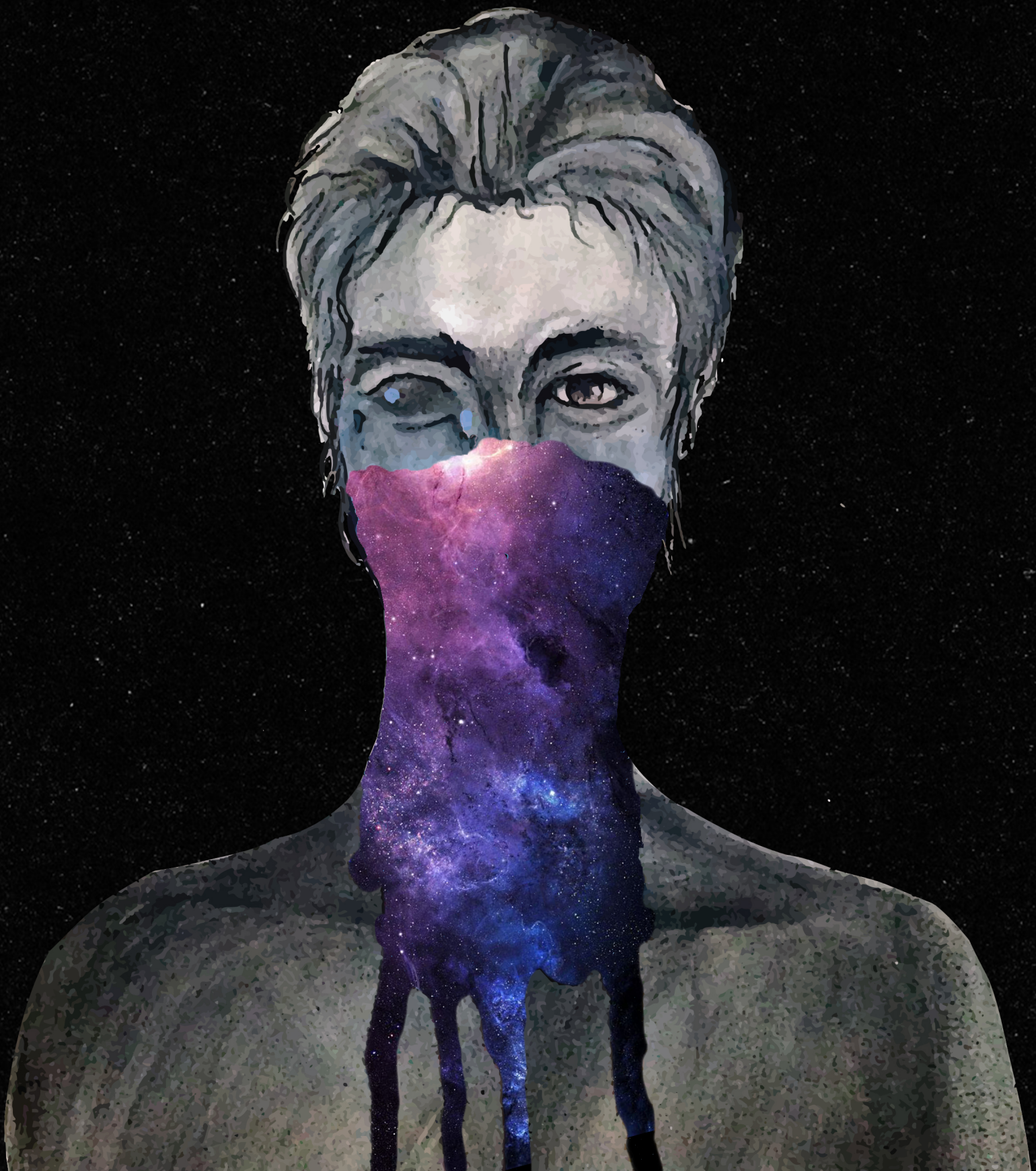
ITHAKA 2016

METAMORPHOSIS



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ITHAKA 2016

Annual Journal of the Department of English,
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Metamorphosis: Tracing The Journey

