JABBERWOCK

JABBERWOCK
2018

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
LADY SHRI RAM COLLEGE FOR WOMEN
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

ABOUT

Jabberwock is the print journal of the Department of English, Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi. This year's journal has been put together by our editorial team:

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EDITORIAL

As we sit in college writing this, authors whose research we are publishing this year reassuringly shout, 'The edits are fine!' at us as they pass by. This has been a year of constant dialogue (not all shouted out), with our authors, editors, design team, and with each other. It is an exciting time of the year for us at *Jabberwock*—our print journal is to be published soon, and we're in a flurry of exchanges that prompt both reflection and activity. We've both been a part of *Jabberwock* for three years and have had to do a lot of things that seemed difficult—memorize multiple versions of the MLA format, proofread papers five times over, and try to understand concepts very new to us. Writing this editorial for *Jabberwock* 2018, is perhaps the most difficult of them all—and that says something about this journal, and what it comes to mean to the people who work for it. So now we're learning to let go, to resist the urge to proofread one last time, and to simply watch as the printer inscribes one more year of writing and editing into the (as of yet, short) history of *Jabberwock*.

The idea of an independent journal means a lot to us. There is something intrinsically enabling about a journal that gives one the space to make it one's own. For us, *Jabberwock* has been this space—a space where we can write without constraints, but equally, a space that insists on interrogating the ideas and contexts that have brought us to the things we write about. As the academic journal of the Department of English, *Jabberwock* is not just a print publication—it is also a place where research can be learnt and generated, and this is the approach we've tried to work with. This year, we have a collection of papers that includes an analysis of the gendered spaces of fanfiction, a comparison of *Breaking Bad* and *Paradise Lost*, and an exploration of the violence preceding the Partition. This journal also contains research on *Doraemon*, hot chocolate in eighteen-century England, and fairy tales. If this sounds like an unlikely set of research subjects, then hopefully, the reader will find the selection to be reflective of a genuine belief: that anything can be a subject for academic research.

This year, we have a theme section within our journal—research writing, opinion pieces, and poetry on the theme of Silence. The introduction of a theme-based section was an attempt to facilitate the production of ideas and research. This section also has, for the first time, non-academic writing, as we wanted the journal to be as diverse and interesting as possible. Ideas of silence pervade our culture. Words falter and retreat in moments when language fails us, and we resort to gesture. Some of the writings in our theme section seek to explore the implications of some of these silences, looking at what silence enables through its movement beyond language. One of our authors offers an analysis of *Pingu*, its 'nonsense' language, and its silent action. We also have a poem that explores the nuances of silence as we meet it at home.

Conversely, we seek to question the imposition of silence: why are certain voices negated, or disallowed the means to articulate themselves? The writing within the theme section point to lacunae within our cultural imagination—the lack of a vocabulary for lesbian experiences within the context of India, the powerful resistance offered through life-narratives. One of our opinion pieces offers insight into the world of *Persepolis*, questioning conventional historiography; the other destabilises the category of silence in itself, by highlighting how the correlative of silence versus speech excludes the experiences of the deaf community.

Vanessa Guignery wrote that acts of reading and writing are typically both conducted in silence—our modern culture, premised on the idea of literacy and saturated with texts and images, often plays out in this silence. For our readers, the act of reading this journal will be one that is carried out in silence, and we wonder if this silence is reminiscent of other forms of silences that they might encounter through their lives—silences in homes, in writing, in their own thoughts, and in classrooms.

Putting this journal together would have been impossible without the enthusiasm and dedication of our team of sub-editors and assistant editors. We've learnt a lot from working with you, and creating this journal would not have been possible without you. We want to thank Chetanya, our talented Design Editor, and the entire design team, for giving a coherent shape to

our words, and for interpreting Silence through a beautiful cover design and through multiple posters. We would also like to thank the Union of the Department of English, whose collaborations and support were invaluable to us.

This journal owes much to our Staff Advisor, Dr. Madhu Grover, for both her inputs to our ideas and her interactions with our team; she has been very receptive to being assailed by ill-timed calls and requests for venue sanctions. Mr. Jonathan Koshy Varghese has been equally generous with his time and encouragement, engaging with contributors at our paper presentation, and providing feedback whenever we've required it. We would also like to thank Ms. Karuna Rajeev, who addressed the student body on the tricky subject of academic writing conventions and the MLA format. We're extremely grateful for the constant support of Ms. Dipti Nath, Teacher-in-Charge of the Department of English, and the faculty of the Department as a whole. We could not have done without our discussions with Mr. Ravindra Karnena, who helped us formulate our vision for this journal. We would like to extend our thanks to Dr. Suman Sharma and the college administration for their help. Finally, this journal would not be what it is without the contributions of our authors, and we are indebted to them. *Jabberwock* 2018 is a tribute to the student body—our readers, writers; the reason why *Jabberwock* exists.

Jabberwock derives its name from the fantastic beast in Lewis Carroll's adventurous story. Fittingly enough, for us, being the editors of this journal has been a make-your-own-adventure. Through this journal, we hope that you as a reader experience this very freedom, and the way we've put these pages together tells a story of its own.

Anushmita and Sanna,

Editors-in-Chief,

April 2018

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General Section

Theme Section (Silence)

*These works were originally presented at *Sound Proof*, a paper presentation organised by *Jabberwock*.

Pinjar(a): Redefining the Self in Amrita Pritam's Skeleton-Cage

Tript Kaur

Following the cinematic adaptation of Amrita Pritam's Punjabi novel *Pinjar*, the text, originally written in 1950, became seminal to narratives of Partition violence. Yet, in this paper, the author argues that the Partition itself is merely a short textual portion of a larger project—Pritam's demonstration of violence against the female body. The author of this paper analyzes the violence of gendered inhabitation through depictions and intersections of motherhood, folk tradition, abduction, marriage, communal violence, masculinity, and caste in the original Punjabi text. The author argues that by offering a social representation of the novel's protagonist, Pooro that shares an uneasy co-existence with personal selfhood, the linguistic and corporeal template of the text are fashioned as zones of patriarchal rebellion. Through these analyses, the author challenges readings that posit gendered violence as a mere out-group phenomenon in the context of conflict.

O Mother of mine, clasp me to your bosom
And answer just one question
Tell me not a long tale.
Tell me why you bore me
If tonight we have to part?
I have got out my spinning-wheel,
I have my wads of cotton,
I'll spin sheets with square patterns
To sons are given homes and palaces;
Daughters are exiled to foreign lands.
(Pritam 132-136)

In *Pinjar*[1], Amrita Pritam examines the alienation of the woman's body from its constituent parts, such that Pooro, the protagonist, is reduced to a feminine object meant for the satisfaction of male desire. Sharing experiences with similarly exploited women helps Pooro evolve into a person capable of uncompromising conscious choices. Pritam follows a strange method of mathematical elimination in her fragmented[2] novel to drive home an alternative discourse that Ayesha Jalal also echoes, "All said and done, the commonality of masculinity was stronger than the bond of religion. . . Alas, Punjab had betrayed its patriarchal bent more decisively than the affective affinities of religious community" (2190).

The folk song murmured by Pooro's mother on her imminent departure after marriage absorbs and reflects the violent separation of the woman from her natal home; it is a patriarchal given, a patrilocal necessity. This lament is not merely an expression of sorrow, for that would be the superficial intent, but it also acts as an assurance of women's status as perpetual diaspora, a people always in search of home. Gita Viswananth and Salma Malik explain that the lost self is remembered through "folklore, legend and popular memory" because the "mnemonic device" of history forgets significant human details with a vengeance shrouded by official versions (62). Pooro's mother's song creates a contiguous bond with all the layers of the novel, by expressing the division wrecked onto most women characters in multiple forms, be it abduction, marital rape, corporal violence, or annihilation of bodily autonomy. This bond imprisons the female self in a skeleton-cage of patriarchal making, but Pritam's treatment of the prison-house implies that women can grasp the key if explicit or implicit resistance is taken recourse to.

The folk song quoted above is a feminised narrative, typically told and retold in

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[1] *Pinjar*, Amrita Pritam, 1950 is the Punjabi original used for this paper. Criticism comparing the English translation by Khushwant Singh—*The Skeleton and Other Stories* (2009 Reprint), is a major founding principle of this paper, because many allusions unique to the Punjabi text seem to have been lost in translation in the English one. Nevertheless, Singh's work is essential by virtue of its accessibility, and it has been quoted from extensively, here.

[2] "'Fragment' then, in this context, signifies official history as a 'broken piece' masquerading as the indisputable and incontestable whole story. It also poignantly points to the 'broken peace', which returns to rupture and challenge orthodox historiography's claim to unified, totalizing narratives." Jisha Menon, "Rehearsing the Partition: Gendered Violence in *Aur Kitne Tukde*"

the domestic space to socialise young girls into the acceptance of rejection, by teaching them that living in their natal homes is temporary. Rosemary George notes that the transfer to the 'marital' home through abduction was simply accepted as "an intensification of the usual patriarchal discourse about women as property"[3] ("Pinjar"). As a result of centuries of socialisation of women into believing and becoming the discourse of loss and lament, women's personal experiences during the Partition reflect some distinctive observations. The oral histories of Partition witnesses and social workers as well as fictitious narratives stand at the opposite end of the chasm in 'authorized' understanding, because they are founded on trauma. "Travel, displacement, the trauma of bedahi, and homesickness are all scripted into a commonplace understanding of a woman's normal life cycle and ironically provide a means of narrating and adjusting to Partition's particular forms of violent separation," George observes (150). The bedahi song remains in the grip of structural violence which escapes the confines of order to become uncontrollable chaos and pillage in 1947. Pritam's *Pinjar* contributes a new nuance to the common conception of violence by making it an intrinsic feature of the community or 'self', not just a weapon of force employed against the 'other'. She explains that violence wasn't unique to the Partition—it was an everyday reality, a fact made clear by how the violence Pooro experienced was Pre-Partition violence. Gyanendra Pandey studies the tenuous nature of typical definitions of violence:

> One might suggest indeed that violence and community are constitutive of each other. Violence marks the limits of the community, that is to say, violence can occur only at or beyond that limit. By the same token, what occurs within the boundaries of the community is, by definition, not violence. (2037)

Thus, violence against women by their own community is not labelled as violence, a fallacy Pritam exposes. Before venturing into analysis of the themes building Pooro's selfhood, that is, motherhood, agency, madness, 'othering', the body politic and aggression; it must always be remembered that her sense of self is developed after her abduction.

Of Motherhood and Madness: "If only she could take the worm out of her womb and fling it away!" (Pritam 46)

Pritam overturns the traditional formulation of motherhood by replacing care-giving, instinctive maternal love and blissful pregnancy, with apprehension, disgust, and rejection of childbirth. This redefinition of generalised gender roles draws from Rashid's abduction of Pooro and her parents' dismissal of their 'tainted' daughter, because that disables her from becoming the traditional mother figure that she has been socialised into. The person responsible for socialising her into this traditional maternal role unravels the threads of a conventional *bedahi* by rejecting her, and tinges of this final betrayal also colour her disgust for her 'unwanted' child. In fact, the novel opens with Pooro's direct equation of a worm found while shelling peas with the worm festering in her womb, Rashid's child. The powerful imagery of a parasite devouring her body from within develops her desperation as an organic state because her exploited, slowly deteriorating self, rues the lack of choice: "She felt as if her body was a peapod inside which she carried a slimy, white caterpillar" (Pritam 45). Her body, thus, becomes a fertile site for patriarchy to successfully manifest, detaching all illusions of self-efficacy from her and arousing revulsion at her pawn-like status. The woman is dehumanised into a skeleton, a vessel-frame bearing children.

Motherhood, as a state Pooro is coerced into, further alienates her bodily autonomy from her sense of self. Since the physical site of her body is removed from her control, only her fermenting thoughts and rebellious silence constitute her subjectivity. The 'purity', 'chastity' and 'honour' enabling the preservation of the community are treated with immense disdain by Pooro (and implicitly by Pritam) because they are devoid of absolute consent. The significance of consent being completely and unmistakably given is stressed

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[3] "The anguished adjustment of survivors of abduction was thus an extreme magnification of the pain that women in traditional households routinely endure in the aftermath of 'normal' marriage—their own personal and wrenching 'partition' from the world of their birth, and their absorption into a new, challenging, and sometimes hostile environment." Rosemary George, "Pinjar", Film Review, University of Iowa. uiowa.edu/indiancinema/pinjar

here because after the abduction, Rashid does not sexually assault her. It is only after she returns dejected from her ancestral home and marries him because there is no other alternative[4], that she performs the role of the 'good wife'. However, by introducing us to the character of Taro who is accorded the authority to use dominant linguistic registers[5] for exposing the hypocrisy of marriage, she succinctly explains it as prostitution. Taro is wrecked by sickness; her furious wails escape in sporadic spurts as if she is reclaiming control over her own being almost desperately, before passing away. She criticizes the impression of women as 'base' creatures, existing like animals and displaces this formulation by situating 'God' as the ultimate patriarch, and engaging in an intellectually stimulating discussion with Pooro. Her disease, which can be read as a metonym for 'prostituting' her body to her husband for scraps[6], and her mother's frantic consolation, fuse to become a mechanism of consistent silencing and interruption trying to rupture her arguments. But her strident voice stands true, "'Only my lips are sealed and my feet put in fetters,' exploded Taro. 'There is no justice in the world; nor any God. He can do what he likes; there is no God to stop him. God's fetters were meant only for my feet.'" (Pritam 449).

Taro's marriage is not balanced on any unstable foundation from the viewpoint of socially accepted norms, that is, her husband is chosen from the same community and has an appropriate social and religious background. Her relationship with him is perfectly normative, just like Pooro's dream about an alternative reality as Ram Chand's wife after Rashid marries her. However, despite the social stamp of approval, she perceives her body as a commodity of exchange much like the dishonourable and sexually engaged unmarried women (understood as 'whores') juxtaposed against 'honourable' married women. By attaching shame to the institution of marriage, she scrutinises religion to judge God's compliance with her suffering. This disturbs Pooro greatly, forcing her to explore the possibilities of her imagined utopian existence. Would her proposed marriage with

Ram Chand have been any different from her marriage with Rashid? Was she taught to concede to her family's decisions about her life to such an extent that marrying Ram Chand would have been an erosion of her consent as well? A simplistic logic clarifying this ambiguity would be that the rejection of the woman's selfhood automatically denies her agency, moulding her into a body to be used and abused. Then, how can she accept or refuse, agree or disagree, feel or believe? Upon realizing that she could never have exercised true choice or consent, Pooro descends into meditative silence, and recedes into herself.

With Jhalli, the naked madwoman, Pritam is at her most incisive, her bitterest. Jhalli is a normal fixture in their rural society; a skeleton meant to be ignored or sexually abused by the menfolk, pitied or dismissed by the women, and tormented like a plaything by the children. By allowing Pooro, the sane, respectable Muslim wife to empathise with her and classify her madness as socially constructed, Pritam calls the classic myth of unity and cohesion of pre-Partition society a mad belief. Described as a supple vision of beauty, Jhalli's infant emerges from a swarthy unconventional skeleton. It is insinuated that the baby is a result of sexual assault—it is difficult to determine the same as consensual sex or rape because of inadequate textual clues. The baby is a symbol of exploitation, but Pooro feels her blood flowing through its veins and voluntarily embraces motherhood while nurturing it as posited against her earlier refusal to care for her 'parasitic' biological son, Javed. She imagines herself as its mother and becomes a surrogate for the excluded 'mad woman'. Drawing from Saadat Hassan Manto's treatment of the madness motif in his short stories, Jhalli's madness can be read as collective madness, a metonym of the horrors inflicted on the female body and a premonition of the Partition's bloodshed. Stephen Alter's explanation of Manto's usage of madness as an expression of the "dislocation of the self", a "sense of separation", "distorted loyalties" and "mass schizophrenia", can be read into Jhalli's characterisation (Alter 97). She becomes a lens for viewing the "fractured interface of

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[4] Pooro is a 'tainted woman' unwelcome at her natal home and conveniently 'misplaced' by her religious community. Thus, as per social diktat, she is 'dead' to her family, and the only family she now has access to is the family of her abductor.
[5] She employs 'masculine aggression' while shouting against her oppressive husband, much to the shock of her shaken mother.
[6] She can satisfy her basic needs for survival—food, clothing and shelter, only when her body is able to satisfy her husband's appetite as part of their sexual transaction.

symbolism and psychology in a strangely distorted world", while her child's relationship with Pooro reveals madness as a relative and inherently ambiguous concept. Nonica Datta also notes that Pritam describes the "trauma of rape through the metaphor of the mother's womb" (Datta "An Alternative Voice of History"), which in Jhalli's supposedly 'undesirable' body gets violently torn apart until the body (and the body politic of the new-born nation-states) can no longer survive. Can we read Jhalli as representing the 'disorientation and bewilderment' of the common woman, who is a permanent refugee in all patriarchal domains because she is unable to grasp any sense of belonging? The folk song Pooro's mother tearfully hums is merely one signifier of the notion of women as '*paraya dhan*' or estranged possessions temporarily kept by the parents. Jhalli's episode recognizes this to be a chain of signifiers extending to unfathomable levels during Partition violence, as if her irregular stumbling run across village streets travels to other villages, towns, and cities until the collective madness grips everyone. This collective madness rests in the communal unconscious, and is awoken into contemporary reality by efforts at story-telling or 'memorialization', a classification that *Pinjar* also falls into.

Of Selfs and Others: "It was a double life. Hamida by day, Pooro by night. In reality she was neither one nor the other; she was just a skeleton without a shape or a name." (Pritam 256)

The novel delves into Pooro's evolution by employing sensuous and physical imagery, as is evident in every epiphany being revealed through violent effects on the women's bodies. It appears that the systematic erosion of her senses, meant to symbolize the severing of connections with herself, are substituted by external threads drawing and subsuming women of various types into an abstract design of female suffering named 'Pooro'. Pooro is not an exception to the rule, she is the rule. What Pooro loses by virtue of being tossed like a ragdoll to fulfil the wishes of those around her, she gains in affirming this collective self by assuming agency. It may also be argued that Pooro behaves as a 'self-sacrificial' model of obedient and woeful femininity, but she

decides who she wants to sacrifice for and in what way. Her sacrifices are choices, consciously exerted, and dictated by her own sensibilities. On the contrary, she succumbs to the structures she eventually comes to criticize and doesn't outwardly rebel or attempt to resist. Her attitude is one of apathetic compromise, but this transmutes into the desire to create a family of her own by adopting Jhalli's child. This irregular evolution encapsulates the destruction of the mythical idyll of the traditional family system. The home of her childhood and adolescence rebuffs her by pointing to the changeable nature of the woman's religion; her faith is determined by others on the basis of skewed ideas of revenge and honour. Once the invisible strings of family bonds are cut by her beloved parents, Pooro inevitably feels rootless. Pritam etches her desire to find a socio-emotional anchor in the form of a painful sequence in which Pooro attempts suicide, as this breakdown of certitudes makes her indifferent towards her own being. Her methodical dissolution begins with the statement, "Now she was the cage of a skeleton, who had no face, no shape, no mind, and no will" (Pritam 29).

Perhaps the most powerful means of charting the course of this wearing away of the self can be read in the literary devices Pritam skilfully uses. Surjit Singh Dulai's insight into her poetry helps one realize similarities in her prose. He comments:

> Amrita again tends to confine herself to the experience of an average individual, particularly the average woman's experience. The daily round of activities from cooking, spinning and embroidering to the workings of the mind and heart provides her with the bulk of her imagery… Even when Amrita uses some universal phenomena and objects, and she does so almost all the time, as the vehicles of her poetry, these objects and phenomena are seen from a characteristically Punjabi point of view. The references to the Sun, Moon, Earth and the stars and to the changes in season appear in her poetry as part of the Punjabi perspective on life.
> (Dulai 70)

However, Pritam's skill of overturning regular rustic imagery into trenchant critique is what metamorphoses the discourse of 'ideal Punjabi womanhood' into a structure of

domination and cruelty. Pooro's fingers lose feeling in some scenes; she looks with unseeing eyes in others. Lost to her reality with Rashid, she dwells in the inner recesses of her being where her dreams, hopes and passions remain unsullied by the horrors of the world. Pritam describes Pooro's behaviour in the household as a series of efficient acts squeezing purpose out of every tool she touches, due to which work exists as a distraction by numbing[7] her senses with monotony. This removal from daily reality serves to alienate her from her own body, her relationships with others, and the work she is producing, converting her into a sum of disconnected units. Her machine-like movements negotiate with escapism and inversion of normative chores, such that the lack of emotion displayed by her limbs wrecks Rashid into guilt and repentance. This can be read as a turning point in the tale of her self-realization because the eschewal of agency forced on her by social hypocrisy is transformed into a unique struggle—it appears that her body unconsciously drifts away from any overt physical or emotional sustenance, and her meditative 'rectitude' drives Rashid into feverish penitence. Pritam inverts the tool of silencing the woman to a weapon fashioned from self-inflicted violence on the body, enabling Pooro to critique hierarchical morality with quiet disgust; Pooro silences Rashid through her own deliberate silence. Inwardly, she focuses her turbulent thoughts to reveal a source of empathy, and begins enacting that by associating with the 'other' women to resist structures of oppression.

Body as political artefact: "Brother, will nothing clear your mind of suspicion? Look, my name is Hamida," she said, drawing back the sleeve of her left arm and showing the tattooed letters." (Pritam 1041)

The deterioration of her physical subjectivity does not stop here. She thinks of herself as Pooro, but has Hamida, an alien identity tattooed on her skin. This communal identity becomes a source of more confusion after she accepts motherhood by adjusting in her new 'family'. Pritam reinforces meanings

directly and explicitly, they are rarely implied. All plot-lines are clearly dictated by emphasizing primary ideas through immediate experience. This is best seen in terms of Pooro's body being explored as a text, with her skin literally existing as parchment. Applying Roland Barthes' seminal essay "From Work to Text" to this idea, one realizes how her body, the 'fragment of a substance', eventually becomes a 'methodological field' cutting across fields of analysis, integrally and radically symbolic, pluralistic and executed for the pleasure of consumption. The multiple coexisting narratives of the women of *Pinjar* decentre femininity, making all of them dynamic texts in production and circulation. Hence, the Partition episode exemplifies gruesome manifestations of female bodies exploited as works, by creating a text of commonality with various centres. In this sense, the title is eponymous because the story revolves around Pooro and the women she encounters, all of whom are reduced to 'skeletons'. The skeleton image also encompasses layers of narrativity by posturing as a cage clinching the ribs of objectified flesh, balancing the cranium of suppressive silencing, and selling the pelvic girdle of metaphorical fertile wombs standing in for male property. In "Me", Pritam asserts, "My birth without 'me'/ was a blemished offering on the collection plate. / A moment of flesh, imprisoned in flesh" (Pritam *Poetry* 195). She paints Pooro in an identical image to force her out of the "collection plate" and redefine her "imprisonment in flesh" (195) to transform the meaning of her pinjar into a source of self-awakening.

Can the woman be given the label of or constructed as the 'other' when her self is so powerfully denied? Can the 'other' exist without the 'self'? Pooro's relationships with women of different social, economic, religious, and intellectual status, strangely absolve other identity differentiations to rest on the ultimate thread linking their existence—shared suffering and female solidarity. Yet, this female solidarity is applied onto the text because it is difficult to accept it as a 'pre-existing' or 'natural' state primarily while studying Pooro's relationship with the old

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[7] "The extraordinariness of this experience is narrated through the use of quotidian metaphors that reveal the inassimilability of this traumatic experience within her existing analytical categories." (Menon "Somatic Texts and the Gender of Partition")

woman, the mother of Lajjo's abductor. Pooro uses her gendered identity by skilfully employing female discourse to form an association of trust with her. This trust is claimed through rumour-mongering and implicit sympathetic acceptance of the old woman's words, at least at face value. By performing the role of the *khes*-seller, she purposefully places herself at the old woman's feet to stress on their unequal power dynamic. She engages her in commercial relations, unconsciously mirroring the female commodity, Lajjo, she wants to exchange in return for her conversation. Pooro veers from commodity exchange to a personal connection with the old woman by systematically manipulating her into reliance. She carefully plans Lajjo's escape by engaging the mother of her abductor in skilled conversation. The *khes*-quilt motif is used to weave a patchwork of falsehoods to lure the old woman into Lajjo's plan of escape. Here, Pooro performs the reversed gender role—the rescuer figure who empathises with women against injustice, as opposed to the 'othered' old woman who dotes on her rapist-son and condones his action. She draws lines between acceptable and unacceptable visions of womanhood by critiquing the unethical behaviour of the old woman, thus lying strictly on the other side of ethics and morality. This prompts the question, how would have Pooro fared if she was married to Ram Chand? Would she have remained a perpetual victim in that case? Would she have realized the exploitative nature of institutions if she was comfortably settled in one?

Pooro's self is denied throughout the novel, allowing her to see women as fellow 'self-less' creatures she can empathise with, but the self is strongly claimed when structures of exploitation built on female complicity are exposed. The common bond of femininity connecting Pooro to all other women breaks down because of its selective, constructed nature, but, Pritam cleverly tempers this distortion with the old woman's lack of essential harmonious femininity—she exploits another woman. Therefore, gender here, does not include only the female sex, it seems to incorporate the notion of a morally sound, female-centric and female-developed, non-exploitative conscience. She moves freely in the public space of the village while acting as a *khes*-seller, pointing to the fallacy of rigidly defining gendered spaces when she travels from house to house in search of her sister-in-law. This movement between spaces is undeniably fluid, but it carries a definite class connotation—women with well-to-do husbands remained within the domestic space since they didn't need to supplement the household's income (discounting non-valued tasks like collecting firewood or fetching water), while those (like Pooro's assumed role of the *khes*-seller) who needed to engage in indigenous crafts or work on their small landholdings had less strict demarcations of the public and private. The mad woman, Jhalli, occupies a liminal space. It seems like Pritam is painting the landscape as the 'private-political' everywhere Pooro steps.

Of Aggression and Repentance: "If my uncle abducted your aunt, what fault was that of mine?" (Pritam 192)

Immediately after the folksong, Pooro is abducted. Unconscious with shock, she feels gentle hands wiping her brow. While the mother's sorrowful mourning of her daughter's departure is still fresh in the reader's ears, Pooro plaintively calls for 'Amma'. What is ironical here is that the tender care and fussing her body recognizes is coming from her abductor, that appals her further. Pritam displaces Rashid's initial aggression not only with physical and mental self-wrought torture due to which he becomes terribly sick, but also by locating him in the domestic space throughout the novel. He is shown kindling fire for the stove, a task traditionally performed by the women of the family. The sense of Rashid's easy movement between the public and the private sphere is elided over by Pritam's projection of his intimacy with his children and efficiency in handling domestic chores. She also detaches him from a typical understanding of masculinity by forcing culpability onto him in a distinctive reversal of coercion—through Pooro, the story punishes Rashid into accepting and redeeming his complicity in destroying Pooro's life. He is held responsible covertly and overtly and every word acts as an indictment against him, until his trajectory of repentance enables him to save Lajjo and indirectly, himself. Rashid's acceptable, and even 'normal' contribution to the domestic space invests significant meaning in the private arena because all the action is

concentrated in it, be it Pooro's ancestral home, her home after marriage, or Ram Chand's previous home and Lajjo's cell of exploitation. In this way, Pritam makes the private realm, the women's language, and the definitions of their subjectivity far more political than the refugee camp, the train station, the fields, or the *chaupal* of the Hindu leaders. The only incident that inspires tremendous fury and a desire for revenge in Rashid is when upon being branded as a Hindu child, their adopted infant is returned to them by hypocritical religious leaders. So carefully nurtured by Pooro, whose breasts 'magically' begin lactating after prayers (an act of slow repossession of her body), the half-dead baby is left in his arms. A part of his repentance is resolved with Lajjo's rescue, making him an alternate father figure for the abused woman. Rashid eventually recedes into the background, with Pooro's affection for him becoming more emphasized than his own selfhood.

