moral obligation to not "let [Suvarnasena] down" (19). Foucault's idea of docile bodies conceptualizes them as fluid objects on which disciplinary force is acted upon due to the organization of power relations in a certain manner. The symbolic authority attached to a teacher, especially in ancient India (Vaidyanathan 148) could make Ambapali's body "pliable" to be "manipulated, shaped, trained" (Foucault) by Suvarnasena to uphold her status quo. Simultaneously, Satyakriti and Dharmadatta despite their more privileged gender identity could not protest against the disciplinary power of the State vested in the social practice of choosing the Rajnartaki through a dance competition. Dharmadatta appears to be steeped in fear and anxiety by imaging the "dangers" of Ambapali's victory (21). The consequences of becoming a court dancer would likely entail alienation from family, sexual exploitation due to her body being considered as "palace property"(25). Hence the use of the word "dangers" almost appears to be a euphemism employed to deliberately disguise the inconveniences (Burridge 68), Ambapali would experience in order to help the readers emotionally cope with the sudden turn in reality.

Further, the "pliability" of the protagonist is also encoded in the physical description of her body. The comparison of her lips to "trembling rosebuds" and drawing upon the "air of vulnerability" presented by a "slender figure and tiny waist" (20) indicates how bodies are discursively constructed and produced according to dominant cultural notions to maintain hierarchies. This objectification has been discussed by various scholars in recent decades. Laura Mulvey in her essay titled "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" posits that cinema reduces women to their body parts in order to capitalize on "scopophilia" (pleasure of looking) by appealing to the narcissistic tendencies of the audience, resulting in an identification with the male protagonist allowing them to carry out their own voyeuristic tendencies. Podder utilizes a similar structure to turn the audiences seated in the auditorium to guide how we perceive Ambapali's performance. Allusions to the celestial dancer Menaka along with the description of her "sensuousness" (20) intensify the power of the "gaze". There are several instances where Ambapali is being surveyed by men who wish to possess her. Through this emphasis on "looking" along with the third-person narrative of the text, the reader is forced to pay attention to her corporeality from an external perspective. In some ways, beauty pageants could be thought of as a modern manifestation of this phenomenon. While they do have the scope of negotiating national and racial identities (Cheng; Balogun 359) along with offering women a route towards acquiring more financial resources (Pahuja), they primarily operate on the principle of women being turned into a "sight" to be observed and judged, thus emphasizing the passivity usually required of female bodies. (Berger)

Body as the site of negotiation

With some progression, the novel presents incidents where Ambapali could resist and defy certain social norms. For example, she presented the Council with an ultimatum demanding the construction of a separate palace and the ability to decide the fee for her services in addition to other demands when she was abruptly declared the Nagarvadhu Janpad Kalyani (bride of the entire city). Her threat of self-immolation "forced" the Parishad to accept her conditions. Hence by expressing the idea of a world where her corporeal absence would also result in destruction of the symbolic value of the State attached to it, she threatened its very existence. Thus her body became "not only a symbolic field for the reproduction of dominant values and conceptions; [but] also a site for resistance to and transformation of those systems of meaning" (Crawford 95). The ability to gain economic resources and agency to choose sexual partners ties back to Veena Talwar Oldenburg's analysis of the colonial past in Uttar Pradesh. Oldenburg adopts a historicization approach and concludes that "courtesans" subverted the institutional male dominance by amassing wealth belonging to elite sections as well as ruptured the "sanctity and romanticism of marriage" to some extent.

Another key incident of Ambapali's rebellion was banishing Suvarnasena from her palace, thus ending her days of "enslavement" (166). While this relates to the concepts of authority and agency established earlier, here it also represents freedom in an intangible, emotional sense. A deeper analysis reveals how Ambapali's attempt to protect herself from her reality could be mirrored in the description of her body. By becoming someone whose "armour few could penetrate. Her sparkling eyes rarely twinkled with wonder and excitement. The smile never reached the eyes." (124). Readers possess a sense of passing time by rich descriptions of seasons, perhaps the only way of gauging her emotional states due to the usage of pathetic fallacy to attribute human qualities to nature. It must be mentioned that Ambapali was named after the mango tree she was found under. Hence nature becomes a motif representing fluidity of emotions and time, an attribute typically associated with femininity. However this continuity is broken repeatedly by vignettes of royal surroundings and dresses, that can only situate the readers in a moment in time. Hence in the "break" away of nature, constructed buildings mirror how Ambapali developed a cold exterior (as opposed to the innocence and naivety she embodied in her childhood), enabling her to defy patriarchy and exploitation in her own subjective experience.

Religious attitudes and beliefs about female sexuality and bodies Eventually, this detachment leads her to develop a strong loci of control and turn towards Buddhism. Johnanthan Walters while appreciating Buddhism by establishing Gotami was a female equivalent to Buddha and provided a unique ideal of spiritual achievement for women. Although Buddhism could be considered liberative (Bode), drawing similarities between the status of men and women seems far-fetched. Falk dives into the nuances of subordination of women within the Sangha by special rules for Bhikkhunis, prohibiting them to act as an independent organization, thus operating on the Brahmanical values of the time. Often the women inculcated into the Sangha were lectured by their sons to meditate upon the foulness of body, as in the case of Abhaya and Padumavati, Vimal and Ambapali (Wilson

52). The verses composed by Ambapali in the Therigatha are imbibed with similar understandings. The theme of transience of human form finds its way through a repeated comparison of organs once full of vitality to reduced and decayed parts of plants. For example, firm and full calves are compared to "twigs of the sesame plant" (5). The most lewd description was perhaps of the full and huge breasts which have "burst open with putrescence" (implying the similarity between breasts and buds). Wilson argues how these insights have been influenced by an androgenic sense of self and body. She contextualizes John Berger's work "Ways of Seeing" by illustrating how the nuns became aware of being observed by the male "surveyor" which they have internalized (59). Linton as quoted by Djikstra again establishes the voyeurism associated with the male gaze and the narcissistic tendency of women. Thus these "self-effacing" nuns become the means of the Sangha to maintain the asexuality and detached subjectivities required by it (Wilson 80).

Yet this practice of focusing upon a decaying body demonstrates the potential for greater autonomy to be experienced by women. In having control over representation or description of their body, female monks possessed the power to reorient/direct the male gaze in the way wished to. From Ambapali's point of view, this act could be interpreted as decentering male desires and patriarchy's symbolic associations with her body in order to gain agency over it. Alternatively, this method of describing the body reminds us of a postmodernist construction of the body - one which ruptures the concepts of power, hierarchy, and reality we once situated within it to give way to a chaotic hyperreality removed from identity categories structuring our perception (Lindenmeyer 49). This postmodernist reconstruction opens up new avenues to question binaries formed on the basis of biological determinism and in turn transforms into a powerful tool that can be employed by feminist discourses around transgender bodies.

Conclusion

Thus this paper has attempted a gendered reworking of Tanushree Podder's Ambapali by reinterpreting the "body" as a symbol which is both - "a prime site for the contestation of social and individual power; it is the locus of both oppression and empowerment, simultaneously." (Reischer and Koo, 2004). While Podder is able to portray nuanced, complex and layered symbolisms and meanings in her novel, it is also very evident that most of these discourses also resemble the way men would write about women's bodies. Ambapali is portrayed as someone waiting for someone to come save her. Even in her love affair with Bimbisara, she tends to pedestalize her lover and submits to him completely. The author has not made any successful attempt at developing a model of feminine sexuality and desire detached from a patriarchal understanding about this topic. Meanwhile, authors like Koral Dasgupta have been successful in portraying female pleasure in novels like "Ahalya" without constructing a dichotomous relationship between sexuality and spirituality that Podder resorts to. Accordingly, remythologizing narratives about sexuality through a discursive analysis of literary texts could be a further area of research. Secondly, analyzing the relationships between women in these novels, in this case Priyamvada and Ambapali indicate possibilities of understanding female friendships, sisterhood and emotional resilience as observed in films like "Portrait of a Lady on Fire". Thirdly, a careful inspection of nature and the manifestation of eco-

feminist consciousness in religion could prove to be useful in redirecting discourses to focus on the role art can play in shifting emotional states by mediating value conflicts central to these debates. Hence developing intertextuality with respect to themes of religion, nature and sexuality could be areas for future research.

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Navigating the Patriarchal Labyrinth: A Man's Journey in Tagore's 'Aparichita'

Sreelakshmi Nair

The exploration of feminism in Indian literature reveals a rich labyrinth of narratives challenging traditional gender norms. A notable contributor to this discourse is Rabindranath Tagore, an eminent literary figure whose works delve into the complexities of societal expectations and gender dynamics. One such poignant contribution is portrayed in his work called "Aparichita". In this narrative, Tagore masterfully examines the multifaceted dimensions of patriarchy through the protagonist Anupam's compelling narrative."Aparichita" goes beyond a mere critique of patriarchy. It serves as a critical examination of its profound impact on the male psyche, offering a nuanced commentary on the constraints that accompany societal expectations. Tagore's storytelling transcends the convention, providing a powerful lens that critiques the pervasive influence of ingrained norms on personal agency and interrelational dynamics in a thought-provoking and illuminating manner.

Introduction:

"A woman cannot be herself in contemporary society, it is an exclusively male society with laws drafted by men, and with counsel and judges who judge feminine conduct from the male point of view" (Ibsen 337).

The feminist literary movement, originating in the late 19th century and gaining momentum in the 20th century, represents a scholarly endeavour to deconstruct patriarchal paradigms through literary expressions. Spearheaded by luminaries such as Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir, this movement strives to authentically depict the multifaceted female experience, critically scrutinising societal norms and advocating for gender parity. Its thematic scope encompasses nuanced examinations of reproductive rights, complexities of female identity, and its broader socio-cultural implications. Evolving within the tenets of intersectionality, contemporary feminist authors continue this intellectual discourse, contributing to a profound re-evaluation of societal norms and envisioning an egalitarian future. The term "New Woman," coined by British feminist Sarah Grand in 1894, embodies a revolutionary archetype of femininity that emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This visionary individual defied societal norms, challenging traditional roles by pursuing autonomy, education, and self-fulfilment beyond the expectations tied to marriage and family.

According to Finney, "The New Woman typically values self-fulfilment and independence rather than the stereotypically feminine ideal of self-sacrifice; believes in legal and sexual equality; often remains single because of the difficulty of combining such equality with marriage; is more open

about her sexuality than the 'Old Woman'; is well-educated and reads a great deal; has a job; is athletic or otherwise physically vigorous, and accordingly, prefers comfortable clothes (sometimes male attire) to traditional female garb” (Finney 95).

The emergence of the "New Woman" in Indian literature, notably influenced by Bengali reformers such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Raja Ram Mohan Roy, unfolds a narrative where female characters embody the transformative dynamics of societal norms. Vidyasagar's commitment to women's education resonates in the works of Rabindranath Tagore, and characters like "Charulata" challenge entrenched roles. Consequently, Roy's influence echoes in texts by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, portraying female protagonists navigating societal changes reflective of reformist ideals. Simultaneously, female writers like Ashapurna Devi play crucial roles; her work "Subarnalata" exemplifies the journey of a woman transcending societal expectations. Together, they contributed to a rich and nuanced depiction of the "New Woman" in Bengali literature, adding layers to the broader discourse on evolving gender roles.

The idea of the "New Woman" signifies a societal shift towards fearlessness, career orientation, and liberation from traditional norms. However, a notable oversight in this narrative is the absence of a parallel re-evaluation of traditional masculinity—a conspicuous gap that prompts reflection. Why has the focus predominantly revolved around transforming female roles, while traditional male paradigms remain largely unexamined? This raises pertinent questions about the sincerity of commitment to genuine societal equity. As Rahman accurately notes, "Both men and women are victims of the patriarchal society we live in. The sooner we see that, the better" (Rahman). True gender equality demands a thorough reassessment of both feminine and masculine ideals, urging a collective commitment to dismantling entrenched gender norms and fostering a more inclusive social landscape.

In Tagore’s "Aparichita," the societal patriarchy casts a pervasive shadow, not sparing even the male protagonist. The narrative subtly unravels the constraints on the protagonist as societal expectations dictate his reluctance to defy norms, ultimately deterring him from marrying the woman he genuinely likes.

> “Through the character of Anupam, Tagore points out that the current system is damaging to both men and women, as they are both conditioned from birth to believe that men are superior to women. Although this story does portray the ‘New Indian Woman' in Kalyani, it also gives us a glimpse of the ‘New Indian Man'” (James 104).

Anupam, despite his educational achievements and acumen, emerges as a poignant example of the constraining influence of patriarchal expectations. His obedience and lack of independent reasoning serve as a reflection of societal norms that curtail individuality. This portrayal illuminates the far-reaching consequences of patriarchy, illustrating how it impedes personal growth and decision-making capacities, not only for women but also for men like Anupam, as he claims,

> "I had neither the training nor the inclination to look after the affairs of the family or to prepare for any kind of work. All that I had was my mother inside the house and my uncle to negotiate with the world outside" (Mukherjee 1).

As the male heir to familial wealth, he is exempt from the necessity of engaging in livelihood pursuits, thereby assuming a state of relative idleness. The narrative underscores his dependency on his family, who negotiate his societal values and dictate life-altering decisions on his behalf, highlighting the lack of autonomy and the obligation to adhere to prescribed norms established by senior members. Moreover, the depiction of Anupam's inert existence implies a commodification of his identity within the marriage market. In the narrative, "Tagore focuses on the deconstruction of the masculine/feminine binary opposition" (Banerjee 4). As a male protagonist, his role is analogous to that of an ornament, subject to negotiation and transaction. This symbolic subjugation throws light on how men could be treated as tradable entities within the confines of a patriarchal system, highlighting the pervasive limitations that extend beyond gender stereotypes.

> "I hoped that he approved of me…Bedecked in a glittering cloth of gold with rings and necklaces, I looked like a jewellery shop on display for auction. I was going to confront my future father-in-law with a price-tag on my person" (Mukherjee 2-3).

Tagore disrupts the prevailing societal construct of macho behaviour, as exemplified by the groom's palpable anxiety preceding his encounter with his prospective in-laws and future bride. Anupam is portrayed as a fervent suitor eagerly anticipating the union with his beloved, revealing a nuanced facet of male vulnerability. The eagerness to meet his bride portrays the tender dimension of the apparent indifference among the male characters to the systemic subjugation imposed upon the bride's family. Anupam's unswerving compliance with his masculinity challenges entrenched stereotypes and emphasises that men, too, harbour aspirations and emotional investments in the realm of marriage and life partnerships. The departure from conventional gender dynamics is evident as Tagore presents a reversal wherein Anupam finds himself yearning for the companionship of Kalyani. This conflict manifests as a struggle between the ingrained moral principles instilled during his upbringing and the burgeoning affection he harbours for the unidentified woman.

Anupam finds solace in the notion that the unknown girl harbours similar sentiments and clandestinely values his photograph. His tendency to interpret Kalyani's decision to forego marriage as a sign of reciprocal feelings emphasizes his joy upon learning of it, giving Anupam a sense of hope and connection. Tagore intricately portrays emotional vulnerability, inviting readers to empathise with Anupam's longing and his fervent wish for a shared sentiment. On the other hand, Kalyani emerges as a resilient feminine figure, portrayed with a self-sufficiency that challenges the conventional narrative of women awaiting a man to illuminate their future. In contrast, Anupam remains tethered to the past, struggling to entirely disentangle himself.

Within the story, Anupam's family strategically leveraged every available opportunity to assert

their dominance over the prospective bride's family. Notably, they subjected the bride's father, Shambunath Babu, to unfounded accusations of theft pertaining to the promised jewellery intended for the groom. This coercive tactic compelled Shambunath Babu to acquiesce to the demand for pre-wedding testing of the ornaments as he states,

> “Your uncle would like to test all the gold jewellery before the wedding ceremony begins. How do you feel about it?” I lowered my gaze and remained silent. “What can he have to say? Mine is the last word on the subject,” my uncle intervened”(Mukherjee 3).

Through this, Tagore unveils a poignant aspect of patriarchal societies, delineating how even young men are disenfranchised and unable to contest established power hierarchies within their families. Anupam, despite being positioned as the groom-to-be, finds himself unable to navigate or challenge the prevailing authority structure.

Contrary to the anticipated response of a bride's father during that era, Shambunath Babu deviates from the norm. Faced with the egregious accusation and the prospect of humiliation, he refrains from capitulating to the demands imposed by the groom's family. He makes the unprecedented decision not to bestow his only child in marriage on a family that impugns his character and accuses him of theft, as he states, “I cannot give my daughter to a family which considers me capable of stealing her gold” (Mukherjee 4). Tagore intricately navigates this juncture to illustrate the defiance of traditional patriarchal norms. This narrative departure, where the bride is not relegated to a mere burden but rather perceived as a human being deserving more than the minimalistic expectations of a patriarchal society, positions Shambunath Babu as a pivotal figure.

In the historical context of the account, an unmarried woman was often considered an omen, who attained fulfilment only through traversing predetermined stages like marriage and motherhood. Remarkably, Shambunath Babu appears to internalise this societal paradigm, as evidenced by his acceptance of Kalyani's resolve to abstain from marriage. This facet of the account can be construed as either a woman-empowering stance, allowing the daughter agency over her life choices, or conversely, a manifestation of patriarchy reclaiming authority by determining the course of a woman's life. Shambunath Babu's acquiescence to his daughter's decision introduces a layer of empowerment, yet simultaneously underscores the persistent influence of patriarchal structures in shaping women's lives. The use of the dowry system further dissects patriarchal control, showcasing it as a transactional arrangement and an unquestioned acceptance in Anupam and Kalyani's marriage.