Published December 2016

Editorial

Metamorphosis is the most profound, and beautiful of acts. Andrew Marvell, the great metaphysical poet said that "time's wing'd chariot [is] hurrying near"; thereby leaving art, life, and all things in between constantly in a state of flux. Time cages us, and mortality gives life meaning. Ozymandias fell, Alexandria burned and Atlantis drowned; time spins the world, balancing it on spinning blades madly whirling on. The changing ethos of generations can be chronologically studied through the medium of literature, a zealous chronicler of change succinctly rendering bare the metamorphosis that time demands.

The concept of literature itself is coloured by these changeful tides of time, from strict meters and clipped lines of the Renaissance to the insurgent force of modernism. In 2016, the great metamorphosis literature has undergone came to light when the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to a musician, indeed showing (in his own words) that the times, they are a-changing. In this spirit, the Ithaka Journal aims to dissect these changes and their filtered shades: the big, obvious ones that flip the canvas on its head and paint outside the borders; and the small, subtle ones that dismantle colossal structures delicately. From the five act play to a rap musical, from the sonnet to free verse performance poetry, literature is reborn every day. We aren't here to tell you what literature is. On the contrary, we seek to ask you what it isn't.

This year, our writers have traced revolutions and gradual paradigm shifts through several filters. Insiya Rangwala begins by studying the Kafkaesque in *Metamorphosis*. Amani Bhobe details the influence of Sartre and Camus' underlying philosophical principles on their protagonists through the course of their work, while Veydaant Khanna examines the Joker's psyche and 'supposed' insanity through the lens of Camus' philosophy of absurdism. Anandita Bhalerao applies feminist theory to the representation of women in video games in '*Playing For Keeps*', whereas Arohi Patil expertly analyses Dickinson and Plath's poetry of suffering. Nikita Mujumdar explores gender transformations in literature using Shakespeare and Woolf, while Miloni Shah problematizes the narrative voice of Draupadi through scriptural and contemporary literature. Swagat Siby closely follows and analyses the circularity of Odysseus' journey through the Iliad and the Odyssey. Next, Vikrant Mehra displays the omnipresence of the 'Hero's Journey' in popular Young Adult fiction. Simran Vijan uses a psychological approach to the transformation of a protagonist to an antagonist, as Gauri Saxena presents the case for new and increasingly ambitious adaptations of classic literary works. Namrata Nerurkar traces the diasporic experience in *The Namesake*, while Raina Bhagat highlights second-generation immigrant narratives and the psychological implications of the American Dream. Rishika Jain addresses the *'Resolution of Thematic Contradictions in Dostoevsky'*, and finally, Asmita Kuvalekar creatively scrutinizes geopolitics and the USA's historical and political narrative in the global sphere.

Diksha Nawany depicts a mirrorless society untouched by vanity and ideals of beauty, while Sarjan Sheth charts a young photographer's journey to fulfilment through intense loss and grief. Sunaina Menezes brings to the forefront the psyche of a troubled actor torn between two identities. In the newly added poetry section, Kriti Krishan and Rati Pednekar view metamorphosis through a romantic lens, while Udity Paralikar dramatises metamorphosis. Finally, Farah Maneckshaw explores the subjectivity of memory and a stubborn resistance to metamorphosis.

We hope reading this journal is as enriching to you as the creative journey was for us.

Sumant Salunke
Nayanika Nambiar
Editors-In-Chief, Ithaka Journal 2016

Ithaka

As you set out for Ithaka
hope your road is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope your road is a long one.
May there be many summer mornings when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you enter harbors you're seeing for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind—
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to learn and go on learning from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you're destined for.
But don't hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you're old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you wouldn't have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