Their roles are finally, almost completely inverted when he remains silent during Pooro's final choice[8]. Instead of Pooro being defined as Rashid's wife, Rashid is defined as Pooro's husband, a man receiving his identity from her. Therefore, Pritam creates a complex figure in Rashid—she does not allow us to perceive him as a demonised Muslim, or a male conqueror, for he is unable to meet 'his woman's' eyes after his so-called conquest. Nevertheless, this does not prevent the reader from condemning his action, because he abducts her not only from her natal home, but from herself. Tarun K. Saint draws *Pinjar* as a parallel productive reworking of Manto's "Thanda Ghosht", where Pooro's "visceral and radical rejection" (Saint 59) navigates through numbing and fury. He says:

> Pooro's reconciliation with Rashida can only happen, though, after reconciliation with her estranged self, after experiencing a form of death in life. Rashida's own acknowledgement of guilt and gradual self-transformation a key stage in the process of working through the residue of trauma, even as Pooro becomes an agent (with Rashida's assistance) in the effort to recover women abducted at a later stage of

history, during the Partition, including her own sister-in-law. (Saint 60)

In an interview with Carlo Coppola, Pritam clarifies Rashid's act and locates it within the framework of the Partition: "There's an antagonism between two groups, one Hindu and one Muslim. A Hindu girl is abducted by a Muslim boy out of revenge, and only revenge - it has nothing to do with religion or politics. Years later, Partition comes and many women are forcibly taken on both sides. But there's a change of values" (Coppola 13).

Rosemary George adds, "Within the rhetoric of the nation and citizenry, the paucity of words with which normative masculine subjects can express these multiple traumas and still continue to occupy the position of the patriarchal masculine subject/citizen is especially stark" (190). Despite assertions to the effect of Pooro's reclamation of agency, one can't help but view her as a stereotypical vision of India's 'suffering femininity'. In the same interview, Pritam explained one of the motivations behind Pooro's decision:

> What could she do? The only thing she can do is hate him. Her hatred is an act against him, but there are no other things she can do against him. In the end, she loves him because of his personal qualities. Isn't this womanly enough? She recognizes the other side of his personality - the good side - and this side she loves. (Pritam 14)

Urvashi Butalia explains the status of women during the Partition to accord them the dual identities of victim and agent to explore another nuance, "These abducted women were in a sense in a 'no-man's land' and thus when they acted or attempted to resist being restored to their original families, they were exercising a different kind of agency" (Butalia WS19).

Pritam's original intention lends itself to multiple interpretations primarily because Pooro's work is now a text, and thus cannot be fixed into rigid categories. At the same time, Pritam does not convert Rashid into a text, he remains a work opposing aggressive

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[8] Contrast with Jisha Menon's analysis of Saadia in *Aur Kitne Tukde*: "This vignette reveals how subjects are formed and de-formed through multiple identifications, some of which become politically significant at certain times. Saadia chooses to remain with her abductor, but her decision is shot through with contradictions and complicated claims to agency" ("Somatic Texts and the Gender of Partition").

masculinity and patrilineage, but retains his innately oppressive centre. Due to this rigid center, Rashid cannot become an all-encompassing vision of masculinity—he fails to escape the authority of the patriarchal 'author'. No models of empathy or association connect him to the other men in the novel, reducing his guilt to a unique feeling drawing from his own sense of self but not bound with that of other men. Lajjo's abductor-rapist is a case in point.

Partitions before and after 1947: "When it had happened to her, religion had become an insurmountable obstacle; …And now, the same religion had become so accommodating!" (Pritam 901)

The contention that *Pinjar* is a 'Partition novel' as has been successfully marketed in popular media, conflates the original Punjabi text, its translations in various languages and the film version directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi. The 2003 film shifts the time period of the historical setting to erase the long gap between Rashid's abduction of Pooro and their encounter with the Partition, placing the narrative's ambiguous understanding of Pooro's final choice on a more robust moral framework dyed in sentimentality. It also displaces her disgust towards motherhood and eventual 'post-traumatic'[9] adjustment (after a cycle of 'numbing, intrusion, silence and compulsive re-enactment') with it by reducing their family to a childless couple, and taking away the alternative of the woman choosing to remain in her abductor's household for the sake of her children. While the novel ends on a note of tragic triumph quietly flowing away like Pooro's tears and resting on the crescendo of her self-definition, the movie fixes her in the role of the 'honourable' wife of a 'contrite' apologetic Muslim. Viswanath and Malik compare the Partition cinema of India and Pakistan to reflect on a trope related to this line of argumentation. They say, "The family-as-nation trope, central to Partition films, abets audience identification. A romanticised pre-Partition era, the apportioning of blame to politicians, the heroism of individuals, the

triumph of love, violent and bloody scenes of Partition - these are some of the leitmotifs of the Partition film" (64).

Thus, the Partition is simply the conclusive section of the original story, which debunks the myth of Hindu-Muslim unity by exposing severe fault lines hidden by reminiscences of a 'peaceful' past. It also functions as an 'absent presence' in the form of a premonitory chill attending to the episodic framework of 'case studies' as every tormented female body predicts worse terrors. By dwelling on multiple forces of exploitation in the form of Pooro's abduction and her relationships with her family, Kammo, Taro, Jhalli, Lajjo, her children and Rashid, she proves women's bodies to be sites of inter-generational and inter-religious conflict, exacerbated to unforeseen extremes during the Partition. This can be read as a debatable comment on the usual description of Partition violence, that is, it wasn't only a sporadic rupture that cost millions of lives, but emerged as a highly aggravated picture of pre-existing affairs propelled by the pandemonium accompanying the formation of two new nation-states. Anne Hardgrove remarks that the Partition's universal and irreconcilable experience must be referred to both in the past and present tense (2427). Saint's reading of Manto's figurative etching of the "risk of infinite repetition of the moment of Partition" and the ceaseless "fissioning of self" (54), adds to this understanding. This observation also founds Pooro's self-realization because her life did not revolve around this human tragedy; the Partition was simply a chapter in her story. Her final choice is not a religious one; it is derived from her reclaimed sense of self, making her the purveyor of meaning. It is the last nail in the coffin of her victimhood because she now assumes the roles of the definer, the creator, the independent rescuer and the subject: a person controlling her own life. Nonica Datta records this in her obituary for Pritam:

> Perhaps *Pinjar* is Amrita's final testimony, as a witness, to Punjab's Partition. Here Amrita's Pooru defies patriarchal and territorial boundaries, and effectively uses her agency to critique the reality of Partition by

[9] "*Adjust* is in fact the favored South Asian English term to describe the degrees of self-negation required and expected of women in difficult or new situations and has consequently been imported into most other Indian languages." (George 251, emphasis mine)

choosing to stay on in Pakistan. Indeed, in times when religious identity became a brutal blueprint of territorial boundaries and nationalism, Amrita and her female protagonist criticise the elision of religious community with 'nation', highlight patriarchal hypocrisy and challenge the national obsession with borders. (Datta "An Alternative Voice of History")

Pooro begins as the objectified woman forced into skewed notions of patriarchal honour, then becomes a subject forming empathetic associations with other women questioning the exploitative institutions determining their lives, and finally steps on the elusive plank of the character emerging from her story and helping to write it. Amrita Pritam writes her experience of the Partition into Pooro's loss, displacement and longing to address the human dimension of history through the themes of "sexual violation, forbidden love, physical dislocation, motherhood, questions of 'honour' and 'sacrifice'" and confounding the boundary between oral narrative and fictional account (Butalia WS20). Amardeep Singh understands *Pinjar* as a novel occupying the liminal space between realism (ethnographic and historical) and internal psychological portraiture, but the 'psychological reading dominates' to help us grasp that the Partition 'selves', are partly the 'other' too (Singh 2005). Pandey avers by calling *Pinjar* "a survivor's account, between history and memory—a protagonist who refuses to assume stereotypical identities assigned along the lines of religion" (Pandey 2044).

By creating characters not with the "indulgence of a mother" but with the "mercilessness of a social biologist" (Sharma 119), Amrita Pritam redefines the dignity of the Punjabi woman by re-fashioning her body. She creates this sense of agency through her self-driven consciousness and defiance against the silencing static of patriarchy. When asked why she calls the novel *Pinjar,* Pritam replies, "Here I am referring to the very inside of the characters, their naked selves, even devoid of flesh, what they are deep inside" (Pritam and Coppola, 15). The Partition helped women understand that they were all born as skeletons. They were skeletons of honour with territorial borders writ large on their bones. One only had to imagine invisible puppet-strings keeping them from snapping into dust.

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Breaking Bad: Redefining John Milton's Satan for the Twenty-First Century

Tanishka Goel

John Milton's epic poem, *Paradise Lost* has been read as a powerful narrative of ambition, rebellion and revolt. This paper seeks to highlight similar themes found in Vince Gilligan's television series, *Breaking Bad*. Although separated by centuries and geographical boundaries, what lies at the heart of both Milton's epic poem, and the contemporary television show, are questions surrounding morality, fate and free will. This paper is located at the intersection of Immanuel Kant's philosophy surrounding the notion of immoral deeds being acts of free will, and Phillip Cole's argument that such actions primarily stem from madness or necessity. It attempts to blur the lines between the two, challenging the very concept of morality in the process. Drawing a link between Milton's Lucifer and *Breaking Bad*'s Walter White, the paper attempts to fathom the nature of 'evil', man's inherent fascination with sin and the reader's implicitness in the actions of the protagonists. The paper, in conflating the characters of Lucifer and Walter White, the circumstances they find themselves in, and their ultimate degeneration and fall to Satan and Heisenberg respectively, endeavours to bring to the fore the protagonists' quest for individual freedom and their struggle to forge a distinct identity for themselves.

Written 350 years ago, *Paradise Lost* remains relevant in the twenty-first century because of the radical ideas it explored in terms of rebellion and ambition. The twenty-first century television series, *Breaking Bad* explores similar ideas in the context of the modern man. However, the treatment of the concept of evil by means of their protagonists, both of whom, despite being set in exponentially different times, struggle to forge an identity for themselves, stands as a stark similarity between the epic and the series. The German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, was of the belief that evil[1] depended on free will. For a person to be morally responsible for a deed, he would have to *choose* to commit the evil deed: implying that there would be alternative choices out of which evil would be consciously chosen (Anna Rømcke Høiseth 7). On the other side of the scale, in his book, *The Myth of Evil*, Phillip Cole argued that no evil deed is committed because of free will. The act, according to Cole, can be explained through madness or necessity; either a person does it because he or she is "mentally disturbed", or it

is committed because the perpetrator is in a "desperate situation" (Anna Rømcke Høiseth 9). Somewhere in between these two extremes, blurring the lines of these two definitions, lie John Milton's Satan and Vince Gilligan's Walter White.

John Milton crafted the figure of Satan during the political, social and cultural turmoil in the seventeenth century England, which linked to the conflict of power between the Crown and the Parliament[2]. Milton was a staunch advocate of Republican freedoms, which is evident from his other political works, including *Defensio Secunda, Eikonoklastes, The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,* and *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth.*

The twenty-first century individual, despite living in a very different cultural reality, struggles with many of the same ideas Milton had attempted to explore: advocating individual freedom over anything else. *Paradise Lost* advocates the qualities of rugged individualism, self-reliance and the

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[1] For the purpose of this paper, evil is defined as something that is not only antithetical to the moral values defined by the society but completely ruptures the structure of morality people are accustomed to dealing with. Any deed that goes against the morality adopted by the society is categorized as evil.

[2] After the Restoration of the Monarchy with the return of Charles II, there was an atmosphere of distrust between the Parliament and the Crown on the political front. At the same time, due to the executing of Charles II, the common people were just beginning to realize that the King was no longer a divine entity. A similar conflict of power can be seen in Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

aggressive ambition in the archangel. The same aspects of an archetypical man's nature are explored in Vince Gilligan's *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013). Fashioning the character of Walter White in his popular television series *Breaking Bad* Gilligan crafted a character that can easily be seen as the Satan of the twenty-first century.

> Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit
>
> Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
>
> Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
>
> With loss of Eden…
> (Milton I.1-4)

Paradise Lost begins *in media res*, midway through the action, like most epics[3]. Satan's glorified past as the brightest angel is deliberately not shown to the readers but is only alluded to. This provides Satan with a "hidden dimension and a past" (Carey 133). Similarly, *Breaking Bad* commences on Walter's fiftieth birthday, the same day when his fall into the endless abyss of ambition begins. Gaining the same "hidden dimension and a past", Walter's past also becomes a part of his existence which is only alluded to.

Satan resorts to a rebellion "against the throne and monarchy of God" (I.43) to nurse his "sense of injur'd merit" (I.98) after God's arbitrary decision of choosing his Son to reign in Heaven: "to him shall bow / All knees in Heav'n, and shall confess him Lord" (Milton V.607-608). Refusing to bend his knee to what he perceives as an illegitimate reign, Satan rebels against the "tyranny of Heav'n" (I.124). His pride and ambition to sit on the throne himself mark the beginning of his fall. Even though Milton has in no way attempted to justify Satan's actions, his heroic and sublime description of Satan's actions throughout Book I and II solidify Satan's status as a wounded hero in the minds of the readers. Walter White, a middle-aged man struggling to make ends meet in the Great Recession of 2008, suffers a blow to his ambitions when he learns that he is

suffering from lung cancer. Having been an "underachiever" throughout his "dead-end life" (Gilligan Season 3 "Caballo Sin Nombre"), Walt decides to take the reins of his life in his own hands to ensure the well-being of his family after his demise. The path chosen by him is morally questionable but it is important to recognize that he lives in a hyper-masculine society where the job of meeting all the financial requirements of a family falls upon the man: "What does a man do, Walter? / A man provides for his family" (Gilligan Season 3 "Más"). Despite the fact that his choice of path involves fabricating crystal methamphetamine, his desperate need to provide for his family gives him a moral center. Vince Gilligan, the creator of *Breaking Bad*, described his approach to the character:

> …I didn't ever think I would lose sympathy for [Walter White] completely, but I worried that the audience would. And so I kind of neurotically front-loaded the character…with a lot of reasons to give a damn about him and to sympathize with him. (Brian Kong)

Once Walter embarks upon this path of cooking crystal meth, it is remarkable how easily and quickly he falls far away from the line of morality, exhibiting to an extent, the "Lucifer Effect" (Zimbardo 8)[4]. Despite his fall, the audience, for the larger part, stands to view Walter White as a vigilante against the omnipotent forces of nature which are constantly trying to pull him down. Like Satan, Walter refuses to lose his "unconquerable will" and "courage never to submit or yield" (I.108).

According to the Kantian view, the two characters actively *choose* to do the evil deed, while Cole's theory argues that it is performed out of desperation. Where does that leave the two characters in question? Once the Son has been chosen to reign in Heaven, how much of a choice is Satan left with? In Satan's opinion, he is the Son's equal, if not superior to him. God's decision subjects Satan to humiliation, with his only other option being swallowing his pride and subjecting himself to further humiliation by serving under an 'illegitimate'

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[3] *In media res* is a Latin term used by Horace to suggest that any good epic should begin from a significant plot point in the middle of the action, instead of beginning at the beginning.

[4] It is a term coined by Philip Zimbardo to explain and analyze a phenomenon wherein ordinary, even good people undergo character transformations leading them to commit bad deeds that characterize as evil, much like the transformation of Lucifer, the archangel into Satan, the "devil".

reign. Therefore, he concludes that it is "better to reign in Hell than serve in Heav'n" (I.263). Analogously, the "underachiever" Walter White has always dealt with humiliation in his life: his students ignore him, his son refuses to listen to him, his salary is barely sufficient to make ends meet and his boss at the car-wash incessantly rebukes him. To be suffering from lung cancer on top of all this is the *coup de grâce* to his already straggling self-esteem. When the prospect of cooking meth surfaces itself as a lavish escape from all this, Walter takes it. The audience does not need to scout hard to find sympathy and pity for Walter in their hearts for the sole reason that he is an easy character to connect with.

A striking difference between Satan and Walter White, however, is their object of blame. Satan, at no point in the epic, places the entire responsibility of his actions on God or the Son; he understands from the very beginning that every decision he has made along the way has been a product of his own free will. He comprehends the role ambition and hubris have played in his fall but never deceives himself and the readers into thinking that he did it for anything other than his own convictions. Walter, on the other hand, lives in denial and delusion till the very end that his actions were only meant "for the good of [his] family" (Gilligan Season 5 "Felina"). For Walter, his actions were nothing more than an effort to secure his family's financial future; he blinds himself to the fact that his actions are a pursuit of power and are more self-serving than he believes. However, this does not alter the fact that he refuses to see his evil side altogether. The writers of the show indicate Walter's awareness of his own deeds. Walt Jr describes his father as, "He's a great father, a great teacher…He always does the right thing" (Gilligan Season 2 "Phoenix"). Walter walks away at this instant because in his heart, he knows it is a lie; he is no longer the man his son is referring to, he is now the meth kingpin of New Mexico, responsible for the death of a lot of people.

Even in the face of Walter's denial, the writers attempt to redeem Walter midway through the series in one of the most striking episodes, "Fly". Parallel to this, notwithstanding his vaulting ambition and pride, Satan also experiences a moment of recognition in Book IV in one of the most pathos-ridden of his soliloquies:

Till Pride and worse Ambition threw me down

Warring in Heav'n against Heav'ns matchless King

…………………………………

Hadst thou the same free Will

and Power to stand?

Thou hadst: whom hast thou then or what to accuse

……………………………….

Nay curs'd be thou; since against his thy will
Chose freely what it now so justly rues.

Me miserable! which way shall I flie Infinite wrauth, and infinite despaire?

Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell…
(IV.40-41, 66-67, 71-75)

For Walter too, his moment of possible redemption occurs precisely in the middle of the series, right before his fall becomes absolutely irredeemable. In "Fly", he experiences a moment where he comes face to face with the megalomaniac he has metamorphosed into. He becomes obsessed with a fly that has entered his sacred meth lab. The fly, however, to a large extent symbolizes the corruption of his world; the breaching of his ordinary world with his evil deeds.

JESSE: So you're chasing around a fly and in your world, I'm the idiot.

WALTER: My head is not the problem, Jesse. The fly is the problem.

…………………………………

WALTER: I should never have left home. Never gone to your house… No maybe, things would've…I'm sorry about Jane. ("Fly")

Walter's morally sound core briefly dominates his existence. Soon, though, the Heisenberg[5] in him navigates his way through his conscience, and from then on, there is no stopping him. Regina Schwartz observes in her book *Remembering and Repeating: On Milton's Theology and Poetics*, "Having lost their positive identity, they have lost their names" (qtd in Simon).

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[5] Heisenberg is the name Walter adopts to hide his true identity while dealing methamphetamine.

In a moment of absolution, Walter apologizes to Jesse about his girlfriend Jane's death. To an audience who is aware of the situation in its entirety, it seems like the moment when Walter will come clean about his involvement in Jane's death. Walter tells Jesse of the time he had a drink with Jane's father, concealing the fact that he was responsible for her death: "Oh, if I had just lived right up to that moment…and not one second more. That would have been perfect" (Gilligan Season 3 "Fly").

Since that night, Walter has caused multiple deaths. Not only did he let Jane choke on her own vomit, but in the process, he also became indirectly responsible for the hundreds of people who died in the plane crash due to Jane's father's wrong instructions to the pilots[6]. Walter tries to calculate the odds of him visiting Jesse and describes them to be "astronomical"; had he stayed at home that one night, the guilt for so many innocent and unnecessary deaths would not have been his to deal with. Ever since that night, there is "no end in sight" to his turpitude.

> Those rigid threats of Death; ye shall not Die:
>
> How should ye? by the Fruit? it gives you Life,
>
> To Knowledge, By the Threatner, look on mee,,
>
> Mee who have touch'd and tasted, yet both live,
>
> And life more perfet have attaind then Fate
> (VIII.685-680)

With these words, Satan tempts Eve and she despairs from God. Eve's deception is Satan's worst crime, yet his most successful endeavor. It can be argued that Eve was not entirely innocent before Satan deceived her; she did want to escape the shackles of patriarchy and ownership. Yet, the thought of disobeying God never occurred to her. Satan, however, leads the way for her despair. Correspondingly, Walter's worst form of crime

has to be the impact of his evil on the psyche of Jesse. Jesse was no saint before Walter walked up to him with an offer to make the purest form of meth but his innocence was intact nevertheless. He never crossed the line of morality before encountering White. One of the most poignant episodes in the series is "Peekaboo", in which Jesse ends up playing Peekaboo with a kid, whose parents were addicts and had stolen his money. Not only does Jesse refrain from killing the parents, but he also takes care of the child and calls 911 at the risk of being arrested himself. This 'innocence' stays intact until the moment White forces Jesse to kill Gale[7]. Unlike Walter who spends the two years of his meth career in denial, Jesse at no point shies away from admitting the reasons and responsibilities of his actions; he lives in guilt throughout the span of the series. When he breaks the fences in the finale, it is also (symbolic of) him breaking away from the disastrous life he has had to live till that moment.

Satan and Walter White both attain their goals on a larger scale than imagined— Satan tempts mankind which leads to Adam and Eve's fall while Walter earns millions of dollars and leaves it all behind for his family. However, when they had set out on their endeavors, they had expected glory and praise once it was achieved, which to their despair, they do not attain. Satan enters hell in hope to hear words of praise only to hear disapproving hissing:

> So having said, a while he stood, expecting
>
> Thir universal shout and high applaus
>
> To fill his eare, when contrary he hears
>
> On all sides, from innumerable tongues
>
> A dismal universal hiss, the sound
>
> Of public scorn;…
> (IX.505-509)

On the other hand, once Walter

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[6] Jesse is Walter's partner in his meth business. Jesse falls in love with his landlord's daughter, Jane, and is on the verge of opting out of the meth business. However, Jane dies in her sleep while Walter simply watches, refusing to save her since her death meant that Jesse would continue to be Walter's partner. Jane's father, Donald Margolisa air traffic controller is subsequently grief-stricken and causes two flights to collide thereby causing the death of 167 people aboard the plane. These deaths thus indirectly connect with Walter's actions

[7] Gale Boetticher was hired by Gustavo Fring—a drug kingpin whom Walter partners with. Walter coerces Jesse to kill Gale in order to save both their lives.

accomplishes his aims, his beloved wife and son refuse to so much as look at him, let alone welcome him with applause.

> SKYLER: All I can do is wait…for the cancer to come back.
> (Gilligan Season 5 "Fifty- One")

> WALT JR.: Just die!
> (Gilligan Season 5 "Granite State")

Soon after, Walter realizes that his deeds have cost him his family and that he has become a "monstrous father" (Gilligan Season 5 "Felina") while trying to be a great one. The only redeeming point in his life after this is when he finally admits to himself and to his wife that his actions were not meant to benefit anyone but himself; he steps out of the denial to face his true reality. "I did it for me. I liked it. I was good at it. And I was really…I was alive" (Gilligan Season 5 "Felina"). The show comes to a cathartic close as Walter dies in his lab with pride in his eyes for his machines and his work. For him, even after everything, the lab was "still magic" (Gilligan Season 3 "Sunset").

William Blake accused Milton of belonging to the "devil's party without knowing". To further explore this notion, Stanley Fish in his book *Surprised by Sin* argued that readers were supposed to fall for the charismatic insurgent Lucifer—as Eve had before them—so at the end they could recognize their own share of original sin, the reader's own eagerness to turn away from God and goodness (Harris). This seems to justify the situation of Walter White and Satan, two characters so reprehensible yet loved and admired by the audience. Bryan Cranston, who plays the role of Walter White, said:

> What Vince Gilligan has done with *Breaking Bad* is put the moral dilemma in the audience… and then you start rooting for him to cook crystal meth and get away with it, and then you stop yourself and go, 'Wait a minute, what am I saying?'… and as the seasons go on, that sympathy starts to erode and now you're far down the road with me and you're am I morally bankrupt?
> (Gilligan and Brown)

These characters, who could easily be repugnant and vilified, turn out to be characters with whom the audience sympathizes and even supports. The creator, Vince Gilligan stated:

> I have kind of lost sympathy for Walt along the way, I find it interesting, this sociological phenomenon, that people still root for Walt. Perhaps it says something about the nature of fiction, that viewers have to identify on some level with the protagonist of the show, or maybe he's just interesting because he is good at what he does. Viewers respond to people who are good at their job, even when they are bad.
> (Plunkett)

Milton goes to large extents to showcase the degeneration of Satan's character after having shown him in all his grandeur while also treating Satan in a way which ensures that readers are consciously aware of Satan's lust for power as the reason behind his actions; this substantiates the fact that Milton did not sympathize with Satan while Gilligan's lack of sympathy is evident from his interviews. Therefore, neither Milton nor Gilligan sympathized with their anti-heroes, but they nevertheless managed to arouse pity for them. Perhaps, Gilligan summed it up well, the audience does indeed root for the character who is exceptional at their work, notwithstanding what the work is. The two characters go a long way in bringing out the inherent desire of man to lean towards the ever-seducing side of evil; they reveal man's fascination with evil and the fact that the audience too probably belongs to "the devil's party" (qtd. In "Introduction" *ix*).

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Indoctrinated Masculinity: Nobita as a Transgressor of Gender Roles in *Doraemon*

Aarooshi Garg

This paper investigates the process of gender role socialisation of Nobita Nobi through social institutions like the family, as well as through extra-familial interactions with his peer group, in the popular Japanese TV drama *Doraemon*. These institutions serve as sites for a display of ideal masculinity and femininity whereby the effeminate boy protagonist undergoes a series of trials and tribulations owing to his status as a non-conformist. Nobita fails to uphold the accepted model of masculinity, choosing to shun traditionally male-dominated sports like baseball and football in favour of more 'domestic' and 'feminine' pastimes such as cat's cradle and play-acting. The paper attempts to analyse these institutions as performative grounds for socially determined gender roles. Nobita is often chided for a number of deviations like being emotionally expressive, deriving pleasure from homely hobbies like solving puzzles and play-acting, and refusing to engage in physical altercations to assert power and dominance. Finally, this paper shall look at Nobita as an inadvertent transgressor of fixed gender binaries, with respect to his social interactions and natural affinities.

Introduction

The bulk of scholarly work[1] on *Doraemon* pertains primarily to the titular robot's scientific origins[2] and their bearings on reality. The protagonist's human confidante, Nobita Nobi, is often neglected in favour of debates around the consequences of creating robots that could potentially mimic human emotion and sensitivity. This paper, however, will focus on Nobita to analyse the socially constructed gender roles in the Dora-verse[3]. Nobita's fictional society is a microcosm of the Japanese society that it is modelled on. It comes with its own shared values, culturally orchestrated norms and a naturalized order that every individual is expected to abide by. Nobita's age is of consequence, for it is the young members of the society that need to be indoctrinated and controlled. The young

protagonist is thus, an actor who takes on an established social role[4] (Goffman *The Presentations of Self in Everyday Life* 17). The "actor" highlights the performativity of this "social role", a role that is part of a culture's self-identity, and must be faithfully performed to ensure the stability of the order. Gender is a major aspect of this identity, and must be grappled with to understand a society's functioning.

The question then arises, how to integrate the young members within the society's pre-existing framework? How to naturalize[5] the traditional gender roles so as to prevent transgressions that could potentially destabilize the order? It is achieved by socializing children who "are in a natural state of passivity similar to that of a hypnotized person, and have a natural inclination to imitate

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[1] Refer to Mark Gilson's "A Brief History of Japanese Robophilia."

[2] According to the show, *Doraemon* is a 21st century robot sent by Nobita's grandson back in time to prevent Nobita from committing the same mistakes that have resulted in his future generations living in abject penury.

[3] The operative term chosen by the author to denote the fictional *Doraemon* universe.

[4] Erving Goffman elaborates on the performativity of identity, proceeding to observe that an individual's identity is designed by the society and the said individual need only conform, "A self, then, virtually awaits the individual entering a position; he need only conform to the pressures on him and he will find a *me* ready-made for him. In the language of Kenneth Burke, doing is being" (77).

[5] To ''naturalize'' is to render a normative and constructed value a default condition. Or, to disguise the representation as the real. The individuals are prevented from revolting against a 'natural' order, which is in fact, an artificially constructed order.

the actions of adults" (Keel 12). To socialize[6] is to make the target individual internalize a given set of values—as per the causal agent's discretion. Through this process, individuals are made to adapt in a social environment by inculcating a normative orientation that would allow for future assimilation. Children are predominantly socialized by parents and teachers—by virtue of their superiority in terms of "experience and authority" (Keel 12).

Normative gender roles are thereby internalized and accepted by children. Their first experience of gender performance takes place in the domestic space, facilitated by their parents. Their opinions of gender and identity are further influenced by their peers and the society within which all these interactions operate. Consequently, Nobita is under the scrutiny of familial and extrafamilial authority attempting to indoctrinate within him a conventional model of masculinity. This model is accompanied by a patriarchal feminine ideal, the ideology of *ryoosai kenbo*[7] "good wife, wise mother" (Matsumoto 241). These idealized images of masculinity and femininity are socially constructed and perpetuated. However, despite parental and social surveillance, Nobita fails to perform his gender identity effectively—his tendencies and interests acting against the normative masculine model. Along with Nobita, his friends and family will be studied to understand the gender roles predominant in the Dora-verse.