The climax unfolds with Anupam's long-awaited encounter with Kalyani on the train. This pivotal moment reveals the true essence of Kalyani as a formidable and empowered woman. “Her radiant personality is perhaps a reflection of Tagore's vision of the emerging modern women in India” (Banerjee 274). She stands resolute and unyielding when faced with the Englishmen who seek to remove her from the train compartment. Unlike Anupam, who displays readiness to acquiesce the moment the generals claim their entitlement to the seat, Kalyani fearlessly upholds what is right.

This stark contrast accentuates the transformation of both characters, illustrating Kalyani's strength and Anupam's realisation of his vulnerabilities in the face of moral conviction.

His stance on the feminine attitude diverges from the run-of-the-mill portrayal of female strength and resilience. He innovatively challenges the trope of female characters transcending extraordinary obstacles for basic freedom and respect, by exemplifying a man's disorientation when a woman refuses to conform to societal expectations. Tagore, through this portrayal, showcases the strength and fortitude of a female character in contrast to the evolving and introspective journey of the male protagonist. An impactful moment in the narrative is Anupam's plea for forgiveness directed at Kalyani's father, coupled with his request for her hand in marriage. This act serves to invalidate the authority of his uncle and mother, thereby disrupting age-old patriarchal norms. Tagore skillfully portrays that a man, too, can assume responsibility to dismantle societal injustices and instigate transformative change. The narrative's most poignant juncture unfolds as Anupam not only accepts Kalyani's rejection but also respects her commitment to educating girls in her homeland. This portrays a male character embracing empathy and support for a woman's aspirations.

> "Do I have any hopes of marriage? None whatsoever. I live in the faith which an unknown melodious voice had instilled in me on a dark night: there is room here. There is room for me" (Mukherjee 7).

Conclusion:

Tagore, through this storyline, explores the stringent rules of patriarchy that compel the protagonist to prioritise familial reputation and societal approval over personal desires. The unnamed woman becomes a symbol of the unconventional, challenging the predetermined path of arranged marriages. While renowned female authors like Mahasweta Devi and Taslima Nasrin have illuminated the struggles against gender bias, Tagore distinguishes himself by delving into the male experience as he offers a unique perspective on the imperative for men to break free from entrenched traditions. This feminist discourse prompts a re-evaluation of gender dynamics, encouraging to reflect on the multifaceted struggles and aspirations of individuals within the broader context of society.

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From Taboo to Tale: An Exploration of Bombay's Hidden Realities

Mansi Devani

Bombay, at first glance, comes across as a city thoroughly explored, in its tourism and sociology. In addition, Saddat Hasan Manto is a distinguished writer of the partition era whose recognition reaches a global audience. The paper then aims to connect with the "uncharted" through the exploration of the unexplored corners of Bombay, a city whose quarters are recognised worldwide. The paper will address the unknown part of this well-known space through Manto's collection of short stories titled Bombay Stories.

Introduction

Literature of the Indian subcontinent lends itself to presenting a rich tapestry of diverse storylines located in the land's vibrant social and cultural panorama. Indian literature witnessed a flourishing curve to achieve prominence in national academic spaces, along with the acclaimed cosmopolitan settings that became the frequent abode of their plots. Literature, then explores the corners of the Indian cities, journeying through their political, religious, geographical and affective mayhem. These cities and their spaces carve an identity of being the heart of the collective emotions, turmoils and triumphs. Writers of these texts equally play a role in conferring life and memory to these cities, encouraging explorations of the stories embedded in their chaos. Bombay is one such city - that invites an exploration of its eidos, and Manto is one such writer - who invites the reader on a journey through its lanes and lives.

The collection of short stories *Bombay Stories* set in the city veers through the unconventional and undesirable that are seldom glanced upon when exploring a city. The paper strives to answer questions of how the under-represented and the subaltern sections of the city form a distinct part of its core. How is morality explored through the unexplored immorality? How does New York harbouring the American Dream compare to Bombay harbouring the Indian Dream? And lastly, how can we analyse cities through human beings, and human beings through cities?

Exploring Bombay Through Its Brothels

Amidst the rising urban expansion of the city and its erstwhile as well as present progressive image, there lie the unspoken sites of sex work that are shamed by moral and ethical structures overning the representation in Bombay. There are two sets of lives lived in Bombay - one that boasts

of its socially desirable status and the other that is pushed towards blatant criticism and hate by the very system that placed them there in the first place. Bombay can be found as much in the oppressed brothels as in the towering buildings. Manto brings out on paper what is erased in the narratives. Shafique states, "They live in an infernal underworld, invisible to the respectable society which pretends ignorance of its existence. Ironically, not only has it produced this world, but it also provides it full sustenance" (Shafique).

Manto's sex workers in stories like "Das Rupaiya", "Hatak", and "Siraj" are not just portrayals of women as prostitutes. Still, they also depict a search for their identity and stories in the large but clandestine city space. He connects the characters of Sarita and Siraj to the quintessential Bombay spaces like Juhu Beach, Iranian Cafes, and amidst the general chaos of Bombay "It was five in the evening, and traffic filled the Bombay streets—cars, trams, buses, and people were everywhere." (Manto 18). He evokes the Bambaiya spaces through the stories and eyes of the prostitutes - an invitation to their equal and vital part in being a citizen of Bombay as much as the power structures of patriarchy or caste and class hegemonies that employ them. In "Hatak" (The Insult) and "Siraj", Manto confers the emotions of feeling in love, of being wanted, to the sex workers as much as any other individual in a restless and bustling city like Bombay would feel. "She knew the answer herself. She wasn't bad at all but good, and yet she wanted someone to praise her….it would be enough if someone said, 'Saugandhi, you're really good.'" (Manto 46).

The city life makes one feel commodified to the point that one needs someone to verify one's worth, and as an extension, one's existence. The hustle of Bombay is succinctly put as a principal part of a sex workers' world. The loneliness of the city is weaved into the desire for the company in Sarita, Saugandhi and Siraj's life. Bombay being a 'city that never sleeps' is depicted by the sex workers' being awake throughout the night to be on the beck and call of their clients. When such a doubly oppressed group imbibes the very eidos of the city, Manto through their depiction as principal characters with emotions, puts forth their right to be in the centre as anyone else. Such complexity and intricacy in feelings are not only reserved for the elite but for the socially marginalised, the impoverished and the ones whose voices have not been heard enough. Raza Rumi points out the qualities of these women that are usually reserved for the morally righteous and heroic men - "Manto's female characters appear as defiant and righteous even though their circumstances are mired in taboo and social marginalisation" (Rumi 76). Manto's brothels and sex workers thus do not become a mere symbol of the impurities that must be kept away from the urbanised city but demand a rightful place in recognising the emotions, plights and lives as a definite part of the city itself.

Discussing Morality through the Sidelined Immorality

Sex work thus also opens up avenues for the discussion of morality. It creates a space of supposed immorality in the very heart of Bombay, along with the rest of the characters existing in other shades of immorality. Manto posits the city as a site of constant flux between the waves of morality and immorality. He juxtaposes moral values and human emotions with the characters who have questionable moral attitudes perceived by larger societal forces. The characters are "drawn

from the flotsam and jetsam of society - down and outs. Rakes and debauches" (Wadhawan) like those of Mammad Bhai and Mummy from an occupationally immoral space, Mozelle from an ethically immoral standpoint, Babu Gopinath drawn from an erstwhile immoral lifestyle. Manto paints the character of Mammad Bhai as "He was a gangster…but he sympathised with the poor and often gave money to the destitute prostitutes…Manto Sahib, Mammad Bhai is an angel!" (Manto 160). Similarly, Manto takes his readers on an unventured journey to look into the humanistic side of these immoral beings that dwell in the underbelly of a vast developing landscape. His principal narrative crux is that "by narrating stories of evil he desires to highlight the good, not the evil. He is not narrating lust for lust, coercion for coercion, oppression for oppression, sin for sin; but to evoke a deeper understanding of the hidden agenda of a hypocritical society." (Zehra)

Manto unearths this hidden and unreflected structural prowess of the upper echelons by portraying these grey characters with a dim but certain light of humanity. He doesn't insist on the reader's sympathy, or even justify their actions, but to understand that life in Bombay is not a simplistic landscape but a heap of pluralistic experiences. Manto also brings the believers of several faiths who find a proximal dwelling in Bombay - Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, Jews and Sikhs. He blends the characters with strokes of immorality to skew the perception of who will turn out to be morally superior.

"Beyond religion, race, caste and creed Manto was a humanist and had a grand vision of humanity whereby even the dregs of the earth like prostitutes and swindlers had innate humanity and in many cases proved to be better beings than the pious and the moralist" (Rumi 76). Manto thus ventures into the unventured territory - of asking the readers to reflect on the point seldom reflected - does immorality naturally underline all moral codes and conducts? He points to the existence of immorality as a natural and close companion of morality, something the society would rather keep a distance from. Thus, his stories in Bombay Stories explore the unasked and unanswered questions of whose prejudice and bias declare the labels of morality, and if we combat the said immorality with more immorality. Rumi highlights the existing but concealed nature of these questions - "The moral principles in this given everyday universe of ours hide underneath our prejudices and our ideological agendas. Manto created a pure universe on the other side of the horizon; in his universe, ambiguities twinkle as virtuous." (Rumi 75). Another example can be found on the other side of the globe - in the city of New York, through F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby - as it portrays a city of ambiguities towering over the hopes and dreams of its citizens.

Connecting The Great Gatsby and Bombay Stories

The American dream signified the pursuit of happiness through "an intense American urge to do something about one's condition, to take risks for a better self, a better life, a better nation." (Callahan 377). New York City in Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby embodies the American Dream of the intense chase towards the materialistic betterment of life. And so is Bombay, termed as the City of Dreams', and viewed by a large population of migrants as a means of attaining their pursuit of happiness. Manto inserts these dreams and hopes of numerous such dwellers of Bombay, transcending religious and class barriers, in the stories that represent the unseen part of their being. Be it the titular character of Janaki, arriving in Bombay aspiring to be an actress, Brij Mohan in

"Peerun" toiling to sustain a job as an assistant to the director, 'or Babu Gopinath in "Babu Gopinath" in search of a lover for Zeenat, or even Manto himself in several of the stories working as an aspiring scriptwriter. The Indian Dream manifests itself in the soil of Bombay. Bombay embodies the restlessness of life as much as New York does in *The Great Gatsby*. Suketu Mehta points out the same by quoting "A city like Bombay, like New York...is full of restless people. Those who have come here have not been at ease somewhere else." (Mehta).

Products of urbanisation like the popularity of automobiles serve as yet another link to connect New York of the American Dream to Bombay of the Indian Dream. The automobile in *The Great Gatsby* stands for "creating a trope in which the automobile stands for a larger social ill." (Lance 25). Additionally, Lance argues that "just as the colour of the automobile symbolises a significant aspect of the driver's personality, the car itself reflects each driver's socio-economic status in the world of West and East Egg." (Lance 26). As Gatsby's car signifies his status as a nouveau riche in The West Egg, the cars of Sarita's clients in "Ten Rupees" and that of Saugandhi in "The Insult" signify the power these men have over the women due to socio-economic and patriarchal structures. However, the automobile that takes Sarita through Bombay empowers her instead of being a vehicle to represent oppression. As the automobile gives Gatsby the freedom of mobility, thereby representing bis mobility in the class structures, Sarita's car rides give her the mobility to experience freedom away from her mother and the impending sex work. "When she was in a car speeding through the empty streets, the wind whipping over her face, she felt as though she had been transformed into a rampaging whirlwind." (Manto 14).

Furthermore, both dreams have the right to be dreamt by all, irrespective of any societal barriers. But Fitzgerald's and Manto's cities depict the inequalities in attaining the dream. The American and Indian dreams remain unattainable, as the writers demonstrate a dream that "led to the extravagant promise…and devastating loss felt when the dream fails another of its guises." (Callahan 374) making them the American and Indian reality.

Exploring the Unexplored Mirror

After charting through the sidelined professions, people, and realities of the city, another corner that remains uncharted is also explored by Manto. It could be true that oftentimes the most unexplored places seem to be one's self. *Bombay Stories* brings out the characters and settings that inhabit the core of Bombay. "There was only one bathroom in the chawl and its door was broken.

As Gatsby's car becomes a pivotal point of conflict in the story, so does the car of Saugandhi's client who insults her from his car. Both protagonists undergo an essential narrative arc after a fateful incident with the car. "Suddenly, she heard a noise - phar phar phar…then she realised what it was - it was her heart that was racing, and not the car." (Manto 45). Gatsby's desire for Daisy's love and Saugandhi's desire for her client's love are embedded in the connection with the cars - Fitzgerald and Manto represent the cars as not the automobiles that drove people towards their destinations, but away from them. Such a chain of analysis brings forth the undiscovered and elusive part of both the American and Indian Dream - that they will not always bring one to their destination.

The women of the building - Jewish, Marathi, Gujarati, Christian would gather there early in the morning to fill their buckets with water." (Manto 85). By depicting such innate lifestyles of Bombay, along with the prejudices, biases, injustice, and emotions that accompany their narrative, Manto beckons the readers to look into their thoughts and unmask the realities that remain hidden from the world and the self. Rumi illustrates this through a compact idea about Manto's exploration,

> "His explorations are of a specific nature where he focuses on the 'worst' of humanity, …he writes as someone confessing on the part of the silent degenerate and inhumane majority. Manto's work shouts out that true morality is not silent, nor hidden under tradition, rules or a white veil of religion. He explores the degenerate as a mirror." (Rumi 82).

Manto shows that stories emanate from the various corners of the city, and that does not exclude the life of the reader, either. Through the immorality of his characters, he nudges the reader to look for the immorality in themselves, an area which is largely unventured by all of us. He urges us to look for the mirror in the story, "And, as each man is a short story, urban life is a competition to discover the greatest liar of all. Each one sees in the other not only the difference but the rapist, the murderer, in himself." (Viswanathan). Manto himself sought his self in *Bombay Stories*, linking an individual with the collective actions of others -

> "I am a human being, the same human being who raped mankind, who indulged in killing and destruction as if that was what constituted man's natural condition …Not surprisingly, Manto wrote of himself. Here lies Saadat Hasan Manto, under the earth, wondering who of two is the greater short story writer: God or he." (Visvanathan).

Conclusion

Bombay Stories thus proves to be an oeuvre that ventures forthrightly into the uncharted and the unexplored. It brings out lost narratives of characters and themes that are set in the backgrounds of Bombay's bustling parts. Additionally, as Manto proves, it is the combined experience of prostitution, migration, poverty, religious prejudice, and intolerance, which sidelines these characters and pushes them to peripheral areas. He reveals the veiled dichotomy of existence in a city through its moral and immoral fabrics. In the polarities and contradictions, in the sins and squalid of the space, Bombay is an emotion that is liberating and contaminating at the same time, being both a city of debris and a city of spectacle (Muzumdar).

Bhardwaj also mentions Salman Rushdie's lines from his novel, that encapsulate the crux of this essay through the understanding that - "Bombay was central, had been so from the moment of its creation: the bastard child of a Portuguese English wedding, and yet the most Indian of Indian cities …all rivers flowed into its human sea. It was an ocean of stories; we were all its narrators and everybody talked at once" (Bhardwaj 3). *Bombay Stories* thus explores the unexplored destination - the city and the self. It pulls out the extraordinary through the ordinary and implores that perhaps the real Ithaka lies in the unexplored parts of the thoroughly explored spaces.

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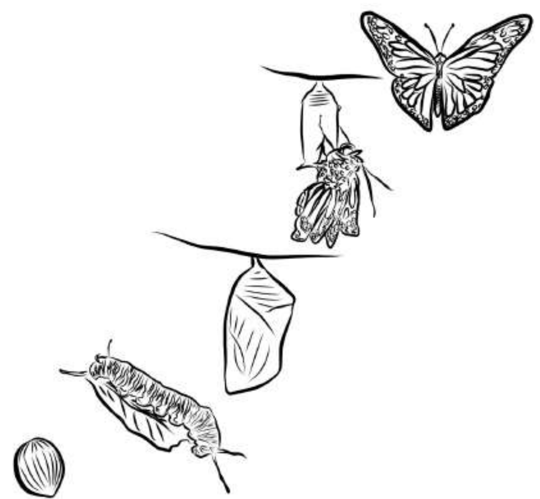
Rigid to Renegade: Tracing the Complexity of Transgender Representation in *Stone Butch Blues*

Akriti Banerjee

Leslie Feinberg's Stone Butch Blues is a pioneering work of literature that focuses on the narrative of coming of age as a transgender person in New York in the 1960s and 1970s. This article aims to explore the nuances of being transgender in a predominantly cisheterosexual society by examining the ways in which Feinberg portrays the transgender experience. By focusing on themes such as police brutality, necropolitics, and the class struggle, this article attempts to provide a deeper understanding of gender queerness and its defiant nature through gender theory and non-conformity.

"Who was I now—woman or man? That question could never be answered as long as those were the only choices; it could never be answered if it had to be asked" (Feinberg 241).



In the corpus of literature as we know it, the representation of transgender people has always been a space of ambiguity, evolving from abstraction to puritanical, and then authentic, thus shaping our understanding of an identity that has historically occupied a marginalised space within society as well as literature. The consistent stigmatisation of the transgender community has seeped into the literary representation of their identities, as we see in Robert Bloch's *Psycho* which perpetuates transmisogynistic stereotypes with its 'man in a dress' and 'dangerous trans woman' tropes, as well as in *The Silence of the Lambs,* with its harmful anti-trans legacy. Conversely, we also see the impact of transgender representation in literature on collective thought, from Shakespearean plays like *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* with their potential portrayals of gender fluidity, to Woolf and Le Guin's mystical portrayals of gender as ever-changing (Brinkman).