- C.P. Cavafy

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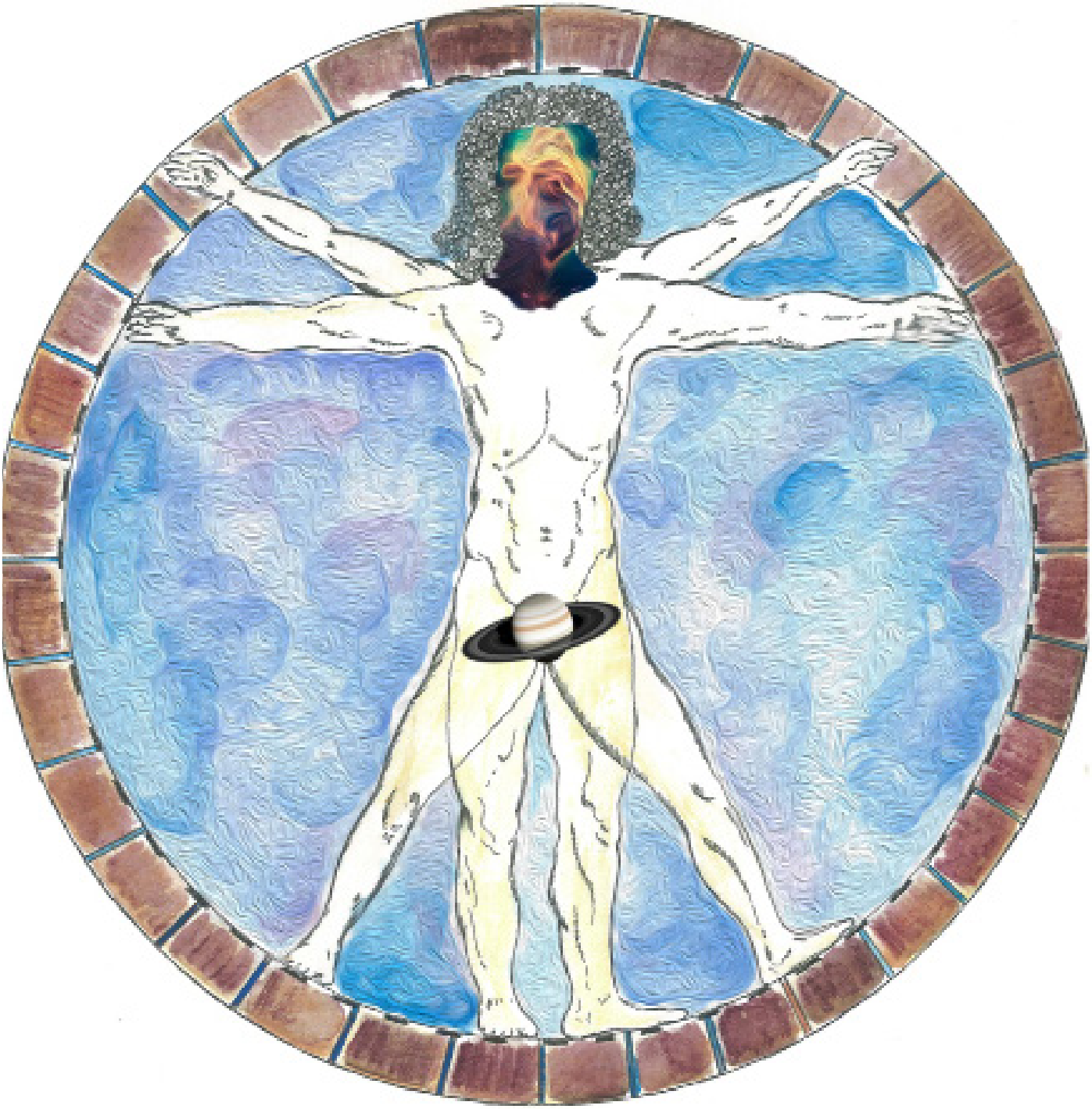

RESEARCH PAPERS

Kafka To The Kafkaesque

INSIYA RANGWALA, SYBA

This paper aims to examine the multiple facets of Kafka's works and the Kafkaesque, with an emphasis on the twentieth century ideas of absurdism, psychoanalysis, surrealism, while analysing Kafka's oeuvre under the lens of reader response theory and new historicism.