The Politics of Games

Games in Nobita's world are exceedingly gendered. The boys engage in physically tough sports like baseball and football as an aggressive display of masculinity. These games are fiercely competitive and fertile battlegrounds where male egos clash. A fixed hierarchy exists in these games, with the leader wielding power and control over players beneath him. Their play resembles the structure and dynamics "inherent in the managerial world of work and thus prepares boys for success in the organizational realm" (Patricia Adler, Kless and Peter Adler 170). A major source of popularity between boys is their athletic prowess. Takeshi Goda[8] (nickname Gian), Nobita's bully and a representative of aggressive, dominating and assertive masculinity excels in sports and gains much of his power through the same. Physically powerful, muscular and an excellent leader; Gian displays the attributes traditionally associated with manhood. He comes from a culture that valorises controlling masculinity:

> Boys' culture also embodies their *expression of physicality* in its central focus on active participation and prowess in sports. Boys spend most of their free time outdoors, carving out and conquering space. . .their physicality is competitive and dominating, structured to involve contests in which one individual or team beats the other and revels in the victory. Physical displays, both inside and outside the game structure, can also culminate in physical aggression and fights between boys, through which masculinity is tested and dominance is established. (Patricia Adler, Kless and Peter Adler 183)

Gian's superiority both on and off the field is a result of his sheer physical strength. He is modelled on the prototype of the alpha-male who seeks to establish his dominance in all his social interactions. His character serves to highlight the lack in Nobita's character. Although Nobita is keenly interested in toys that require hand-eye coordination and motor skills, such as radio-controlled helicopters, cars and robot-assembling kits, all 'boyish toys' (Farkas and Leaper 567), he lacks interest in the 'manly' sports his peers indulge in.

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[6] "In this sense, socialization refers to a developmental process in which the to-be-socialized individual is required to adopt a set of rules considered relevant in a given society. To socialize an individual to a specific role involves continuous tacit or explicit shaping of his or her competences and orientations to these implied normative expectations" (Keel 13).

[7] Yashiko Matsumoto comments on the three dimensions of "femininity training" being modesty, tidiness and elegance in "Alternative Femininity: Personae of Middle-aged Mothers".

[8] His violent behaviour can be attributed to repression within the Goda family. Constantly belittled by his mother, Gian desperately attempts to control the events around him by brute strength. Another factor could be an absent father figure which results in Gian taking on the role of the family patriarch; and failing in the presence of a strong mother who defeats his attempts to control their domestic lives.

Pathetically weak, characteristically cowardly and a terrible leader—Nobita falls right at the end of the pack that has Gian as its leader. He consistently fails to perform his masculinity successfully. His lack of athletic strength and a general disposition to not physically exert himself result in Nobita shunning all male-dominated sports. The aggressive masculinity of Gian is contrasted by Nobita's almost-feminine delicacy and physical inferiority[9].

Nobita's and Gian's scuffles outside the field bring out the differences in their personalities. Gian assaults his peers to serve the dual purposes of venting out his latent aggression and creating an unequal dynamic of power. Nobita, on the contrary, seldom engages in altercations to prove his superiority. A gangly boy lacking the strength and fortitude of masculine force, he lacks the courage to fight back. Nobita's sensitivity acts as a foil to Gian's unthinking brutality. In a display of male bravado, the protagonist is found to be lacking[10].

Furthermore, Nobita's 'feminine' pastimes problematize his position as a male subject in Dora-verse. In a bold move, Nobita chooses to shun baseball and football. The domestic game of cat's cradle is frowned upon by his parents and peers. His domestic orientation is pronounced in his interactions with Shizuka Minamoto[11], his childhood friend. Shizuka represents the feminine ideal in Dora-verse, whose uncanny resemblances to Nobita make his subversion of gender roles explicit. The girls, including Shizuka, engage themselves in enacting scenes of a domestic life. The make-believe play involves the girls pretending to be mothers and wives, taking care of the household and the patriarch who returns home after a long, hard day. The passivity of these games has a strange allure for Nobita, who excitedly partakes in them while his male counterparts busy themselves with active on-field jostling and roughhousing.

These domestic recreational games are designed to mimic the girls' future domestic responsibilities, and Nobita's affinity for them further complicates matters for him:

> Passivity is also inherent in the *ideology of domesticity* that characterizes girls' play and interaction . . . they live indoor lives; draw indoor scenes; and concern themselves with gathering others around them. In this way, they prepare themselves for domestic and maternal roles.
> (Patricia Adler, Kless and Peter Adler 184)

Nobita's gravitation towards a sheltered existence invites scorn from boys and girls alike—much to his parents' chagrin. Gian and his sidekick, Suneo Honekawa often point out Nobita's feminine interests, with the girls condescending to let him in their games. Nobita's placid reception of traditionally male sports, and unbridled fascination for feminine sports have the undertones of an unconscious rebellion against fixed binaries and conventions.

Division of Space and Labour

In this section, two divisions of space in the Dora-verse will be made and analysed: the extrafamilial and the intrafamilial space. The immediate family of the individual in question constitutes the intrafamilial space, while his society and peer-groups comprises the extrafamilial space. The labour-based interactions taking place in these spaces are majorly determined by gender roles.

The extrafamilial division of labour has the men enjoying greater public representation, with women leading quiet, indoor lives. Men are shown as active contributors to the society's economy—occupying leadership positions of consequence. From the neighbourhood grocer to Mr. Nobi's boss, men retain their traditional breadwinner status with

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[9] Nobita lacks Gian's muscle and height. He is often bossed around by his peers, never asserting his selfhood or attempting to counter-attack. His passive attitude is problematic in a culture that presupposes and values a volatile masculinity.

[10] He almost always seeks Doraemon's assistance in defeating Gian. Nobita's own incompetency is underscored by his need to deploy the robot's 'gadgets'.

[11] An interesting example of gendered clothing can be demonstrated through Shizuka's character. She's always in the garb of pink skirts, with the colour pink having acquired feminine connotations. Whereas Doraemon, the male robot, is blue in colour—blue being associated with the masculine. Nobita is mostly seen wearing a yellow tee, yellow having resisted gendering for long. Nobita's wardrobe is characterised by mild tones, in an allegory for his fluid nature and identity. Gian, on the other hand, sports bold colours of tangerine, red and black.

the women relegated to the maintenance of the household. Suneo's father has a well-paying corporate job, and Nobita's father struggles to move upwards in the corporate chain. Despite their financial and class inequality, both men exercise control within the family by virtue of their role as the patriarch. Women are rarely seen in the public space independent of a male relative. They may make major financial decisions[12] within the household, but the men wield power and authority outside the boundaries of the home:

> . . . children also become aware of the extrafamilial sex-role division of labour within society at large. For example, children become aware that social roles involving aggression and violence (policemen, soldier) and decision-making (president, judge) are played by men while women specialize in roles involving maternal and caretaking activities.
> (Albert and Porter 189)

The relegation of women to the private has multiple reasons. Firstly, phallic surveillance of women assists their containment and control[13]. Female sexuality is effectively subdued by the construction of a hierarchy in which women always occupy a subordinate position. Moreover, their dependency on a male figure is amplified by their unemployment. The dynamics of power shifts in favour of the breadwinner, typically a man. Finally, women's confinement to the private space allows them to nurture their maternal and feminine instincts. Looking after the children, maintaining the household, cooking for the family without male assistance and doing the dishes are some of the chores a woman is expected to perform without fail. This domestic labour has no monetary returns, and as a result goes largely unrecognized.

An exception to these culturally determined divisions of space and labour in the extrafamilial network is Mrs. Goda, Gian's mother. In the absence of Mr. Goda[14], the patriarch, she takes on his responsibilities by running a convenience store for the family's sustenance. Her entry in the public space as a shopkeeper is an important transgression of gender roles. Mrs. Goda claims the conventionally male status of a breadwinner and creates an identity for herself, largely independent of a male relative. Another masculine role she performs is the disciplining of her son. Employing different tactics to punish Gian, Mrs. Goda supersedes Mr. Goda as the dominant force in the Goda family. Ridiculed for her 'manly' strength and aggression, she does not fit in the patriarchal mould of femininity—she lacks emotional hypersensitivity and physical frailty. The other mother figures on the show stand in contrast to Mrs. Goda, with their idle gossip and chattering on the streets, frequent visits to the neighbourhood salons and trivial preoccupations. She is the only woman in the show who manages to cross the threshold of the personal; to register her presence in the political. However, as if to counter this seizing of male authority, Mrs. Gian is constructed as a parody of the feminine ideal sanctioned by the society. The show's treatment of Mrs. Goda is an extended mockery and chastisement of the woman inverting societal norms, instead of a celebration of difference. The right to exist in the public eye is earned at the cost of her womanhood.

Labour in the intrafamilial space is performed mostly by women who function as homemakers. The men don't contribute to the upkeep and maintenance of the household—seemingly compensating for their domestic unavailability with their earnings. The household as a 'socialization depot'[15] provides a ground for "children [to] observe the way that interactions between family members communicate a set of meanings about gender" (Cunningham 112). Chores like buying vegetables from the supermarket, mending clothes, cooking, washing the dishes and doing the laundry are done by women—

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[12] Mrs. Nobi, Nobita's mother, prepares the monthly budget and decides the allocation of funds in all transactions occurring in the domestic space. From Nobita's pocket money to the cost of repairs for appliances, Mrs. Nobi remain in possession of Mr.Nobi's income.

[13] First theorised and popularised as an idea by Laura Mulvey in the seminal "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". See "Voyeurism and Surveillance: A Cinematic and Visual Affair" in *Sensational Pleasures in Cinema, Literature and Visual Culture: The Phallic Eye*.

[14] Mr. Goda is mentioned in passing in *Doraemon*, never making an appearance. The absence of a father figure has severe implications on Gian's character.

[15] Erving Goffman (1977). "The arrangement between the sexes". *Theory and Society, 4,* pp. 301-332.

while the men engage themselves with mechanical labour in fixing the instruments around the house. Mr. Nobi spends his time watching the TV or reading the newspaper—patently refusing to provide assistance to Mrs. Nobi. Domestic labour falls solely under the purview of the women, and young daughters. It is not surprising that none of the fathers are shown performing domestic labour; conspicuous by their absence from the private realm.

Shizuka Minamoto, representing the patriarchal feminine ideal, receives proper training for her future wifely and motherly responsibilities. Adept in the arts of sewing, baking, cooking, dusting and gardening, she is expertly indoctrinated to be an efficient homemaker. Just as Nobita's masculinity is socially ordained, Shizuka's femininity is influenced by culture, tradition and society. She shares the domestic burden with her mother—gaining valuable experience for her foray into matrimony and motherhood. A peculiar example of Nobita's conformity (after a series of transgressions) to the gender roles is his resistance to this particular form of labour. Shizuka and Nobita have been socialized to an ideology of gendering and ranking labour in terms of its financial returns:

> The second measure[16], referred to as the *ideal division of housework,* represented the children's beliefs about the way that four stereotypically female household tasks should be divided between husbands and wives. These tasks included shopping for groceries, washing the dishes, cleaning the house and taking care of children. (Cunningham 114)

Thus, space and labour in Dora-verse are determined by gender. The stereotypical images of repressed women and assertive men that predominate the show act as an 'ideological state apparatus'[17], perpetuating normative values to its viewers. The transgression made by Mrs. Goda is nullified by her characterisation as a burlesque figure.

With her heavy-set physique and overbearing persona, she is often made out to be the butt of jokes as the show progresses. *Doraemon* as a microcosm of real society, idealizes normative behaviour and retains the distinction between the private and the public—restricting both sexes from escaping the confines of their respective realms.

Emotional Responsiveness and Sensitivity

Mary Wollstonecraft, in her radical text, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* scathingly remarked:

> You may have convinced them that *littleness* and *weakness* are the very essence of beauty; and that the Supreme Being, in giving women beauty in the most supereminent degree, seemed to command them, by the powerful voice of nature, not to cultivate the moral virtues that might chance to excite respect, and interfere with the pleasing sensations they were created to inspire . . . and that Nature, by making women little, smooth, delicate, fair creatures, never designed that they should exercise their reason to acquire the virtues that produce opposite, if not contradictory, feelings. (Wollstonecraft 45)

Wollstonecraft, in this fierce unmasking of stereotypical notions of womanhood, was commenting on a patriarchal conception of femininity. Elegance, delicacy, temperance, abnegation and a spirited submission to male authority were some of the desirable traits in a feminine ideal. This conditioned inferiority to men ensured the stability of a patriarchal social order. Any deviations from this norm were antagonized and demonized, quelling further rebellions.

Dora-verse, too, constructs a patriarchal feminine ideal in the figure of Shizuka. Decked up in 'gender-appropriate' clothing, Shizuka boasts of all the traits glorified by the conduct literature of eighteenth century. Fashionably feeble, pliant, dependent on men around her,

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[16] From a study conducted by Cunningham, data available at Intergenerational Panel Study of Parents and Students (IPSPC). The information was assessed when the children were aged 1 and 15 (1962 and 1977, respectively). The young participants seemed to echo adult gender role stereotypes, conflating household chores with the mother figure.

[17] A term given by Althusser, the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) is a power structure that maintains its stronghold by influencing certain classes and reinforcing the dominant *ideology*. The people on whom ISA acts, submit to its norms for the fear of social ostracization and alienation. This submission to an ideology may occur unbeknownst to the subject.

nurturing and emotionally responsive, she represents the femininity endorsed by a patriarchal system. The slightest exertion in sports causes her to swoon and fan herself vigorously—highlighting her fragility that requires male protection. Not surprisingly, nearly all boys in *Doraemon* are attracted to her. Furthermore, she is self-sacrificing, proceeding to give primacy to the interests of others over herself. She is the motherly figure in the Doraemon-Nobita-Gian-Suneyo clique, resolving arguments and displaying strong tendencies to foster her social relationships. As discussed earlier, Shizuka unconsciously works towards her future role as a wife and mother; and not as an independent woman striving to a career-oriented lifestyle. The dominant gender roles posit a woman as a domestic being by default.

Language plays an important role in visualising Shizuka Minamoto as an ideal of femininity. She is often called 'kawaii'[18] by her peers and elders, a Japanese term with socio-historic connotations meaning small and immature. Promptly infantilized, Shizuka is denied agency and control. In a culture preoccupied with male supremacy, she needs supervision, preferably by a man. Discussing the implications of this term further:

> Animated characters that are soft, infantile, mammalian and round such as Hello Kitty (a white and pink female cat), are quintessentially *kawaii* because they appear kind, innocent and helpless[19]. (e.g. Hello Kitty has no mouth, so is ostensibly not able to speak). (Burdelski and Mitsuhashi 67, emphasis added)

Denied a narrative, a voice so to say, Shizuka fits perfectly in the gender roles assigned to her. However, Nobita is not as successful in his gender role performance for the precise reason that he displays instincts reminiscent of those of Shizuka. As opposed to Gian's destructive aggression, Nobita is

emotionally sensitive and responsive. Easily moved to tears, he is often criticised for his open display of vulnerability. In stark contrast to Nobita's sensitive nature is Gian's violent and assertive selfhood. Nobita identifies more with a feminine disposition to free expression and tractability. Consequently, he fails to uphold the conventional male images of ruggedness and mental self-restraint. In *Doraemon,* Nobita is severely criticised for the same reception to phenomena for which Shizuka is comforted. His tendency to cry instead of repressing his emotions under the garb of rational and unfeeling masculinity is another transgression that exposes the fixity and redundancy of gender roles. A recurring trope in the show is Nobita bawling all the way home to seek Doraemon's counsel and support. His ability to channelize his emotions is neglected to focus on the systematic ridicule it consequently entails by his peers and family. Thus, Shizuka's healthy self-expression becomes weakness of character in Nobita; a weakness that solicits corrective measures in the series.

Conclusion

During the course of this discussion, a central point seems to emerge. A carefully designed identity is provided to the young members of any society—one whose competent values percolate down multiple generations. This percolation occurs through socialization that allows for integration of young members in a pre-established order by stimulating an internalization of normative ideology[20]. Thus, children are indoctrinated in their respective gender roles and gender identities. Nobita, the boy-protagonist of *Doraemon* is under the influence of several social agents that propagate culturally sanctioned models of masculinity and femininity.

As a transgressor of a gender role expected from him by virtue of his sex (one's sex often conflated with one's gender), Nobita

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[18] Kawaii has come to be associated with *cuteness* over the recent years. However, this adjective is mostly used for infants and young children. Clearly, it's problematic when used for adolescent girls and women as a term of endearment, for it effectively infantilizes (and disempowers) them.

[19] Female helplessness is conducive to establishing the male as the saviour.

[20] "In the methodical socialization of children, adults' authority and children's passivity and inclination to imitate induce the latter to accept and internalize what they are taught by the adults (Durkheim 1973 [1922]: 64–5). It is interesting to note that Durkheim already highlights that it is through each of the 'thousands of small actions' that parents and teachers orient toward a child at every moment that the child is gradually socialized: 'With the words we utter, with the activities we accomplish, we continuously shape our children's souls' (Durkheim 1973 [1922]: 69, my translation)'' (Keel 12-13).

exposes this oppressive apparatus. Dora-verse gives one idealized models of masculinity and femininity in Gian and Shizuka. With Nobita's conflicting interests and affinities, his subject-position as a male figure is problematised. His homely hobbies, passive attitude and unforced gravitation to the world of girls is contrasted with Gian's athletic skills, spectacular male bravado and leadership skills. The show's treatment of transgressive elements is largely orthodox. Mrs. Goda as a financially independent shopkeeper and Nobita with his ambiguous position on the gender axis are parodied and mocked. *Doraemon* is a fertile ground for questioning prevailing attitudes towards gender, but its hostility towards all deviations can be attributed to a tendency to maintain the status quo. The conflict in Nobita's character can be understood better by the following lines:

> It is true that here and there we can pounce on a moment when an individual sits fully astride a single role, head erect, eyes front, but the next moment the picture is shattered into many pieces and the individual divides into different persons holding the ties of different spheres of life by his hands, by his teeth and by his grimaces.
> (Goffman 127)

This fragmentation in Nobita's character and sense of self is caused by non-compliance to a patriarchal notion of masculinity. Gender roles are deeply entrenched in Dora-verse, closely mirroring the real world. The transgressions afforded by the narrative are immediately controlled, repressed and represented as a burlesque of the ideal. However, Nobita as the main transgressor unconsciously problematises the apparatuses that seek to create and foster gender binaries—denying free expression to an individual.

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Taste the Revolution: Chocolate in the Eighteenth Century

Devika

The aim of this paper is to analyse chocolate as a symbol of change in the eighteenth century. The paper begins with a discussion on how chocolate reached the English coast, became an obsession for English society and a symbol of debauchery and sin because of its associations with Chocolate Houses. This association is traced through its representation in William Congreve's play, *The Way of the World*, and William Hogarth's sixth painting from *The Rake's Progress*. It also became a symbol of the changing world order where aristocratic authority gave way to a society governed by capitalist relations. Additionally, the paper deals with the production of chocolate and how, through trade, it links the 'Old World and the New World', connoting a set of changes in global relations. The paper ends with a recipe analysis of the changes in the beverage hot chocolate, which again reflects transformations within the society that consumed this commodity.

On September 14, 1715 Dudley Ryder wrote in his diary:

> Rose between 6 and 7. Got myself ready for my journey to the Hay with Cousin Billio and his wife. At 7 o'clock cousin and his wife came. They would not stay to drink chocolate and so left me to follow them after having drank some chocolate.[1]
> (Ryder qtd. in Matthews 96)

Ryder, Attorney General in 1745 and later Lord Chief Justice, was an uptight[2] man, extremely particular about rules, and the fact that he delayed his trip to drink his chocolate exemplifies the obsession of early eighteenth century English citizens with chocolate. After the first beans of cocoa hit the European continent in the sixteenth century, the first chocolate drink was sold in a shop called The Coffee Mill & Tobacco Roll. The drink had been earlier sold in Coffee Houses, but due to its bitter taste and expensive rates, it was ignored for a cup of coffee that had more caffeine.

As Matthew Green notes, "For a city [London] with little tradition of hot drinks (coffee had only arrived five years earlier), chocolate was an alien, suspect substance drunk [sic] associated with popery and idleness (i.e. France and Spain)" (*The Telegraph*). For the English elite, it came from alien lands of the 'New World'—for the herb was said to be grown in Central America—giving it a mysterious and sketchy aura. Hence, to generate a demand, the market was flooded with a "slew of pamphlets" (Green) and posters put up in every nook. Diaries and newspapers carried accounts of chocolate as a wondrous miracle drink that cured hangovers, was preferred by royalty[3], and was popularly known as an aphrodisiac. As William Hughes writes: "[Chocolate] revives drooping spirits and cheers those ready to faint, expelling sorrow, trouble, care & all perturbations of the mind, is an ambrosia ... it cannot be too much praised"[4] (Hughes qtd. in Paoletti et al. 5).

"The public was sold on it" as a result of this campaign (Green); soon multiple Chocolate Houses sprang up across London, giving rivalry to both coffee houses and the city's tavern culture. White's Chocolate House established in St. James's Street (1699) was one of the most popular. It was also the model

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1 *The Diary of Dudley Ryder, 1715-1716.* Transcribed for shorthand and edited by William Matthews.
2 His 'uptight' nature is deduced from incidents as described in his diary. His insistence on what women should want from men and other instructive anecdotes are an evidence of the same: "they despised and neglected all the qualifications of virtue and good sense in comparison of a rakish air and a gay rattling conversation" For more on Ryder, see "Discourse and Reality: the many worlds of Dudley Ryder, 1715-1716" by Maurice Brenner.
3 "Samuel Pepys, chocolate was the perfect cure for a hangover, relieving his 'sad head' and imbecilic stomach" (Green).
4 William Hughes noted in "The American Physician or a Treaties of the Roots, Plants, Trees, Shrubs, Fruit, Herbs Growing in the English Plantations of America", 1672.

for the chocolate house setting for Congreve's *The Way of the World.*

The popularity of Chocolate Houses gave the English Government another lucrative opportunity to earn money, and hence a heavy tax was imposed on it. Due to a jump in consumption in the early eighteenth century, the tax on cocoa imported from British Colonies was two shillings a pound (Fjordman). The heavy tax assured that only the wealthy could afford the drink, thereby rendering the Chocolate Houses as spaces for the privileged. Further, these spaces capitalized on the fact that it was the aristocracy and the nouveaux riches who were their target audience, introducing an entrance fee of a penny over the additional cost of chocolate. Chocolate Houses soon transformed into hubs of gambling, political discussion, gossip and illicit activities that proliferated among both the upper-class and the upwardly mobile class. To be able to afford a drink of chocolate declared one's status to the world, and to frequent the place made one fashionable.

Arthur J. Weitzman notes the changes in London as it emerges as a city: "The increase of trade brought wealth to the city and sparked a building boom" (473). Additionally, "there was a steady improvement of civic life as affluence and luxury seeped down through the classes in the city" (Weitzman 475). Chocolate, besides being a marker of luxury, was also the condiment responsible for accentuating this socio-economic development, since its consumption and sales increased, thus supporting the burgeoning economic activities of the city. The emergence of the city of London, therefore, runs parallel to the emergence of Chocolate Houses.

The waves of economic change introduced through the growth of trade marked the cultural transformation from "vestigial feudalism to a new economic order" (Gardner 55). The church, in reaction to these developments, came to view chocolate itself as sin. The organizing principles of the city (socio-economic growth and luxury) clashed with those of the church: therefore the growth of Chocolate Houses in London and their association with gluttony, debauchery and luxury made the condiment itself a marker of depravity. The city itself was also a threat to traditional values; as Weitzman notes, 'traditional' in this case alludes to the old culture of aristocracy which was under attack (476). The relations and status in society were now therefore governed by money, rather than being based on consanguineous relations. The drinking of chocolate hence became a performance that aristocrats and the new moneyed class[5] indulged in to establish their status within the new social order This performance was reflective of a larger aspirational anxiety that was prevalent in society.

While the aristocracy emphasized this performance in a desperate attempt to hold on to the power stemming from their status and the gentility, the new moneyed classes indulged in this performance to prove their status as equal to that of the aristocrats. This is reflected in the first act of *The Way of the World* (1700), William Congreve's play, set in a Chocolate House. Petulant, a fop desperate for social ascendance in class, pays people to call on him in the Chocolate House to accord himself importance and therefore a rise in social standing. In light of Foucault's discourse on power[6], this can be read in context of the notion of the Panopticon. People keep up performances and roles (even if no one is watching) under the assumption that they are under surveillance. This is meant either to establish their pre-fixed status within society, or point to their aspirational status. Drinking chocolate therefore becomes a part of the same performance—the idea is to be seen drinking the expensive chocolate, to show oneself as capable of both buying and enjoying upper-class pleasures. Thus, the opening scene

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[5] This new class had earned their wealth through trade, in some cases trade of cocoa itself.
[6] *Discipline and Punish,* 1977. Jeremy Bentham's nineteenth-century Panopticon was a circular building with an observation tower in the centre of an open space, surrounded by an outer wall which contained cells for occupants or prisoners. This was to ensure heightened surveillance. The cells would be flooded with light, occupants would be readily distinguishable and visible to an official invisibly positioned in the central tower, but invisible to each other. Due to the bright lighting emitted from the tower, occupants would not be able to tell if and when they were being watched, making discipline a passive rather than an active action. What Foucault concluded the function of this heightened surveillance was: 'the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment, but he must be sure that he may always be so' (Foucault 201). Discipline would be ensured since the prisoners, due to their constant fear of being watched, would police themselves.

of the play functions as an example of how a body is made docile by the discourses and institutions of power and made to submit to the codes of behavior expected from his aspired class.

The relevance of the Chocolate House in *The Way of the World* also lies in the manner Congreve uses this setting to demonstrate the growing irrelevance of the Rake figure at the turn of the century. As many critics have noticed, the Restoration Rake[7] became the reformed rake as morality triumphed (Chakrabarti xiv) and Sentimental Comedy gradually took over the stage. Richard Braverman argues that the failure of Fainall, the Rakish villain of the play, lies in the fact that he had not adapted to changing times, while the hero, Mirabell, had. Fainall hence represents the old crumbling aristocracy in the face of the new society governed by money. In an analysis related to the Chocolate House, Braverman writes that Fainall's power has been proven symbolically impotent, his Rakish status outdated and dead in the incident when he asks "Bring me some Chocolate," (Braverman 9, Congreve 1.103).

Braverman writes: "Fainall is himself powerless by the location of his 'court'. He holds forth in a Chocolate House, a venue of new men and social equality, rather than the tavern, where rakes traditionally assemble to restore themselves after a debauch" (Braverman 141). Fainall's court (representative of royalty and aristocracy) has been replaced by a Chocolate House. An institution governed by power and privilege secured through birth and blood has been replaced by an institution governed by money.

In an ironic paradox, the social set-up of Chocolate Houses, which was governed by money, a force supposed to divide people and the classes, ended up democratizing power and debauchery to some degree. Although Chocolate Houses remained accessible only to those with economic capital, the industry that grew around chocolate disturbed the monopolies of the landed aristocrats. More people were now allowed to indulge in the pursuit of luxury, earlier closed by ideas of gentility, and now open due to money. Debauchery[8] and Rakishness were now, due to the power of money, at least theoretically available to anyone who could command a fortune.

Since Chocolate Houses democratized power, they almost became a symbol of the spirit of revolution which would be witnessed in eighteenth century Europe, as one could perceive values of equality and liberty are already seeping in—the new economy allowed more people to enjoy and indulge in privileges heavily guarded before. This is yet another paradox. The cruel decadence of the rich and the royal of Chocolate Houses was in sharp contrast with the dying poor; this gap became a primary cause of the French Revolution itself. A relevant example is the royal family's flight to Varennes in 1791 where Marie Antoinette refused to part with her silver chocolatière.[9] This allows one to realise the significance of the chocolate as a symbol associated with luxury.