It is simple to claim that literary depictions of varying gender identities have advanced over time, moving from archaic, inauthentic, and misguided representations to more contemporary, veritable representations written with more cognizance. However, upon truly examining the narratives of transgender people that literature seeks to present, it can be seen that the transgender identity is in constant flux, changing with every portrayal. There is no linear progression over time, but rather, a perpetual push and pull of the way in which gender is portrayed. Be that as it may, what is seen in narratives written by transgender people themselves, is the truthfulness behind the representation of

treansness in their writing. One such example of this candour portrayal is Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues.*

When looking at *Stone Butch Blues* as an autofictional text, it transcends the constraints of most other queer and transgender texts due to Feinberg's commitment to raising awareness about the ground realities of the transgender experience. Hir work draws upon personal experiences as a transgender person, as well as the broader history of the LGBTQ+ community to weave together narratives that are truthful and profound. Published in 1993, the novel captures the struggles of Jess Goldberg, a butch lesbian who is a fictionalised version of Feinberg, navigating the complexities of identity in a pre-Stonewall American society. This faithfulness of Feinberg to represent hir own narrative, in itself, demonstrates the importance of transgender voices in literature.

The novel is set against the backdrop of the 1960s and 1970s, a tumultuous period marked by social and political upheaval. During this time, the LGBTQ+ community was actively fighting for visibility, recognition, and basic civil rights. In the 1950s and 1960s, people who were then known to be 'crossdressers' found homes in bars, restaurants, and other venues that did not actively discriminate against people of the LGBTQ+ community. Bars were often converted into queer safe havens until harassment from law enforcement and local authorities forced them to close (Beemyn 20). Norms of binary gender and heterosexuality came under heavy scrutiny in the 1960s, setting the backdrop for Feinberg's novel. Written in first person, Feinberg provides a deeply personal and immersive experience by taking us on a journey of identity, love, and social expectations. The raw and emotionally charged narrative offers a window into the complexities of navigating one's own gender in a world that rejects non-conformity.

Stone Butch Blues delves into a range of issues, including the challenges of navigating gender identity, the impact of societal expectations on individuals who don't conform to traditional gender norms, and the complexities of love and relationships within the LGBTQ+ community. The novel also addresses the undeniable intersections of class, race, and gender in America, providing readers with a nuanced portrayal of the diverse experiences within the LGBTQ+ community, thus leaving an enduring mark on transgender literature.

In most transgender literature, the nuances of being trans or gender non-conforming are often brushed aside to focus on themes of acceptance and assimilation. This is often portrayed through dramatised narratives that simplify the transgender experience into a binary framework, thus placing an emphasis on transgender people to align with traditional gender norms. Feinberg's novel subverts this by challenging cisgendered integration, and instead, focuses on the diverse aspects of transgenderism, characterised by non-assimilation into traditional gender norms and resistance of a deeply cisheteronormative society. The novel emphasises the denaturalisation of gender binaries by portraying varying experiences of dysphoria, and these variabilities of being transgender are highly amplified in the novel (Cecavova 59). Jess, the novel's protagonist, when walking into a bar, narrates:

> Woman or man: they are outraged that I confuse them. The punishment will follow. The only recognition I can find in their eyes is that I am "other." I am different. I will always be different. I will never be able to nestle my skin against the comfort of sameness. (Feinberg 244)

As seen from this quote, Jess is clear in her understanding that her identity is not one that will fit into a binary, and to this, she is not faced with grief, but rather with "fear and excitement" (Feinberg 244). This is not a narrative often seen in queer fiction, since transgender characters are almost always made to hate their bodies, and subsequently, themselves, for their transness – an idea that is pushed by cisgender creators due to their own inability to see trans people as more than people of pain. In the broader context of the literary canon, wherein narratives often focus on the challenges and struggles faced by transgender individuals, *Stone Butch Blues* emerges as a distinctive work by depicting moments of trans joy. The novel echoes the importance of this uncharted narrative by depicting the transgender experience as something beyond pain and dissatisfaction with one's own body, thus enriching the portrayal of transgender lives within the literary domain. Feinberg's own understanding of transness provides her a space in which she portrays the transgender experience as something that is not inherently negative, but rather, something to be celebrated.

Still, while Feinberg delves into the complexities of being trans and remaining inclusive of the trans person's acceptance of deviance, zie does not shy away from the harsh realities of being trans, including the discrimination and violence faced by transgender people. Police brutality has always followed queerness for the very same reason that discrimination follows queerness – the idea of an 'other' threatens the status quo that benefits the dominant groups in society. The police sexually assault and harrass Jess and her gender non-conforming friends, and they tend to remain a constant, recurring character throughout the novel. This reflects the realities of being queer, especially gender non-conforming in a largely cisheteronormative society. Police brutality follows transgender individuals in every facet of their life, and all their interactions are largely influenced by the threat of violence imposed upon them (Hamilton 30; Testa et al. 457; McGee 9). "I was still a gender outlaw," narrates Jess when hospitalised after being harassed. "Any encounter with the police might end up with me in their custody." (Feinberg 284

This not only highlights the realities of police violence that gender non-conforming people face, but also brings to light the hurdles that trans people have to face in order to exist. The negotiations made between receiving adequate healthcare and inevitably being made to register oneself with the system versus foregoing one's own health for the sake of ensuring safety are vast and daily (Gupta et al., 4). A forgotten space of discussion is the necropolitics often associated with queerness, that is, the ways in which political power operates on the organisation of mortality (Mbembe 92). Necropolitics encompasses the idea that certain populations or individuals are subjected to an existence wherein their lives are disposable in the eyes of the state, an experience not foreign to transgender individuals who are faced with systemic oppression daily.

Feinberg's work aptly captures this through hir portrayal of the violence faced by Jess. This violence can be understood as a form of necropolitics, wherein certain bodies are deemed as expendable according to societal norms. The discrimination and brutality Jess experiences contribute to her social death, symbolising the necropolitical forces that seek to control and suppress marginalised identities. The novel addresses this systemic oppression and how it operates as a necropolitical force through structures of class and economic marginality as well as

traditional gender norms, thus creating an intersectional understanding of how necropolitical dynamics govern the lives of those who exist outside of accepted norms in society.

Feinberg provides the readers a space wherein it is not only the necropolitical forces acting upon transgender lives that are depicted, but also the emphasis on resistance and challenging the necropolitical norms that seek to devalue the lives of transgender people. Thus, the novel becomes a narrative of survival and resilience in the face of oppressive forces. It offers a counter-narrative to necropolitics while simultaneously providing us an understanding of the transgender body with relation to the state, and the biopolitics involved in it.

The puritan nature of contemporary transgender fiction is subverted with Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* by portraying the gruesome, vulgar details of transness rather than a watered-down, moralist understanding of gender queerness (Wark 532). The exploration of working class life in Buffalo, New York, along with the forthrightness in which it talks about gender-affirming surgery and hormone replacement therapy, all concepts that are commonly known as merely that – conceptions – are brought out into the open in Feinberg's writing, thus creating a space where transgender individuals are more than mere conceptualisations, but rather, complex humans deserving of a place in which they are free to be human. Lines like "I'm doubling the shots of hormones just to try to make it work faster" (Feinberg 161) show us the variabilities of being transgender, the ways in which the transgender experience is so vastly different from the cisgender experience, and also the humanity of being trans – the corporeal, carnal need to merely exist in a body that feels like one's own.

Stone Butch Blues also maintains its Marxist core through this so-called 'vulgarity' that Feinberg emphasises by portraying labour as a crucial aspect of the butch identity, examining the idea that one's identity is often deeply tied to labour. For working-class individuals such as Jess, their identity is largely shaped by their experiences in the labour force, aligning with the Marxist notions of labour influencing identity and the impact of economic structures on an individual's life. The labour of securing protections – love, community, and even a union job, is highlighted in Feinberg's work (Gleeson et al. 291). When asked about what Jess wants to do with her life, despite wanting more for herself, she responds by saying, "I want a good job, a union job" (Feinberg 45). The vivid portrayal of the working-class struggles faced by the characters through economic precarity, unemployment, and the harsh conditions of the labour market conveys the intertwine between economic hardship and the transgender experience, thus highlighting the intersectionality of class and gender oppression. Feinberg asserts this idea in the afterword of her novel, where she goes into her author rights – "Stone Butch Blues is not merely a 'working class' novel," zie says, "It is a novel that embodies class struggle" (Feinberg 355).

Chiefly, on a wider examination,, the novel's roots appear to be planted in authenticity and individuality – Feinberg, in hir work, provides a rich exploration of the transgender experience through a portrayal of non-assimilation, medicalisation, self-acceptance, violence, marginalisation, legal discrimination, deviance, social isolation, community, and love. The novel's power ultimately lies in its ability to illuminate the complex ways in which the transgender experience is encapsulated,

wbe it through binaries or the absence of it, thus inviting readers to reflect on the ongoing struggle for recognition, dignity, and agency within a cisheteronormative framework.

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Exploring Muslim Women's Sexuality through Ismat Chughtai's Writing.

Mohsina Sakriwala

In pre-colonial times, Islam was perceived to be a religion integrating all the diversities in genders and sexuality. In the postcolonial literature, exploring these diversities through writing becomes an important artifact, as these pluralities were perceived in a negative lens and were marginalized during colonization. In this context, Ismat Chugtai is a renowned mention. She began writing and exploring female sexuality through her writings at a time when women were prohibited to even write. She sheds light on the complex lives of Muslim women and their journey of finding pleasure. Through the Marxist lens, she also explores the class dynamics within the institution of sex and shows the intricacies of class hierarchies in the postcolonial setting. Chugtai's stories reveal an image of a patriarchal Muslim household. She uses her pen as a weapon to dismantle the hierarchical power structure in patriarchal households, as many Muslim houses are assumed to be. In the collection, Lifting the Veil, the readers embark on exploring sexuality, power, and generalized biases towards Islam. Despite the criticisms, her writings stand guard to an important narrative of Muslim women of the Indian subcontinent which were considered non-existent, unimportant and were forgotten. This paper critically analyzes muslim women's sexuality in Chugtai's stories through the postcolonial lens.

"IN MY STORIES I've put down everything with objectivity. Now, if some people find them obscene, let them go to hell. It's my belief that experiences can never be obscene if they are based on authentic realities of life. These people think that there's nothing wrong if they can do things behind the curtains... They are all halfwits." (Chughtai 3).

Ismat Chughtai was a radical writer and seminal to postcolonial Indian literature. A significant voice of 20th century literature, she incorporated a genre called 'literary realism' in her stories. She mostly wrote on themes which explored women's sexuality and her settings were made up of muslim patriarchal households. Her short story anthology *Lifting the Veil*, was an amalgamation of female sexuality, socio-political happenings and a view in the lives of muslims during that time. This paper critically analyzes muslim women's sexuality in Chugtai's stories through the postcolonial lens.

Although her most prominent short story, “Lihaaf - the Quilt” brought Chugtai recognition and fame, it also led to accusations of obscenity and public humiliation. When women’s writings were rare and tentative, Chughtai wrote about lesbianism and explored female sexuality of muslim women, making “Lihaaf” revolutionary.

According to general perception, freedom of gender and sexuality didn’t coincide with Islam. The concept of purdah system veiled the sexuality and desires of women. Chughtai also makes subtle mentions about male sexuality through the character of Nawab. Though the purdah affects the women in a rigid systematic manner, it has its impact on men too. The Nawab, though he couldn’t be open about his sexuality, he could still use his privilege as leverage to engage in it. Begum Jaan on the other hand, was trapped in loneliness and her suicidal thoughts were portrayed through her physical health and body which was forcefully veiled under the purdah.“No one except Ismat drew attention to the fact that a woman also has sexual desire that can move her as ruthlessly as a man” (Kiran 6).

Islam used to be more inclusive about sexualities in the pre-colonial period, but colonization changed the perception of Indians about homosexuality. Even the Quran mentions about homosexual practices, although experts debate about its authenticity and actual meaning of the texts. Heterosexual relations enabled and enforced the patriarchal system which thereby became the cultural norm, further incorporated in religion in later periods. This doesn’t mean that the common population supported the non-heterosexual community before but the intensification became rigid after colonization. “Lihaaf”, written and published in 1942, challenged the existing psyche of Indian society about homosexuality.

The purdah system, although not mentioned in the Quran, does benefit the patriarchal society. Islam is perceived to be a patriarchy driven, male oriented religion but the Quran is known to have space for women to be independent. If literature has a huge impact on people who follow a particular faith, why are certain parts ignored? Why is literature termed to be scandalous and not analyzed for its true meaning? “I know history. There are many names in history but none of them are ours” (Siken 6). Although religious texts might have mentions of homosexuality, interpreters of religion are often heteronormative and ignore homosexual references. Hence the stories of muslim women, homosexuals and their existences go unrecorded and disregarded. Therefore stories like “Lihaaf” and people like Chughtai become so important in history. These are the narratives of forgotten and suppressed existences and identities.

Chughtai faced trials which accused her works of eroticism when she never intended that. Most of these accusations were by men who themselves engaged in writings of female objectivity yet never faced labels of ‘scandalous’ or ‘problematic’ writing. The imagery indirectly created by the words of Chugtai was held under trial. Imagery created varies from individual to individual. Can an interpretation be termed criminal?

Inspite of her confession in the beginning of the story about “mind racing into the labyrinths of the past” (Chughtai 13), the narrative hardly seems to be a stream of consciousness. Her simple words carry complex meanings and portray the experiences of muslim women and their loneliness quite aptly. The words may seem easy to understand but deeper insight would show thoughtfulness

and intricacy. “Lihaaf” is narrated through a child’s gaze and it is curious, why she chooses to do that. As the Indian society had turned blind towards the existence of other genders and sexualities, this story became a narration of how a child becomes fascinated by seeing an unfamiliar sight, fearful yet curious. This use of a child as a narrator was a flow against the patriarchal view which considers non-heterosexuality immoral as a child's lens is untainted by the heteronormative conventions of the society. Yet, such a narration births poetry which should not be ignored.

Begum Jaan and her relationship with Nawab was almost non-existent. Readers get a description of Nawab’s wants and desires: “He kept an open house for students- young, fair, slender-waisted boys whose expenses were borne by him” (Chughtai 14). Begum Jaan was kept as a trophy at home, young, married and lonely; a facade of Nawab's heterosexuality. “Having married Begum Jaan, he tucked her away in the house with his other possessions and promptly forgot her. The frail, beautiful Begum wasted away in anguished loneliness” (Chughtai, 14), the story of many married women even today. Her beauty is described through such elegance that even though the readers haven’t met with Begum Jaan, they can imagine her beauty and delight in it. This is probably the only part in the story where readers feel erotic. As confessed by Chughtai in her story, ‘In the Name of Those Married Women’, her purpose to write an erotic description of Begum Jaan was to let “some brave fellow (should) release her from Rabbu’s clutches, encircle her within his strong arms.”(Chughtai 261).

Mentions of lesbianism in Indian literature were already scarce during that time. One of the only early mentions of homesexual intercourse was in the Kamasutra. Producing a homosexual narrative based in an Islamic setting was quite unconventional in the post-colonial era. The repressed sexual desires in a patriarchal setting also highlights the veil covering up those emotions. In a way, Chughtai really was Lifting the Veil from hidden aspects of muslim households.

Rabbu is another character of significance who not only depicts the gender diversities but also the class and power dynamics. Alongside Begum Jaan, who was described to be a beautiful woman living in haveli with all her lavishness, Rabbu was a lower class woman with stereotypically ugly aspects and was also described intentionally, for the readers to be disgusted by her, “Rabbu was as dark as Begum Jaan was fair...stench exuded from her body” (Chughtai 16). The power dynamics were ironical, that inspite of Rabbu’s lower class status she ended up controlling the economically and socially elite Begum Jaan’s sexual life and making Begum Jaan totally dependent on her. Although Rabbu was shown to be her ‘life savior’, the constant presence and almost an obsession does give her the leverage to control Begum Jaan. Another notable point was the lack of any mention of romance in their relationship. Was Begum Jaan saved only through the want for sexual needs? As Chughtai wrote, “I’m not going to regale you with a romantic tale. It’s hardly a subject for romance” (Chughtai 13). This adds to the complexity, as writing about sexual relationships with complete lack of love was not explored through a woman’s perspective, let alone a lesbian’s.

Third and the most important character is the narrator. The narrator is an adult except while narrating the story, they view the surroundings and the characters through their childhood experience and lens. For example, “Begum Jaan’s quilt was shaking vigorously, as though an

elephant was struggling inside" (Chughtai 17). The shadows formed by the quilt become an elephant figure for the child's eyes but as readers, we are aware about the actual elephant beneath the quilt. In a way, by using the child's perspective, Chughtai does hide aspects of lesbian relationships under the veil. Her words, though simple and styled in a child's language, successfully convey the thoughts she was trying to portray. Chugtai employs the innocence and ignorance of a child's eyes to surpass the societal taboo of lesbian sex.

Another event of significance, which often gets overlooked, is the sexual abuse of the narrator. Begum Jaan felt alive after meeting Rabbu and engaging in a sensuous relationship with her but when Rabbu left to meet her son, she inflicted her lust on the narrator. While Chughtai's writing about homosexuality gathered much attention and critique, the subtle confession about the narrator's harassment was neglected. Whenever the topic of sexual assault was discussed, it's always in the context of a man being the accused, hence homosexual harassments took a backseat (Chauhan 1). "This analysis is not trying to cover up or negate the narration on homosexuality or trying to view it in an antagonistic lens, it only wishes to throw light on a different perspective of the story" (Chauhan 1).