> "I have the true feeling of myself only when I am unbearably unhappy."

Franz Kafka's unassuming stature as a German speaking ethnic Jew in the Bulgaria of yore had, amongst other things, the rather unfortunate effect of aggravating his latent insecurities thus ensuring his relative obscurity during his lifetime. However, amongst the few privy to his manuscripts, there seemed to be a general consensus about the macabre of his originality and the strength of his expression. The turn of the century, nevertheless, saw him gain much critical acclaim; the auctioning of his manuscripts at an unprecedented sum was a clear reflection of his indelible impact on the modern German literature. This paper aims to explore the different facets of Kafka's oeuvres and the literary technique developed by Kafka, the Kafkaesque, represented and emulated in literature. It also aims to examine the extent to which he has been successful in making the philosophy of Absurdism amenable through the Reader Response and Reception theory as well the distinct influence of Surrealism and Absurdism in the development of his technique.

A Freudian critique of Kafka expatiates that the melancholy expanse of Kafka's œvres were a reflection of the "neurosis" he suffered from. Walter Herbert Sokel in his *Myth and Power: Essays on Franz Kafka* opines that Kafka's neurosis was "a spiritual or existential anguish, inseparable from the whole being of the one who suffered it." Being Freud's contemporary, Kafka, was cognizant of Freud's theories and, he repudiated Freud's methods saying, "the therapeutic part of psychoanalysis" was a "helpless error". Yet many psychoanalytical critics disregard this statement as fallacious citing the habitual motifs used by Kafka to represent Oedipal impulse, the phallic order and the subconscious. Psychoanalytic criticism states that any piece of art is the revelation of the author's suppressed desires (Delahoyde). Hence, the associations that the author makes with metaphors, symbols, similes etc. are private to his/her psyche and need not coincide with those of the reader. In *The Metamorphosis*, the transformation of Gregor Samsa into an unspecified anthropod partly signifies the expulsion of the tortuous feelings of angst that Kafka had held towards his father but had suppressed for ages. This would stand to be a non-universal interpretation; a reading that only those who are aware of the authors' sufferings would be able to grasp. The text, therefore, loses its objectivity.

The Reader Response Theory coined by Hans-Robert Jauss dictates that in the process of reading, there is an interplay of 3 elements – The author, the reader and the text; on the premises of two parent forces – the author's intention towards the text and the reader's interpretation of the text. Reader Response theory, contrary to convention, gives greater importance to the reader's reception than the author's intended message. He argues that a piece of work must be critiqued on the basis of the readership's understanding and learning from the text rather than the achievement of the author's intentions in the 'physicality' of words (Kinoshita 2).

Franz Kafka's short stories and parables are renowned for their Surrealist elements such as animal allegories, juxtaposition of the quotidian and the absurd et al. In *An Imperial Message* for instance, the reader is made the protagonist and put in the setting of the Imperial era. Initially, the reader might find the setting archaic and therefore unrelatable but the constant recurrence of thematic motifs i.e. the walls, the people, the emperor among others is successful in transporting him/her into that surreal world. The

reader undergoes a gradual defamiliarisation, confronted with unfamiliar time and setting but realistic conflicts. It is through this kind of defamiliarisation that Robert Jauss's "horizon of expectations" is diluted and nullified.

However, despite of this successful transportation, there happens to exist certain gaps that need filling from the subjectivity of the reader. For example, the letter that the emperor has sent for the reader which is the metaphorical embodiment of secrecy leading to the feelings of anxiety and guilt that the author hypothetically wants the reader to experience. However, the subjective aspect is the content of the letter which allows the reader to interpret and anticipate its contents according to his/her discretion. The personalised experience of reading and interpreting facilitated by Kafka's own reluctance to cede his vision renders the experience all the more subjective.