Chocolate Houses were, as Braverman calls them, "a venue of male sociability reserved for news and gossip, wit and especially cards" (134). The decadence associated with gambling ran so deep as to destroy whole inheritances, fortunes and even kill people. The addiction to gambling and the

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[7] "The Restoration rake was a carefree, witty, sexually liberal aristocrat whose heyday was during the English Restoration period (1660–1688) at the court of Charles II." Examples include Earl of Rochester and more "who combined riotous living with intellectual pursuits and patronage of the arts. At this time the rake featured as a stock character in Restoration Comedy." ("Rake" *Revolvy*)

[8] "Debauchery" dictionary meaning is excessive indulgence in sex, alcohol, or drugs which was the way of living for the aristocrats and therefore the culture of the places they frequented. An evidence can be found in Hogarth's paintings referred to in this paper. Because chocolate soon began being sold at these establishment, and was labelled as sinful as alcohol (especially it's attachments to gluttony) it too was related to debauchery.

[9] *Chocolate: History, Culture, and Heritage* By Louis E. Grivetti, Howard-Yana Shapiro.

destructive power of it is evident in the legendary White's[10] betting book which archives wagers placed between 1743 and 1878. It consists of bizarre predictions:

'Mr Howard bets Colonel Cooke six guineas that six members of White's Club die between this day of July 1818 and this day of 1819', reads one typical entry (Colonel Cooke won). Elsewhere there are bets on which celebrities will outlive others; the length of pregnancies; the outcomes of battles; the madness of George III; the future price of stock; and whether a politician will turn up to the Commons in a red gown or not.
(Green 2017)

One hence gets the context of the sixth painting in William Hogarth's infamous series, *A Rake's Progress*[11] (Figure 1). In the sequence, this engraving comes after the Rake, Tom Rakewell has lost his fortune and tried to gain it by marrying an old lady. In this engraving he loses his newfound fortune at the chocolate house. The positioning of the engraving in this particular sequence hence signifies the penultimate point of his downfall where he loses all and there is no room for redemption.

Hence, appropriately named 'Hell' (Green), the inner gaming room at White's is depicted here in all its debauched glory. The room seems to be burning in literal fire and symbolic hell fire which threatens to consume all engaged in this orgy of sin. It is a picture of greed and despair—the posture of the ruined rake with his hands held high as though for divine intercession, while no one cares to even look at him and a side figure accepts a glass of chocolate, is characteristic of the happenings associated with Chocolate Houses of the time. The figure of the boy

Figure 1

serving the chocolate to the man in the painting also draws one's attention to the fact that chocolate as a heavily traded condiment created avenues for jobs, albeit exploitative ones. Simultaneously, it allowed for institutions like slavery to flourish. It is well known that slaves were taken from colonies to work at the labor-intensive plantations, the justification for the institution of slavery given by the American South to the North during the American Civil War (1861-1865). Cocoa was one such labor-intensive crop, especially with its growing popularity in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

It is thus that Chocolate Houses and chocolate itself become representative of Slavery[12] (Gay 290). Labeled by Carl Linnaeus, the eighteenth century scientist, as 'theobroma cacao' (food of the gods), chocolate was a product borne from the exploitation of slaves. From the plantation culture in the colonies of Africa, to the very trading of cocoa beans as a commodity along with slaves, chocolate has a connection with the institution of slavery. This connection offers an insight into the relationship between the Old World and the New World. Chocolate, according to James F. Gay, was more

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[10] White's, established in 1693, was a gentlemen's club on St. James Street, the venue for all upper class social activity and therefore debauchery. As a club, it served and entertained its clientele of aristocrats with cards, wager and drinks which consisted of but were not limited to chocolate. It was originally established as a hot chocolate emporium under the guise of Mrs White's chocolate house. The club functions to this date and is extremely exclusive with the one woman allowed in being Queen Elizabeth II in 1991. It has also been featured across works of art, two notable ones being Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* (See Footnote 8) and *The Way of the World.*

[11] Figure 1: *A Rake's Progress* is a series of eight paintings by 18th-century English artist William Hogarth. The canvases were produced in 1732–33, then engraved and published in print form in 1734. The series shows the decline and fall of Tom Rakewell. The original paintings are in the collection of Sir John Soane's Museum in London. Figure A depicts the sixth engraving of the series.

[12] "Chocolate Production and Uses in 17th and 18th Century North America." James F. Gay.

"American than American Pie"[13] (290). It was one of the few things, a subset of trade practices that was linking the two worlds together amidst their fraying strands of connection as the New World declared its independence.

Chocolate also allowed other products of slavery like sugar to flourish. If one were to compare the recipe of chocolate drink between the two centuries the comparison yields the following result. In 1692 the following recipe[14] was published by M. St. Disdier of France:

> 2 pounds prepared cacao
> 1 pound fine sugar
> 1/3 ounce cinnamon
> 1/24 ounce powdered cloves
> 1/24 ounce Indian pepper (chile)
> 1 1/4 ounce vanilla

> A paste was made of these dried ingredients on a heated stone and then it was boiled to make hot chocolate. (DeWitt)

By 1700, Sidney Mintz notes, "Chiles" disappeared completely from the recipes and was replaced with an extra ounce of sugar. He attributes this to the significance of sugar as a luxury product that "embodied the social position of the wealthy and powerful" (140). He further elaborates "sugar's usefulness as a mark of rank—to validate one's social position. To elevate others, or to define them as inferior" (139). Sugar and chocolate are thus related to the aristocracy and a performance of power. Mintz also argues: "… the simultaneous control of both the foods themselves and the meanings they are made to connote can be a means of a pacific domination" (153). The aristocracy's clinging to chocolate to define their status, and the increase in portion of sugar and cocoa, which represents the new money culture, emphasizes how chocolate becomes symbolic of both the old and new social order.

The trajectory that the consumption pattern of chocolate followed marks it out as a symbol of change. The bitter cocoa extract of the 1650s which was discarded by all initially became the envious frothy "food of the gods" in the eighteenth century, symbolising the nature of the change that the turn of the eighteenth century brought. A change that said loud and clear that the aim is to not destroy the old culture, but in the true essence of its utilitarian ideology, the purpose is to preserve the best parts of the old while recreating a convenient New. An analogy one can also draw here is the discarding of trade as a practice by the aristocrat as it required 'work', whereas for centuries they had survived on taxes and land exploitation— ultimately it was trade that overturned the class order like the discarded chocolate condiment.

The seeds of the Industrial Revolution can be seen in the production of cocoa as people discovered newer implements to mass produce chocolate as demand for it increased. In France, in 1776, Doret invented a hydraulic process to grind cocoa beans into a paste, facilitating the first large-scale production of chocolate. The constant inventions and experimentation with the recipe of the drink and the implements associated also hinted towards the countenance of an age obsessed with science and innovation.

To conclude, chocolate and Chocolate Houses themselves became an emblem of social relations in London and more importantly, social change in the eighteenth century. The consumption and production peaked and declined with the beginning and ending of the century, thus pointing to the whimsical time that the eighteenth century was. The production declined in line with the revolutionary ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity and the rejection of most things seen as luxurious, but when chocolate returned in the nineteenth century as a product of industrial mass production and not upper class decadence—it stayed.

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[13] James F. Gay. It's also concerned with the idea that cocoa is homegrown via slave labor on the American soil whereas Apple pie really came from England in the initial form of meat pies. Cocoa beans like other plantation crops needed extensive human labor thereby allowing slavery to play a major role in its production.

[14] From "Chiles and Chocolate." Dave DeWitt.

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Deconstructing the Myth of the Woman in Fairy Tales: Angela Carter's "Snow Child" and "Company of Wolves"

Samidha Kalia

The classical European fairy tale genre reflects the social, cultural and gendered characteristics of the nation. Even though oral fairy tales are usually associated with women, they were compiled by male scribes for the longest time. The writing of these tales was influenced by patriarchal discourses, and hence, the female character in the fairy tale is always secondary to the male. The beginning of the twentieth century saw a rise in the reworking of these fairy tales, which led to a questioning of the foundation of fairy tales and the nature of the traditional fairy tale genre. Angela Carter was one of the influential writers of this period and re-wrote some of these the tales exposing the sexism and misogyny in them. This paper looks at Carter's "Snow Child" and "Company of Wolves" as a rewriting and remaking of Grimm's "Snow White" and Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood", subverting the established literary tradition through themes of female desire, lesbianism and language. It also analyses the feminist approach Carter takes in her writing and further looks at Carter's interpretation of the elements of bestiality and animalistic desires that both women and men engage with in fairy tales. By looking at these themes, it ultimately hopes to conduct an exploration of the limitations and restrictions placed on desire in traditional fairy tales, and how Carter challenges this notion.

"All Art is political and so is mine. I want readers to understand what it is that I mean by my stories." (*Fireworks* vii)

Introduction

The Classical European fairy tale genre reflects the "social, cultural and gender characteristics of the nation" (Azizmohammadi 32). Oral fairy tales were usually told by women (Azizmohammadi 3), which carried the concerns of their gender. However, they were compiled and written down by male writers (Bartu 9). When written down by male scribes, the gaps within these stories were exposed, as they were written with a patriarchal discourse in mind. And so usually, the female character in the fairy tale was always secondary to the male. Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, together known as the Brothers Grimm, were pioneering writers of German society who wrote down and used oral folktales in order to provide the reader "pleasure from different depictions of power transformation" and the rise of the "seemingly ineffectual, disadvantaged" people to privileged status (Zipes qtd. in Introduction xvii).

From the twentieth century onwards, there was a rise in the reworking of these fairy tales. This led to questioning the foundation of fairy tales and pondering on the nature of the traditional fairy tale genre. One such writer Angela Carter, re-wrote the tales, exposing the sexism and misogyny of both the male writers and the male heroes. With the publishing of *The Bloody Chambers and Other Short Stories* (1979), Carter destabilizes the myth of the woman in a fairy tale by rewriting the conventional fairy tale themes through systematic and stylistic parody. She writes about the gender conditions of her culture and incessantly defines the ground her gender is standing upon. By subverting the themes of sexual desires and liberation she uses parody[1] as a form of critique. Carter's stories borrow heavily from the original fairy tales but promotes female agency by giving an alternate "happily ever after" in a more egalitarian and independent way, by breaking free from the figures of restriction. This paper will look at Carter's "Snow Child" and "Company of Wolves" as a rewriting and remaking of Grimm's "Snow White" and Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood".

Carter conveys new messages and realities within the contours of the old tales, which enables the reader to compare and contrast her tale with the original story. Her female heroine is, however, smart, quick-witted and makes her own decisions. Along with giving a

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[1] Parody is a subversive imitation of an original text with the purpose of mockery and criticism.

feminist twist to her writing, Carter also talks about elements of bestiality and animalistic desire that both women and men have to suppress. Through such a condition she points out the restrictions which are prevalent for both the sexes. Moreover, Carter doesn't banish the male canon; instead she redeploys and parodies it to feminist ends (Bartu 61).

The Bloody Chamber and Other Short Stories carry both poetic and parodic elements as post-modern[2] and feminist writing. Female desire, lesbianism and language are the ways in which she targets this literary tradition. Her work is a mixture of parody, pastiche and inter-textuality. These two short stories deal with the notion of "dreadful pleasure" (Carter 49) and culturally conditioned sexuality, the taboo of 'dark' erotic desires in both the female and the male, and the possibility of altering gender roles where Red Riding Hood becomes the symbol of redemption for the "bestiality" of the wolf, by giving in to her own "beast like sexual appetite" (Carter 186-187). Her characters move from language, articulation and writing to a more sensory realm of understanding.

Carter's stories have been defined as an "ongoing process"[3] rather than an "independent body of work" (qtd. in Bartu 50). Through her revision of the fairy tale genre, she has paved the way for a different view of women in folktales, by demanding and simultaneously providing them a voice. She transgresses the frame of traditional tales and unfolds the implicit sexual references. Along with structural changes, she also alters the contextual qualities of the tale, hence it is no longer a cautionary tale, but a postmodern parody which highlights sexual awakening and mutual desires between animal and human.

Folklore: Placing Angela Carter

Folktale as a genre has been open to speculation and is seen as a primordial form of literature, as it has been constantly evolved and nourished. The etymological term *fairy* was given by Thomas Keightly from the Latin word *fata* meaning "superior being", which later became a verb *fantare,* "to enchant". From fata

later came "Faerie", and in 1300 circa, the English language adopted the word and transformed it into "fairy" (Bartu 14). According to J.R.R. Tolkien it means "which touches on or uses Faerie, whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy" (qtd. in Bartu 14).

Most critics have identified a set of structures that conventionally form a fairy tale. These tales are interwoven with punishment and predicaments of ordinary people with regard to their social lives. They are seen as ageless, timeless and dateless and offer insights into the universal human dilemmas that span difference of age, culture and geography (Harries 1-2). They usually start with 'once upon a time' which also constitutes a form of equilibrium; the second phase is where the antagonistic forces place a curse and upset said equilibrium, which results in a quest and finally, the victory of the protagonist, usually by the help of external male parties. The third phase is the defeat of the evil forces, through innocence and beauty, which again is identified with the male power, that create a 'rags to riches' situation. And finally, they end with a life and promise of a new harmonious equilibrium or 'happily ever after'. Therefore, these tales embrace wonder, resurrections and magical transformations—there is a remote kingdom, with particularity of characters, which are named by their occupation or other defining characteristics, like King, Queen, Beauty, Red Riding Hood, and Prince Charming. There is an impossibility associated with their names, because they can't exist in a realistic environment. Max Luthi says, "[fairy tales] conquer time by ignoring it" (44).

In the Brothers Grimm's collection, only one in every ten female characters has a name, and even then, the proper name of the character is unknown. It follows the classical fairy tale genre—a question or a trail is repeated three times, by the end of which the heroine is rewarded with marriage, prestige, and a husband to protect her. The only major prerequisite is that each female character has to have beauty, as inner beauty and outer beauty are linked together. However, for the Prince there are no such qualms—chivalry, prowess

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[2] Postmodernism does not simply support aesthetic 'isms', or avant-garde movements, such as minimalism or conceptualism. It has a distinct way of seeing the world as a whole, and uses a set of philosophical ideas that not only support an aesthetic but also analyse a 'late capitalist' cultural condition of 'postmodernity', as per Christopher Butler in his book *A Very Short Introduction to Postmodernism* (14-15).

[3] Linden Peach: "[Her writings] are best read not as an independent text, but as a part of an ongoing process." (22)

and gallantry are seen as the major attributes. The female has to be passive, beautiful and inactive while the male saves her from her beauty, which is a boon and a curse. The female doesn't play any active role in her own story, she has to be resigned, obedient and self-sacrificing. Heroes and heroines are binaries; the heroine should be patient to win the heart of the bold, intrepid hero (Bartu 31). The final group of characters are the villains. The evil stepmother and the witch are a common trope.

England has been an important ground for the emergence of fairy tales, especially since the Middle-Ages. Folklore was seen as genuine superstition about miraculous events, customs and 'pagan' practices; these were later adopted by playwrights such as Marlowe, Shakespeare, Chaucer and Spenser. Later, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and Kipling's *Jungle Book* were also added to the genre. Finally, in the twentieth century Angela Carter and Roald Dahl wrote within the same framework. The Disney Studio began mass-market commodification of these tales in the media around the 1930s. In every film there was music and song and the inner thoughts of the characters were revealed through these. A girl/woman was usually rescued by a worthy man; there was the inevitable heterosexual marriage and by the end of it, the secondary characters—usually the talking animals or inanimate objects—danced and sang about the 'happily ever after'.

When Carter writes in the late twentieth century, she parodies the sexist nature of the resolutions given for women in the stories. She alters these representations of women with her own re-writing of the story. The idea is to disrupt the long-established quotidian and ordinary notions of the female character. She says:

> I spent good many years being told what I ought to think, and how I ought to behave, and how I ought to write, even, because I was a woman and men thought they had the right to tell me how to feel, but when I stopped listening to them and tried to figure it out for myself they didn't stop talking, oh, dear no. So, I started answering back, how simple, not to say simplistic, this all sounds; yet it is true.
> (Carter v)

Her aim is to estrange the reader from the text by altering the 'grand narrative', and none of her fiction is real or social-realist since, through her non-realistic fictional world, she wants to de-familiarise and confuse the reader (Bartu 62). Her fiction includes a wide spectrum of genres—gothic, science fiction, paranormal, pornographic—and that gives her a post-modernist tendency. Carter creates independent content and ideology, while paying homage to the tradition. She deconstructs heterosexual normative love and challenges the assumptions of sexuality and gender. Margaret Atwood calls her "Fairy Godmother" (qtd. in Bartu 65). The women in Carter's stories are rewarded for being active and curious, as well as for chasing their own sexual appetite, hence addressing the problematic treatment of sexuality and gender within the fairy tale genre.

Carter breaks down the dichotomies and stereotypes containing sexuality of women and female agency. Her heroines refuse to deny their sexuality and allow themselves to not be part of the traditional narrative of punishment and victimization, thereby propelling the reader to make the same choice. Carter has said in multiple interviews that she is interested in the "latent content of stories" (Bartu 55) that are about cannibalism, incest, bestiality and female sexuality, and that is what she explores in "Snow Child" and "Company of Wolves".

Snow White or Snow Child?

'Snow White' has been depicted across media, literature and culture in a variety of ways. The earliest version of it, "The Young Slave"[4] is about an evil aunt who is suspicious of her young beautiful niece who might be sleeping with her husband. The Spanish version looks at the Queen demanding not the heart of Snow White but her blood in a vial stoppered with her toe. Disney uses the poisoned apple rather than the earliest version of the Brothers Grimm, where the young Snow White is a child of her mother's desire, born as white as snow, hair as black as ebony and as red as blood. After giving birth the mother dies, and the father remarries. The evil stepmother is jealous of Snow White and her beauty due to her Magic Mirror: "Snow White is the fairest of them all" (Grimm 249-258).

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[4] "The Young Slave" was first published in the Giambattista Basile's collection called "*The Pentamerone*" (1788). The Spanish version was written shortly after.

Snow White escapes the hunter and walks into the house of the seven dwarves; she befriends them and forgets about her kingdom. However, the evil Queen pursues her and through the trial of three, finally gives her a poisoned apple after which Snow White falls unconscious. Later when the dwarves take Snow White away in a glass coffin, a passing Prince asks to see Snow White once without the coffin. As soon as the coffin is opened the apple falls off her hand and she wakes up. The Prince marries Snow White, because they are in love and the evil Queen dies of rage and jealousy. In another version of the Brothers Grimm's, the King's son pleads the dwarves to allow him to have Snow White: "Let me have *it* as a gift, for I cannot live without seeing Snow White. I will honour and prize her as my dearest possession" (221, my own emphasis).

In all the narratives of "Snow White" the underlying principle is female jealousy. "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves" could actually be called "Snow White and the Evil Stepmother" as the action of the plot is oriented and held by these women (Gilbert and Gubar 35). Gilbert and Gubar further suggest that on a basic level the mother is threatened by the 'budding sexuality' of the girl and hence wants to get rid of her (35-36).

In "The Snow Child" Carter uses the traditional fairy tale mould but subverts all other notions of it. This five-hundred-word short story begins with "midwinter, invincible, immaculate" (152) which critics[5] have pointed out as the three characters—the midwinter Snow Child, the invincible Count and the immaculate Countess. The two main characters, the Count and "his" Countess are introduced. The Count precedes every other description, placing him as the patriarchal authority and power. The Countess is introduced through him, almost as if she is an object and afterthought. They are both described in very visual and stark colour imagery, against the blank canvas of the snow. The colours red, black and white—associated with the original tale—however, unlike the original, here this represents the whiteness of the snow, the blackness and the red "high, shinning boots" of the Countess and the grey of the Count (152). This tale is different from the source tale in two aspects, first that only the Countess is depicted in black, and that the absent father is very present in this tale through the Count.

The father is the most effective character of the tale, as it is his desires and not the Countess' that give birth to Snow Child. The pair is seen as yearning for a prey, and the Snow Child, who appears not as a child but as a young girl "stark naked" is seen as the "child of his desires"(153). However, the reader is aware that his wish is not fatherly but erotic, he creates a "masculine fantasy image of a woman" and not a beautiful daughter (Bartu 95).

Once the nameless girl is introduced she sets competition between herself and the Countess for the attention of the Count. Three times the Countess tries to eliminate her: by dropping her glove and asking the child to fetch it, second by asking the girl to get her diamond brooch from the frozen pond; however, the Count always negates the request. Every time her request is denied, one piece of clothing of the Countess, and her belongings are taken by the girl, who is riding with the Count. It is only at the third trial, when she asks the child to bring her a rose, that the Count allows it and the Snow Child, plucks the rose, "pricks her finger on the thorn; bleeds; screams; falls" (153). Almost in the next paragraph without wasting anytime, the Count dismounts "weeping" and rapes the dead girl by "thrusting his virile member into" her (153). The Countess witnesses this paedophilic as well as necrophiliac act and looks at him "narrowly"—by witnessing this act she too becomes complicit in this evil. Yet, perhaps her resigned emotion doesn't make her an oppressed figure; it makes her powerful because she is in accordance with her husband's deeds. The Count regains his composure and offers the same rose to his wife, while the Snow Child "melts into nothing" (153). As soon as she takes the rose, she drops it as "it bites" (153). Even though the traditional female fairy tale atmosphere is dominant, Carter asks a larger question than just parodying the narrative. Carter explores the idea of whether the same woman can be both a victim and a villain in the patriarchal

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[5] For a detailed discussion, see Cemre Mimoza Bartu's "Disenchanting Patriarchal fairy tales" and Soman Chainani's "Sadeian Tragedy: The Politics of Content Revision in Angela Carter's 'Snow Child'".

world.

Carter looks at the hatred of the stepmother in the larger social context, where the child hasn't been born by the sexual union of the two; rather the Count is the only agent of creation. There is a complex triangle of desire in the father, mother and the child figure. She only focuses on the main motif of female rivalry without the dwarves, the apple or the hunter, which are secondary to the text. Carter gives us the opposite to address the glossed over divergences in form and incomplete conclusions of the heroine focused analysis (Chainani 212-235). "Snow Child" empowers neither the heroine nor the villains—it only provides the power imbalances in the patriarchal status quo. Carter decries pornography as the greatest bastion of repression as it keeps "sex in its place" outside "everyday human intercourse" (qtd. in Chainani 220).

"Snow Child" is seen as an 'erotic fable' as it works with the present tense—an immediate departure from the once upon a time' tale, very much like the oral folktale tradition with an omniscient narrator. Carter's focus is on the Countess' evil notions; however, she draws parallels with the Prince and the Count by showing how Snow White was "deflowered" by the Prince in her "glass coffin" (Grimm 249-258) whereas the Count rapes Snow Child once she reaches sexual maturity but does so in public and in front of his wife. The underlying notion being that both the male characters exploit her when she is unconscious, hence the never-ending struggle of being a woman isn't over even in death. Snow Child doesn't seem like a character, more like an object that ceases to exist once its task has been done. The Count asserts right to ownership on both the virgin, by exploiting her and on the wife, by making her watch his actions. In the end however the Countess survives the "prick" because she isn't a virgin, whereas the virgin perishes. Thus, Carter's story exhibits sexuality at the unconscious level.

There is a desire-power relationship, which is latent in the fairy tale plot, the means of violence and recklessness, where it is the antihero and villain who achieve rewards by killing the innocent girl. The Count is a prototype for 'civilised monsters' who stand for the mechanisation for the repression of young girls. Jacques Barchilon says that "it is not child rape – how can one rape a child made of snow – but an event in the artistic realm of supernatural" (Barchilon qtd. in Duncker 58-68). He definitely sympathizes with the Count, but many other critics argue that Carter is not fixated on the role of the rape; rather it is the role of the Countess that interests her. The Count's sadistic tendencies recede in the background as the female is highlighted. The Countess' desire to retain and attain her status is more powerful and hence she doesn't give up her illusion of power. The Countess at the onset of the story is only described through her clothes, clothes given to her by the Count, which are replaceable (much like her) as later the Snow Child possess her clothes. The Countess is literally and symbolically stripped of her clothing, which gives her an identity, a status and dignity in society. What the Countess lacks, in terms of *purity*, the child has naturally. Red associated with the sexuality of the girl, and black as the Countess—representing the girl's death—are together seen as a combination of sex and death. Under the patriarchal ideology two women cannot have the same power; they have to compete for power by wooing the man to their side and eliminate the threat created by the other woman by eliminating her.

The more the Countess fights the Count, the more she becomes out of favour, until at last the child dies and the Countess has momentarily won, because as soon as the Count gives birth to another fantasy, she will have to compete. The narrative ends how it starts—the Countess goes back to "being a wife" once again (Carter 152-153). Carter uses language to force us to look at the damage done to women. The villain is the woman without maternal predilections and with an illusion of agency (Gilbert and Gubar 36). Angela Carter shows how consent is not a concern to those who wield power. The dehumanisation of women is presented when the Snow Child is not resurrected like in the source tale, showing that every woman's end comes not from another woman but through the patriarchal system, from the man who is supposedly her protector. Unlike the Prince, the Count's act of looking at the girl in terms of his possession leads him to deny her resurrection. Through "Snow Child" Carter unfolds the horror of patriarchal, authoritative powers and shows that there is a need for fairy tales, because women continue to suffer under patriarchal power systems as they face issues

of rape, incest, abuse and are overlooked and marginalised. Fairy tales and the reworking of these tales can give them a voice.

"Little Red Riding Hood" is another parable made famous by the characteristic of the red shawl given to a young child by her mother, as she sets out to visit her grandmother. Numerous narratives of the same tale exist. In the Italian and Asian variations, the wolf tricks the girl into unwittingly eating her grandmother's bones and drinking her blood (Bartu 38). In another, the little girl escapes due to her own cunning, by asking the wolf if she can answer nature's call and then slipping off to her house. In another version the grandmother and Red trick the wolf and drown him. The tale is known for its indeterminate ending. The Brothers Grimm change Charles Perrault's version by placing the hunter figure as the saviour rather than letting the wolf devour the young child. "Red Riding Hood" embodies a certain discourse on adult prohibition and child sexuality and gender.

However, all versions punish the villain through death and the triumph of the heroines is removed by the advent of a male figure. The emphasis is on transgression. The folktale suggests that young girls should be wary of men who hunt little girls and take away their virginity, or that the beastly male wolf "devours" the child. There is an association between predatory masculinity, wolfishness, and childhood vulnerability. In sixteenth century France, the phrase '*elle a vu le loup*'('she has seen the wolf') also meant 'she has lost her virginity' (Reid 6). Perrault's version focuses on childish disobedience and sexual transgression. Jack Zipes says that the story has transformed into a "bourgeois parable of appropriate sexual behaviours" (qtd in Bartu 88). However, sexuality is a construct, as ever institutionalised power influences our knowledge of sexuality and paradoxically necessitates the continuation of power (Reid 8). Many critics see these versions as a conflict between the id and the ego, which the huntsmen and the wolf provide. Carter however, was angered by this particular interpretation where the female figures and their sexuality are seen as inherently transgressive and in need of control and containment.

Tales in the Company of Wolves.

In Carter's Wolf Trilogy, she gives each of the three short stories a twist, however, focus is on the second story "Company of Wolves", where Red is not a child but a young girl, described as "an unbroken egg, she is a sealed vessel" and the "brilliant red shawl" is described as "the red of blood, of her menses" (192). She makes her way to her grandmother's house, when she meets a young handsome hunter. They quickly become friends and the hunter shows her a compass and challenges her that he will reach the house of her grandmother before the young girl. A deal is struck that if he reaches first he gets a kiss, and Red looks forward to it. Carter makes her fierce female character aware of her sexual yearnings, someone who wants to kiss the hunter and is not afraid to show it.

The hunter reaches the house of the grandmother before the girl and in a very erotic description is transformed into a werewolf. He eats the Grandmother, who is, ironically, reading the Bible. When Red reaches her grandmother's house she is a little disappointed to see that the hunter has not yet come. She looks for her missing grandmother, and seeing the naked werewolf, quickly understands that the hunter has killed her grandmother. The trial of three commences; the last question is asked: "What big teeth you have!" to which the wolf answers "Better to eat you with, my dear" (196). At this point, Carter breaks off from the traditional fairy tale story and Red laughs in the face of the Wolf, telling him that she is "No body's meat" (196). The wolf orders the girl to strip, and give him his kiss. They lie together and the wolf "consumes" the girl. The end of the story shows the girl sleeping "in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf" (200).