The discomfort of the narrator is expressed constantly after her encounter with Begum Jaan. "I tried to protest", "I wanted to run away but she held me tightly", "I felt very uncomfortable" (Chughtai 20), the story was fraught with these phrases which portray the narrator's emotions and displeasure about the situation. As readers the focus is aimed at the homosexuality due to the topic being taboo and rarely being discussed in a Muslim household. But the narrator's confession of discomfort in these little phrases ends up being forgotten.

Chughtai employs the child's gaze which is quite gullible, like only considering the shape of the shadow while the events inside the quilt are unknown. It is the mature reader who gives meaning to the elephant. The concept of pregnancy was culturally always encountered with happiness in families when the couple was married. But in the short story "Gainda" (originally published in 1938), when Gainda gets pregnant with the Bhaiya's child, the narrator is the only one feeling happy for her but the rest of the family is ashamed of the premarital pregnancy that too of a maid "when I expressed happiness, I was reprimanded." (Chughtai 9). Chughtai, with a lot of wit, tackles many social problems through this story too. There's also the class intersectionality which plays between the characters. The character of Bhaiya escapes the situation and is not held accountable for pre-marital sexual relations because of his gender and class privilege. Gainda was left behind with a label and a child and nowhere to go. Quite interesting to note how the woman's sexual desires got questioned and the man wasn't even held responsible. Her struggles after she got pregnant are also portrayed, "She was beaten to a pulp and abandoned without food. She survived somehow." (Chughtai, 11).

In "Gainda" there's subtle mentions of lesbianism when the narrator and the maid play the bride game. "We always played this fascinating game stealthily" (Chughtai 1) , the fact they played it secretly is another highlight of suspicion. Although it's written with jealousy from the narrator's perspective, the layered hints of attraction cannot be ignored. "I was either gaping at her or following her around like a wistful kitten", (Chughtai 3).

In the last story of the collection, “In the Name of Those Married Women”, the readers get more insight into Chughtai's struggles after writing her pieces. The story delivers her experiences of going to trials on accusations of ‘arousing sensual emotions’ and being charged for ‘obscenity’ through imagery created and being compared with accomplished yet problematic authors like Manto. This story is more autobiographical and opens a window into the actual life of Chughtai as a person and not just a writer.. The story’s conclusion contains an interview regarding “Lihaaf”, It became proof that the story was based on real events; which also makes it much appalling and showcases the courage Chughtai took to narrate such a story. Chughtai also confesses the aftermath of “Lihaaf” on Begum Jaan herself. The readers get a complete picture of their story when she confesses about confronting Begum Jaan about the abuse and being relieved with how her life changed after the story.

The title of the short story collection Lifting the Veil, fits the narrative of the stories well because Chughtai lifted the veil off of so many issues that muslim patriarchal households face; especially in context to muslim women. Chugtai proposed a path for these stories hidden behind a veil, and even in the 21st century the veil is barely lifted. Women end up being the silent sufferers with no one left to narrate their stories. Chughtai's bravery became an important artifact about their narratives. From female sexuality and homosexual abuse to premarital pregnancies, Chughtai explores them brilliantly and writes about them in subtle tones which aren't too direct yet simple enough for the readers to comprehend. Chugtai imparts to her readers that staying silent is never an option. Writing “Lihaaf " brought her public scrutiny but it changed her as well as Begum Jaan’s life. Similarly, documenting lives of muslim women, she emphasized that food and clothing are not the only needs to be fulfilled for a woman to sustain life, that taking her pleasures into consideration is just as necessary. Tahira Naqvi’s commentary on Chugtai’s writing elucidates the change she ushered, “By understanding women's struggles against the oppressive institutions of her time, she brings to her fiction an understanding of the female psyche that's unique; no other Urdu fiction writer has approached women’s issues with the same degree of sensitivity and concern." (41).

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Umbilical Entanglement: Unmooring Narratives and Insidious Realities of Motherhood.

Rishika Pangam

Motherhood is frequently extolled as the most profound and heavenly of human ties, obscuring the complicated humanity that lies underneath it. Individuals who become mothers are frequently burdened with the weight of another life but have few outlets to express their deepest worries, anger, and anxiety. In literature and other mediums of culture, the horror genre develops as a powerful vehicle through which unsaid worries and concerns of motherhood are channelled. Inquiring this phenomenon allows readers and viewers to confront the terrors and injustices of the unheard experiences of mothers, while also providing a route to regain power, agency, and self-discovery. It serves as a tool for processing trauma, a mirror in which we may view our worst fears and a haven for finding courage and catharsis in the face of insurmountable obstacles. This paper attempts to critically analyse a selection of literary works that dare to explore the untold side of motherhood. Motherhood by Sheila Heti and the 2014 cinematic masterpiece The Babadook directed by Jennifer Kent are among these explorations. Each of these works provides a distinct viewpoint on the complicated mosaic of maternal experiences and the tremendous societal and psychological obstacles encountered by mothers, which are frequently veiled in the shadow of motherhood's apparent joy and purity.

Few narratives in the broad fabric of human experience are as cherished and romanticised as the path of motherhood. Motherhood is frequently portrayed as the pinnacle of womanhood and grace, capturing the spirit of selfless love in cultural and communal spaces. From literature to art, folklore to popular culture. the story of motherhood is repeatedly presented as a beautiful and virtuous voyage, laced with delicate moments and cherished memories. However, by adorning the notion of motherhood with words like 'glorious' and 'fulfilling', society propagates a myopic attitude that ignores the enormous physical and emotional toll that mothers suffer. This paper attempts to untangle the nuances of the motherhood narrative, highlighting the contradiction where the celebration of selflessness inadvertently silences the voices describing the trauma and hardships accompanying this complex journey.

It can be said with fair certainty that the traditional narrative has been deliberately manufactured to emphasise moments of joy and fulfilment while ignoring the less romantic parts of childbirth, postpartum recovery, and the never-ending duties of caregiving. Women negotiate expectations and obstacles as conventional kinship relationships and family structures undergo transition. In patriarchal societies, women have always been the primary care-givers and this position has not changed despite modern cultural changes. The long-standing idea that women play major roles in developing and preserving familial relationships persists. Even though capitalism impacted the structure of familial and kinship relations, certain characteristics, most notably women's maternal duties, persist from the pre-industrial and pre-capitalist eras. Furthermore, in an era where we view economic pursuits as liberating and the sole indicator of our status,the dynamics of women's lives change dramatically. The reproductive sphere still has strong roots and is still a defining feature in shaping women's identities and everyday activities. Women must not only deal with societal expectations but also manage their responsibilities within changing family structures and the greater socioeconomic landscape.

The ideological use of motherhood to keep the family as the regulating social order divides women's lives into binaries, before motherhood and after motherhood, interweaving them intricately with their identities. Bagchi argues that these "binaries confine women to the reproductive domain of the home and deny them access to the world" (2). These enforced social binaries, in essence, limit women to either 'at home' or 'at work'. A woman's power to create is forced to be limited to the act of creating life, which makes their pursuits outside of the domestic sphere less than. These binaries act as a double edged sword which denies the laborious task of domestic upkeep as an act of creation, reducing it as mundane and unimaginative.

> "Can't one pass on one's genes through art?
> Yes
> Do men who don't procreate receive punishment from the universe?
> No
> Do they receive punishment for neglecting other tasks one typically associates with maleness?
> No" (Heti 22).

Feminist academics have elaborated on Engels' views on caregiving (a gendered endeavour), solidified as a social reality, due to economic and material circumstances by providing a more complex insight into the role of interaction between class, gender, cultural norms, power relations, and human agency. They have underscored the process of 'naturalising' caregiving. Hegemonic notions such as caregiving being the primary feminine trait are treated as de facto, where any deviation is treated as an anomaly, or anti-nature which is further enforced by the tightened nozzle of biological ability and personal attributes as the same.

Blessed with the opportunity to choose motherhood, Sheila Heti in her book *Motherhood* provides excerpts from her monologues where she finds space to communicate her fears and anxieties regarding the ever-present, daunting question of motherhood. The societal expectations placed on women regarding motherhood and the implicit assumption that becoming a mother is not only a

natural duty but also a source of fulfilment, often leave no space to discuss the inability to do so. Paved as a natural progression of life, the failure to excel in the assigned 'natural advantage' isolates women as 'unnatural' and, in turn, a horror to be told. The manifestation of fears is perhaps best expressed and given the centre stage in horror, as these spaces "don't create fear; they release it"(Craven). When the woman or girl is not the victim, she is most commonly the enemy, and her femininity is frequently represented as being at the centre of her monstrousness. Creed asserts in her famous essay "The Monster Feminine: Film, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis" that "when a woman is depicted as a monster, it is unavoidably about her mothering of reproductive activities" (Creed 47). This is seen in films such as *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *The Brood* (1979), and *The Fly* (1986), where pregnancy is central to the terror, or the abundance of films in which the mother is the source of the horror, for instance, *Psycho* (1960) and *Carrie* (1976). Motherhood in horror is always the source, but never the subject of the horror.

> "Does the universe mind if women who don't make art choose not to make babies?
> Yes
> Are these women punished?
> Yes
> By not experiencing the mystery and joy?
> Yes" (Heti 22).

A perceived consequence or judgement for women who deviate from the expected path of motherhood is subjugated to loom over women. The idea that the universe 'minds' implies a cosmic or societal judgement on women who choose not to bear children. The punishment is framed not only as a deprivation of the joys and mysteries associated with motherhood but also as a broader societal consequence, possibly encompassing judgement, isolation, or social disapproval. Women who reject motherhood are labelled as 'childless', and as individuals who are missing out on life and are hence incomplete. Belief in maternal instinct may also contribute to hostility to birth control and abortion; after all, why should women restrict the number of children they have if it is in their nature to enjoy motherhood? This joy is praised for being so transcendental and otherworldly that it breaks through the pain of being carnally humane. The process of childbirth is overlooked as a minor hindrance to the ultimate salvation of being a mother, which blinds the discourse from the traumatic and painful labour undergone by women and the brutal recovery period that follows. The pain of motherhood is never something to acknowledge; it is always swept under the rug as a blessing.

The *Babadook* (2014) empathetically humanises and allows the mother to express her suffering and isolation in motherhood through horror. As Amelia struggles to juggle her responsibilities and find joy in mothering her oddball son, the monster Babadook becomes the physical manifestation of her trauma and suppressed grief, reflecting the haunting impact of trauma on her psyche. The love for her son Samuel which must come instinctively to her, fails to manifest in her caregiving for Samuel, resulting in a sense of detachment and loneliness. Jasodhara Bagchi writes in her introduction to *Interrogating Motherhood* that "the paradox of motherhood in the context of feminist theorising in India was the potent contradiction between the ideological glorification of motherhood as 'shakti' (power) and the powerlessness faced by mothers in their everyday lived

reality."(2). Since women are held up as the primary caregivers, they are bestowed with the ultimate responsibility of the children. This hyperawareness of their role in the child's life and the powerlessness they often feel in patriarchal societies causes this so-called paradox in their excursion of power, which often engulfs them in fear of not being a good enough role model, or worse, being a bad mother. These fears taint their relationship with their children, where the mother may become overbearing or mocked at for shaping her life around children.

Heti elaborates on the dominant social notion of a child as a 'pure' object to have, which the woman will inherently be blessed to care for, limiting the role of personal competency to a shallow gendered essence. The fear of not fulfilling the presupposed universal role and the guilt of being the cause of shame for the family, force women into a constant state of negotiation with their choices. Heti writes that "the egoism of childbearing is like the egoism of colonising a country—both carry the wish of imprinting yourself on the world and making it over with your values and in your image." (63). The one-way maternal relationship devoids agency and communication. Valid considerations regarding parenting are often dismissed or downplayed with the assumption that these concerns will magically be resolved once a woman becomes a mother. Framing the mother as the provider and someone who always 'knows best', pedestalizes and isolates the woman as someone to look up to and not at. Children in this situation also become passive objects who will be blessed by their mother's love regardless of their actions, forfeiting the role they play in influencing their dynamic with their mothers. When Amelia yells, "Why can't you just be normal?" (*The Babadook* 30:48-30:51) to her son, she ends up highlighting society's established inclination to expect uniform conduct from children, which frequently ignores their distinct individualities and personalities.

Amelia struggles to discuss her pain, which is exemplified as her husband dies on the way to the hospital for Samuel's delivery. She cannot separate the birth of her son from the death of her husband, and she struggles to accept her emotional turmoil. Amelia struggles to separate the birth of her son from the death of her husband and finds no space to air her grievances. She confines all tangible mementos of her spouse within the confines of the household basement, a space expressly prohibited to Samuel. This behaviour manifests an evident incapacity to commune her emotional experiences, both sorrowful and joyful, with her son. She experiences heightened distress when her son ventures into the basement and endeavours to engage with the possessions of his deceased father, a situation that exacerbates her emotional turmoil. The lack of communication and emotional closure between mother and son strains their relationship and turns the latter into yet another chore for the overburdened single mother to manage.

"I'll wager with you.
I'll make you a bet.
The more you deny,
The stronger I get.
You start to change when I get in.
The Babadook is growing right under your skin." (*The Babadook* 36:46-37:10) .

When the doctor suggests scheduling an appointment for Samuel to see a specialist, Amelia urgently requests immediate relief, pleading for something to help him sleep until they secure an

appointment. She expresses her exhaustion and emotional struggle, emphasising that the situation is challenging for both her and Samuel. Despite her clear distress, the doctor reluctantly agrees to prescribe a short course of sedatives until test results come back, subtly shaming her by insinuating that most mothers aren't eager to take them unless the situation is dire. In this interaction, Amelia's plea for help is met with reluctant compliance, and she feels restrained from openly discussing her emotional struggles even with a medical professional. Her disdain towards her son can also be observed when her sister points out how neither her or Amelia can stand being around Samuel. Brid Featherstone, in *Motherhood and Ambivalence*, notes that the idea of mothering often causes anxieties, which are coped with through cultural defences. These defences manifest in the idealisation and denigration of mothers, but neither portrayal accurately reflects reality.

The cultural expression tends to simplify mothers into a binary of 'good' or 'bad'. Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky express how 'bad mothering' is like obscenity: you know it when you see it (2). What defines terrible and good mothering is neither apparent nor consistent. However, the fear of being called evil, which motivates the desire to be classified as good, impedes awareness of the normality of complicated maternal emotions as well as their appropriate expression. 'Bad' moms in films appear to reject their customary duties and expectations. These moms are frequently portrayed unfairly as lone mothers with bad discernment. There is little or no recognition of the fact that they are carrying out their responsibilities while simultaneously earning an income. Amelia's maternal ambivalence is further challenged as the Babadook manifests itself as a physical representation of Amelia's horror of being an incapable mother. The Babadook's influence further intensifies by appearing as her late husband, willing to relieve her burden by taking away Samuel. The lines between reality and the supernatural are blurred as the Babadook possesses Amelia, symbolising the inescapable nature of trauma. In one of her confrontations, she gutturally screams "I'm your mother" (*The Babadook* 1:09:34- 1:09:37) to her son, symbolising her acceptance of this gruesome, horrifying part of her. This guttural, harrowing scream and acceptance of her worst fears becomes a space for voicing out her so far repressed pain which she had violently suppressed throughout the film. She is finally able to acknowledge and express the love and hate she has for her son. Their mutual acknowledgement of this reality becomes their salvation. Eventually, she succumbs to a moment of intense catharsis, vomiting a black substance. Though they briefly believe they're free, the haunting rhyme reminds them of the persistent Babadook. Amelia continues the battle and, in a moment of revelation, screams at the monster, declaring ownership of her house. The Babadook retreats to the basement, and Amelia and Samuel are left in a moment of empowerment. The Babadook is tamed and controlled by addressing its needs and fended for by the team efforts of the mother and the son, who have locked the demon in the basement and can be found discussing its temperament for the day and whether they have fed it. In the end, the film offers a poignant commentary on acknowledging and confronting trauma, suggesting that, while the Babadook may never be fully eradicated, it can be managed, allowing for healing and the rebuilding of relationships. Fears and trauma often just need space to be addressed.

The societal narrative surrounding motherhood is a complex interplay of idealisation and romanticization, often neglecting the profound physical and emotional toll experienced by mothers.

Through literature and horror women can express their stories of pain and fear allowing society to move towards a more nuanced and compassionate understanding of motherhood. Ultimately, the exploration of these narratives serves as a catalyst for dismantling societal stereotypes and fostering a more empathetic and inclusive perspective on the diverse roles and experiences of women. Literary works such as *Motherhood* by Sheila Heti and *The Babadook*, provide a space for women to express the pain and isolation of motherhood, addressing suppressed trauma and challenging societal expectations while fostering a more nuanced and compassionate view of motherhood and deconstruct our notions of womanhood.