Carter's Red is neither a masochistic victim of rape nor the fallen woman. Red explores her own sexual cravings and challenges social rules of conduct; she indulges in a sexual act with the wolf on her own desires and willingly makes a bargain for her life. The tale itself begins not with her plight but that of the werewolves, who are described as "shadows", "Wraith", and "Devil incarnate" (185). The wolf isn't just a wolf but a werewolf, suggesting that he is both the human and the devil, a melancholic figure that can't help his bestiality and wants

redemption. A traditional telling would focus on the wolf being active, cunning and representative of the unbridled male libido. However, Carter's wolf is guilty, anguished and there is an "inherent sadness" in him (183). Carter parodies the wolf and the hunter (saviour and evil) by placing both the roles in the werewolf. The setting of the forest is also seen as "commonplace of a rustic seduction" (183), where the hierarchies are upturned, where the norms of the 'normal' world don't hold. The werewolf's motives aren't controlled by meat but the desire for flesh. He breaks the "unbroken shell" of the young girl by making her aware of her own autonomous sexual desire. The rewriting transgresses the traditional tale and unfolds explicit sexual references; structural and contextual changes to the plot parody the mutual relationship between animal and human as well as the sexual awakening associated with it.

Carter structures the story around familiar opposites: human and animal, innocence and experience, obedience and disobediences, predator and victim—the werewolf has an indeterminate position between the animal and the human, and due to the bodily violence he goes through when he shifts, he is the victim and the predator. Carter also questions Christianity, as the generational conflict among the granny and the child is evident. The grandmother has been taught to repress her sexuality, and read the Bible; she sees her sexuality as abject and shameful and that is why even though she perishes her last description of the wolf is only through sexual vocabulary: "His genitals, huge. Ah! Huge" (196). When seen as opposites, Grandmother's sexual repression and submission leads to her death, whereas Red's sexuality leads her towards freedom of choice.

The young girl and her grandmother represent the opposites of female sexuality. Even when she sheds off her clothes and lies with the wolf, she can hear the bones of her grandmother cracking beneath the bed and yet she doesn't pay them any heed. Her virginity, rather than being seen as a treasure, empowers her. Carter removes any possible male hero and makes the story female-centric. The consummation is described as a "savage marriage bed" (198), where the girl refuses to be a weak, vulnerable figure and wrests back her agency. She refuses to put herself under the servile position of the wolf; and shifts the power from the wolf to herself. Carter indirectly hints at the fact that everyone has a beast inside them, and Red connects to her beast and overcomes the societal dangers.

The wolf is a walking appetite—sexuality incarnate—unable to suppress his desires. Red overcomes him by giving into her own desires. Through the staging of the generational conflict and dismantling the distinction between human and animal, Carter allows for liberating and transgressive identification between Red Riding Hood and the wolf, which challenges hierarchal views of gender, and engages with contemporary theories about identity and gender construction through liberation of sexuality (Reid 23).

Conclusion

In both of Carter's tales, infants and children are changed into sexually matured, nameless girls who are at the precipice of womanhood. She presents both the evil and the good, but ultimately every female has to be "evil" in order to achieve her desire. Carter foregrounds the latent sexual content of the original tale, so that rather than a rape myth, punishing female sexuality, Red embraces her own animalistic side, by asserting her sexuality and reversing the moral of the fairy tale. The female character takes up the task of literally and metaphorically taming the animalistic male figure. Carter challenges the idea of passivity in women for sexual, romantic, social affairs. The woman is liberated through her own free will; even if what she is doing leads to the murder of a child.

Angela Carter uses the same problematic conventions of sexual exploitation allowed by the social apparatus that both defines and restricts sexuality and gender as constructs, all the while blurring ethical and moral boundaries by forcing the oppressed to be a part of the mechanism that perpetuates their own destruction, in the sense of rendering them displaced and dissatisfied, unaware of their own identity and the limitations exposed (Ignjatović 7).

Carter re-writes her own fairy tales by using unconventional and non-conformist ideas. In the "Snow Child", the only way the Countess can stay in power is by eliminating the child of the Count's desire, and the only

way Red, in "The Company of Wolves", can escape victimisation is by choosing to give in to her own desires. Both women are at the opposite ends of a spectrum, and embody different struggles. Countess' struggle is related to time and age, and Red's struggle is against society's parameters and her budding sexuality. In a way, Carter provides a way for other writers to expand the horizons of the classical fairy-tale genre. She strives to create a new culture in the restrictive parameters of the existing structure.

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The Mary Sue and Her Audiences: Studying Female Fantasies

Tanvi Chowdhary

This paper attempts to analyse the gendered spaces of transformative works, such as fanfiction, focusing particularly on the writing trope "Mary Sue". This typified author-insert changes the canonical space by making the fictional universe centre around the identity of this one character. The criticism of "Mary Sue" as being poorly written fails to take into account that the "Mary Sue" also comes from a gendered identity and is fundamentally a female fantasy. The paper traces the Mary Sue's transformation from her original form in multiple ways—partly through the pressure of audience-based backlash, and partly through an evolving culture of policing the female fan identity. It also attempts to analyse the reception of the Mary Sue within the domain she functions in, especially with regards to misogynistic trends. Ultimately, this paper seeks to explore two conflicted areas of understanding Mary Sues. Do we study her as an expression of female fantasies in an alternative space, one which is never given legitimacy? Yet, in doing so, do we ignore the genuinely problematic messages that are delivered by the more passive Mary Sues, which work with traditional patriarchal misogyny? The Mary Sue is a female reimagining of a canonical space which can be overtly misogynistic or poorly written—but both her audience and her reception is a telling indicator of what the popular perception of female protagonists is.

"Hi my name is Ebony Dark'ness Dementia Raven Way"
(XXXbloodyrists666XXX)

Transformative works have been essential to literature since time immemorial. However, our current understanding of them as "fanfiction" is a function of a modern relationship between the author and the audience. The privatisation of intellectual property that birthed the author figure[1] is one that is challenged through the very nature of a transformative work. On the other hand, the genre of fanfiction as is currently known has been relegated to the margins: delegitimised and ignored, fanfiction is supposed to reside in secret spaces. Fanfiction is, then, a space which originates in the margins—the fact that it is made up largely of women[2] testifies to this.

The gendered spaces of transformative fiction were originally a playground for women to rethink the canon. The authority of the author is questioned, since the notion of what makes an author is societally constructed.

Michel Foucault's theorisation on the origins of the author examine this challenge:

> Once a system of ownership for texts came into being, once strict rules concerning author's rights, author-publisher relations, rights of reproduction, and related matters were enacted - at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century - the possibility of transgression attached to the act of writing took on, more and more, the form of an imperative peculiar to literature. It is as if the author, beginning with the moment at which he was placed in the system of property that characterizes our society, compensated for the status that he thus acquired by rediscovering the old bipolar field of discourse, systematically practicing transgression and thereby restoring danger to a writing that was now guaranteed the benefits of ownership. (Foucault 168)

The writers of fanfiction are evidently carving the canon to make their own space.

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[1] The figure of the author is an essential notion of literature: by placing the author at the centre of our understanding of any text, we construct the author as a figure that is, ultimately, the centre of meaning for the text. The intellectual ownership that the author extends over the meaning of the text is a function of multiple sociological and economical forces—the all-powerful author emerges once texts become the private property of those who write them — where they are no longer subject to the reimagination and interpretation of the folk imagination. However, "Fan crafting allows previously marginalized voices to take centre stage" (Jenkins 23), reclaiming the power of interpretation for the audience.

[2] Camille Bacon-Smith theorises that 90% of fancrafting is done by women. (Bacon-Smith 110)

Since a majority of the writers are female, the existence of the writing device that inserts an original character into the narrative—known as the writing trope "Mary Sue"—is an interesting phenomenon. This typified author-insert changes the canonical space by making the fictional universe centre around the identity of one character. Despite being critically lamented as a poorly constructed phenomenon in writing, the "Mary Sue" also comes from a gendered identity, and is in its purest form a female fantasy. That amateur female authors find it necessary to insert themselves into mainstream media through transformative works is something that plays with transgressive identity politics: why do they feel the urge to put women at the centre of their stories? How do we infer their choice to give this fantasy a voice in an alternative space such as fanfiction? Where do we locate the audience of the Mary Sue?

"Gee, Golly, Gosh, Gloriosky": Why a Mary Sue?

The "fandom" as we now know it originated during the first runs of the TV show *Star Trek*, and consisted of female writers creating the equivalent of fanfiction known as 'fanzines'. Paula Smith coined the term "Mary Sue" in her fanzine *A Trekkie's Tale*, which was a parody of what a lot of authorial inserts were. The original Mary Sue can be illustrated through the first few paragraphs of the fanzine alone:

> 'Gee, golly, gosh, gloriosky,' thought Mary Sue as she stepped on the bridge of the Enterprise. 'Here I am, the youngest lieutenant in the fleet - only fifteen and a half years old.' Captain Kirk came up to her.
>
> 'Oh, Lieutenant, I love you madly. Will you come to bed with me?'
>
> 'Captain! I am not that kind of girl!'
>
> 'You're right, and I respect you for it. Here, take over the ship for a minute while I go get some coffee for us.' (P. Smith)

Paula Smith accurately demonstrated—in an exaggerated fashion—the rather unbelievable traits of characters such as Piper in *Dreadnought* (Carey). The subliminal message being conveyed about what a Mary

Sue is then becomes simple: she is "exotically beautiful, often having an unusual hair or eye color [...] She's exceptionally talented in an implausibly wide variety of areas, and may possess skills that are rare or nonexistent in the canon setting. She also lacks any realistic, or at least story-relevant, character flaws—either that or her 'flaws' are obviously meant to be endearing" (TV Tropes).

Barring the character traits that are associated with the Mary Sue—she is, fundamentally, a character that makes a fictional universe about her. The universe stops having substance because it comprises of a single character. However, what these descriptions and definitions of a Mary Sue fail to understand is that she is *wish fulfilment:*

> This is just pure wish fulfilment. She's a backstory-less bundle of positive character traits with nothing behind the eyes and the story's no fun unless you like pretending to be her. Because the story is entirely centred around people reaffirming how great she is. Now this was the Gen One Mary Sue. The original, shameless, girls just wanna have fun fic insert. And honestly, I'm not going to complain about her. (Red)

The question, then, is not what the Mary Sue is and what purpose she serves but *why* she is necessary. "In spite of the controversy, and perhaps at the root of it, most fans will readily admit to having written at least one Mary Sue story" (Bacon-Smith 97)—which begs the question, why? Her existence alone is a small miracle: an unabashed female fantasy, unconcerned about who it pleases and who it responds to—written for a primarily female audience. The Mary Sue's most interesting trait, however, is that she enters a
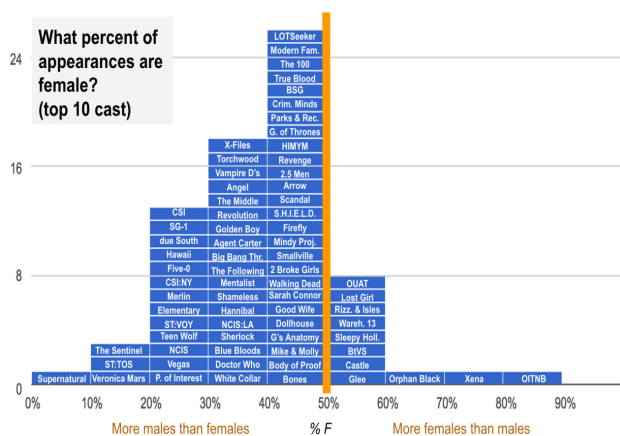

Figure 1

male centric world:

> **Current popular U.S. TV is about 40% female** – very clearly biased in terms of gender representation – according to a number of different possible ways of measuring. The average is about the same for a number of metrics I looked at based on both number of cast members and number of appearance. (Destinationtoast)

This statistical analysis conducted by Destinationtoast in 2015 shows the very clear bias in media representation of women. When the Mary Sue originated, it was in the 1970s.

The Mary Sue is a female entering the canonical universe and making it her *own*. She is, ultimately, the female voice—previously relegated to the sides becoming the subject of the story. The act of writing a female into a story which is dominantly centred around men continues as a fantasy written for exclusively female eyes. Additionally, it is also an expression of the kind of representation of character they would like to see. "For intelligent women struggling with their culturally anomalous identities, Mary Sue combines the characteristics of active agent with the culturally approved traits of beauty, sacrifice, and self-effacement, which magic recipe wins her the love of the hero" (Bacon-Smith 101). She is defined by her "*moreness*" (Frey 29)—and yet, there is a large part of her that is constrained.

The Mary Sue takes on characteristics traditionally associated with male protagonists, becoming the centre of the story. This transgression made by her is reigned in through her childishness, her naivete, the ease of her existence. She does not have to fight men for the position in the centre—she is given that. Her "childish behaviour" can be read "as a coping mechanism she has used herself or observed in her friends to mask the threat their own intelligence and competence poses to men." (Bacon-Smith 102)

The unabashed control the Mary Sue wields over the story and the canon lends her a currency of power that female writers do not often see in mainstream representations of female heroes. She is the "figure of subaltern critique," (Chander and Sunder 597) upstaging the heroes who follow the traditionally masculine ideal. However, despite the prevalence of women in fan spaces, the Mary Sue faces unceasing backlash due to the implausibility of her characterisation. The construction of this characterisation is subject to the gendered politics of the space she rises out of: despite being a female space for writing, the Mary Sue is incapable of realising her potential as a hero. She negotiates notions of female fan identity and heroism, and in it, she has to become the centre of the fictional universe without becoming too obtrusive.

Cooties and Girls: Where are the Women?

The Mary Sue has changed from her original form in multiple ways—partly through the pressure of audience based backlash, and partly through an evolving culture of policing the female fan identity. The reception of the Mary Sue within the domain she functions in is interesting, when we consider that transformative fiction as we currently understand it comes from a fan-culture based in the foundation of female forums. While fanculture is the prevalent way to access communities that enjoy the same media, their representation in mainstream media is largely of male communities—as shown in *The Big Bang Theory* and *Revenge of the Nerds*. Female writers, then, occupy something of a secret space within fan-culture. Fanfiction, despite being the most prolific expression of women's writing is denied the legitimacy that other forms of media enjoy.

There is a secrecy to the space that online fan-culture operates in. Accounts of persecution[3] during the early stages of online fan-culture increased the anonymity of it. The illegitimacy associated with transforming a work without the author's consent is only part of the reason. The culture of collective reimagining began with *Star Trek* and was spearheaded by women.

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[3] During the 1970s and 80s, fanfiction was considered taboo—to the point that the owners of the source materials attempted to persecute those who practiced fancrafting. A famous example of this is Anne Rice, author of various Young Adult books. Anne Rice was known to legally persecute those who wrote fanfiction about her stories. Additionally, fancrafting has faced persecution from the very websites that host them—in 2008, *Fanfiction.net* purged a large number of works which were considered "inappropriate." This is what led to the creation of *Archive of Our Own*—a website that was constructed by fancrafters and for the sole purpose of protecting the interests of those who wrote fanfiction.

I had grown knowledgeable enough in the science fiction community to recognize a basic hostility against the "Trekkies," who were seen by my predominantly male informants as a blight on the convention scene, an embarrassment to right-thinking science fiction fans, and something less than intelligent. (Bacon-Smith 86)

Women formed these communities. In another act of transgression, they formed these communities either to insert themselves into the narrative or to explore the homoerotic relationship between Spock and Captain Kirk (now termed 'slash'). Fancrafting gives these women the tools to reinterpret the canon according to their needs, making simple the task of "inexorably blurring, by an extreme subtilisation, the relation between the writer and his characters; by making of the narrator not he who has seen and felt nor even he who is writing, but he who is going to write" (Barthes 144).

The communities of fans become spaces for women to express themselves and explore their sexuality, and their styles of writing. Why does a Mary Sue—written as a female fantasy for a female audience receive such vitriolic criticism?

A story with a Mary Sue is considered defunct of literary value. The contrived nature of the plot, the universe, and the characters that surround her make the fictional universe pointless. The only thing that exists in this world is a character—a character who is the author's understanding of what they would *wish* to be. While such a story can be devoid of interest from anyone outside the author, fanfiction is not a work of art that is looking to please critics. Fanfiction need not seek to please literary sensibilities, and as Red says, "you're allowed to have plain, stupid fun" (Trope Talk: Mary Sue).

The backlash to the Mary Sue comes not just from her unrealistic identity, but also from an ingrained idea of what we consider the hero of the story to be—and more importantly, with the shame of what fanfiction as a medium

of writing connotes. In a space that is already fraught with the gender politics of its existence, the expression of female empowerment and sexuality cannot be through the figure of a woman—particularly when there are few female characters of any note in the source material. Additionally, the lack of women in the centre of the source material forces the audience to look at the relationships amongst other characters. Typically, the bond of friendship is illustrated through the relationships of men who are consistently loyal to each other. "In a male-dominated field that regularly focuses on close relationships between men while sidelining the women, it's not a huge leap to turn that homoerotic closeness into romance" (Romano and Baker-Whitelaw, *The Daily Dot*).

Fanfiction is overflowing with the exploration of Male/Male romantic dynamics—Spock and Captain Kirk are examples of this. More examples include Sherlock and John from *BBC Sherlock*, or the plethora of male dynamics in the show *Supernatural*[4]. This does not hold true for Female/Female dynamics. The privileging of the masculine is seen time and again since, "patriarchy teaches us to care the most about male characters, most often white male characters. Patriarchy says that male characters are the most relatable, the most interesting, the most likeable" (Kate).

In essence: "women are the writers of fanfiction. You're on female turf when you enter fanfiction communities" (Romano and Baker-Whitelaw, The Daily Dot). Yet, women cannot express and engage with their sexuality and their own sense of power without facing unceasing backlash. Which is why, ultimately, "for many women and girls, exploring sexuality through male characters provides a safe, shame-free distance" (Romano and Baker-Whitelaw, *The Daily Dot*).

This kind of privileging is not restricted to the source material alone. The fact that fanfiction still occupies a sense of shame, of illegality to the endeavour of rewriting a work and is primarily filled with female writers testifies to this. In addition, there is also a

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[4] During the height of their popularity (around 2011-2012, and a few years preceeding them), the TV shows *Doctor Who, Supernatural,* and *BBC Sherlock* formed a majority of the fan space on websites such as Tumblr and Archive of Our Own. Melding into a group popularly known as *Superwholock*, this fan subculture was notorious for their dedication to the male homoerotic dynamics of the leads of each show.

dismissal to the individuality of female writers who are part of this community. Fancrafting is looked at as a collective reimagining—dismissed as something that lacks authorship. Paul Booth, in *Digital Fandom* says "the writer of the blog is ultimately a group" (Booth 43). This analysis is countered in a review by Francesca Coppa:

> And yet the erasure of the figure of the author or artist can mean something different to women—and fandom, at least the parts that make transformative works like fan fiction, art, and vids, is still predominantly female. Women have struggled to have their creative work recognized as art.
> (Coppa 12)

Female communities for geek culture also suffer from the setback of not being considered a part of mainstream geek culture. Gaming, comic books and science fiction are "associated with an overwhelmingly male consumer base" (Scott 1.3). As popularised by the "adorkable misogyny" (Mcintosh) of TV shows like *The Big Bang Theory*, the picture of geek culture becomes of "a bunch of greasy, cheeto-stained white guys in sweat pants mouthbreathing in the basement of their parents' house" (Fozmeadows). Men at the centre of this geeky masculinity are routinely excused for their entitlement towards the women of their lives, or their sexual harassment—as is seen in the character of Howard Wolowitz, from *The Big Bang Theory* (Mcintosh).

Women are relegated to the side—their interests in fanculture consistently questioned over authenticity. Female spaces such as seen in Western online Fandom have, over the course of the last few years become more popular and mainstream. The influx of marginal voices has been accompanied by the voices of male members who have chosen to find these online communities important. There is a criticism of fan communities built by women—female fans are viewed with suspicion for being interested in what is claimed to be a *male* interest. While mainstream spaces do not accept the female fan, spaces constructed for women are considered exclusionary, embarrassing, or not *truly* geeky:

> Women are still excluded from the definition of 'geek' and 'fan' in the mainstream press, despite our contributions to the culture, once again leading to the very issue I discussed in 'Fandom and Male Privilege': mainstream geekdom attempts to exclude us, and then when we make our own spaces, accuses us of being exclusionary.
> (Busker)

Surrounded in a culture that routinely denies her identity, The Mary Sue is not simply a poorly written character. There is an anxiety associated with her existence, an anxiety over what a female only space can produce. The Mary Sue changes and evolves based on this criticism: writing women becomes a complex matter of balancing female identity, female fan identity, and the scrutinising audience that is watching her. Her identity takes multiple different forms—straying from the original Mary Sue in many ways. The Mary Sue has to be understood within the framework of her history, to clearly trace her evolution within transformative works.

What Happens to the Mary Sue?

The policing of a Mary Sue eventually becomes not just a criticism of forcing the fictional universe to bend itself to one character—but also a critique of female protagonists who begin to assert masculine characteristics. The generation of passive Mary Sues—defined by their insecurity and inability to see their own beauty are a function of this backlash. *Twilight*'s Bella Swan becomes a prominent example of this. The Mary Sue goes through multiple transformations before she reaches the Bella Swan archetype. Analysed by Red from *Overly Sarcastic Productions*, the Mary Sue begins to fall into different types as authors attempt to avoid the characteristics associated with the first Mary Sue.

What most writers forget about the Mary Sue is that it's not a character defect that is fixable. A story with a Mary Sue is a Mary Sue story—everything in the universe revolves around her, or is centred on her needs. In an attempt to avoid writing a Mary Sue *character,* writers often try to sidestep the traits that sparked the scorn against her. This does not solve the crux of the problem, and ultimately, it

births a new set of Mary Sues.[5]

The most obvious of these is the "Possession Sue" (Red). This is typically a character that appears in the original story however is repurposed according to the author. This often occurs at the expense of the character's original traits. The canonical character in the hands of the author becomes the character with the subject position. This particular brand of Mary Sue becomes extremely popular when it comes to inserting a character in a canonical setting without disturbing the canon. This was increasingly popular in the *Harry Potter* fandom—where there were multiple unexplored areas of the canon. The Marauders era of the *Harry Potter* universe, in particular, went through numerous reworkings by fans. The Marauders era signifies the time during which the titular character Harry's parents and their friends were studying in Hogwarts. Since there is little for us to understand about the era apart from the characterisation we are provided from Harry's perspective—the Marauder's era becomes ripe for the Mary Sue to enter without disrupting the canon.

An example of this writing is thought to be Rose Logan. While Rose Logan from *The Line Between Love, Hate and Womanly Pride* (EllieBaby) is not necessarily consistently a Mary Sue, she does take on a lot of the traits of the Mary Sue. She enters the narrative as the romantic interest for Sirius Black—and while the story does focus on her incessantly, there is also focus on the stories and struggles of the other characters. Rose Logan is awkward and outspoken, frequently unsure of herself and anxious. The story might not be known for outstanding literary merit; however, Rose Logan's character traits are not what should count when judging whether or not her story is one of a Mary Sue. Yet, in chapter fourteen the author poses the question to her readers, "Is Rose a Mary Sue?"

The question alone should be an indication of how the popular perception of the Mary Sue has changed. Rose Logan's story cannot be codified as a *Sue* story—the focus shifts from her to her peers, to her friends, and to her interests frequently. While Rose may not be a Sue, the *Harry Potter* universe boasted a crowd of characters that were labelled Mary Sue that had similar character traits to her—and they were not necessarily impossibly confident, blindingly beautiful, and skilfully humble as the original strain of Mary Sues were.

Dreamers by Yavanna and Sunstar features a heroine by the name of Natasha Regan (Yavanna and Sunstar). Natasha is shy, bullied, burdened with a complex tragedy in her past and—most importantly, unaware of her own status as the character at the centre of this universe. Natasha is a Mary Sue typical of this time—she is unusually beautiful but unaware of it (often, denigrating her own appearance)—she is an outcast with a heart of gold, and she is unequivocally shy. The remaining characters would be constantly concerned by her. She is the focal point of the universe, even if she is not allowed to feel this way. The 'Tragic Sue' was popular during this second generation of Mary Sues, specifically because the original Mary Sue did not have tragedy attached to her name.

This is also seen in one of the most famous Mary Sues of her time: Ariana Black[6]. Ariana Black's character was nothing more than a Mary Sue who was "upstaging everyone with her beauty, charm, wit, cleverness, deviousness, power, intelligence, etc," (das_mervin and Mrs Hyde, Ariana Year 2: Chapter 1 - Another Typical Summer Day). Ariana also wields uncanny power, such as being an Empath (the ability to sense the nuances and intensity of emotions)—something she has in common with most Mary Sues. While the Ariana Black series are popularly known for their excessive bubbliness, one of the key elements that is forgotten is Ariana's initial shyness—coupled with her *own* tragic story. Analysers Das Mervin and Mrs Hyde have commented on the excessive use of the word "shy" in the first part of the series. The

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[5] Due to the prolific nature of fancrafting, it will be impossible to study Mary Sues from across different fandoms. While the politics and tropes of each fandom will have their own specificities, the broader definitions and concepts will be discussed within the ambit of *Harry Potter* fanfiction. This is primarily because while the *Harry Potter* fandom is not the oldest, it is certainly the one that was the site for the construction of the modern fandom. We can narrow this down to two factors: first, the 1990s saw the internet become available and accessible. Second, JK Rowling became one of the early authors to accept and welcome fancrafting. The *Harry Potter* series became a safe space to engage with it; the sheer vastness and popularity of its fictional universe also allowed fans to indulge with it very easily.

[6] This fanwork has since been taken down by the author, and is only available on das_sporking, on Livejournal.

key here then is not that Ariana is very radically different from the original Mary Sue—she maintains her unique power, her ability to manipulate the canon to her advantage along with the characters. What changes is her isolation—she is now an outcast, an outcast that needs to be helped and pitied.

The Mary Sue's obvious characterisation is avoided without the writing being focussed on at a story oriented level. This allows the Tragic Sue to become a very permanent fixture in Mary Sue writing—she is a Mary Sue who carries emotional trauma, leading to isolation from her peers. The claim becomes that since her isolation prevents her from being universally loved, she is no longer a Mary Sue, while the universe and the characters are still revolving around this character. Something similar is seen in the writing of gracedkelly in her fanfiction "Barking Mad". The main character, Nika Schmidt (Gracedkelly) features the irregular name, the unconscious beauty, and the unique ability of divination. What is forgotten is that all the characters are designed to her personality.

The tendency to shift the characteristics of the Mary Sue to prevent her from existing is a common method. A sister trope that evolved during this time is the "Jerk Sue" (Red)—the Mary Sue who simply *cannot* be a Mary Sue due to the lack of the cornerstone of a Sue's character: niceness. The "Jerk Sue" attempts to defy the category simply by being convincingly difficult. Hailee Vance (*Art of Not Caring*), written by Nothingsperfect uses this to her advantage—she is consistently cynical, prickly, and particular. Yet, from the beginning itself—each of the characters becomes suitably obsessed with her. Astoria Greengrass, a canonical character who marries Draco Malfoy is frequently cast in the role of this Mary Sue. The writer AstoriaAliceMalfoy in *For Every Frozen Heart* recreates the character of Astoria, making her belligerent and rude. She almost immediately becomes the centre of Draco Malfoy's universe, including the centre of all other character's characterisations.

The Mary Sue begins to take many different forms—she changes from being the protagonist to becoming the antagonist. Frequently, stories with a Mary Sue at the centre have antagonists who are equally one dimensional, created simply for the Mary Sue. Termed "Scary Sues", they form another part of the Sue mythos. The fanfiction *My Immortal* (XXXbloodyrists666XXX)[7] codifies multiple (if not all) of these tropes:

> "It's all there," Jamison said. "The author's note that tells the reader to go away, the redundancy of calling herself 'Ebony' while saying her hair is ebony, the extensive describing of the eyes, the describing of the skin. It was hitting all these tropes at once." There's also the slapdash attempt to mash a popular work with an unrelated genre – in this case, putting vampires into the Potterverse – as well as the gratuitous shout-outs to teen touchstones like retailer Hot Topic, Lee, and Gerard Way. What's more, this is a cardinal example of so-called "Mary Sue" fiction, in which authors insert thinly veiled version of themselves into a popular fictional universe and have all the characters already be friends with them. Add that to the horrible misspellings in the author's notes and the standoffish attitude, and you had an odorous stew for anyone who cared about fanfic. (Riesman)

My Immortal is infamous for the cultural impact it had on the world of fandom. Nothing, however, personifies the art of Mary Sue writing as much as *Twilight (*Meyer). While *My Immortal* remains famous in fandom circles, *Twilight*, written by Stephenie Meyer in 2005 is well known as the most poorly written in terms of characterisation. Bella Swan, written with a blank personality intended for women to project themselves into

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[7] Very recently, the strongest claim to the ownership of *My Immortal* was made by author Rose Christo. The history of the infamous "worst fanfiction" is littered with authors attempting to claim that they wrote it, including a short manifesto by a user account, 'The Batman,' and multiple other claims that have sprouted over the years. A large part of the mystery behind My Immortal is whether it was written earnestly, or if it was a parody of the common Mary Sue story writing style. Reisman's, 'The Bizarre, Unsolved Mystery of "My Immortal," the World's Worst Fanfiction' outlines the controversy very well. Rose Christo claimed to have written the story, and to have intentionally written it as a parody — however, her claims have been refuted by various sources, (Romano, "The My Immortal memoir has been canceled, and the mystery of the notorious fanfic deepens").

is a deliberate creative decision by the author. The characters of the story are caricatures, serving only the larger cause of Bella. Lauren Mallory serves to be envious of Bella's position, and is consistently framed as an antagonist. Angela Weber is the "quiet, bookish one" (das_mervin and Mrs Hyde, "Twilight: Final Thoughts"), while Jessica becomes the friend who gossips. Any and all of Bella's romantic interests are there for her importance and likeableness to be emphasised. Bella herself, is written as blank personality—for the reader to step into the shoes of, so that the female fantasy can fulfil itself.

Bella Swan's empty personality manages to hide the larger flaws within the text. Bella herself is Mary Sue: "Bella Swan is an empty, shallow, very poor character. I have no grasp of her personality. I have no idea what her goals are, no idea what her ambitions are, no idea what her likes and dislikes are (outside of the obvious). She means *nothing to me, because I do not know her."* (das_mervin and Mrs Hyde, "Twilight: Final Thoughts").

However, this characterisation does not cover the truly troubling aspects of this text:

> Unfortunately, Meyer did not quite succeed—she's not *entirely* characterless. Even more unfortunately, what little character Bella has is absolutely repugnant. She is horribly judgmental and shallow, basing her opinions strictly on how people look and what they can give her. She constantly degrades and mocks everyone around her, no matter how nice they are to her.
> (das_mervin and Mrs Hyde, "Twilight: Final Thoughts")

Bella Swan is a complicated mesh of poor characterisation and accidental characterisation. The author insert that Bella represents appears to be balancing two identities: the intention of the author, and the impression she finally gives. The author intends a Mary Sue to be a complex and nuanced character, who is, by definition, the one that is most likeable. The rest of the text is a foil to *her*—and nothing defines this more than Bella Swan.

For something that attempts to speak for women—for something that was popular largely in the teenage bracket of readers, *Twilight* is distressingly worrying where romance is concerned. Meyer attempts to show us two teenagers who fall in love, however, the balance of their relationship is extremely difficult to examine. Edward Cullen is an example of consistent male entitlement and control, however, Bella Swan can be equally manipulative:

> Their relationship is based on mutual abuse, manipulation, and lies. Both are using each other to get what they want—Edward wants a meek, timid, easily-controlled female who will do whatever he wants when he snaps his fingers, and so she does so. In exchange, she gets the hottest boy in the school, money, beautiful and expensive things, and, though she hasn't gotten it yet, eternal youth and beauty.
> (das_mervin and Mrs Hyde, "Twilight: Final Thoughts")

The toxic message given by *Twilight* is something various analysers have commented on and dissected. What is often forgotten is how many women and teenagers read these stories, and more importantly, derived pleasure from being at the centre of this fictional universe. Mary Sues such as Bella Swan and Anastasia Steele (James) are impressively problematic for female fantasies written by female authors. They are both characters that are devoid of personality in an attempt to give women a space to step into—yet, whatever character they do have seems to stop short of being able to revel in being the centre of the universe. These characters enjoy the centrality of their existence—but they cannot do so outwardly. They negotiate a space where they would like to be at the centre of the universe, but they cannot do so at the expense of the male heroes. Without discarding the genuinely problematic patriarchal discourse that texts like *Twilight* have engendered, how do we study this female fantasy?

Bella Swan and Anastasia Steele negotiate a space where male fear of female sexuality makes it impossible for them to enjoy their position as central characters. By doing so, they feed into the very discourse that makes it hard for them to be unapologetic female fantasies—they have to bend their wills to their male romantic interests. While their characters are uncomfortable, the behaviour they espouse is critiqued by audience and critics alike. The Mary Sues existence is based in a reality that cannot allow her freedom. This cannot be said about their male counterparts. Female Mary

Sues attempt to consistently negotiate with the plot, their power, and what is expected of female protagonists. On the other hand, male Mary Sues are unnoticed in a literary sensibility that is founded in male protagonists.

Conclusion: Gary Who?

Gary Stus, or, the male counterparts to female author inserts have *always* existed. In a literary canon that has consistently valued the stories of men over women, the Gary Stu has formed the backbone of literature. Many of the traits that are associated with Mary Sues are what make a male protagonist the hero. Mary Sues are normally skilled in a way that other characters are not, usually at the centre of the story, and are well liked. However, male Mary Sues are allowed a lot of freedom, while female Mary Sues are consistently torn down for exhibiting the smallest of "protagonist-y" (Red) traits. The fact that the Mary Sue was originally codified in a feminine form is attached with its own politics: why was this character not noticed in its long pre-existing male form? The YouTube analyser Red, points out that Beowulf fits many of the character traits of a Mary Sue. Similarly, Sherlock Holmes from *BBC Sherlock* (Cumberbatch) is unrealistically intelligent, unequivocally difficult, not to mention rude. The remaining characters of the show, however, do not exist beyond him. Any relationship outside of Sherlock is insignificantly small, and with few moments of separation from him.

Because Sherlock is a male, the character traits that make him a Mary Sue are routinely ignored. This is amplified by the fact that Sherlock is arrogant in his knowledge of the centrality of his existence in this universe—something female Mary Sues are denied. Bella Swan may be the female fantasy, but she is not given the vocabulary to express her own knowledge of her importance to her universe. The understanding of male Gary Stus and female Mary Sues is essentially discriminatory:

> Because male characters are supremely unlikely to be called out for Sueness this shame mostly roots itself in female protagonists. And the thing that makes this disproportionately bad is that an accusation of Sueness is a conversation ender. The character has been tainted. Their strengths and confidence are suddenly negative traits that you're not allowed to admire. And because Mary Sue is very strongly a girl associated trope that never really sticks when applied to a male character the accusation of Sueness basically only ever makes it shameful to like female characters. And it is shame! How weird is that? We've made a literary device whose very name being mentioned is capable of stripping the joy out of a girl-centric story.
> (Red)

The Mary Sue is a contradiction—an evolving contradiction, facing the backlash of an audience that is extremely sensitive to the existence of a female character. Her existence is a problem—she is both a female fantasy, and a fantasy that is not allowed to exist.

And her story does not end: the gender bias in media, in fandom, and in geek culture ensures that she will continue to exist, to challenge, to change, and to pose a problem.

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silence

Quiet House

Sanna Jain

i

This morning I am thinking
about how the walls of my
home were once crackling
with faces. In the splintering plaster,
an eye, impishly fixed sideways.
Discoloured, beaming patches
teeming with a challenge for me
to unsee them. And the maps—
spidering islands, intricate coastlines
meandering cream upon cream until
the edge of that old curtain whose flowers
were always clambering men—
petals upward, coiling themselves
on vines—and behind them, opening to me
that scratched wall my dog
is fond of digging; soundwaves.

ii

I have unseen them. There is
no joy that in this house, the Pacific Islands
(crafted by years of poor drainage)
curve softly: above, not below
Sunlit imperials. In this upside-down map
cresting forward towards me I feel
no rebellion. Gone is the charm
of that crawling man (near the window,
his arm reaching towards sunlight
like Adam, even
on rainy days). Their shadows
no longer move.

iii

Is there still
an old woman trudging
towards the lamp? I cannot know
and for the aged
it is unwise to hope.
Before, I never ran my
hands over the walls for fear
of uprooting heads and
drowning coastal villages. But now,
unguarded, I enjoy
the secret expanse of this
rough paint.

The Life Narrative as Ouroboros: Writing Marriage, Violence and Self-Identity in Malika Amar Shaikh's *I Want to Destroy Myself*

Stuti Pachisia

Marathi poet and writer Malika Amar Shaikh has been popularly historicized in relation to her male relatives—especially her husband Namdeo Dhasal. Between the covers of her autobiography *I Want to Destroy Myself (Mala Udhvasta Whaychay)*, however, is penned a life narrative that challenges this patriarchal categorization. In tune with the title, Shaikh deconstructs her life, offering her private thoughts and experiences of abuse for critical purchase. In this paper, the author argues that Shaikh's writing of her desire for self-destruction is not nihilistic, but deeply political. By denouncing her marriage to Dhasal and speaking out against the violence he inflicted on her, Shaikh casts herself against the silence of patriarchal violence and gives voice to her own identity. The author also attempts to show that through the act of writing, Shaikh is involved in a cyclical self-construction akin to the alchemist symbol of renewal, ouroborous: the snake ingesting herself. This paper attempts to analyze Malika Amar Shaikh's autobiography as an intentional act of 'speaking out' against the violence often inherent in domestic institutions. The paper also hopes to examine how the life narrative carries disruptive potential that can destroy the silence surrounding the role of women in masculine historiography—making the act of writing the female self, an act of recreating the female self.

I
Selfhood

Jenny Marx, [the wife of Karl Marx], was first and foremost a woman with a steadfast commitment to revolutionary socialism. Not a mere cipher for her husband's views, she genuinely believed in the struggle for working-class emancipation from capital… Jenny was a staunch defender of her husband's work and politics, even when he faced exile and incarceration for his views.

…Marx and Engels went to London to explore the industrial slums of Manchester, while Jenny, six months pregnant, and their housekeeper, Helene Demuth ("Lenchen"), returned to Trier. There, Jenny wrote to Marx about the plight of women in society, and how even in socialist circles the rights of men were emphasized while the rights and needs of women were treated as secondary at best.
("The Life of Jenny Marx", H. Fluss and S. Miller)

The blurb of Malika Amar Shaikh's memoir, *I Want to Destroy Myself—Mala Udhvasta Whaychay* in the original Marathi—introduces her in relation to her more prominent male relatives: her father, the 'lok shahir'[1] Amar Shaikh, and her husband, the revolutionary co-founder of Dalit Panther[2], Namdeo Dhasal. Shaikh herself dedicates the book to Jenny Marx, Karl Marx's wife, a historical figure on whom little scholarship exists. In a personal interview, when asked about the editorial choice to introduce Malika Shaikh in relation to her male relatives in the blurb of the translated text, translator Jerry Pinto answered, "Mallika Amar Sheikh's [sic] chosen name is Mallika Amar Sheikh, linking herself directly to her father. She never changed her name after marriage but her memoir is largely about that marriage. Thus, after much discussion and *with her consent*, it was decided to describe her thus" (Pinto). At the outset, there is a visible invocation of these three individuals, which functions as part of the larger project of selfhood that Shaikh seeks

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[1] "people's poet" (translation mine). An honorific used in the Marathi folk tradition for travelling poets, who compose poems about the working classes.

[2] Dalit Panther was a literary and socio-political organization seeking to dismantle the caste system. It was set up in Maharashtra in 1972 by Namdeo Dhasal and J.V. Pawar. For a further discussion on the caste system, please consult footnote 7.

to construct by writing a memoir. Smith and Watson note that:

> …the life narrator confronts not one life, but two. One is the self that others see—the social, historical person, with achievements, personal appearance, social relationships... But there is also the self experienced only by that person, the self felt from the inside… [that] has a history. While it may not be meaningful to an objective "history of the times," it is a history of self-observation, not a history observed by others. (5)

In stating that she is "peel[ing] away the skin of [her] life and serv[ing] it up to [her reader]" (49), Shaikh expresses that her writing is purposeful and deliberate: she wishes to deconstruct her life by exploring the chasm between socially visible selves and internally experienced selfhood. Shaikh is aware that to "peel away" is a visceral act, but a revelatory one, so she offers herself through visions of terrifying domestic violence at the hands of a socially lauded figure, her husband, Namdeo Dhasal.

Malika Amar Shaikh: A 'His'tory

Before reading *I Want to Destroy Myself* as a text driving towards personal conceptions of selfhood, it becomes important to analyze the popular historical imagination within which Shaikh is read—that of her father and her husband.

Malika Amar Shaikh was born to *lok shahir* Amar Shaikh, a leftist Marathi folk composer and poet from Solapur, Maharasthra. As a folk poet, Shaikh wrote poems and verse about the Marathi working classes which were sometimes dismissed by critics as "propagandist" (Pradhan 79), but which nevertheless "attracted thousands of farmers or workers" (Shaikh 221). Amar Shaikh was associated with the Communist Party of India, and grew to prominence in the street theatre circuit, which was "an important aspect of cultural life in the mill district of Mumbai until the 1940s" and formed the Lala Bavta Kalapathaka (Red Flag Troupe), a leftist artistes' collective (J. Shaikh 73).

As a result, Shaikh grew up with the cultural abundance of communist ideology. Her father's fame meant that she engaged with prominent leftist artistes and performers. In *I Want to Destroy Myself*, she notes having interacted with Sachin Shanker[3], Subal Sarkar[4], Parhlad Keshav Atre[5] and watching performances of the dance-drama *Mazha Gaon* as a child (M. A. Shaikh 193-266). This cultural consumption had a greater impact on Shaikh than active exchange with theoretical ideology. As she says, "I was not in the habit of reading the newspaper. The current debates, the issues of the day, the social questions, Marxism, all these were words I had heard but had not paid attention to" (M. A. Shaikh 496).

Among her father's communist associates was Malika Amar Shaikh's brother-in-law, who introduced her to Namdeo Dhasal. Namdeo Dhasal broke into the Marathi poetry scene with the publication of *Golpitha*, a volume of poetry dedicated to the dark underbelly of Mumbai: composed of its slums and brothels. But *Golpitha* functioned more than just a revelatory text—it functioned as biting criticism of Brahmanical Hinduism, which had oppressed Mahars[6] like Namdeo Dhasal for centuries (Hovell 65). Dhasal's lines,

> I am a venereal sore in the private part
> of language.
> The living spirit looking out
> of hundreds of thousands of sad, pitiful
> eyes
> Has shaken me.
> ('Cruelty', 1-4, translator Dilip Chitre)

had caught the Dalit imagination, becoming a

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[3] In his footnotes to *I Want to Destroy Myself*, Jerry Pinto notes that Shanker was a dancer and performer with India People's Theatre Association (IPTA), an association of leftist theatre artistes.
[4] Marathi film choreographer and prominent activist of the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement.
[5] As Jerry Pinto notes in his footnotes to the text, "Prahlad Keshav Atre (1898-1969) was a prominent Marathi writer, poet, playwright and the founder-editor of the newspaper *Maratha*".
[6] 'Mahar' is a category within the Dalit community, much like 'Chamars' or 'Chuhras', whose historical labour comprised of carrying carcasses, sweeping streets, cleaning stables, collecting revenue, etc. As Dalits, they were subjected to untouchability and faced systemic exploitation. (Miller) B.R. Ambedkar, economist and activist, was born a Mahar. For a more thorough explanation of Dalits and caste, see footnote 7.

clarion call against caste-based oppression[7]. In 1972, Dhasal co-founded Dalit Panther, a 'parapolitical' organization inspired by Black Panther. Dalit Panther, much like Black Panther, espoused militant beliefs, and wanted self-emancipation through violent means. Simultaneously, Dalit Panther inspired a literary 'renaissance' for Dalit writers, prompting the outflow of powerful, revolutionary verse. It was by the actions of Dalit Panther that 'Dalit Literature' attained authentic literary space (Bhoite and Bhoite 72, Mukherjee 18). Yet, "while the Panthers contributed a great deal of revolutionary literature and campaigned against several crimes against dalits, within a few years the movement splintered and became co-opted" (Ghose 101).

Even without theoretical engagement, Shaikh greatly recognized the importance of ideological framework, something she felt "angry, violent" organizations like Dalit Panther missed (M. A. Shaikh 514, 798). Her reckoning against the organization is fundamentally a protest against the hyper-masculinity Dhasal and other Panthers espoused: she calls them "a group of angry young men", with leaders who were "hot heads with inflammatory ideas" (514, 511), in which Dhasal could lead the life of a "romantic revolutionary" (563, 944). Yet, she marks, this masculine life of travel and inflammatory speeches was only enabled because Dhasal could return home, "with any number of friends [to a] mother always ready with a hot meal" (562).

By fashioning Dhasal as dependent on his mother (later herself) for food and sustenance, Shaikh is systematically dismantling the idea of the solitary romantic rebel Dhasal was cast as in the popular imagination. She is, instead, creating him in the light of various systems that enabled his individual heroism—systems based inherently on the service of women. Shaikh is challenging the culture of silence that pervades female contribution to 'masculine' enterprises, and therein lies the root of her dedication.

Taliaferro and Decker find that "a dedication is an intentional, purposive act falling under the more general act type of *honouring* or *revering*" (620, emphasis in original). By that line of argument, Shaikh is trying to "honour" or "revere" Jenny Marx—even as they are two women separated by geography, time and an awareness of one another, they are connected by their largely unacknowledged service towards the movements that their husbands became known for.

Jenny Marx, the wife of Karl Marx, was born to aristocracy as a baroness, but renounced her class status in allegiance with her husband. In fact, as noted in *Jacobin*, Marx "latched onto early feminist views on women's equality" and "tirelessly devoting her energies to organizing communist meetings, providing shelter and relief for refugees, and helping her husband produce his philosophical and economic works. She gave up her privileged position as a baroness and made wrenching sacrifices to achieve her vision of a better world" (Fluss and Miller). Where Karl Marx was co-author of *The Communist Manifesto*; the philosopher who theorized the eponymous Marxism, the contributions of the other Marx are overlooked in popular imagination.

Marx's contributions to her husband's vision superseded political ideology, and interpolated deeply with personal life. Biographer Mary Gabriel, who wrote *Love and The Capital*, which chronicles Jenny and Karl Marx's relationship, critiques Marx's husband, calling him "a revolutionist, an often shabby,

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[7] Hinduism is based on a hierarchical division of social and economic caste, the chaturvarna, which categorizes all castes according to four major divisions based on birth, in a descending order of "purity". At the top of this pyramid are Brahmins, who perform Hindu rituals and maintain sacred texts, then come Kshatriyas, the ruling class, then the Vaisyas, the trading class. At the bottom of this division are the Sudras, who are oppressed by the other classes and relegated to derogatory labour such as collecting carcasses and night soil, and manual scavenging. Although there are several debates around why the practice of untouchability started, it was practiced towards Sudras and those considered Avarna or outside the caste system. As they were declared impure, lower castes have been systematically ousted from the community, marginalized based on food, water, livelihood, education and shelter. The 20th Century saw various struggles for self-emancipation emerge from this section, part of which involved calling themselves 'Dalits', literally meaning 'broken men', to signify the historical oppression they have experienced (Mukherjee 23-24).

poverty-stricken genius with a taste for the bottle… [who] expected his wife and children to fall into place behind him because they also recognized the significance of his work … Lovingly and without hesitation, they did" (Gabriel). In fact, as Elaine Showalter notes in her review of the book, "[when] the political figure's wife, pregnant with their fourth child, took a brief trip to try to raise money for his work, he slept with their live-in housekeeper and got her pregnant. In a panic, he persuaded his most loyal follower to claim paternity, and the baby boy was sent away to be raised by another family. For the real father, out of sight was out of mind, and for decades he kept the secret of his paternity" (Showalter). Shaikh and Dhasal's relationship runs almost parallel, except she was not as wilfully complicit as Jenny Marx is seen to be.

Early on in their interaction with each other, Malika Amar Shaikh remembers that Dhasal told her, "'In a political movement, there is no place for the personal.'" (579). Indeed, their marital relationship follows a pattern of sacrifice that is normatively expected by Dhasal. He expects her to stop her education to marry him (693), to entertain and provide for his visiting political affiliates so much so that "it became difficult [for her to have the privacy] to even change [her] clothes" (810), and sell jewellery that had been her father's keepsake for the Panthers (827). It is only in her autobiography that Shaikh can note and give voice to these sacrifices, because the patriarchal nature of mainstream historiography discounts the function of the private in the formation of the public. Hence, Dhasal was cast as the "great maverick Marathi poet [who] writes with a mission to wage a war against all forms of exploitation whether it is economic, social or cultural" (Arora 221), and little research is readily available on Malika Amar Shaikh. Indeed, as Jerry Pinto notes in the Translator's Note to the text, "it seemed to be one of those books that blazed across the sky like a comet and if you were lucky enough to be looking its way, you got a glimpse of it but if you tried to seek it out later, only the void stared back at you" (M. A. Shaikh 6).

Therefore, there is a tacit chasm between the dedication and the blurb, encapsulating the gulf between the socially visible self, and the experienced self. Allison Weir argues that global feminist politics requires a rethinking of identity, recognition that transnational feminist politics requires "a shift from a focus on identity as category to a focus on identification-with" (111). Shaikh's exact dedication reads, "To Jenny Marx, who seemed to be as tall and impossible to ignore as Marxism itself" (M. A. Shaikh 3). Perhaps the massive overlooking of Marx's sacrifice, and the shadowing of her work by her husband's is what provides the basis for Shaikh's dedication, an identification-with Jenny Marx. This politics of identification-with transcends any imposed definition, of a working-class woman, of a homemaker, of a Dalit woman, especially as she does not explicitly identify herself as such. Indeed, when I asked Jerry Pinto whether Shaikh should be read in the tradition of Dalit women writing violence, he responded, "Does it matter how I classify Mallika Amar Sheikh? [sic] Do you not see that in asking me to classify her you are undercutting her individual choices? These choices are discussed in her text … whether [it is to be read] in terms of violence to Dalit women or violence to Indian women or violence to women" (Pinto). Perhaps by Shaikh's invocation of Jenny Marx, and her deliberate refusal to explicitly identify herself within categories, Shaikh has a larger project: "to seek justice in a patriarchal world" (47). Shaikh's dedication therefore acts as a commemoration that mourns the patriarchal violence women undergo for the advancement of their husbands' masculine revolutions; movements which refuse to take responsibility for this violence through memory or scholarship. It is by writing the "self from the inside" (Smith and Watson 3) that she can challenge this silence.

II

Violence

'Darling, please cool down. What's your point? What have you got against Facebook?'

'There is no reason why you should be on Facebook. It's narcissism. It's exhibitionism. It's a waste of time. I've said this to you a thousand times. It's merely you voluntarily feeding information straight to the CIA, to the RAW, to the IB, to everyone who is hounding my life. Every fucking thing is being monitored. Your life may be a peep show, but I'm a revolutionary. I cannot let you endanger me. We've had this argument so often that I've lost count.

I'm not going to repeat everything I've said.'

I could smell the match heads and the burnt hair.

'This is plain and simple blackmail. I'm not going to do anything if you blackmail me.'

'I don't have to tell you what to do. You're pushing me into this corner where I'm forced to tell you what's good for you and what is not.'

'If you put the matches down, we can talk about Facebook.'

'If you love me, this is the quickest way you will make up your mind.'

For a split second, I think about taking a matchstick and burning my own skin. His aim is to make me suffer for his pain; I do not want to suffer two-fold by inflicting this bizarre punishment on myself. Another matchstick is lit and put out. And another and another. I've stopped counting. It almost makes me feel that he is enjoying himself.

As distressed as I am, there's a part of me wanting to laugh. This elaborate ruse of revolution being roped in. This standard, textbook mention of the CIA and the home-grown RAW to frighten me. To laugh at my husband would mean that I humiliate him, the consequences of which would be far worse than the matchstick pyrotechnical performance. To reason with him will lead to a long, interminable fight, a war of attrition that would exhaust me into defeat.

I look at him, deciding what I should do next. Now the lit matches are being extinguished on the inside of his left forearm, each leaving a tiny red welt on the skin. He doesn't look up at me, he doesn't say a word, and that in itself scares me. He has the defiant eyes of a man who is in no mood to give up. I do not know where this will end.

In the next ten minutes, I deactivate my Facebook account.
(Meena Kandasamy *When I Hit You or A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife*)

In "Law, Boundaries, and the Bounded Self", Jennifer Nedelsky cautions against fixed metaphoric and imagic assignment to what she terms as the "fluid" concept of bounded space. She finds that "when boundary is the routine metaphor for integrity, privacy, or the conditions of autonomy", then sexual intercourse, or any other "consensual" performace becomes techinically invasive, as it invites an interaction with an other; an impeachment of imagined boundary" (170). But even as she argues against "making boundedness the central metaphor for humanness", Nedelsky admits that all interaction is metaphoric, and therefore selfhood is imagined in the visual language of boundaries. The image of boundary, therefore, becomes the "routine" and "central" metaphor for transactions between self and the other.

Malavika Karlekar's negotiation between the imagination of violence as a negotiation between the self and the other emerges from Nedelsky's aforementioned legal theorizing. Karlekar finds that performances of violence invite the "questioning of a sense of self as well as perception of another's autonomy and identity" (Karlekar 1742). Violence thus manifests in the invasion of implicit boundaries of selfhood by the other, as well as by a forceful expansion of these boundaries established by the self. Both these actions work in tandem to challenge the autonomy of an individual.

Shaikh's experience of violence is built on both the invasion of personal conceptions of boundaries, and by a forceful expectancy on her to expand this limit point. Throughout the text, Shaikh expresses discomfort in her married life based on her personal, domestic space being violated due to the constant inflow of Dhasal's guests (often Dalit Panthers). The spatial invasion of her privacy disables her from even communicating with her husband, and the constant obligation to provide for Dhasal's guests put financial pressure on her, to the point of self-deprivation and starvation (M. A. Shaikh 816, 826, 955). One on hand, Shaikh's bounded sense of space is compromised, and on the other, she is forced to become "acquescient" (Karlekar 1742) and expand her boundedness out of enforced notions of wifehood. Shaikh notes the invasiveness of "sacrifice" (an expansion of boundedness) when she says that

Namdeo asked for a three- or four-tola gold necklace which my father had had made for me. I took it off and gave it to him. He took it to the pawnshop immediately. I received much praise for my sacrifice. But I grew a little thoughtful, a little solemn.

I had no great love of gold; that wasn't it. But my father had made that necklace for me. That was my sentimental value for it. (M. A. Shaikh 830)

The idea of boundary seeps so clearly within the text, that Sheikh's narrative creates a concentric orientation for violence; moving from the physical outwards to the deeply personal inward. The violence moves from spatial invasion, to physical assault, to sexual and reproductive violence, and finally, to psychological violence, where it becomes a chokehold, preventing her from even finding release through her favourite activity, singing (M. A. Shaikh 1267).

The first time Shaikh is physically assaulted is when she is pregnant. The next time she is hit is when she questions where her husband was "until two or three in the morning". Shaikh writes about Dhasal taking her son away from her as she "lay on the bed, stanching the flow of blood from [her] nose" (M. A. Shaikh 882,1080,1108). The physical violence translates rapidly into sexual and reproductive violence. Shaikh writes about locking herself in the bathroom to not have intercourse with her husband. She writes of being forced to abort children as Dhasal would not allow birth control. She writes of Dhasal's sexual infidelities, which result in her contracting a venereal disease. (M. A. Shaikh 1336,1330,1192). Throughout the exposition, Shaikh offers her body to us, "peeled away" (Shaikh 55) as a text[8] that is intent on visually presenting the immensity of the violence she has undergone, largely in silence:

> There was not a paisa in the house. And I began to suffer an unclean pain that just would not go away. On both sides of my pubic area, boils erupted. Pus began to form inside. The pain got worse but who could I tell? I knew no one in the area. There was a doctor in the village but I had no money for his fees. I was beginning to feel dizzy almost every other minute. I had no energy. I began to run a fever and lose weight. I recognized the symptoms. This was one of the gifts Namdeo had given me, a souvenir of his days with prostitutes. My body filled me with revulsion now. How carefully I had
>
> looked after it. How carefully I had washed and dried myself. When it was possible, I would take a bath before sleeping with Namdeo, for I had felt that one's body must be clean and beautiful for the person one loves. And now? What should I feel for Namdeo? I wanted to gash and score him with my nails. I wanted to empty an entire revolver-barrel of bullets into his chest. What right had he to play with my life? Was my love my only crime? (M. A. Shaikh 1192-1193)

Simultaneously, Shaikh also employs partial or fragmentary narrative modes to enable us to witness moments of deep psychological grief. Where her physical violence is expressed in no uncertain terms, the psychological trauma of her violence is offered to the reader obliquely. When Shaikh speaks of her abortions, she only speaks of the clinic she visited, and says "in the first month I would free myself and return. I would go alone" (1130). Here, the body is not offered for critical reading. This is possibly because of the boundaries Shaikh maintains in her narratives. Again, when she expresses her desire for death, she merely says she "quietly took some of the pills that had been prescribed for Aai"[9] (Shaikh 886).