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Bly Manor Revisited: Horror and Hauntology in *The Turn of the Screw*

Aditya Shiledar

Perhaps the most astonishing thing about The Turn of the Screw *is its unusual place in Henry James's repertoire: James, an avowed realist who sought to chronicle the interior lives of Americans abroad, writing about ghosts and country mansions? And yet the very popularity of the novel indicates the skill with which he infuses the narrative, and which also partly dichotomizes its critics into two groups: those who claim the ghosts to be imaginary, and those who hold them to be real. But for all the gamut of Marxist, Feminist, and Freudian criticism it has borne along the decades, there is no fixed consensus on the ghosts' existence. By using Jacques Derrida's hauntology, this paper attempts to explore the deeper autobiographical meanings underlying the text. Specifically, it seeks to highlight how the mere presence (and not the existence) of the ghosts was central to James's project of using the novel as an exploratory form.*

Firstly, the term 'horror' itself must be adopted with some caution. James was a frequent writer of 'ghost stories' (in Victorian parlance), and yet, the form his ghosts take is more complex and bewildering than perhaps any other writer before. Jamesian characters tend to recur as ghosts because of various motivations (like love, jealousy, desire, even punishment); but they scarcely have any footing in the author's own past. This, however (and as the paper argues) is the case with *The Turn of the Screw*. Perhaps that is why it becomes so much more susceptible to Derrida's hauntology than any of James's other (ghost) fiction.

Ghosts, for Derrida, are never mere passional occurrences – their presence owes something to thedisruption of space and time. Preferring the term 'spectre' to ghost, Derrida goes on to clarify the chief characteristic of haunting: that it is incongruent with space and time, and thus does not *fit* the context appropriately. He writes, in *Spectres of Marx* (1993): 'This Thing meanwhile looks at us and sees us not see it even when it is there. A spectral asymmetry interrupts here all specularity' (Derrida 6).

What is this 'spectral asymmetry' and how does it 'interrupt' (or disrupt) all 'specularity'? Derrida's prime example is the ghost from Hamlet. The ghost of the dead father stands where he should not –both spatially and temporally, his appearance there is an impossibility. The dialogue

'The time is out of joint' (*Hamlet* 45) is an attempt to make sense of this apparent impossibility. And yet, according to Derrida, since the ghost cannot be perceived by everyone, its existence cannot be taken for granted –only its presence can. Because of this apparent inscrutability, all explanatory attempts (which he calls 'specularity') are vain.

A close reading of *The Turn of the Screw* provides insights into many such occurrences –especially the incongruency of the ghost with its surroundings. A fitting example of this comes up in chapter 15, where the governess encounters the ghost of Miss Jessel in the children's nursery. Narrating this, the governess says, 'While these instants lasted... I had the extraordinary chill of a feeling that it was I who was the intruder' (*The Turn of the Screw* 221). The incongruence is obvious: Miss Jessel, the previous (and dead) governess is seated where the (current) governess rightfully should.

In the governess's third encounter with the ghost of Peter Quint, another such inconsistency is revealed. Encountering it on a dark staircase, she writes: '... the next instant, I knew that there was a figure on the stair.... He knew me as well as I knew him; and so... we faced each other in our common destiny' (James 196-7). This experience of horror is underlined by the persistent metaphysical doubt: how does the governess know that it is indeed Peter Quint that she is seeing?

In fact, harking back to her conversation with Mrs. Grose in chapter 5, it becomes obvious that the 'identity' of Peter Quint has been foisted on the ghost by the two women merely on the basis of a number of physical characteristics. Further, the governess says, "He gives me a ... sense of looking like an actor" (James 176), while instantly adding that "I've never seen one" (176). Though this testimony is dubious in itself, it provides an essential clue to the *real identity* of the ghost.

Whatever this 'real identity', it is almost always fluid. Like other Jamesian ghosts, it has no fixed purpose or shape; but unlike other Jamesian ghosts, its identity is also fluid –so much so that it lends itself to being entirely unknowable. Derrida also writes about this quality of the spectre, calling it a 'visor effect'.

Again invoking the example of *Hamlet*, he writes about its ghost: '...his apparition makes him appear still invisible beneath his armour' (Derrida 6). The armour, then, is of peculiar interest here – not *particularly* as an armour, but as an external embellishment, as a form of mask (thus the name 'visor effect'). The essential purpose of this mask remains the same: to deceive the viewer, and hide its 'true' identity. What lies beneath the mask may never be known, implies Derrida.

Having said that, the construction of the ghosts' identity in *Turn* becomes much more legible: the governess adds on to the 'deception' practised by the ghosts by attaching an *identity* to them. In a way, she, too, like James, turns the screw on herself by sinking deeper into this 'deception'. But the question then remains: if James, too, was indulging in deception by having his ghosts prey on the governess, what was his true motivation behind them? Surely, behind the visor (or the mask) of the identities they inhabit, their true selves must have an origin –and this must be knowable, if only partially.

What, then, may this 'purpose' be? Clues to its origin can be found persistently in James's diaries and letters, while the same themes that feed and fuel *Turn* find utterance in other works of the period

too. Particularly interesting is the interplay of *loneliness* and *sociability*, which has deep parallels with James's childhood days.

Leon Edel, his biographer *par excellence*, writes illuminatingly about this facet of the novel: 'The house symbolised the world of his childhood, the danger of self-assertion... In the house of Family, he had had to defend himself to escape William' (*The Treacherous Years,* 253). In fact, the rivalry between Henry and his older brother William (who would go on to become America's primary philosopher) was serious enough to displace his sense of self. Writing in typically reserved fashion about this rivalry in *A Small Boy and Others* (1913), James says, 'We were never in the same classroom, in the same game, scarce even in step together or the same phase at the same time... he was clean out before I had got well in' (James 10).

But at the same time, he had had a cosmopolitan childhood – he had visited Paris and London with his family at the age of two, and settled in Geneva for his education during his teens. But even there, the young Henry only hovered on the fringes of society. Edel quotes a letter from him to his friend TS Perry, where he says, '...seldom have I seen a more hideous collection of females than I do on these occasions. They all sit on benches ranged along one side of the room... and for a fellow to sit down on one of their benches would be a heinous crime.' (*The Untried Year*s 49).

The similarities are almost visible: the young Henry, stifled by a host of female companions in Genovese society, and the young Miles, sequestered in Bly Manor with only a handful of company – and Mrs. Grose, Flora, and the governess are all female. Miles's outburst in chapter 14 – "You really compare me to a baby girl?" (James 217) clearly also has a gendered connotation. This would later be revisited in the second chapter of his memoir, where he says, 'It was a humiliation to me at first...that our instructors kept being instructresses' (*A Small Boy and Other*s 17).

All these combine to create a dreadful sense of isolation for the young Henry – and when Edel writes about his days in Geneva, it is painfully visual: '...he looks out of the hotel window, he explores the shops, he walks around the edge of the lake. He is very much alone. His brothers are scattered. He doesn't make friends with his schoolmates' (Edel 49). Gradually, the image of a lonely and sequestered individual emerges.

Interestingly, all these impressions of childhood anxieties find a symphonic arrangement in the creation of Bly Manor. Bly Manor is, from the very outset, a location which seems to suck in all external energy. As Miles is expelled from school, his social life is completely severed; he and Flora are continuously subjected to the governess's unerring supervision. After Peter Quint's second visitation, even Mrs. Grose and the governess are daunted from going to church, instead opting for 'a little service of tears and vows, of prayers and promises' in Bly Manor itself (James 177-8). In frantic progression, all impulses to seek the outside world are repelled and finally abolished –the governess's letter to her Harley Street employer remains unsent, and when Miles breaks out with "I want to see more life!" (216) he is calmly rebutted by the governess's remarks. Evidently, all of James's childhood insecurities are re-created in Bly Manor with the startling power of memory: it is this that lends the novel its *horror*.

But if Bly Manor is a site of 'horror', it is also a site of control. Surely, its tendency to observe (and restrict) its inhabitants' movements has Foucauldian undertones. This motif of observation is not the only one in James's oeuvre –indeed, Jamesian characters tend to have a high appetite for

observation (whether ominously or not). In *Watch and Ward* (1871) one of his earliest novels, an older chaperone watches over a young girl, while *The Sacred Fount* (1901) is a novel of distinctly Holmesian characteristics –except that the protagonist has an *idee-fixe* for observing and fantasising his fellow-characters' romantic lives. Robert Weisbuch goes so far as to posit a comparison between Winterbourne (in *Daisy Miller*) and the governess from *Turn of the Screw*. Both are engaged in games of observation and categorisation; about Winterbourne, the narrator in *Daisy Miller* writes, 'He had a great relish for feminine beauty; he was addicted to observing and analysing it...' (James 163), while in *Turn*, the governess's very role is to supervise and observe the children.

But it is in this process that her narcissism gets the better of her. If her 'duty' is to look after the children, she also extrapolates it to protecting them –the protection being, of course, from the ghosts haunting the manor. Once she gets used to the idea of the children being in communion with the ghosts, she is frantic to extract this confession out of them. In chapter 11, as she puts Miles to bed, she asks him, "You must tell me now –and all the truth. What did you go out for?" (205).

But she scarcely realises how soon her protection turns into a kind of wilful isolation. By the time she exclaims to Mrs. Grose, "They're lost!" (James 188), she has already crystallised her need for self-validation. From that point on, her quest for certain knowledge only keeps intensifying. And the question constantly hovers in front of the reader (and the governess): are Miles and Flora really as innocent as they appear to be?

Definitely, there can be no simple answer to this; but the governess's apprehensions that they may be 'corrupted' are not totally unfounded. After all, they have been witness to a good many catastrophes from an early age. As Susie Boyt writes, in a 2017 introduction to the novel, 'They occupy that strange emotional territory that is usually the reserve of the very elderly: they know more people who are dead than are alive' (*The Turn of the Screw and Other Ghost Stories*, introduction, xxx).

But how about her (and Mrs. Grose's) concerns that the children may be corrupted (by Peter Quint and Miss Jessel)? Perhaps these apprehensions only amount to the fear that Miles and Flora may know too much at a young age? Surely, 'knowledge' as a form of corruption was prurient Victorian perception, and in Jamesian terminology, would probably be called a
'horror'.

In fact, as a notebook entry for March 4th, 1895 demonstrates, James often employed such vocabulary. The entry, which is about his novel *The Awkward Age*, reads, 'The idea of the little London girl who grows up to 'sit with' the free-talking modern young mother...inevitably hears...guesses...becomes acquainted with, horrors' (*Notebooks of Henry James*, 192). The word 'horror', used in conjunction with the motif of *precocity* is not uncommon in Victorian parlance – but by using it in a literal manner, James turns the Victorians on their heads. And in *Turn of the Screw*, Mrs. Grose and the governess are precisely those characters –whose apprehensions grow too real for them to handle or sufficiently take care of.

And yet the idea of corruption does not resolve itself easily. If Miles is feared to be 'precocious', he also fears precocity – though he is desirous of more society, he is also afraid of it.And the governess can never be sure of either his corruption or his innocence. If he has 'known nothing in

the world but love' (163), he is also dismissed from school for an inexplicable reason. And the only insight provided into this is by Miles himself, in the ultimate chapter, where he remarks to the governess, "Well – I said things" (254). Though the governess does not ask him what these things are, any inquisitive reader may be piqued to find them out. But 'to say things', in Jamesian parlance, could also imply expressing oneself freely. This 'incident', though it may be fictional, also has a prominent precursor in *A Small Boy and Others*, where James recalls a bitter remark made to him by William: "I play with boys who curse and swear!" (260), implying, of course, that Henry is not one of them. The ensuing parallels are obvious: Miles is afraid of confronting corruption, while the young Henry chose not to confront it.

Ultimately, it all circles back to the inherent loneliness experienced by James, right from his boyhood days in Geneva, to his late years when he isolated himself in Rye House. Even a Derridean analysis brings out this point –almost uncovering it from the depths in which it has been 'turned' by James. In that sense, then, unwinding the history from the story is an exploratory process; Edel again quotes a letter of James's, written in 1900, to W.M Fullerton: 'The port from which I set out was...that of the essential loneliness of my life –and it seems to be the port also...to which my course again finally directs itself!' (Edel 511). But unlike his characters in Bly Manor, James was not doomed by the curse of his loneliness. It served him faithfully, in that he was able to revisit it, and finally, extinguish its 'horror'. That horror is *Turn of the Screw*.

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Confronting the Absurd in Children's literature

Riva Harani

The use of literature as a medium to bring out life's irrationality and the lack of inherent meaning is a prevalent pattern; however, interestingly, absurdism is also a prevalent theme in children's literature, which is otherwise known for its whimsical and fantastical storytelling. This paper attempts to bring out the extensively undiscovered (and thus uncharted) motifs of absurdism in children's literature; it also delves into the basic aims of such literature, which tend to familiarise children with life's flaws and uncertainties from an early age. Thus, it is left to them to either derive or reject meaning, teaching them to accept and almost celebrate the absurd, as is their typical nature. To support this thesis, the paper traverses through time, literally as well as through the progression of literature concerning the ages of children. The time period covered is the 14th century to the 18th century, represented by English and German nursery rhymes meant for infants and Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, meant for pre-adolescents.

> "We cannot live human lives without energy and attention, nor without making choices which show that we take some things more seriously than others. Yet we have always available a point of view outside the particular form of our lives, from which the seriousness appears gratuitous. These two inescapable viewpoints collide in us, and that is what makes life absurd." (Nagel 719)

In the vast tapestry of human existence, the quest for the meaning of life has been a timeless pursuit that transcends cultural, temporal, and intellectual boundaries. From the esoteric realms of metaphysics to the empirical domains of science and the spiritual aspect of religion, humanity has tirelessly sought to unravel the enigma of its existence. Amidst the myriad philosophies that have arisen in response to this fundamental question, existentialism, from which absurdism is derived, confronts life's inherent meaninglessness and absurdity.

Tracing the Journey of Absurdism

Absurdism serves as a potent tool in children's literature, unravelling life's irrationality and inherent lack of meaning to young readers. As a philosophy, it gained popularity during the 1950s and 60s, though absurdist themes had been explored considerably earlier, via existentialism. Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* is credited as the first philosophical exploration of absurdism, addressing the fundamental query about the value of life. Camus reflects upon the Greek myth of Sisyphus who was doomed to repeatedly push a boulder up a hill, before it rolled back down again, for eternity. While the story of Sisyphus is a metaphor for the laborious futility of human existence… its' moral is not one of despair. As Camus explains, individuals are able to gain a sense of satisfaction in life, in spite of its meaninglessness (Davies).

Kafka’s 1912 novella *The Metamorphosis* depicts the futility of human effort to forge a sense of (individual) meaning, as opposed to what existentialists suggest, in the face of a deeply confounding world. It is the story of a man who wakes up to find that he has been transformed into a giant insect. Overwhelmed by a sense of alienation, the character struggles to come to terms with the impact his new form has on his daily life.

> “While existentialism posits the idea that one can create their own meaning through goals and achievements, the absurdists deny that meaning can be found at the outcome of any rational endeavour... In the case of Sisyphus, by accepting the absurdity in endlessly rolling a boulder up a hill, he achieves a sense of freedom. As Camus concludes, ‘The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.’” (Davies)

Confronting ‘the absurd’ in the realm of children's literature is an uncharted exploration in today's evolving literary landscape, where stories traditionally lean towards "happily ever afters." Thus this paper embarks on a journey from nursery rhymes to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, culminating in fostering an acceptance and celebration of the absurd, aligning with children's inherent inclinations.

Nursery Rhymes

> “Children's literature is fundamentally a deceptive literature. Many nursery rhymes that were developed out of the current socio-economic upheaval talk of history, politics, trauma, murders, gore, sexuality, or death through the apparent clarity of nursery rhymes, like Aesop's Fables that taught moral truths under the garb of fables” (Chinnaswamy 5)

Nursery rhymes are the cornerstones of culture; surrounding children from conception to infancy, they transcend cultural boundaries and landscapes. Typically associated with simplicity and whimsy, beneath their charming façade of seemingly nonsensical verses, nursery rhymes do address essential aspects of human existence, like morality, societal norms, and purpose. A powerful medium of communication with children, they are used for socialising children into the norms and moralities of a culture, to convey compassion, and to mask genuine sentiments, such as discontent with political regimes without prosecution. Since rhymes are easy to remember and may thus be communicated by word-of-mouth to a large number of seemingly illiterate people, they are seen to be surviving and being colloquised by different cultures. Moreover, “Observation reveals that rhythm is pleasurable to the infant, whether it appears in self-induced or passive rocking, shaking, or the "crooning sound of cradle-songs” (Mintz pp. 23-24). And thus, lending rhymes a nonsensical and absurdist element, where children trade rhythm for meaninglessness.

> “Baa, Baa, Black Sheep,
> Have you any wool?
> Yes sir, yes sir,
> Three bags full”.

The origins of 'Baa, Baa, Black Sheep' can be traced back to the mediaeval era of Britain as the Great Custom (a new wool tax that was imposed by Edward I in 1275, to raise funds for military ventures after returning from the Crusades, which lasted until the 15th century). The rhyme likely symbolises monarchs imposing taxes, as the original ending reveals the neglect of the child down the lane, emphasising the shepherd's limited share of the produce. Like the myth of Sisyphus, we can see the acceptance of fate one is doomed to, which in the English nursery rhymes mirrors the fatalistic reality of the Victorian Era or the dire consequences for a small misstep, as showcased in *Der Struwwelpeter*.

Additionally, the myth around the rhyme "Ring a Ring o' Roses" remains a subject of great interest. Contrary to the claims linking it to the Great Plague of 1665 or the Black Death, it is widely viewed as a children's singing game. Various plague-related narratives exist, attributing the rhyme to different outbreaks and locations. Scholars dismiss these claims for lack of evidence. However, these narratives can be seen as attempts to rationalise or accept life's absurdity, reflected in the rhyme's fatalistic symbolism. The seemingly whimsical elements, such as "roses" symbolising rashes, "posies" as preventive measures, "a-tishoos" as sneezing, and "everyone falling down" as death, The seeming whimsy serving as a counterpoint to one of London's most atavistic dreads, the Great Plague, an epidemic of bubonic and pneumonic plague that struck the city in 1665 (Chinnaswamy 5).

Along the same lines of nursery rhymes, but seemingly bizarre, uncharted and unsafe for children is *Der Struwwelpeter* - a German children's book written by Heinrich Hoffmann in 1845. While it may not explicitly align with the philosophical concept of absurdism, predating Albert Camus and his development of it, the book consists of cautionary tales written as rhymes, featuring misbehaving children who suffer bizarre and often exaggerated consequences, allowing for an exploration of elements of the stories aligning with key concepts of absurdism. Herein, the absurdity lies in the disproportionality of the punishments, emphasising the irrationality and unpredictability of life. “Die gar traurige Geschichte mit dem Feuerzeug” (“The Dreadful Story of Harriet and the Matches”) illustrates the same, where the child Harriet plays with matches, ignites herself, and burns to death. Harriet's death results from a seemingly innocent act.

The book also highlights suffering as a result of the characters' actions. In absurdism, the idea of suffering without inherent meaning or justification is prevalent, echoing the absurdity of human existence. For example, Frederick from “Die Geschichte vom bösen Friederich” (The Story of Naughty Frederick") refuses to eat his soup and dies of starvation. Moreover, the characters in *Der Struwwelpeter* often face isolation due to their actions, reinforcing themes of alienation present in absurdism. The characters are, in a way, isolated by the absurd consequences of their behaviour.

Similarly, in the story of “Struwwelpeter” (Shock-headed Peter) Peter's shock-headed appearance becomes a symbol of defiance against societal norms, echoing the absurd notion of rebelling against an indifferent universe. Thus, the book serves as an interesting lens through which to explore the irrational and unpredictable nature of life, individual responsibility, and the apparent senselessness of suffering in the context of a children's morality tale.

Alice in Wonderland

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1865, follows the protagonist Alice, a young girl who tumbles down a rabbit hole into Wonderland, a place where logic and order have been turned on their heads. The characters she encounters, from the enigmatic Cheshire Cat to the tyrannical Queen of Hearts, in Wonderland, with its ever-shifting landscapes and nonsensical rules, are a metaphor for the unpredictability and irrationality of the real world. Alice spends the entirety of the book navigating the characters' disdain for her while trying to make sense of her surroundings. "Alice to Cheshire Cat: I can't explain myself, Sir. Because I am not myself, you see?"

Except for the Cheshire Cat, who offers a clearer response than anyone else. Alice expresses her reluctance to stay around "mad" people, to which the cat responds, "Oh, you can't help that…we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad" (Carroll 75). Indignantly, Alice questions the cat about how he knows she's mad, to which he replies, "You must be, or you wouldn't have come here" (Carroll 75). This insight is crucial, as the Cat's only solace for Alice is that everyone is insane, explaining the pervasive illogical and silly nature of Wonderland.

We find the Cheshire Cat challenging us on our assumptions about absurdity, asserting that labelling one world as absurd and another as sane is unjust. Alice's world - Wonderland - mirrors the other idea of absurdity we have in the "real world, " labelling the road less travelled 'uncharted' and 'absurd' rather than delving into it and confronting it for its apparent madness. When asked if a dog is sane, the Cat replies affirmatively, using Alice's reasoning against her, claiming his madness is based on unconventional behaviours. Alice protests, but the cat dismissively replies, "Call it what you like" (Carrol 77).

Camus versus Caroll

Carroll's use of surrealism and absurdity to remark on the nature of reality, language, and social conventions has led to the book being regarded as an example of nonsensical literature. However, its parallels to Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* (2000) also provide for an analytical treatment of the absurdist elements it utilises. Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, states that our world is the absurd one. In the book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, we see Alice placed in an absurd world, yet she chooses to continue her adventure and stay in absurdity. Through this choice, she represents the first consequence of Camus' absurdity - which is - revolt. The other characters of Wonderland, who are fully embracing absurdity, are disclosing the second and third consequences of Camus' absurdity, namely freedom and living life to the utmost.

In the second chapter "The Pool of Tears" of the book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* Alice finds a bottle potion labelled 'Drink Me' containing some sort of potion. As Alice drinks the potion, she grows inexplicably larger. Now unable to fit through a door, cried a pool of tears. Amid tears, Alice urges herself to stop crying, grappling with the absurdity of her emotions, paralleling Camus' link between emotions and absurdity. Similar to Camus' quest for unity between the world and the world, she encounters absurdity and must decide whether to persist in her adventures despite the unsettling nature of absurdity. This mirrors Camus' existential choice between embracing the absurd or revolting against death, with Alice choosing to continue her adventure.

Wonderland as a World of Absurdity

Throughout her journey in Wonderland, Alice remains resistant to becoming accustomed to the absurd, consistently encountering and grappling with its bewildering nature. This dynamic creates a connection between the reader and Alice's character, making it challenging for the reader to empathise with other Wonderland inhabitants who are fully immersed in the realm of absurdity.

> "Absurdity has not only influenced the world around her, but also herself and the way she perceives herself, thus a fundamental question comes in and she thinks: "yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've changed in the night? […] But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?'" (Carroll, 2011, p. 42).

At this juncture, we find not only Alice's landscape reality but also her sense of self rapidly changing. We see her eventually shifting from a pursuit of meaning rooted in her human need to make sense and rationalise the situation to her gradually embracing the purpose of purposelessness, i.e. the absurd, evident through her conversation with the Cheshire Cat (a cat that frequently appears and disappears, often leaving behind only a grin)

> "Alice: Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?
> The Cheshire Cat: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to. Alice: I don't much care where.
> The Cheshire Cat: Then it doesn't much matter which way you go.
> Alice: ...So long as I get somewhere.
> The Cheshire Cat: Oh, you're sure to do that, if only you walk long enough."

The other characters of the world continue to expose the oddity of the world around Alice, however, we find them embracing and rather revelling in the absurd. One can never be entirely certain of the world Carroll was referring to in his Alice books; whether it is an allegory, or possibly as a means of providing insight into his creative mental-scape. All iterations of Wonderland are positioned as an abstract reflection of reality, adapting to various eras and interpretations. Despite extensive critical analysis, it would be ironic if, as Carroll claimed, Wonderland was merely a whimsical story of an uncharted land, created to entertain three young girls during a boat journey. Naturally, that would be quite absurd.

The intricate interplay between reality and absurdity in children's literature, illustrates the genre's ability to bridge the gap between fantastical storytelling and a window into the harsh reality and seeming meaninglessness of life, reflecting the value that these seemingly nonsensical tales bring to a child, teaching children to celebrate and embrace life regardless of the meaning of it all, as we see children often do, and as Absurdism advises us to.

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The Influence of Literature on Visual Arts: Uncovering Echoes of Unexplored Narratives

Geenia Fernandes

The intersection of literature and visual arts represents a dynamic realm where two distinct forms of creative expression converge, resulting in an intricate tapestry of uncharted narratives. The collaborative process between literature and visual arts reveals rich narratives as artists infuse their unique perspectives, resulting in a convergence of verbal and visual elements. The research paper focuses on specific literary works, such as The Great Gatsby and 1984, to showcase how artists transform written language into visual experiences. Emphasising the transformative nature of interpretation, the study also highlights the cultural and historical contexts shaping these narratives, including movements like Romanticism and Surrealism. Broadly, the research paper underscores the profound impact of literature on visual arts, revealing the continuous emergence of uncharted narratives captivating audiences across time and space.

Literature and visual arts share a profound, mutually enriching relationship that has endured through time, fostering a dynamic interchange of influence and inspiration. This symbiosis finds expression in various artistic forms, including paintings, sculptures, illustrations, and multimedia installations. In this cross-disciplinary interplay, literature emerges as a wellspring of narratives, themes, and emotions, serving to ignite the creative spark in visual artists. Simultaneously, visual art seamlessly integrates with literature, as artists and writers draw upon their experiences and cultural contexts.

These two creative realms, both reliant on the synergy of images and written language, can be viewed as complementary facets of a singular artistic coin. Together, they weave immersive worlds and give rise to unique artworks that resonate with the essence of literary narratives. This research paper, concentrating on the convergence of literature and visual art, specifically examines the impact of seminal novels such as F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby and George Orwell's 1984 on the visual arts of their respective eras.

Furthermore, the paper seeks to delve into the symbiotic relationship between literary texts and

artistic movements. It places particular emphasis on exploring the influence of Romanticism, Surrealism, and Postmodernism on the dynamic interaction between artists and literary works. Through this focused exploration, the aim is to unravel the intricate threads that connect literature and visual art, shedding light on the enduring and evolving nature of their interdependence.

Establishing the historical context for both novels

The Great Gatsby penned by F. Scott Fitzgerald in 1925 during the Jazz Age, unfolds against the backdrop of a society grappling with disillusionment and profound social transformation in America. The era was characterised by the tumultuous impact of Prohibition, the ascent of organised crime, and a surging stock market that ushered in economic prosperity, fostering the emergence of a privileged elite. Fitzgerald, a representative of the Lost Generation—a cohort of writers shaped by the aftermath of World War I—captured the zeitgeist, articulating the disillusionment and hedonism of the post-war period. Within The Great Gatsby, he meticulously explores the corruption and moral decay embedded in the affluent circles of the 1920s.

As a work of fiction, The Great Gatsby delves into multiple themes that reverberate throughout its narrative. Against the vibrant Roaring Twenties, the novel scrutinises the elusive nature of the American Dream, laying bare its emptiness and the corrupting sway of wealth. The characters' pursuit of success, social standing, and love becomes intricately entwined with illusions and deceptive facades, underscoring the jarring disparity between outward appearances and the stark reality beneath.

In the opulent backdrop of the Jazz Age, a time synonymous with extravagance, the novel became a source of inspiration for many artists, including Grant Wood. An exemplary manifestation of this influence is evident in Wood's iconic painting, American Gothic.

In the opulent backdrop of the Jazz Age, a time synonymous with extravagance, the novel became a source of inspiration for many artists, including Grant Wood. An exemplary manifestation of this influence is evident in Wood's iconic painting, American Gothic.

Wood's masterpiece captures the essence of this aspiration, portraying a farmer and his daughter against the backdrop of a farmhouse. The painting, like the novel, becomes a testament to the ideals and values associated with the American Dream, encapsulating the zeitgeist of a period characterised by extravagance and the pursuit of prosperity.

The novel's poignant critique of the extravagant lifestyles and excesses of the wealthy during the Jazz Age finds a visual counterpart in Archibald Motley's The Twenties. In a lively scene, individuals are depicted joyously dancing and revelling, encapsulating the spirited atmosphere of the Jazz Age. Motley's brushstrokes and dynamic composition convey the exuberance and extravagance prevalent during this era, aligning seamlessly with the novel's scrutiny of societal indulgences and conspicuous consumption of the privileged class.

Additionally, the novel's exploration of the themes of societal moral decay, particularly within the upper class, where characters indulge in unethical behaviour and pursue their desires without moral restraint, finds resonance in Salvador Dalí's renowned surrealist painting, The Persistence of Memory. The melting clocks suggest a sense of temporal distortion and instability, mirroring the unravelling moral fabric depicted in the novel. The piece serves as a thought-provoking reflection on the malleability of time and morality, echoing the ethical unravelling and decadence depicted within the pages of 'The Great Gatsby'.

Although these artworks are not directly inspired by The Great Gatsby they capture the themes and spirit of the novel, providing visual interpretations of the societal shifts and cultural dynamics of the 1920s.

George Orwell penned 1984 in 1949, a tumultuous period immediately following World War II, marked by global uncertainty and the aftermath of conflict. In this atmosphere, Orwell was deeply troubled by the ascent of totalitarianism and the erosion of individual liberties. The post-war era, shadowed by the perceived threat of totalitarian regimes such as the Soviet Union, fueled Orwell's apprehensions about the spread of authoritarian rule. His narrative was also shaped by his firsthand experiences in the Spanish Civil War, where he witnessed the tactics employed by both Fascist and Communist regimes. These varied encounters converged to form the dystopian and sombre vision of a future dominated by a totalitarian regime.

The impact of George Orwell's seminal work, 1984 extends beyond literature, influencing visual artists who have found inspiration in its themes of surveillance, totalitarianism, and the loss of personal freedom. One prevalent theme depicted by these artists is surveillance, mirroring Orwell's portrayal of a society constantly monitored by the omnipresent Big Brother. Russian artist Vitaly Komar, for example, reimagined Big Brother as a camera-like figure in his series 1984-1985 vividly capturing the chilling ambience of perpetual surveillance and its profound effect on individuals.

Visual artists also delve into the theme of totalitarianism inspired by 1984 illustrating a society where the government tightly controls every facet of life, stifling freedom of thought and expression. Chinese artist Ai Weiwei's series, Surveillance Camera, constructs replicas of security cameras, drawing attention to the pervasive surveillance culture in China and beyond. Through Weiwei's work, viewers confront the weight of oppressive regimes and the accompanying loss of personal liberty.

The third theme explored by visual artists, influenced by Orwell's depiction of 1984 revolves around the loss of individual freedom. The novel vividly portrays a government manipulating reality, erasing history, and enforcing a singular ideology. Artists, such as Jenny Holzer, incorporate Orwell's phrases into their installations to challenge the concept of truth and question the boundaries of personal freedom. Holzer's works, projecting phrases like "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING," serve as stark reminders of the dangers associated with surrendering personal freedoms and underscore the critical importance of vigilance in preserving such liberties.

In a broader context, 1984 and The Great Gatsby share a commonality in being written during pivotal periods of cultural, social, and political change in the United Kingdom and the United States, respectively.

Supplementing artistic movements for thematic parallels :

Literature serves as an abundant source of inspiration for visual artists, propelling them to craft interpretations that not only encapsulate the essence of written works but also contribute to the broader cultural discourse surrounding them. This dynamic interaction empowers visual artists to delve more profoundly into the intricate themes presented in the literature. The emergence of artistic movements, shaped by the cultural and historical context of their era, plays a pivotal role in facilitating this exploration. Thus, the existence of artistic movements and the abundance of novels in literature contribute to deepening our understanding of the significant impact literature has on the visual arts.

In a broader context, 1984 and The Great Gatsby share a commonality in being written during pivotal periods of cultural, social, and political change in the United Kingdom and the United States, respectively.

In 1984, Orwell's protagonist, Winston Smith, undergoes a profound sense of alienation within a dystopian society that suppresses individuality. His rebellion against the oppressive regime resonates with the Romantic spirit, symbolizing the assertion of one's unique identity. Similarly, in The Great Gatsby Jay Gatsby's isolation, despite his extravagant parties and relentless pursuit of the American Dream, reflects a profound loneliness and the repercussions of unrestrained ambition. This aligns with Romantic notions of the individual's intricate relationship with society.

These themes of individualism and alienation find a visual parallel in Caspar David Friedrich's painting Wanderer above the Sea of Fog. The solitary figure and mist-covered landscape evoke a similar sense of introspection, isolation, and the quest for personal identity within the vastness of the world.

Surrealism frequently delves into the subconscious and explores the absurd. In 1984, a central theme is the manipulation of reality through language and propaganda, where the Party controls perception by altering language and distorting the truth. Meanwhile, in The Great Gatsby characters often indulge in self-created illusions, and the narrative delves into the contrast between appearances and reality.

René Magritte's painting, The Treachery of Images (Ceci n'est pas une pipe), exemplifies how the pipe depicted is not a pipe, but a challenge to viewers to question the relationship between images and reality, emphasizing that representation differs from the actual object.

Postmodernist artworks frequently delve into meta-narratives and irony. This trend is evident in postmodern literature, exemplified by works like 1984 and The Great Gatsby which explore the

repercussions of a society dominated by consumerism. In 1984, citizens are subjected to constant surveillance by the Party, while in The Great Gatsby characters are immersed in a culture of excess and materialism.

Jeff Koons's sculpture Rabbit, though distinct from paintings, stands as an iconic piece of contemporary art deeply rooted in postmodernism. Koons's artistic endeavours are closely tied to consumer culture, employing popular and mass-produced imagery to comment on the commodification of art.

The Rabbit sculpture aligns with postmodern tendencies by challenging established norms, deconstructing meanings, questioning authority, and engaging in meta-commentary. It contributes to the broader postmodern discourse, inviting a critical reevaluation of traditional structures and narratives. Together, these expressions form a collective exploration of the complexities inherent in questioning and redefining societal norms and artistic conventions.

This exploration illuminates the creative processes of artists drawing inspiration from literary works and enriches our understanding of the dynamic interplay between various forms of artistic expression.

Conclusion

It's not solely literature that serves as a wellspring of inspiration for artists aiming to encapsulate and mirror thematic elements in creating striking visual representations. Factors such as cultural influences, historical events, personal experiences, and societal shifts can serve as potent inspirations for artists striving to capture and reflect thematic elements in their visually compelling creations. Artists like Robert Rauschenberg and Zarina Hashmi have pushed artistic boundaries wide open. Rauschenberg's hybrids embraced found materials and objects from everyday life, creating new relationships which challenged the viewer’s mind to find alternative connections. Zarina Hashmi, with a background in mathematics, articulated dislocation and exile through her vocabulary of maps, abstract geometries, stark lines, and a muted palette.

Literature serves as the compass guiding artistic evolution, unlocking unexplored realms of imagination and creativity, forging a path where innovation intertwines with tradition, breathing life into the ever-expanding tapestry of artistic expression.