Even while she "offers herself up" (Shaikh 55) for reader consumption, the act of writing enables "boundary maintenance" (Karlekar 1782)—which is the very object compromised by violence. Goffman finds that "the body is important for identifying links between people's self-identity and social identity." (qtd. in Thapan 2), and writing the body enables her to establish this transaction in precise terms, using it as an anvil recasting a public hero. By writing, Shaikh can give voice to the violence she undergoes, and disrupt this masculine history.

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[8] Here, "text" is conceptualized from Barthes' seminal work, "From Work to Text", where the physical body is as much a literary resource as a written piece of work: writing the body makes it visibly so.
[9] Meaning "mother" in Marathi. Shaikh's mother suffered from psychological distress and was under medication that could be potentially fatal in large doses (M.A. Shaikh 445).
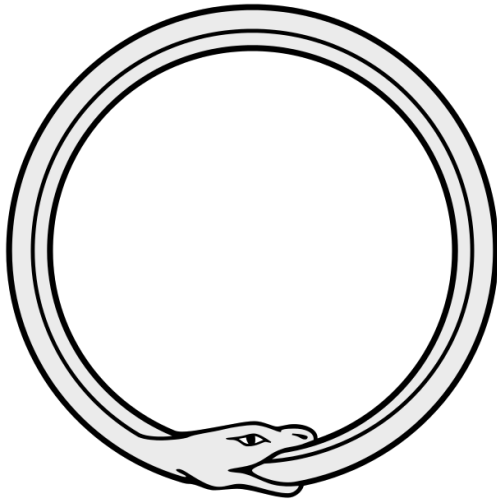
III
Ouroboros

Figure 1

Why should my life be a sacrifice to one man? I am a woman, a force of nature. I am a symbol of all this, this overarching, overwhelming, bliss-soaked nature.

I rise, casting off the old, a snake that has moulted. That pull, that experience rasps across my body.
(Malika Amar Shaikh *I Want to Destroy Myself*)

The ouroboros is an ancient symbol attributed to various cultures practicing magic and alchemy. This symbol comprises a snake eating its own tail and represents eternity, renewal: the act of destroying oneself to reconstruct oneself. Malika Amar Shaikh's life narrative, an exposition on why she wants to destroy herself, becomes a process into reconstructing herself and her public memory.

Malika Amar Shaikh: Her Story

Perhaps the most significant contribution of writing herself is "the unburdening" she experiences (Shaikh 1934). As Goodson notes, life narratives draw from "the literature of therapy and personal and self-development" (9). By laying bare the violence in her life, Shaikh is engaging in a process of renewal, a psychological reconstruction permitted by the act of writing. She knows that "this is the story of a defeat, a lonely defeat," but finds that "In the time I have been speaking to all of you, I

could put down my mask for a while" (Shaikh 1935). Yet, Shaikh's project spans beyond psychological reconstruction and self-claim.

Namdeo Dhasal was called "perhaps the only poet among many poets of protest in contemporary India who speaks of the underworld as an insider and a social and political prophet" (Chitre 94), a man with "a mission of bringing people of different castes, communities and religious faith together" (Arora 253). When Dhasal tells Shaikh, "'In a political movement, there is no room for the personal,'" (M. A. Shaikh 591), he expects her silent acquiescence, her subduing of personal need for the benefit of a larger ideological purpose, one defined by Dhasal.

Dhasal's legacy as a poet and Panther would remain unquestioned, had it not been for the re-historicizing offered by *I Want to Destroy Myself*. By reading a life narrative, one "can then begin to see how grand narratives fell from grace …into the vortex left after the collapse of the grand narratives we see the emergence of another kind of narrative, infinitely smaller in scope, often individualised—the personal life story" (Goodson 8). Writing her own violence allows Shaikh to interrupt and question predominantly masculine narratives of history and biography: possibly something Marx may have wanted to do, but could not. Shaikh's writing of her life memoir is a challenge to Dhasal's demand for acquiescence, the stripping away of her agency for a larger ideological purpose—because in writing her life, Shaikh establishes that the personal is the political[10]. She expresses her desire of destroy herself within a project of self-construction, becoming the ouroboros that recreates herself by writing.

By writing, Shaikh can meditate on questions women have been historically unable to express. She can challenge Dhasal's and men's politics, and the deprivation and violence they imply for the women who support the men:

> What was true? What was real? The twisted and poisoned society around me? The women who bore rape and abuse at the hands of their husbands while concealing the evidence of being brutalized? The buying and

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[10] Popular slogan raised by second-wave feminists.

> selling of ideals in the political marketplace? The leaders who wore the badge of revolution to cover their price tags? The artists who wanted to live off their art but were ignored and eked out a half-starved life? Or was reality the outsider I had become? Was my incomplete, neglected existence a reality? Was my personal sorrow to be my jail? What could I do for myself? And what could I do for those around me?
> (1396)

What she does do for those around her, is establish her own rebellion in writing herself. She says so explicitly in her "Introduction": "It is more important for me to present this very different world of experience in which I have lived, telling the story from my point of view and from the point of view of all women who have been exploited" (M. A. Shaikh 49). By writing her "point of view" Shaikh reconciles the public imagination within which she and Dhasal are seen, with 'private' experiences, drawing a fuller image through which history is to be read. The life narrative therefore becomes a symbol of renewal, because it casts a new balance into reading historical selves.

Shaikh states at the end of the book, "Truly, I was fighting against the system of male domination. Namdeo was not a villain in that fight. Every person is at one time or the other, a villain. Not just Namdeo, the social system in which we live was also responsible for what I had to suffer".(Shaikh 1895). By dismantling—which is to say, "peel[ing] away", like a fruit or a snake—her life in writing, Shaikh is attempting a reconstruction, like the ouroboros. This public shedding of skin and grants her the singing voice she had been denied—not only by her husband, but also by historiography.

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Pingu-istics: Silence and Nonsensical Language in *Pingu*

Vrinda Bhatia

One of the earliest ways in which a child is introduced to different media and art forms is through the means of televised cartoons. Mostly animated, they provide visual information to the child, often in simple, colloquial language. The British-Swiss TV series, *Pingu*, is an example of popular children's cartoons, aimed at a global audience as young as two or three years old. The show, which focusses on the everyday experiences of Pingu, a little penguin boy, and his family, reached global popularity, cutting across cultural and linguistic barriers. This paper will explore how this is possible because the lack of a formal language structure translates (pun unintended) into a coherent system of communication for the intended audience in *Pingu.* The author also argues that the use of an invented nonsensical language, "Penguinese", in the show causes the story to be rendered to young children largely through silent action, humour and symbols. The paper will, further, attempt to link the reception of *Pingu* to its resonances with the preoperational stage, as understood in Piaget's theory of cognitive development.

Visual storytelling in a published form—especially in the context of children's literature—has been an extensively studied area in literary research and media studies, and justifiably so. Stories, in both oral and written forms, constitute a significant part of childhoods, or a collective childhood experience. A grandparent singing a lullaby or narrating bedtime stories to a child in a language the latter might not understand at her age is a common everyday event in cultures across the globe. Before being inducted into a formal education system, children are exposed to picture books: works that ideally have little text and more images. Illustrated fairy tales and *Aesop's Fables*[1] are some early, commonplace examples of such books. The verbal and the visual combine in picture books to describe and narrate, but also to interact with the reader. This interaction encourages the reader to engage with two modes of communication, and the visual gains more prominence especially at an age when the reader's linguistic development is still in its early stages.

Children's picture books comprise of an entire sub-genre under children's literature and have only been increasing in popularity and diversity since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The reasons for the same are said to be advancement in technology and changing attitudes towards childhood (Salisbury and Styles 18). It should be noted that the history is traced through the works in England and mostly Europe. In their seminal work, *Children's Picturebooks: The Art of Visual Storytelling*, Martin Salisbury and Morag Styles touch upon various facets of the category but restrict their study to print media. This presents a few problems regarding the politics of genres and the development of visual art itself—what is considered suitable for children, and who is taking that decision? Illustrators and authors have been using the apparent simplicity of picture books to convey philosophical ideas as well as provide a social critique through visual metaphors. For instance, in Antoine de-Saint Exupery's *The Little Prince*, the boundary between what is meant for children and what isn't is blurred because of the deeper questions the text raises about the perspectives that grown-ups have[2]. Similarly, Umberto Eco, in *The Bomb and The General* picks upon the theme of war yet conveys it in simple language, urging the readers to focus on the images to make the connection with the concepts. "…Nothing would be left but a horrible black pit" is the only line on one page,

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[1] *Aesop's Fables* are a number of stories credited to a Greek storyteller Aesop who lived around 600 BC. Originally passed as oral and compiled into written collections much later, the stories often had anthropomorphic characters and were didactic in nature

[2] Among the multiple examples, one that stands out is the little prince's encounter with the businessman, where he responds to the latter's claims of owning the stars with "And what good does it do you to be rich?" (Saint-Exupery 90).

accompanying a gloomy, dark illustration of a black circle on a grey background. The absoluteness of destruction is conveyed, while initiating the reader into a meaning-making exercise. The role of the visual as a sign in this case cannot be undermined.

In the twentieth century, with the rise in visual animation techniques, animated cartoons, made specifically for children, were being produced. The first animated cartoon, *Fantasmagorie*, a French film, was released in 1908, and Walt Disney Animation Studios was founded in 1923. *Tom and Jerry* made its first appearance almost two decades later in 1940. Enter *Pingu* in 1986: a story about a family of penguins set in a semi-fantastical land. The anthropomorphic penguins live like humans, where the household chores are divided between the adult married couple, and the child performs daily tasks of eating, going to school and recreational activities exactly like humans. What is most striking about the cartoon series is the language (or the lack of a comprehensible one) that the characters communicate in. The theme song[3] in the beginning familiarizes us with the absence of familiar language, and the show's heavy reliance on sound effects—the only discernible phrase in it is "Pingu, pingu". A few seconds into the five-minute-long episode, one sees the penguins conversing intently in a strange language—a language made of noises that is strange to audiences everywhere. Animated films, even if they're set in a completely imaginary land and use computerized animation technique, provide familiarity to the viewer through a voiceover, often the only immediate human element. Commonly, the voice acting follows a script. How does one approach a text if there is no pre-existing script to the dialogues? The voiceover artist for *Pingu* commented, "[…] we had to translate the scripts into Penguinese" (Sant and Cox), later remarking how they created words on-the-spot while recording.

Language in *Pingu* serves a commercial purpose, in addition to the psychological and thematic aspects it brings to the table. The nonsensical language, or grammelot[4], that the show works with has certainly enhanced its reach across media and countries. The two modes of translation applied to visual media for circulation are subtitling and dubbing, both of which become redundant in *Pingu*, owing to the absence of a structured language. *Pingu* has been adapted as a short movie, *Pingu at a Wedding*[5], which was made in collaboration with UNICEF. It also has a game made in Japan as well as a Japanese anime series, *Pingu in the City*[6] which was released as recently as October 2017. The characters further contribute since penguins do not belong to any specific culture and the setting is also generic yet remote to an extent. There might be children in parts of India who never see igloos, but the interiors of Pingu's house, his toys, and his school days can seem familiar. Perhaps due to the recreation of a stereotypical family dynamic and an emphasis on the everyday life of a child, even the distant elements do not prove to be a disconnecting or alienating experience for the young audiences across the world. The assumption in 'audiences across the world', of course, is the inclusion of audiences with access to this particular form of media, in the post-globalization world of late 1980s.

Therefore, before examining the linguistic patterns of "Penguinese" in detail, it is imperative to discuss the target audience the show is aimed at. *Pingu* was first aired at CBeebies. BBC describes the show as a "preschool stop-frame animation"[7] and CBeebies as a channel that will air "UK-produced programmes to educate and entertain the BBC's youngest audience"[8]. This preoccupation with educational television was a characteristic feature of early television broadcasts both in Europe and America. An analysis of preschool media within the American context is done by Shalom M. Fisch in *Children's Learning from Educational Television: Sesame Street and Beyond,* where

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[3] See "Pingu Theme Song", *YouTube.*

[4] Grammelot: "Grammelot is an onomatopoetic, make-up-language that we create with the aid of gestures, rhythm, timbre, melody and sounds as if it was a real language with real words. […] It differs from *gibberish* in that it often mimics another language in sounds, melody, and rhythm." (Klingvall)

[5] A special 25-minute feature film based on characters from *Pingu*, released in 1997.

[6] A Japanese computer-animated series based on *Pingu*, it premiered on October 7, 2017.

[7] See "Pingu". *BBC.* www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006mh02.

[8] See "CBeebies". *BBC Trust.* April 2016. www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/our_work/services/television/service_licences/

she discusses the role of such shows in preparing the child for school. Television, she writes, serves as "informal education" (9), and helps in school readiness through "knowledge of typical preschool academic content, problem solving, motivation to pursue challenges and language acquisition" (37). The didacticism in *Pingu* is not as explicit and the reasons for that can be the absence of a hero or supernatural figure who intervenes in case of a mishap. Even while problems are being tackled within the show, there is no language through which the solution is being communicated, and the onus to figure out the method is on the viewer. The protagonist is as old as the viewers and the problems he deals with are also shared by them. The contrasting evil figure who could have turned *Pingu* into a cautionary tale is missing as well. This is deliberate on the part of the creators, as Steve Cox states: "There's no childish narration over the top, no patronising moral, just naughty characters" (Sant and Cox).

Yet, it isn't mindless naughtiness. Pingu manages to depict a range of emotions without expressing them through any language. Mischief is never the defining trait of Pingu, only one of his many likeable characteristics. There are multiple instances of affection and reinforcement shared between his parents and him—the non-verbal gesture of patting is a recurring one. One of the phrases that made its way into popular culture is "Noot, noot". Interestingly, even those words do not make sense in isolation and Pingu uses it to express both annoyance and exaltation. The voiceover artist for the later series, David Sant recounts the process of writing Penguinese, and how it draws from the physical acting tradition of grammelot: "It's designed to sound like a real language, and the audience can sort of guess what it means, but it's basically gibberish" (Sant and Cox).

There are several examples of nonsensical language in literature, especially that meant for children. Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" and Disney's Donald Duck are classic examples. Humour through body language is also explored: *Tom and Jerry* almost completely relies on slapstick humour for entertainment. What makes *Pingu* stand apart then is the everyday issues it raises and the matter-of-fact manner with which it does so. It also appeals directly to both auditory and visual sensory perceptions in the viewer who might not be able to follow words, but gestures

and intonations make the meaning apparent to her. "The very fact that the 'speech' is made up of abstract noises helps young viewers to concentrate on action and feeling", argues Tony Thorne in the little linguistics research that has been done in conjunction with *Pingu.* He goes on to highlight the significance of intonation, decoding the patterns of sound: "Penguinese has a complex intonation pattern - intonation is the 'music' of speech with its changes of pitch and tone, its rise and fall. It seems to mimic not just the languages of human beings, but the sounds that animals - and birds of course - make, too" (emphasis in the original). The structure of the sentences also helps in deriving meaning out of gibberish, as the show relies on paralanguage. It is as if only words are missing with every other formula of language in place; YouTube comments on *Pingu* clippings are replete with people filling in the blanks in characters' speech. The birthday song in "Pingu's Birthday" (*Pingu* Season Two) is a direct example of this effect, where the music is kept intact, the syntax is maintained yet the words are not decipherable. Interestingly, it is the viewer's ability to comprehend that needs investigation in the case of this show, leading up to questions of language acquisition and cognition.

The language in *Pingu* needs to be analysed at two levels. One level is the semantics and pragmatics: the composition of what the characters speak, the expression, the emotion as well as the context. The second is how it is comprehended by the average viewer, and what it translates to for them. The creation and usage of Penguinese can be understood with Ferdinand de Saussure's theories on semiotics, which suggest linguistics to be a study of signs. According to him, the signs themselves are arbitrary and it is the social convention that assigns meaning to it. He points to the lack of an intrinsic relationship between a phoneme—or a sound utterance—to the concept it is referring to.

> Saussure makes it clear that the purpose of the sign is not to name or label things, events and so on which already exist outside it. The two-way and internal relation between signifier and signified is a contextualizing relation. […] Saussure's point is that the relationship between these two strata of language form is itself

meaningful, or, better, *meaning-making.*
(Thibault 217)

In *Pingu,* the signifiers are not comprehensible words, they are other components of speech as well as symbols of childhood: sibling rivalries, pranks, dinner-table tantrums. The words themselves are made sense of only in the different contexts of the show, taking help from recurring events and actions performed. We are also given hints within the show: "Pingu goes to School" (*Pingu* Season One), can be understood as a kind of meta-reference. The scene of his school in the episode provides a glimpse into the curriculum of the school, where the students are taught to identify animals found in the sea and are to represent on the blackboard what they see in a fishing hole. This exercise in visual thinking is something the viewers outside the screen are constantly engaging in. When the visual signs on the television are interpreted by the viewer, they're participating in a mental exercise where instead of building a vocabulary, they are building meaning. Another interesting point in the same episode is when we are shown Robbie the seal using the English alphabet to name a lobster when he writes "coo-coo" on the blackboard, confusing the reader about the script Penguinese uses. This confirms the theory of arbitrariness of signs, as the process of meaning-making within the show doesn't stop.

No single culture's language or grammar theories can be applied as a means of studying this behaviour without compromising on the subjective and local understandings of both childhood and language. The work of developmental psychologists like Jean Piaget then makes it possible to draw inferences about the viewer response and reception to shows like *Pingu.* Instead of studying from within varying specific cultural contexts, an external approach towards a somewhat universal understanding of a child's mind provides a new direction. In his stages of cognitive development, Piaget elucidated about the preoperational stage:

> Sometime between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four months, Piaget suggested, babies acquire the ability to form mental images of objects and events. At the same time, language develops to the point at which a young child begins to think in terms of verbal symbols—words. These developments mark the end of the sensorimotor period and the start of Piaget's second stage—the preoperational stage.
> (qtd. in Baron 311)

There are multiple points to be noted in this stage, and how they correspond to action within *Pingu* and subsequently its viewership. Pingu, the character, and the child viewer seem to intersect at a juncture within this stage. Both are trying to assimilate and accommodate new information—the former as he moves through the plot of the show, and the latter as s/he learns about roles and rules of interaction while watching the show. Lack of language enhances the imagination and the child's capacity to associate symbols and images to meaning, even as straightforward instructions aren't being given to the child. Cognitive development, according to Piaget, promotes language development instead of the latter leading to the former. Other features of this stage include animism and egocentrism. Animistic thinking is what leads children to accord animate traits to inanimate objects. Within the media they consume, understanding fantastical ideas like human-like animals becomes possible. Anthropomorphism, the idea that animals can talk and behave like humans, is the tool employed in many children's stories, including *Pingu*, often because of this reason. The show's universal appeal also contributes to this. It allows the viewer to learn and be fascinated at the same time. Much like his child viewer, Pingu also displays animism: Pingu is often seen participating in make-believe play himself, especially when he plays with the snowman outside his house. Egocentrism, another limitation of the preoperational stage as per Piaget, is defined as the "the inability of young children to distinguish their own perspective from that of others" (Baron 310). Within *Pingu*, this plays a curious role: "Pingu is Jealous" (*Pingu* Season One) comes just two episodes after the birth of his sister, Pinga. While she is being cradled by her mother to sleep, Pingu is shown yearning for affection. A similar scene is echoed in "Grandfather Comes to Visit" (*Pingu* Season Three) where the viewer notices Pingu's sadness and envy while their grandfather hugs Pinga first. The expectation of attention, and the difficulty of allowing for others' shift of perspective hints at egocentric behaviour.

Pingu is also moving towards a more

logical stage—what Piaget calls "concrete operations"—and we see his problem-solving side. In "Little Accidents" (*Pingu* Season One) Pingu has to use the lavatory after he has drunk a lot of lemonade. That in itself is one of the incidents where Pingu becomes an identifiable character for young viewers since at the current cognitive operational stage, his cognitive abilities are not developed enough to allow him to think of consequences of his actions beforehand. Yet the episode is remarkable for other reasons. The function of communication without language that *Pingu* is trying to serve is defined through this episode as nontrivial emotions of a child are portrayed sensitively. Pingu, when he can't reach the toilet seat ends up excreting on the floor of the washroom. Reprimanded by his father, he takes the responsibility of cleaning it as well as later, with the help of his mother, builds an elevated platform around the seat to be able to reach it. The absence of language in this scene becomes significant. The focus is on the non-verbal cues of tears, and lack of conversation and even eye-contact with family. It lets shame be a subtle emotion that the viewers can easily decipher, without giving in to scatological humour, or any trivialising reaction.

In 2015, an exhibition, "The Story of Children's Television from 1946 to Today" was held at HerBert Art Gallery and Museum, in Coventry, England. One of the rare events to celebrate the role of television as children's media, it featured original puppets from different shows including *Pingu*. It also initiated discussion regarding the status of TV series as classics. As one of the curators, Dr Helen Wheatley put it, "Some people think that it's (television) just so ubiquitous, it's not worth paying attention to. But that's precisely why we need to pay attention to it" (qtd. in Singh). When Pingu is being discussed as a literary character, the aesthetics too contribute. Even after CGI animation[9] was widespread, the animators of *Pingu* kept to the clay-motion mode[10]. This meant the characters would have a more three-dimensional look to them, further increasing the connection with the desired audience (also since clay is a material often

used in children's play). Pingu is also a rounded character in the literary understanding of the term as each episode takes him through a course of youthful development. *Pingu*'s position as a text that has aided or rather accompanied the development of children socially and cognitively cannot be denied as the show continues to be adapted and remastered, confusing the auto-generated subtitles[11] and entertaining the children. Silence and natural language are often considered to be binaries, and *Pingu* attempts to subvert that idea. There is a unique meaning creation process at work where viewers participate and every aspect of language except literal words plays a role. The process might not find its place in dictionaries, but nevertheless, invites for a linguistic and literary study.

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[9] Computer generated imagery, or CGI, is one of the more modern animating techniques, using computers to model 3D characters virtually.

[10] Claymotion is a traditional animation technique, in which an object is made of clay or plasticine. Each frame is made separately Sland the animation effect is achieved by playing the frames next to each other.

[11] YouTube, and other video hosting platforms, generate subtitles using speech-to-text software for multiple languages. There are often inaccuracies within the captions. In this case, they are because the software guesses the language to belong to one of the existing world languages.

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A Language of One's Own: The Lack and Creation of Lesbian Language in India

Tejasvani Datta

Lesbian desires and identities exist in the very roots of texts and practices emerging from the Indian context. However, in a phallocentric view of the world, lesbianism is not only discouraged but also generally ignored. Relations between women are not considered 'natural' because the hierarchical structures of society only give them a status dependent upon their relation to men. This lack of acknowledgment both arises from and leads to the silencing of an already half-hidden community in India, which stems from the lack of a lesbian vocabulary in the country. Most words associated with 'lesbianism' are either too foreign, something that the masses aren't familiar with, or are simply non-existent, highlighting the need to create a vocabulary in order to give this silenced community personal agency and a voice for them to claim their identities, histories and legal rights. This paper attempts to distinguish 'western' lesbian histories from Indian lesbian histories and gay histories from lesbian histories, since they have their own set of hierarchies and struggles and cannot be considered parallel to each other. While looking at Ismat Chughtai's, "Lihaaf" (1942) and Deepa Mehta's *Fire* (1996), which publicly acknowledged that 'which must not be named', sparking controversies and debates, the paper also seeks to understand 'lesbianism' in relation to certain Hindu myths, its presence in contemporary Indian culture, and the vocabulary available for it despite its lack of acknowledgment from the Indian law.

"There is no word in our language to describe what we are or how we feel for each other."
Fire, 1996

Language and identity formation have always been closely linked. Language may not necessarily construct one's identity completely but it definitely shapes it, since identity formation depends considerably on social interaction. According to Sonja Lanehart's essay, "The Language of Identity", language can become a means of solidarity, resistance and identity within a culture or social group. She further states, "To try to dictate and purge a person's language is to try to change the individual, to alter that person's identity" (Lanehart 322). But what happens when words for who you are, how you feel or whom you desire simply do not exist? Do your identity, feelings and desires become any less real?

According to Foucault[1], sexuality based identity categories were created only in nineteenth century Europe. However, "Women have always loved women," states Margaret Reynolds, in her introduction to *Penguin's Book of Lesbian Short Stories*, though "the private history of the past lesbian experience is hidden" (Reynolds xiv). There have been several reasons for this, which resulted in and were due to oppressive labeling of women who loved women. This eventually led to their long absence in history, "A pattern of long silence followed by oppressive labeling does not make for continuity in literary history" (Reynolds, xix).

The first and primary reason for this was that women were not allowed to write, which made the entire process of documentation of lesbian history nearly impossible. In an extremely phallocentric view of the world, lesbianism was not just discouraged but also generally ignored. This lack of mere acknowledgement led to not just externally imposed silence but also a certain self-imposed silence. Men have always

[1] French historian and philosopher, Michel Foucault's three-volume study of sexuality, titled, *The History of Sexuality* (1976,1984), explores and examines the emergence of 'sexuality' as a discursive object. He argues that the notion that every individual has a sexuality is a relatively recent development in Western society. According to Foucault, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries society took an increasing interest in sexualities that did not fit within the marital bond: the "world of perversion" that includes the sexuality of children, the mentally ill, the criminal and the homosexual ("The History of Sexuality" *Wikipedia*).

influenced history because of their power over language, and more importantly, over writing. Writings by men usually included only documentation of public histories, or they made their own private histories public, as they had the power to. According to Dale Spender, "There *is* sexism in language, it *does* enhance the position of males, and males *have* had control over the production of cultural forms" (Spender 144). Owing to this*,* the private experiences of this silenced community that made up lesbian histories were never truly documented. Those that were, existed only as 'private' texts, kept as diaries or exchanged as letters. Thus, only fragments of a more public lesbian history remained; letters and diaries that got published years later. Similarly, Eva Kosofsky points out that one of the favourite arguments of academics who seek to dismiss the history of same-sex relations says "since there is no language about them, they must have been completely meaningless" (Kosofsky qtd. in Donoghue 5).

Emma Donoghue, in *Passion between Women*, talks about how lesbian history is often improvised by rigid divisions of friendship and sex, social acceptability and deviance, innocence and experience. Language plays a key role here yet again since it has been claimed that there was 'no language' about erotic passion between women before the nineteenth century. When one traces back the words associated with lesbianism to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one finds that 'lesbianism' was only introduced back in 1870, 'lesbic' in 1892, and 'lesbian' was only introduced as a noun in 1925. Donoghue disagrees with Judith Brown's notion that before the nineteenth century, women who engaged in sexual relations with other women were incapable of perceiving themselves as a distinct sexual or social group, and were neither seen as such by others. Instead, she states that this lack of explicit acknowledgment in surviving personal papers (again, due to lack of a lesbian language or simply a lesbian voice, for that matter) is not enough to prove lack of perception as well.

Donoghue, Brown and Reynolds are all European writers who attempted to trace and write about lesbian identities, within their own cultural context. Sexuality based and gender based identities are intersectional in nature since they cannot be separated from other types of identities. This gains significance in the Indian context, where a woman's identity is made up of her national identity/caste/class/gender as well her sexual orientation. Unfortunately, there is a perceptible lack of language in relation to sexuality in India, till date. The Indian vocabulary, like the Indian public, is still unable to reconcile queer identities. The words associated with 'lesbianism' then become a western construct, too foreign for the Indian masses, and more than that, simply a privilege based on accessibility of the language. An upper middle class English-speaking woman, who 'likes' women, can choose to identify herself as a lesbian or a bisexual, while another woman with the same sexual orientation but without access to similar socio-cultural capital, or privilege may not be able to do the same.

The female body has general been viewed, in Indian society and culture, as a site for all kinds of action and reaction but seldom as a legitimate site for sexual autonomy or personal agency. According to Maya Sharma, "Women's sexual experiences are generally understood solely within the established parameters of reproduction" (Sharma 1). Sexual relations between women are not considered important or 'natural' in a phallocentric patriarchal view, since the hierarchical social structures only give women a status dependent only upon her relation to a man.

Ismat Chughtai's controversial Urdu short story, "Lihaaf"*,* is considered to be one of the first works written by a woman depicting lesbian desires in the Indian context. It was first published in an Urdu journal titled *Adab-i-Latif* in 1942, and created a huge uproar among its readers. The story, narrated from the first person perspective of a young girl, talks about the suffocating life of a neglected wife, Begum Jaan, "yearning for a love that had never been" (37), her unquenchable "itch", it boldly hints at the sexual relationship between the Begum and her masseuse, Rabbu.