Artists who willingly challenge themselves, push the boundaries and venture into unexplored territories, play a pivotal role in the evolution and advancement of the art world. This continuous cycle of imagination, originality, and innovation ensures that art remains a dynamic and perpetually evolving field. The importance of this ongoing process lies in its ability to continuously expand artistic creativity, challenge viewers' perspectives, enhance aesthetic appreciation, and foster meaningful connections between art, society, and individual experiences.

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In Tandem: Tracing the influence, meaning and significance of Companion Pieces

M. Zaid

The use and necessity of companion pieces in literature, and other media, is a major subject of study, long overlooked because of its very status as a companion piece. This paper discusses and articulates the relationship between a companion piece and its central work; it also elaborates on the various aspects and avatars that companion pieces can take in art, television, literature, and other media. In doing so, it traverses over a wide range of literary subjects, and delves into the various connotations it can have, including the effect of mystification that a companion piece can create. Finally, it illuminates the necessity of the companion piece, proving that it is as central to a text (or media) as the main piece itself.

A companion piece is any work that is associated with or complements another, more prominent work. It is, to borrow from its 13th century French origin, 'a work of reference, usually arranged alphabetically, that is there to be consulted whenever needed' (McArthur and McArthur 242). Thus, it explains, or enlarges, rather than offers a precise definition (like a sensible, well-informed friend). Apart from this particular sense, however, the word 'companion' has a broad extent of meaning, and can be used in quite a lot of other variations. Some of these are discussed below.

To start with, a companion piece would typically refer to all creative works which are designed to be experienced together, or created as supplementary elements to an original work. 'The Cambridge Companion to William Shakespeare', the museum entry to Picasso's Guernica, newspaper reviews of Scorsese's Killers of the Flower Moon, the guidebooks or travelogues to Vienna or Varanasi, the introduction, or preface printed in Penguin Classic novels, an Instagram edit for Wong-Kar-Wai's Fallen Angels — all of these, and everything analogous to these are, by their nature, companion pieces. It may be tempting to narrow the ambit of the term, a good yardstick for which is whether it is formally published or not, but that would be more reductive than useful. This leads to another divide, between pieces by the same author, and the pieces by different ones. In the case of the latter, companion pieces can also act as sources of mystification (an idea explored later in the paper), chiefly because of the form they may take. Relating to a text, the amount of information, criticism, and recommendation that it generates is but another avatar of the companion piece.

On the other hand, pieces by the same author, too, can be perceived validly as companion pieces. This paper, however, does not limit its scope to them; instead, it seeks to measure the scope of influence they have on an observer. For instance, the prequels to Star Wars may have had a huge

huge impact on the original trilogy, but of greater interest is the rationale behind the making of such a prequel. It might seem negligible when talked about in terms of pop culture, but companion pieces can fundamentally change an impression about an art piece. The following is a child's drawing depicting 'sunbathing'.

Ruth Cechova made this sketch in a Nazi concentration camp, shortly after which she was deported to Auschwitz and killed at the age of 13.

What difference do the two images have? In the second instance, the image has come to illustrate the text; by doing so, it has become a companion piece of sorts. This influence is pervasive in nature and companion pieces are all similar in this relation of enhancing the artwork. The importance of recognising this shift in cognizance is that it enhances the perceptibility of art; not only does it empower the discourse, but it also makes it much more transparent and inclusive. It promotes a deeper engagement with art, allowing individuals to derive more meaning and enjoyment from the literary or artistic experience.

Similarly, all art is dependent on other art, and every art piece is in communion with every other art piece. Here, the interplay between inspiration and influence comes in; this relationship, however, is never completely clear. As Martin Scorsese says, 'Sometimes it's the spirit of the piece itself. Sometimes it's far more mysterious than that' (Scorsese 2023). In that sense, even two seemingly unrelated pieces of art can be connected to each other, and this new affinity, or connection that comes with pairing will always show the artwork in a newer light. The intentionality of the connection can be a grounding point here, but treating two unrelated books or two films without any direct connection as companions to each other is a wonderful rabbit hole. Unfortunately, the exploration of this theme is beyond the scope of the current paper.

It now becomes important to distinguish between four types of companion pieces: pieces connected through the simple fact that they are both art, pieces connected through influence, pieces connected through adaptation, and pieces connected through analysis. It would be helpful to think of this classification as a pyramid, and as a rule of thumb, the more 'dependent' the existence of a piece is to another, the higher it would be on said pyramid.

Starting at the top of the pyramid, pieces connected through analysis can first be looked at. In fact, every paper in this journal would be counted here. For pieces connected through adaptation, the examples range from SNL skits about a recent pop culture event, to Julia by Sandra Newman, a retelling of Orwell's *1984* which gives agency to the original protagonist's lover; from an adaptation of *Frankenstein* by the National Theatre starring Benedict Cumberbatch, to *The Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller or even to Kanye's sample in Power, Ozzy Osbourne's cover and the central antagonist in JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: Golden Wind, all to 21st Century Schizoid Man. Pieces connected through influence or inspiration are even more nebulous, which Harold Bloom explores in *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. A good deal more may be said about the scope of influence on artists and writers, but that is beyond the scope of the present paper.

However, with respect to analysis-based companion pieces, the most primary aspect is the context underlying their creation. No work of art exists in isolation; and its historical context and motivation plays a major role in its inception. To take a musical example, Frank Sinatra's 'I'm A Fool To Want You' may be analysed in light of Sinatra's feelings for Ava Gardner (which is a historical context). But that's just trivia, it is important not to create preconceptions based on this context – and companion pieces often lead one to do so. 'It's what an art piece makes you feel about your own life that's important'. (Dylan 14).

A contextual reading, however, is also more illuminating, and helps one to place oneself either backwards or forwards in the historical analysis. It is necessary to establish a standpoint before reading a text. Without such a structure, both the reader and the text tend to wander aimlessly in a semantic haze. 'Seeing' a landscape is to situate oneself in it (like in Homer's *Iliad*). Unlike the landscape, however, the meaning of Achilles' tragedy that has percolated down through the centuries cannot be glossed over; one wonders whether the successive 'meanings' appended to the text were implicit in the original or if they are later accretions, deformations or expansions of it. When reading Kafka, one finds themselves approving or rejecting the legitimacy of the adjective 'Kafkaesque' which one hears constantly being used to refer to just about anything. When reading Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* or Dostoevsky's *The Devils* one cannot help reflecting on how the characters in these books have continued to be reincarnated right down to the present times, in media through Spike Spiegel in Cowboy Bebop, or the Sheriff in Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*.

An important text here is John Berger's Ways of Seeing. It opens with the following lines: 'Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak' (Berger 1). This brings in the ever-present gap in the words which one uses to situate oneself in the world that one first sees

and perceives. But literature offers its own unique contribution to understanding the past as a form of artistic expression and communication. This does not reduce the imaginative quality of literature to mere documentary evidence; it merely highlights this often-overlooked facet of it. Yet when a text or image is presented as a work of art, the way it is looked at is affected by a whole series of learned assumptions about art. Assumptions are essentially the models on which perception is based and affected; they affect and influence any and every future experience of art.

Many of these assumptions, however, no longer accord with the world as it is, and thus end up obscuring the past. As a result, they mystify the past, rather than clarifying it. History always constitutes the relation between a present and its past. And art, over and above this formulation, seeks to create realities and worlds, rather than represent reality, history, or everyday life. The everyday world is perceived (and conceived) by people only in terms of narratives, pictures, and images. That is why art is central to politics, just as it is central to social relationships and to beliefs about nature. There cannot be any representation that wholly reproduces another entity, scene, or conception; there can only be constructions of actualities and fantasies that simplify, elaborate, or otherwise construct a certain reality. Because they create something different from conventional perceptions, works of art are the medium through which new meanings emerge. For the same reason, this account, like all others, is also a construction, shaped to accent, elaborate, and simplify in line with its purpose.

Consequently, the fear of the present leads to the mystification of the past. The past is like a well of conclusions from which one draws in order to act. 'Cultural mystification of the past entails a double loss. Works of art are made unnecessarily remote. And there are fewer conclusions to draw from the past complete in action' (Berger 1977).

When one is prevented from placing themselves in it, they are being deprived of the history which they own themselves. Because history and historical evidence are so crucial to a people's sense of identity, the evidence itself often becomes the focus of struggle. Whether knowingly or not, one chooses from among models supplied by art to confirm biases, change opinions, or crystallise enmities. Since neither artist nor audience live in a political vacuum, these choices are ideologically driven; based on life experiences or prior expectations one reads meaning into the art one finds. Art is thus an integral element in the complex transactions between material conditions and the imaginative or symbolic dimension of life that engender political behaviour. Ultimately, the significance of art may be obscured because of an elite minority striving to construct a narrative that retroactively validates the influence of the ruling classes. Elites may seek refuge in the mystification created by companion pieces, if only to obscure and obfuscate opposing narratives; mystified art generates illusions. For instance, the fairness of legal procedures, as represented in an art piece, is open to analysis; but if the art piece validates it, the representation is not questioned. Good art, however, must steer clear of such usages. Art and literature have to be seen as historical, situated and produced, and not as descending as divine inspiration to people of innate genius.

Mystification is the process of explaining away what might otherwise be evident. This can be seen

in the forewords and the notes of classic novels, an example of which is *The Chouans* by Honoré de Balzac. 'A classic', writes Italo Calvino, 'is a novel which with each rereading offers as much of a sense of discovery as the first reading'. (Calvino 6) No book which discusses another book can ever say more than the original book under discussion, yet it is common to find one believing the opposite. There is a widespread reversal of values here, which implies that the introduction, critical apparatus, and bibliography can be seen as concealing the text's intrinsic value.

The Penguin's Classics introduction piece to Balzac's *The Chouans* discusses, at length, the influences and approaches that went into the writing of the novel. 'With this novel he knew he had begun the achievement of his high aims as a writer, and he signed it, the only work he had ever... signed, Honore Balzac, for he had not yet adopted the style of Honore de Balzac' (Crawford 9).

This is a key example of textual commentary acting as a companion piece to the actual novel. Writing further about the novel's translation and its thematic dimensions, Crawford says, 'Another dimension is given to the characters, and authenticity and vividness to the history, by the constant evocation of the past… In the marrying of the poetry of nature with what is supernaturally or elementally strange… one is reminded of Coleridge and Wordsworth's aims in *'Lyrical Ballads*' (Crawford 20).

A companion piece talking about the 'vividness to the history' transfers the emotions provoked by the text from the plane of lived experience, to that of disinterested art appreciation. Balzac was among the first to portray in literary terms the new characters and expressions created by capitalism, but the introduction sums this achievement, as: 'The brilliant skill displayed in the spinning together of the different strands of the plot, with its sensation and romance and military campaign, historical persons and events, psychological analysis, and typical characters is matched in the integration of very diverse elements in surroundings and atmosphere' (Crawford 19).

That is mystification. The focus here is on the novel's texture, and despite illuminating the stylistics, it diverts the reader from the novel's central point. Thus, in the appreciation of any work of art, the consideration of the receptor never proves fruitful. The audience, or the reader, always remains a separate entity, and is never concerned with its 'response' as such. Walter Benjamin puts it thus: 'No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener' (Benjamin 69). Companion pieces, while providing context, also end up falling victims to the problems of contextual audience. The target audience of any literary piece, then, must be reconsidered.

The paper thus recognises the significance of companion pieces, and their relation to the original, rather than mere condemnation of them. In doing so, it illuminates the folly in exploring art through traditional means. Companion pieces thus also have a particular potency: the original may be obscure, but its precedents and antecedents remain. Besides, their tendency to influence the reader, and thus impede independent thinking, is hazardous for critical discourse. Readers as audience, must expand their consciousness, collectively and individually, about the changes, reactions and

assumptions, in art that are effectuated by companion pieces. More than crutches, these companions might be sirens luring the reader away from engaging with art in a deeper way. The relationship with art, especially the art of the past, carries with it a lot of experience. To do justice to these experiences. Any analysis of art must do justice to these experiences.

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Voices from the Battlefield: The Dilemmas of Wars through Literature

Shania Dsouza

War has constantly coexisted with the conscious human experience. Human morality is distorted by the power vested in them by war. This significant imbalance of power leads to the veiling of the narratives of those who suffer silently so that any exploration of such narratives would remain uncharted. Diving into the relationship between war and literature, this paper explores the way it shapes narratives throughout history. Humanity has always had an enduring thirst for power and suffering. However, even slight scrutiny about the cause of war begs the question, is it human nature or circumstantial?

The paper examines the complex power dynamics that interfere and impact the narratives of people during the war. Propaganda and manipulation of language during the war led to the victimization of the general public. Due to this, a moral struggle within the war landscape existed. In this search for power, ethical considerations are usually eclipsed.

The most severe casualties of this demented power web impact were soldiers who stood as pawns on the frontlines. The uncharted narratives of the gruesomeness of the war, explore the dichotomy between the glorified ideas and grim realities of war. Barthe's Codes focus on the subjective nature of narratives, and how through ages they can be interpreted differently. The paper also touches upon the war aftermath and brings to light the patriarchal connotations embedded in war narratives.

The English language evolves as a trope within the consciousness of human existence. It serves as a testament to lived realities. War has always been a constant presence throughout human history, serving as a means to achieve various ends. What remained constant during the war was man's thirst for power and suffering. From the mythic battles of the Greeks to the struggles of Mesolithic Europe, these conflicts have taken on myriad forms. As civilizations continue to flourish and expand, the motivations behind war become more complex.

The power of language captures the ethos of conflict and the complexities of human beings during war. We can see it as a literary trope when we look at *The Battle of Maldon*, a poem set in a time when the English language was still in its nascent form, offering a window into the earliest expressions of war in literary form. From epic tales of heroism to the haunting poetry born in the trenches of World War I, the impact of war on human expression is profound. And it gives us a chance to look at different narratives. But what causes war is something no one can find an answer for. To put it simply, referencing Greek mythology, we could point the finger straight at Prometheus for his role in making warfare even more terrifying than it already was. But the issue is also: Who is at fault? The untroubled conscience of man or the actions he takes to satisfy his needs. From a psychological perspective, the feeling of being greater only comes from asserting dominance and gaining power at the cost of others.

War times have pushed humans to their farthest. The duplicity of war is prominent, where at one end, glory, power, and victory are seen as the only desirable outcomes. But what seems to be ignored is the gory side of war. *Storm of Steel* by Ernst Jünger, depicts a soldier's eagerness at the outbreak of war and his enlistment, as a soldier he is ready to face challenges and prove himself in war. Jünger's personal experiences give a gripping firsthand account of the brutality and chaos on the western front of World War I.

The notion of power blinds humans from their ability to reason. The power of politics is a rising force over morality. According to W.B. Gallie in his "Power Politics and War Cultures", "Sometimes the government needs war" (22). This statement sheds light on the economic and political goals that individuals seek to gain from war. Beneath the surface lies a profound moral struggle, an internal battle between doing right or wrong that persists even amidst the clamor of combat. The complex dance between politics and morality reveals an unsettling reality: Morality is frequently at a disadvantage, overwhelmed by the unrelenting pursuit of power and political objectives. The concept of power in itself eclipses the innate sense of purpose and integrity that guides humans. It sows seeds of disconnection so deep that humans are often diverted from their path, allowing their aspirations to be subjugated by the pursuit of dominance and control.

Gabriel Chevallier's *La Peur or Fear* reads, "Men are stupid and ignorant. That is why they suffer. Instead of thinking, they believe all that they are told, all that they are taught. They choose their lords and masters without judging them, with a fatal taste for slavery."(Chevallier 7) Hence, within the war landscape dominated by powerful figures, the general public becomes both forced participants and casualties. Glorifying the 'sacrifices' of war is common in literature, Alfred Lord Tennyson in his "The Charge of the Light Brigade" wrote, "Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die,"(14-15) immortalizing Lord Cardigan's botched mission in the Battle of Balaclava. This turned a military disaster into something heroic. The mechanism of propaganda, cunningly wielded by those in power, operates as a mechanism to mold narratives and influence the common man's perceptions. It veils ulterior motives behind the facade of righteousness and divides perception from reality. This manipulation of information acts as fog, leading individuals astray from their true ideals.

Military Keynesianism serves as a reminder of how power and propaganda mixed with war could reshape the lives of ordinary people. This complicated dynamic illustrates the multidimensional character of human conflict reaction and the psychology that supports war glorification. In such cases, the glorification of war serves a political purpose- propaganda. These were times when people were needed for war, and encouragement was given through literary works. Crafted during the tumultuous period of World War I, Rupert Brooke's verses are the embodiment of glorification. "The Soldier" by Rupert Brooke is one of his classic works that appeals to patriotism.

However, the most poignant casualties within this intricate web of power dynamics are the soldiers. These soldiers are those who stand on the frontlines as pawns. Homer's *Odyssey* depicts this very struggle."Yes, I myself, home again in my own country in the twentieth year after much suffering."(Homer 210) These brave individuals, while ostensibly representing the ideals of their nations, often find themselves at the mercy of decisions made by those in power. Soldiers in war become both witnesses and victims of the greed brought about by power and it fuels their narratives. *For the Union Dead* by Robert Lowell highlights Colonel Shaw's heroic idealism. The common soldiers, driven by a sense of duty and honor, bear the brunt of the consequences. "The war has ruined us for everything.."(Remarque 63) is a line from Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which quite simply shows the plight of the common man during wars. Their lives are the true testament to the complexity of power's influence, as they find their way out of allegiances and the grim realities of the battlefield. But in reality, the actual remains of war are lost, or often simply exist as memorabilia for the slain soldier's family. Power plays a major role in this, by honoring soldiers their duty is given due credit but how far does go in compensating for the loss of life? While those in power continue to gain what they desire, the families of dead soldiers suffer a great loss of both life and love. Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* is a testimony to this quandary.