Chughtai soon found herself charged with obscenity by the State, and a trial against her was held in the Lahore Court (1944). In her autobiography, *Kaghazi Hai Pairahan*, she recounts how she had laughed when the Police came to her door with the summons of the Lahore Court: "As I read the heading – Ismat Chughtai vs. The Crown – I broke into laughter. 'Good God, what crime have I

committed that the Exalted King has brought this lawsuit against me'" (qtd. in Khanna 1). Instead of apologizing and paying a fine, as was advised, Chughtai fought the case, and won it too, with the final verdict in her favour. The reason for this was that, as Chughtai had pointed out during her trial, there was no explicit mention of sexual activity or a lesbian relationship in the story. She wrote with subtlety and hinted at what could only possibly be happening underneath Begum Jaan's 'lihaaf' or quilt.

Chughtai was one of the most prominent writers of the Progressive Writer's Association, and belonged to a generation of well-educated Muslim women. According to The *Dawn* newspaper, "Progressive Writers Movement in Urdu literature was the strongest movement after Sir Syed's education movement" (*Dawn*). The association included writers like Tagore, Manto, Faiz, Premchand and Pritam. It was their impulse for modernization that eventually resulted in a body of literature that freely explored the female body, its aspirations and desires, in many ways, changing the way women were represented.

Interestingly, though "Lihaaf" is perceived to be an exemplar of Chughtai's radical feminist stance, it is also noted that she did not intend to extend her support to alternative sexual relationships. She mentions in her autobiography that her mind was "an ordinary camera that records reality as it is" (Chughtai 30). She wrote about female homosexuality simply because she was aware of its existence, concealed within the four walls of the house. In "Lihaaf", these lesbian desires are not only hidden behind the walls of the *zenana*[2], but also underneath Begum Jaan's quilt, "It was pitch dark and Begum Jaan's quilt was shaking vigorously as though an elephant was struggling inside it" (Chughtai 38).

It is important to note in the story that lesbian desires need to exist only in "pitch dark", where the elephant struggling underneath the quilt almost becomes the metaphor for the very elephant in the room that nobody wishes to 'see' or acknowledge.

Chughtai's quilt, in this sense, becomes the covering of lesbian desires that exist but aren't ever spoken about. The words used, or rather the lack of them, not only emphasize Chughtai's eloquence as a writer, but more importantly, the lack of vocabulary on 'lesbianism' in Indian cultures. The 'lihaaf' then, in a way, then shows how the sexual relations between women were literally kept 'under wraps', and their revelation towards the end of the story only deeply scars the narrative voice of the naïve young girl.

Loosely based on "Lihaaf", Deepa Mehta's 1996 film, *Fire*, has been described as a "critical moment of rupture"[3] in Indian queer sexuality. In one of the crucial scenes of the film, Sita remarks to her lover Radha, "There is no word in our language to describe what we are or how we feel for each other". Described as a "metonymic moment"[4], this particular scene gains great significance. Since *Fire* is an Indian movie in English, what "our language" really is cannot be clearly answered. What is clearly established though is that English itself is disowned as "our language". Thus, "our language", in a way, is framed as a catch-all unnamed Indian language that lacks any words for same-sex identities or relationships (Vanita 1).

Unlike the previous "hidden" private lesbian histories, *Fire* truly became a "public text". Bachmann, in her essay, notes *Fire's* primary value lay precisely in the debate surrounding the film (Bachmann 241), and quoting Rima Banerji:

> Fire's most compelling point is the manner in which it has become a truly public text, the subject of controversy in the media and among viewers... The fact that it has elicited such strong reactions from critics and spectator is perhaps its most notable redeeming quality...For those of us who are lesbians, the film is a milestone because it has pushed the politics of same-sex love into the limelight with an unprecedented amount of publicity and hype. (Banerji 18)

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[2] The literal meaning of the word *zenana* is "of the women" or "pertaining to women". The *zenana* are the inner apartments of a house in which the women of the family live (in South Asian countries like India).
[3] Dasgupta, Rohit, "Queer Sexuality: A Cultural Narrative of India's Historical Archive" .
[4] Vanita, Ruth, *Queering India: Same-Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society.*

CALERI[5] was formed in December 1998 following broad-based protests against the Shiv Sena's attacks on cinema halls screening Mehta's *Fire*. It actively participated in the public rally that was organized against the Sena vandalism, in order to protect the democratic institutional right to freedom of artistic expression (Sharma 11).

The 1999 edition of the *Human Rights Watch World Report* notes:

> In December 1998, the award-winning film *Fire*, by director Deepa Mehta, was recalled from theatres after Shiv Sena activists vandalized at least fifteen cinemas where it was playing. Sena members objected to the film's depiction of a lesbian relationship between two Hindu sisters-in-law, adding that had the women been Muslim there would be no objection.
> (qtd. in Davidescu)

The unqualified homophobia of the Sena cadre and the political establishment is evidenced in statements compiled in the CALERI Report (1999). Certain statements and extracts from the report have been taken from Maya Sharma's "Politics of Utterance" in *Loving Women: Being Lesbian in Underprivileged India:*

> 'Why are such films made here? They can be made in the US or other Western countries. A theme like lesbianism does not fit in the Indian atmosphere.'
> - Union Minister for Home, L.K. Advani.
>
> …'There can be no argument that lesbianism is unnatural and is regarded as such the world over.'
> - Former Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Sushma Swaraj.
>
> 'Has lesbian spread like an epidemic that it should be portrayed as a guideline to unhappy wives not to depend on their husbands?'
> - Shiv Sena chief Bal Thakeray.
> (Sharma 11)

Sandhya Luther, a lesbian activist, vividly described the uproar created by the response of *Fire* in *'Fire! Fire! It's the Lesbians!'* in the CALERI Report:

> The word 'lesbian' was on the front page of every newspaper I picked up in Delhi. LESBIAN. It looked odd and out of place. Why was a word like that being tossed around? A word so loaded with fear and embarrassment and prejudice, a word shrouded in silence, a whisper that spoke of an identity that must be hidden from others, that frightening word that dare not cross any threshold, was on that winter morning landing at the doorsteps of millions of households in many parts of the country. (qtd. in Sharma 12)

Mehta's *Fire*, thus, in a way, created an acknowledgment of the very word that Sita and Radha were deprived of in the film, "LESBIAN" becoming the answer to the "no word" that exists for them. But there still remained a lack of the word in "our language", and this continues to be the case, even today. Though there was no shortage of words to interpret and reinterpret "who we are" in "our language", no adequate single word existed for it. In this sense, *Fire* does not introduce 'foreign' or 'alien' elements into India's "culture", but rather resurrects elements that have been silenced, hidden and oppressed over time, forcing the viewer to 'see' them, as they are: a part of Indian society.

The act of 'seeing' becomes relevant here, as Deepa Mehta's *Fire* achieved something that Chughtai's "Lihaaf" could not. Though Mehta borrows from the short story, she shifts the focus from the act of 'covering' to actually 'seeing' and acknowledging "who we are". Fire, thus, in a way, becomes symbolic of the light that was absent in the "pitch dark" world of "Lihaaf". *Fire* begins with a young Radha, sitting with her mother in a field, expressing her desire to the "see the ocean". Her mother tells her that she will have to see the ocean without looking. Radha, as a child, fails to understand what her mother's words really mean. Another scene in the film shows Radha and Sita—now sister-in-laws—both neglected by their husbands and deprived of any desire to love, be loved, and live; bonding one late night in their balcony over how they wish they could see the ocean. Over the course of the film, a sexual awakening of sorts takes

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[5] CALERI (Campaign for Lesbian Rights) is a Delhi-based non-funded autonomous group of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and heterosexuals.

place for these two characters, and more importantly, they develop a deep bond filled with compassion and intimacy, allowing them to finally acknowledge their desires, and simply their "desire to live". As they decide to leave their husbands towards the end of the movie, they move out of the 'home' that had oppressed and killed their desires. It is then that they decide to create a world of their own, where they can live as they are. It is only at the end of *Fire* that once again the scene shifts back to the fields, where young Radha finally says, "I can see the ocean".

The act of 'seeing' thus becomes a way of not just acknowledging one's own desires but also acknowledging one's self, despite the lack of language that exists. Vision then becomes the first step towards this acceptance of self, long before one has the words, or even the voice to truly express it. In India, the word "lesbian" is not commonly used. The Hindi word that comes closest to expressing lesbianism is *samalingika* which merely translates to 'same-sex', and is not commonly known either. However, the realities of gender identities, sexual practices, and sexual identities that challenge the embedded nature of heterosexism in law, and society, have traditionally existed, and continue to do so.

Queer scholar, Ruth Vanita, in her work, *Queering India: Same-Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society*, traces queer histories, all the way back to the ancient times. She points out the existence of lesbianism in the *Kama Sutra*, in the erotic sculptures of Khajuraho Temples, and more interestingly in a particular Bengali version of the *Ramayana*, dated to the fifteenth century. In her essay, "Naming Love: The God Kama, The Goddess Ganga, And the Child of Two Women", Vanita talks of the birth of Bhagirath

in *Krittivasi Ramayana*[6]. There are three different versions of the story dealing with Bhagirath's birth, all of which speak about how he was born out of sexual intercourse between two women, King Dilipa's widowed wives. In all the three texts, the son is named Bhagiratha, and all three provide etymology for this name as Bhaga translates to 'vulva'.

In the text, sex between women is not questioned for two reasons; firstly, they have sex to procreate, secondly and more importantly, because of divine intervention. Although one version[7] attributes greater agency to the Gods, where women desire a child instead of each other, another lesser known version, "represents the women in a way most likely to seem 'lesbian-like' to modern readers" (Vanita 121). It is also the only version in which the women are named. Here, they make love not with the intention of bearing a child (though the Gods have it planned already), but because they desire one another. The love-making here is inspired by Kama, the God of Love.[8] Interestingly, in the text, Brahma tells Malavati (one of the wives), that the baby is "pure" since she got impregnated by "Madan's energy"[9]. Thus, it can be seen, that even though lesbian history has existed in India, it could only be accepted and considered "pure" in the name of God.

The argument becomes almost ironic when one compares these histories to the more recent outburst against lesbianism by the Shiv Sena in the name of 'Hindutva' (Desai 182). One then begins to question, what defines the Indian identity, and more importantly, who should be allowed to influence this definition. Unfortunately, lesbian identity does not exist under Indian law. Indian lesbians have thus, in a way, become accustomed to living as absences. Here, one should note that lesbian histories and gay histories are not parallel. As

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[6] *Krittivasa Ramayana*, composed by the fifteenth century Bengali poet Krittibas Ojha, is a translation of *Ramayana* into Bengali. It is considered to be not just a rewording of the original Indian epic, but a vivid depiction of the society and culture of Bengal in the Middle Ages. ("Krittivasi Ramayana" *Wikipedia*)

[7] This version was found in *Padma Purana*, which was originally composed in Sanskrit .

[8] Here, I have included an extract from the lesser-known version:

"The sky was overcast with clouds,
The swans sang and the peacocks danced.
The skies darkened and a stormy rain followed.
Burning with desire induced by the God of Love, Chandra and Mala
Took each other in embrace,
And each kissed the other.
Chadravati played the man and Mala the woman
The two dallied and made love"

[9] Madan, here, is another name for the God of Love, Kama.

Reynolds points out:

> The practice of homosexuality between men was considered dangerous and disruptive; so it was outlawed. But lesbianism is about women, and all ideas to do with women include an ideology of difference which is generally an ideology of presumed inferiority. So that if women do not really matter, then lesbians and their ways do not matter much either.
> (Reynolds xiv)

This is still the case under the current Indian law—Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalizes "unnatural" homosexual sex; lesbians do not fit there since it only takes into account penetrative sex. Section 377 states:

> 377. Unnatural offences: Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

> Explanation: Penetration is sufficient to constitute the carnal intercourse necessary to the offense described in this section.
> (*lawyerscollective.org*)

Lesbian activist Ashwini Sukthankar states that:

> Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code makes homosexual acts between men illegal but does not technically have lesbianism within its purview since the legal definition of intercourse requires penetration...the invisibility conferred on us by the law- our special share of the country's colonial legacy- does not necessarily result in lesbians being 'legal' and therefore having legal recourse to fighting discrimination and harassment.
> (Sukthankar xv, xiv)

Thus, the Indian lesbian population finds itself neither within the law, nor outside it but rather invisible, hidden between the lines. This, once again, exists because of a lack of language for lesbian sex, or rather, non-penetrative sex in India. It is interesting to note that though the Indian law mentions sex to be penetrative, the Hindi/Sanskrit word for sex, *sambhog*, is a lot more fluid and consensual in nature, as it originally translates to "mutual enjoyment".

The lack of a lesbian vocabulary in India can also been seen in Maya Sharma's *Loving Women: Being Lesbian in Unprivileged India*. While discussing the issues she faced while interviewing her subjects, she talks about how in the overall consciousness of the family/community/society/state the female (homo) sexualized subject has no name, no face, no location, no body, and no voice (Sharma 32). Since she chose to work with the working-class population, she soon realized that most of her subjects did not speak English and were equally unaware of words like "lesbian" and "samalingik". They were uncomfortable with and unaccustomed to labeling themselves, and resisted affiliation with an unfamiliar identity category that was also a sexual practice (Sharma 5). Instead, what she found was that some of her subjects did not identify as women and used masculine pronouns to define themselves. This was easier for them since Hindi pronouns are gender-ambiguous in their plural forms. Other colloquial words these women used to describe their partners or themselves in relation to their partners included words like *dost, sakhi,* and *saheli.*

There is clearly a need for a colloquial lesbian vocabulary in India, words that most Indian lesbian women, if not all, can identify with, that take into account their sexuality and desires, as well as their bonds with other women like them. One finds the existence of these desires and identities in the very roots of Indian culture, yet the Indian lesbian population is still sidelined and stuck in limbo as outcasts. As Gautam Bhan puts it in the Foreword of *Loving Women,* "It is about finding desire, of fighting to believe in the right to have and accept such desire, and to find self-descriptions and identities in spaces where no recognition or language exists" (Sharma ix). Over time, lesbian identities have gained, after much struggle and fight, a voice of their own but the words and the language are still not completely their own.

The creation of a language of one's own has already begun. Several Indian lesbian women consciously choose to identify themselves as 'lesbians', a tabooed word in India that they wish to claim a "word so loaded

with fear and embarrassment and prejudice, a word shrouded in silence, a whisper that spoke of an identity that must be hidden from others" (CALERI Report). Simultaneously, many other modern Indian lesbians actively choose to not identify as 'lesbians', simply because they feel that the word is too western. Instead, they have adopted the term *samyonik,* which comprises of the two Sanskrit terms, *sam* which translates to union, and *yoni*, which translates to vagina, essentially meaning the union of vaginas. Others still prefer using colloquial terms like *sakhi* or *dost*. But a common/universal language is still lacking, which I believe is necessary for the politicization of the Indian lesbian community. As Sharma discusses, there definitely exists a "Politics of Utterance" (Sharma 10). An 'Indian lesbian' vocabulary, and especially its utterance, will enable an assertion of not just identity but allow for their rights, freedoms, protections, and benefits, as valid political subjects to be reclaimed. Thus, this very utterance can change one's perceptions of self and the society, and more importantly, function as an act of claiming. It will not only acknowledge the half-hidden, half-ignored Indian lesbian community, but also give them a voice, and provide them with a language they can claim as their own, a language that takes into account their needs and desires and, and, more importantly, allows them to finally belong.

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REVIEW

Negotiating with Memories to Reconstruct Iranian Cultural History in *Persepolis*

Nilanjana Ray

The migration and displacement arising out of political conflicts create a space that escapes essentialist definitions of identity and stratification. The process of archiving and documentation leaves out subtler nuances of lived experience that must be heard. Official archives, after all, are a monopoly of the State on how civilians think and perceive historical events[1]. *Reading Lolita in Tehran* and *Anne Frank* are such personal archives of global political and social history that capture what piles of statistics and numbers fail to enunciate. Exploring violent histories through graphic novels presents an alternative medium of storytelling, which visually accompanies these broken silences. Victims of violence end up being shoved either into volumes of dry statistics or as representative figures of deprivation and victimhood. With the rise of fascist regimes and their totalitarian laws seeking to dominate through oppression, documenting the lives under such regimes has become imperative to address human rights violations, with the intent of reconstructing ideas of development and demonstrating the failures of welfare states. Graphic novels depicting strife-torn States use the double vision of memory to document a life once had, a culture dead under debris.

In *Persepolis*, Marjane Satrapi depicts her adolescence through a richly interwoven text that negotiates with her memories to produce an autobiography rich in socio-cultural history, using the Islamic Revolution in Iran as the backdrop. The visual memory enacted through young Marji's life is what the author wants her readers to associate the history of her native land with. The opening chapter, "The Veil" engages the reader in an act of voyeuristically peering into Marji's life. It's almost as if Marji is lifting her veil for us,

and negotiating her access to a variety of public and private spaces, guiding readers through the motion picture of a life left behind.

Her characters bear the distinction of being humans, and not anthropomorphic mice that played off the anti-Semitic, less-than-human card in *Maus*. Satrapi was ten years old when the Revolution happened. This possibly explains her manner of representing her characters, in contrast with the art in Maus, which depicts Spiegelman's father's experiences, recovered from memory, and documents that what he endured was nothing short of sub-human. The dual-toned medium of the novel depicts the change from a vibrant, colourful Iranian culture to that of a monotony of black and white, right and wrong, do's and don'ts enforced by the Islamic fundamentalists. Adherence to these two colours questions and complicates the limited perceptions of "right" and "wrong", reminiscent of a Vittorio Storaro[2]-like use of colours with deeper subtexts identifiable across cultures. The dual colour tone gives an impression of a silent film whose documenting includes voiceless several other Iranian "citizens" living as outcasts in their own land as well as outside Iran. For example, political opponents of the newly made Iranian theocracy were either jailed or executed. Marji's family with their liberal ways of living were looked down upon when the new ultra conservative theocracy came to power, that propagated a system of moral policing and espionage that held Western values of democracy and personal liberty to be corrupt. Such a creation of an imaginary "other" within the society is necessary for autocratic governments to take root and sway public emotions in its favour, with a promise of uprooting this malignancy. The wave of anti-

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[1] Poduval, Satish. "What on Earth is a World? Media Habits and Habitats". World Literature: Postcolonial Perspectives, 15 March, 2018, Conference Centre, University of Delhi.
[2] Vittorio Storaro, Italian cinematographer known for strategically using colour symbolism in films to drive home subtexts and historical ideologies. He believes that audiences feel the same regarding colours, irrespective of cultural differences. The colours black and white, for example, have been traditionally associated with the "bad" and the "good" respectively.

immigrant feelings coursing across the United States, Germany, France, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and India offer a view into the ways in which fascist governments take root and prosper.

Satrapi presents an account of 1979 Iran under the repressive rule of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, leader of the highest order of the newly formed Islamic Republic of Iran, a new Iran where speaking females are viewed with suspicion, and progressiveness is dubbed "Western" and rejected. Repression of women and civil liberties are the tools of any totalitarian State. With fundamentalists running the government, all foreign language schools were shut down, dubbed 'Western' and 'profane' while women were ordered to wear hijabs with only their eyes visible.

In the chapter titled "The Sheep" (62), many of Marji's friends and extended family are shown fleeing to the USA. When Marji's mother proposes that they should leave too, her father replies—"So that I can become a taxi driver and you a cleaning lady?" (64). Given the affluence of Marji's family, such a change in social status is nothing short of atrocious for them. Immigrants, refugees and migrants from the South-East Asian, Middle East and African countries often end up as traditionally gender segregated taxi drivers, bus drivers, maids, waiters, etc in countries like the USA and Germany, with no fixed income or access to basic rights. They are treated as outsiders and only silence earns them pity and attention. Their trauma goes unrecorded, their attempts at articulation unheard.

In order to protect their increasingly 'rebellious' daughter and give her a better future, Marji's parents send her off to Austria to study at a French school. At the airport, Marji's father imparts a final advice: "You've got to go now. Don't forget who you are and where you come from" (152). It echoes the sentiment of every migrant looking for steady ground in unknown lands. Their identities are fluid and their silences cannot be grasped by the outsider. The captions become shorter and sharper, inflicting the required impact until fourteen-year old Marji looks on through the glass of the departure lounge wishing she hadn't turned back. The elegiac tone that was reverberating underneath the text, right from Marji coming to know of her imminent separation from her family, reaches a crescendo of deafening silence.

Persepolis seeks to briefly present the changes before and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran through a woman's voice that refused to be silenced, who, in her efforts to seek the freedom of self-expression, is compelled to leave her native home. Coming across such historical accounts that hold contemporary value, one cannot help but think of Anais Nin's remark- "We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospect" (qtd. in Webber and Grumman, 38). Much of the official literature and information on events like the World Wars, Holocaust, and the Armenian Genocide are in the form of statistics, documents, photographs, documentaries, and other such forms of archiving and documentation. Which sometimes remain just a box of unopened files and papers. *Persepolis* differs by offering a ten-year-old girl's perspective of what she had seen, heard and now remembers, in an entirely different format and a genre of its own. The novel, with its retelling and reliving of the past not only contributes to a global repository of personal visual archives on events that changed geopolitics forever, but also re-lives her experiences in a world, increasingly afflicted by the maturation of these repressive and unjust patterns of social domination. Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Syria bear testimony to this assertion. Her work successfully de-centers the space of the events and makes it a part of a shared public memory.

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OPINION
Communities of Silence

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Silence in the world of the hearing has many connotations, all of them premised on the physical ability to speak. Spinning off of those come interpretations of silence as an inability to speak because of various reasons—power equations, social constructs, emotional blockages. In the reality of the hearing impaired, the essential premise of silence as a choice is absent. Here, silence is the essence of being, carrying along with it, in most cases, an inability to speak. Sound is transcribed into the written word, but the language of the deaf bears no correlation to the language of the hearing world.

Historically, communication has linked all life domains, providing the bases for interaction, governance, socialization and so on. Language, the medium of communication, can in itself denote inclusion, exclusion, power hierarchies, and a sense of community. In everyday parlance, when we refer to communities of silence, the immediate understandings are of the disenfranchised, prevented from speaking because of their place in the social and political structure of society. Silence is interpreted as an imposition, self-imposed or external, translating into the loss of identities, as it prevents the articulation of opinions and stances. In this context, communities of silence are made up of those voiceless individuals who are not allowed to carve the space to state their opinions, preferences, and positions. Another understanding of communities of silence is the camaraderie of voiceless protest, sorrow or solidarity.

All of the above are discourses that are premised on the ability to communicate through the spoken word. The communities of the hearing impaired, though silent, are distinct and segregated from the others. The universe of the deaf tilts on a different axis since silence as a tool or a reaction is simply not an option. Therefore, the correlatives of silence versus speech hold no meaning.

In order to pierce the veil, it is important to get a bird's eye view of this microcosm of society. Research studies have revealed that sound and touch are the first inputs that a baby receives and it is these stimuli that kickstart the learning process. Glenn Doman in his book *How to Teach Your Baby to Read* discusses how babies learn to speak and estimates the vocabulary of an ordinary hearing child at about a thousand words in the first year of their lives (Doman 34). The deaf child is denied this input. A study reveals that the part of the brain that deals with language can atrophy by almost 30% between the ages of 0-3 years if it is not given inputs in terms of language (Policy-Education Rights for Disabled Children). When we consider that the average deaf child receives very little such stimulus, it should come as no surprise that this lack of communication and consequent learning impacts their IQ. This fact is often taken as evidence of a disabled child's innate inferiority rather than a byproduct of systemic gaps in the learning process that segregates them, placing them at a disadvantage compared to the non-disabled. Another fallout of delayed learning is the greater angle of difficulty in comprehending abstractions. The deaf child also has a greater proclivity to psycho-social difficulties and, as a corollary, researchers have found that enhanced communication leads to reduced incidents because of better adjustment. The deaf find it difficult to read emotions as these have to be communicated by facial expressions in sync with the sign language being used, instead of being conveyed as a composite whole through sound and speech.

The picture that emerges here is one of extreme lack of socialization skills leading to greater isolation. The consequent effects of the dissonance between the internal reality of the sphere of the hearing impaired and the external reality of the hearing populations' worldview of this community are based on the poor understandings of the latter, with regard to the former. These imperfect understandings of the

hearing color the canvas of the hearing impaired very differently from the internal palette that comes from within the group. Given this position it is not difficult to realize that a collision between what is there in actuality, what is interpreted, and what is understood to have been communicated between the two groups, is inevitable.

If we see law and order as a creation of the human mind, it follows that it is an enabler for the regulation of society and social interactions, created in order to protect the rights of the members of that society. The vast majority of the hearing population is quite conveniently able to ignore the needs of their silent compatriots while framing and implementing these laws. Among the deaf community, it is not uncommon to fight for personal liberty because someone, usually a policeman, has mistaken a deaf person for an 'unstable' or criminal one (National Assn. of the Deaf v/s Union of India and Ors). In most other spheres, this silent struggle is not just with a protector of the law turning oppressor, it flows into every social interaction, whether it is seeking medical help at a hospital, accessing a public authority or railway facilities etc. A writ petition filed on behalf of the deaf community clearly illustrates that the lack of sign language interpreters denies a deaf person the human dignity of independent access (National Assn. of the Deaf v/s Union of India and Others). In the mainstream, it is generally believed that it is very easy to communicate with the deaf because one can use the written word instead of the spoken. However, this assumption is completely flawed, based as it is on the rather arrogant assumption that the deaf will automatically understand the language of the hearing. In fact, sign language does not follow the same grammatical rules as a spoken language. Therefore, written communications between deaf persons are unintelligible to a hearing person and vice versa. It is not surprising then that a large number of hearing impaired persons live bounded by the confines of the deaf community. The hearing community, secure in a power hierarchy that causes it to believe that it knows the problem and can find the solutions without consulting the first rights holder, will incorporate measures of inclusion which make little or no difference to the deaf person. Is it any wonder, then, that for this community one of the major victories in India was the inclusion of a Sign Language interpreter in the television broadcasts of the Republic Day parade (Dhar). The fight was between the solution propounded by the hearing, which was ticker-tape subtitles, and the measures sought by the deaf-sign language interpreters.

A deaf child finds it extremely difficult to gain access to education, since supposedly inclusive mainstream schools do not care enough or know sufficiently to provide an accessible format of learning. The child, already slowed in his/ her understanding due to lack of language stimulus, thus faces an additional burden. The results are quite apparent in the large number of drop outs and the meager number of deaf students in institutions of higher learning (Reilly and Qi 60). Just in order to get basic services the community collectively had to file the abovementioned Public Interest Litigation. The Order in the writ petition starkly illustrates that it had not occurred, even to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, to conduct a survey to ascertain the need versus availability of sign language interpreters in public spaces and fora. The Order therefore contained a direction to appoint a Nodal Officer to accomplish this mammoth task and in compliance of the said Order, 450 institutions/ bodies/ authorities got questionnaires aimed at garnering the information. Not only that, the petition also resulted in a direction to the University Grants Commission to create a curriculum for Sign Language interpreters and thereafter appoint them in order to create a barrier free environment for the hearing impaired.

Lack of access to education further hinders the employability of deaf persons. Even the few that are employable are at worst prevented and at best hindered by the inclement climate created by the attitudinal barriers of the mainstream. The wall of silence that separates the two worlds is clad in presumptions of inability and exclusion on the part of the hearing. A classic example and casualty of this mindset, Dr. Maniram, a civil services aspirant, cleared all the stages of the UPSC examination, but was not given a cadre in 2005 and again in 2006, before finally being given a position in 2009. Instead of celebrating the extraordinary achievements of this hearing-impaired man who had obtained a doctorate and was a lecturer, the hearing community punished this success (Times of India Blog).

Enshrouded in their enforced cocoon of silence, these groups battle with anger and frustration directed in equal parts at the uncaring, as well as the well-meaning, uninformed. The fundamental principles of an expressed identity of an individual somehow seem out of reach for this community as it battles against the limitations of a silence that is the essence of their existence coupled with the ignorance and apathy of the mainstream towards a basic understanding of this driving concept. The interactive spaces such as they are, are so imperfect that they are, for the most part, wholly dissatisfactory. It is for reasons such as these that the entire disabled community, including the deaf community, now marches to the slogan of 'Nothing about us, without us'.

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