The two World Wars of the 20th century drew in people from all walks of life, transcending boundaries of occupation and profession. Artists, scientists, and laborers as soldiers were pushed into the chaos of war, and their lives were forever changed. Soldiers experienced the horrors of combat, and civilians endured the hardships of living in difficult economies with rationing and the constant fear of being victims of wartime crimes. Poets and authors, among others, responded to the turmoil by using their creative talents to reflect on the human condition in the face of war. They voiced a variety of feelings, ranging from patriotic zeal to disillusionment and despair.

The voices of the victorious throughout history are always heard. But the accounts of the fallen have been rendered unheard. These works are not frequently read due to the simple negativity in their reality. Randall Jarrell's poem, "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" (1945) reads "When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose"(5). "The Happy Warrior" by Sir Herbert Read is another example of the soldier's truth: "He cannot shriek; Bloody saliva'; Dribbles down his shapeless jacket."(6-8). These verses serve as an example as to why people were aversive towards real war stories. But as the number of war atrocities increased people became more desensitized to this

gore imagery and it became a passage of normalcy. As the grim realities of war became increasingly evident, the perspective of people evolved. The horrors of warfare and the loss it gave led to an evolution in the works to follow, they reflected real-life experiences of war. These accounts and stories tell us about who suffered the wrath of war. John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields" (1915), tells the story of America's involvement in World War I and how it affected both the soldiers and those they left behind. Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* is his experience of military service in the Philippines during World War II, it is a graphically truthful and shattering portrayal of ordinary men in battle. "Dulce et Decorum est" along with "Anthem for Doomed Youth" is the work of Wilfred Owen throwing light on how war takes away innocent lives. Siegfried Sassoon's poetry speaks of similar things, his "Suicide in the Trenches" is one of his famous works highlighting the sad reality of soldiers in the trench warfare prevalent during those times.

The aftermath of war rendered soldiers susceptible to complex traumatic positions like PTSD. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder deals with the repercussions of experiencing or witnessing terrifying events. Rebbeca West's *The Return of the Soldier* grapples with mental trauma and its effects on the family of a soldier returning from WWI. It sheds light on their fraught relationships and the shell-shocked soldier's difficult reintegration into society. There had to be some solution: "The transforming power of these shocking interactions between the human subject and the machinery of modernity compelled early physicians of the modern industrial age to assume that the trauma of the accident must have produced some underlying organic change."(Hemmings 37) And though in the 1920s there was a booming increase in the narratives of those who suffered in war, not everyone's voice was heard. The narratives of those forgotten and lost during warfare remained unheard, but yet in some or the other way gave the people an understanding of the evils of war, and taught them a lesson that had to be eventually learned.

It is human nature to fear death. Hence stories about death, torture, and turmoil become unpleasant to read. It is in these times we see the duality of literature. A story of survival for one can be a horrible nightmare for another. *The World and All That It Holds* by Aleksandar Hemon is a compelling love story for one and the horrific reality of refugee asylum for another. Applying individual minds to literature becomes difficult because humans are prone to use emotions. While reading, we see what we wish to see and interpret it accordingly. Looking at war literature through the lens of the Barthes Codes, we realize that the 5 codes that help shape our understanding of these works can be extensively varied on how they are interpreted. Though not a single mode of evaluating literary works can be seen as a right "Since there exists no single model and only a given set of generalized concepts, what this means is that any critical method can be combined and utilized with any other discourse."(Robinson 61) The way different unspoken narratives are read is dependent on who reads them.

Patriarchal connotations further add fuel to the fire of war narratives. They lead us to realize the injustice harbored. We have heard the glory of men in war, but what about the women? Women take part in every war, but their accomplishments are mostly unacknowledged. The thousands of

war stories told in the aftermath tend to valorize men's contributions as political leaders and soldiers. Peterson argues "War relies on women, but their stories and experiences are too often simplified as a supporting role for men"(1). Septimus Warren Smith in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is a testimony to this. In her works, she seems to ask one simple question, Where are the women while remembering the war? During the war, women saw hell, from arbitrary killings, torture, sexual violence, and forced marriage. Simone de Beauvoir's *Wartime Diary* talks about this power play again because what is remembered is dictated by those in power. During wartime, it was the men who had this power. Woolf's and Beauvoir's work testifies to the extent to which war permeates consciousness and memory.

War has had a blood-tainted imprint on our memories yet despite that, we strive to retrace its memory by reminiscing on the memories of others in the form of narratives. They have coalesced, beyond literary history and cultural memory, into a recognizable structure of feeling. As history unfolds, the challenge remains to navigate the complex interplay of power and morality. In the greed for power, we forget to look back on what is lost. The uncharted narratives of these losses become a basis for reflection. The dilemma of moral conflict will forever be a menace to society, but only through a collective understanding of one another, in pursuit of peace can humans harmoniously coexist.

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The Representation of Nature: Two Divergent Narratives

Ramprasad Mahurkar

Environmentalism and romanticism are at a critical juncture today. The portrayal of the two requires a deep understanding of their respective compositions. This paper intends to analyse Shubhangi Swarup's Latitudes of Longing *and Siddharth Shrikanth's* The Case for Nature *to contrast their respective stances on environmental protection.* Latitudes of Longing *consists of four stories of individuals turning away from society to reconnect with nature, while* The Case for Nature *asserts that individuals can embrace modernity and nature without having to renounce the world. The paper explores this narrative rift through an ecocritical lens.*

To begin with, how has the 'ecological' been represented in literature throughout the ages? The human-nature relationship has been shaped by various forces throughout the ages. The Industrial Revolution, a pivotal moment, shifted the focus to economic elements. This is evident in early 19th-century realist novels like *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist*, where Dickens questions the capitalism resulting from from the Revolution. *Oliver Twist*, for example,highlights Oliver's exploitation and poor working conditions, emphasising the priority given to efficiency and money. As a consequence, the relevance of the question of nature increases.

Amidst a burgeoning capitalist society, romanticism as a new literary trend was popular. Wordsworth, a nature-loving Romantic, critiqued the Industrial Revolution in his writings, depicting humans and nature as mutually symbiotic. He was instrumental in creating an environmentalist vision among the Victorians. As Guha writes, 'The writings of Wordsworth, Ruskin, Morris and Carpenter helped inspire the establishment of an array of environmental societies in the late nineteenth century' (Guha 23). Besides, as another commentator says, 'Wordsworth's rejection of the modern world stemmed from the bourgeoisie's rise and political control, leading him to emphasise a deeper connection with nature and reject political participation' (Sun 1).

This translates into a more balanced narrative when looked at in present-day discourse. Siddharth Shrikanth's narrative of nature easily mixes into capitalist endeavours. His work, *The Case for Nature*, presents a lesser-heard narrative: 'achieving environmental conservation and economic development simultaneously is possible' (Sayed).

Meanwhile, in Swarup's fiction, romanticism sometimes objectifies nature with an innovative approach. Her work *Latitudes of Longing* is a novel comprising four stories set in diverse island-like ecosystems. Latitudes of longing follows the footpaths of the commonised, anti-development, pro-frugal narratives of Wordsworth and Thoreau. Moreover, on further consideration, the ideology of Swarup becomes more like that of Wordsworth, and that narrative has become common today. There is, however, one rare motif in the novel which seems to subvert this idea. It provides a reasoning about how today's capitalism and environmental action intersect, last seen with the supposed extinction of romanticism. Several intersections may be mentioned where Swarup's approach fails to relate to Shrikanth's perspective. One can view the difference in comparison between their works.

For instance, Swarup writes about the rift between a scientist and his commoner wife, 'She's wide awake, distraught because of the accusatory cries emanating from the other side….. "Can you hear it?" she asks…. "There is no goat roaming in our house," he replies in exasperation (Swarup 1-2) One sees the anger in Dr Girija when his wife, Chanda Devi has a genuine sixth sense. This suggests a disapproval of elements of supernaturalism.

On the other hand, Shrikanth does away with any such romanticization : he indulges only in the the merest of descriptions: 'Thickets of trees were woven into a tapestry of grasslands and glassy shades dotted with wildflowers, abuzz with bees' (Shrikanth 83). Clearly, the language gives off an atmospheric, romanticised hue.

There are many interactive elements in Swarup's works, though, which deserve mention.

Firstly, Swarup's fiction talks at length about the relationship between humans and nature in a descriptive way through four settings. It begins with the newly independent Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Two themes emerge in this story. The dynamics between Dr Girija and his wife are extensively dictated by patriarchy. Swarup's words, 'Most evening conversations among the tea drinkers in Allahabad involved farfetched connections linking them to the illustrious bachelor' (Swarup 4), seem to highlight the industrious attitude and Oxbridge qualifications of the scientist at first glance, as in 'When Dr Girija went to Oxford' (Swarup 3).

There is another yet striking theme of the debilitating position of wildlife sciences. Dr Girija Prasad is, in fact, a marine biologist who was transferred to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as part of the newly established forest service in India. Here, the entire set-up is not the agency of Indians but of the British legacy passed on to India. Swarup states, '...he was tasked with setting up the National Forestry Service in the first year of independence, 1948' (Swarup 4). Here Swarup shows the responsibility and status which Dr Girija owns.

To stay while doing his job, his bungalow is old and dusty, signifying poor upkeep and highlighting the scientists' dusty and ignored status. This conflict arises when readers are curious about learning about the local ecology, but there is merely a generalisation of it with factual description, like

enumerating the species "Andaman padauk" or "ascetic crocodile" (Swarup 2-3).

The islands' unique ecosystem is underplayed by describing the wind, and melodious ocean waves, when Swarup writes, 'Silence on a tropical island is the relentless sound of water, The waves like the sound of your breath, never leave you' (Swarup 1). Further Swarup's tone grows uncertain when Dr Girija stares at a tsunami, 'he stares at the tsunami and sports an erection' (Swarup 76), which suggests a relapse into romanticising the Natural.

An attempt to review the human connection with nature mostly exists through skirmishes or fancy research. However, the author faces difficulty in representing nature objectively. Often, there are many allusions to the diversity of life in Andaman. 'Amidst the corals, Girija Prasad turns around to identify the cause of the approaching ripples' (Swarup 35) However, most of the story is loosely based on the mundane challenge of human relations. It is only in the fag end that the tsunami is referred to as sacred, and it confuses the reader's imagination to wonder about the immense power cushioned in nature or feel belittled by Dr. Girija.

Moreover, the extravagant language deviates from the viewpoint of scientists engaging with their environs. This aim is ignored when the native tribes - The Karen,- are described as drunkards, in 'In that time four drunken Karen youth' (Swarup 17), which suggests Othering. Secondly, there is less emphasis on the endemic flora and fauna of the region, like the *Andaman Mormon* (butterfly variety) and *Andaman hornbill* (bird). Instead, they end up as 'beautiful butterflies' (Swarup 5) in the story. The reader expects the narrative to be about a lively interaction with nature. If a nature enthusiast expects this, there is a great paucity of interaction with nature and wildlife in Swarup's fiction.

Meanwhile, the narrative here categorises the interaction with nature as a dead-end to curiosity. For example, "journal" represents not a journal but a staid old book that alienates a person from others and, ultimately, nature. One moment addresses this when, 'He finds all the pages of the journal, bark-like in texture' (Swarup 18) The character of Dr Girija appears to share the practice of Thoreau's journal-making. The primary difference between them: that Dr Girija keeps a diary for scientific observations, while Thoreau keeps it for philosophical musings.

Dr Girija does not attempt to celebrate his knowledge. This is the first point where the ultimate combination of knowledge, curiosity, and reverence towards nature diverges from the promised narrative, 'On this knotted thread of islands, Girija Prasad hoped to live the life he dreamt of: a life of solitude' (Swarup 5) His choice of living alone is mocked at, by him not comprehending 'the allure of a virgin forest' (Swarup 5) . Here Dr Girija's standing is unreasonably questioned just because he does not believe in ghosts.

Apart from distancing itself from active knowledge-seeking and curiosity, the narrative becomes an unclear broth of ecstasy and obliterates the proper interaction with nature. Overall, the first story proposes that if people become close to nature in a scientific manner, they are deemed outcasts. If they believe in supernatural occurrences they help in critiquing scientists, as seen in 'Chanda Devi, the clairvoyant one' (Swarup 2).

When contextualising this with Shrikanth's narrative, Swarup's hypothesis does not hold water. Shrikanth emphasises the contribution of community knowledge and its results to connect the blocks of nature and the economy. He highlights the indigenous contribution to a harmonic interaction with nature. In his narrative, he emphasises 'pūkeko' and 'ferns blanketing the forest floor' (Shrikanth 231) It tells one about the ignored part of a forest, and it creates a curiosity to engage with the biodiversity on Tiritiri Matangi island. Further, one comes to terms with the lost indigenous narrative when using the technique of romanticism. Still, around 80 percent of still-intact ecosystems are, in fact, indigenous lands.

Today, extensive European colonialism has impacted ecosystems greatly, leading to an unnatural alteration in their very source. In comparison to the unsettling description of the Karen, the Māori example explains the difference. It is understood that the Māoris were written about the most in comparison to the Karen who rarely featured in literature. In New Zealand the British altered the ecosystem protection used by the Māoris.

Though this highly relies on facts, the record of the 1861 agreement between the Māori's and colonisers (Quentin-Baxter & McLean) throws light on creating sanctuaries. Further, Shrikanth uses a conservation approach to the situation by exploring the significance of the endemic birds - takahē, hihi, and pūkeko (Shrikanth 231-233). On decoding the uncharted narrative, it becomes evident that Swarup has no sensitivity towards understanding the indigenous 'Other' or even towards nature conservation in the story of Dr Girija Prasad.

In this part, it is understood from a bird's eye perspective that the conservation aspect of the situation is more successful in strengthening the connection with Nature than Swarup's fanatical, romanticised escapades of Dr Girija, which throws no light on understanding the vulnerable indigenous population, going on to conservation in a simple manner ("The Andaman Tribes - Victims of Development") The mere reference to, 'Through his binoculars, he saw a group of naked tribals'(Swarup 15) indicates how the indigenous are consigned to the 'naked' tag.

Shrikanth's perspective challenges Swarup's narrative in *Latitudes of Longing*, particularly in the section "Faultline," which is set in an earthquake-prone zone near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Swarup's portrayal of the protagonist, a jailed activist named Plato, as a symbol of the bond with nature is contradicted by Shrikanth. Plato's arrest lacks context, and Swarup's narrative drifts into an idyllic state of depression and a flirtation with nature to avoid suicide. Plato's connection to nature, as imagined by Rosy from the islands, is presented, and Swarup attempts to establish nature and politics as antagonists (Swarup 77).

However, Shrikanth counters this by emphasising the economic investment in nature as a fundamental political element. According to Siddharth, nature is crucial in today's politics due to the capital it can generate. Swarup's belief in divorcing costs and ecosystem services is debunked, as authorities consider economic benefits when deciding to utilise the land. The market, in Shrikanth's view, values nature based on economic considerations, disregarding emotional attachments. Shrikanth highlights the economic importance of ecotourism. Shrikanth argues that forests, like the Amazon, are a significant source of revenue, estimating ecosystem services' value at $178 trillion (Shrikanth 56).

This economic perspective challenges the romanticised view of the bond with nature. The narrative concludes with an emphasis on the metaphorical and economic value of conservation efforts, ranging from billions of dollars. Shrikanth's Blue Forest model, considering all stakeholders' opinions, supports the flourishing community narrative of conservation and bonding with nature, (Shrikanth 55-58).

One realises that Swarup's narrative may be rich in building an emotional connection with nature, but the approach fails on an ecological front. *Latitudes of Longing* is an emotional voyage which fails due to its excessive romantic colorisation. Conservation, indigenous knowledge, and economic consideration take a backseat in this narrative. Shrikanth's, on the other hand, is balanced and nuanced in the bond with nature, emphasising the importance of cost, effort, and money.

On one hand, Swarup endeavours to bring the déclassés into the main narrative. The intertwining of the romantic life and thought process of an Indian scientist educated in England seems to mark a deeper understanding of the relationship between humans and nature. Further, his wife, Chanda Devi, testified to equal consideration when vocal about highlighting the importance of environmental awareness's boring nature. There are myriad ways of promoting nature, but Swarup falls short by stagnating at this level. Her imaginative appetite does not extend beyond this point; in a way, this romanticisation is an uncharted approach, but at the same time, though she features outcasts as protagonists (like Plato and Dr. Girija) she fails to provide them agency.

On the other hand, Srikanth's narrative can easily lay claim to being an uncharted one. Its merits are the rebellion towards a contemporary understanding of nature and ourselves. Firstly, Swarup, in the lightest of manners, proves that politics and nature are opposed. Here, the political component is modern-day capitalism, destroying major ecosystems and natural habitats. In this, he highlights the potential of the wealth of nature worth a trillion dollars and the integration of indigenous life into creating nature awareness and pushing conservation.

Meanwhile, Swarup does not strive to bring about the change. The demerit of Siddharth's approach is the technicality and focus on numbers, better presented through a story. Shrikanth brings about a change in presenting the indigenous, seen as a classless identity in Dr. Girija's story. Shrikanth strives to break the norm of treating the indigenous as the other in fanatical, skirmish-filled longings in the Islands. Lastly, Shrikanth concludes that the case for nature (conservation) is quite possible with a detailed explanation of his evidence. Clearly, then, Shrikanth's is a uniquely innovative narrative.

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