The haunting influence of the abuse and indifference Kafka suffered at the hands of his parents has been well documented, most of all by himself. The artistic sensibilities and the emotional fragility of Kafka never met with his hard-headed, patriarchal father whose domineering presence eclipsed his mother meek efforts to appease him. In *Letter to His Father*, he states:

> "What was for me a matter of course, that senseless asking for water, and the extraordinary terror of being carried outside were two things that I, my nature being what it was, could never properly connect with each other. Even years afterwards I suffered from the tormenting fancy that the huge man, my father, the ultimate authority, would come almost for no reason at all and take me out of bed in the night and carry me out onto the [balcony], and that meant I was a mere nothing for him."

His "ultimate authority" and his mercurial tyranny finds voice in almost all his works. In *The Metamorphosis,* it is represented in the character of Mr. Samsa and the unwarranted violence, unchecked by Mrs. Samsa's docility, that he propagates against his son on attaining verminhood and thus losing his utility value in the Samsa household. It is also allegorically demonstrated in the inhumane, impersonal cruelty of the law system, as also in the whimsically structured, chillingly rendered *The Judgement.*

A literary text achieves its identity from two entities. These are the aesthetic and artistic extremities, as propounded by Wolfgang Iser. The former refers to the author's conformation to a specific literary style while the latter represents his/her cathartic inputs. Hence, an 'informed' reader would be able enough to objectively pick the intended message so long as the writing is aesthetic in nature. It is the artistic aspect that adds subjectivity to the text, making it complex, fractured and layered. Many biographical texts and Kafkaesque critics are of the opinion that Kafka's works were cathartic sans intention to cater to the readers' experiential plane. A profound example can be found in *The Judgement*, supposedly penned in one overnight sitting post his meeting with Felice Bauer. Kafka, talking about this self-admittedly successful novel describes it as "the emergence of this story from his "unconscious" as a "birth," as an "opening of body and soul." This further elucidates Kafka's belief in the Freudian concept of the role of the "unconscious" in the process of artistic creation.

Conversely, Kafka in his last letters explicitly expressed the desire to have all his manuscripts burnt. He, in his diary, states that he has always strived to better his craft and in order to be a good writer. He deterred from committing to F. Baumer because he believed that doing so would blur his 'true self', his unconscious and thereafter would waver him away from the path of worldly success. This sacrifice portrays his conviction for the want of recognition. Hence, his works do have the potential to be read objectively or aesthetically. This idea of objectivity is further concretised by Peter Barry who is of the opinion that the text –

style and content – would convey everything to the reader that the author intended through the tools of emotions, empathy and experience.

Looking at Kafka's oeuvres through the lens of New Historicism, one is reminded of the prevailing unfavourable politico-social climate that marked the tumultuous times he lived in. Being a victim of double marginalisation and a constant litany of severe mental abuse, finding himself in the midst of an awakening Surrealism and the pervasive influence of Freud, Kafka's use of the bibliomancy surrounding the sticking of the apple in Gregor's body, the abrupt regressive metamorphosis undergone by him is all indicative of the great period of unrest in which Kafka's creativity flourished. However, the question remains, how delimiting is the Kafkaesque to the contemporary sensibility without these clutches of historical evidence to fall back upon?

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From the Absurd to Radical Freedom

AMANI BHOBE, SYBA

This paper aims at critiquing and comparing the philosophies contained within major works of existentialist fiction from the 20th century, with special reference to two French writers: Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. It also aims to shed light on their tumultuous relationship, and how that inevitably shaped their works.

Originating in 19th century Europe, existentialism emphasised on the existence of human being as an agents of free will, the inherent absurdity of the universe and the significance of death. Existentialists seeked to explore the conundrum of mortality, the fundamental dilemmas of human existence and their agency in the face of absurdity. According to William Barrett, existentialists seeked to confront "the human situation in its totality, to ask what the basic conditions of human existence are and how man can establish his own meaning out of these conditions" (126). This paper aims at tracing the evolution of protagonists in existential philosophical fiction over time, as the underlying philosophy changes. The philosophers discussed are Jean Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus. This paper thus traces the effect and impact of the contemporaries of the philosophers as well as historical occurrences that affected the fictional works of the authors. As Sartre and Camus both existed as writers of philosophical fiction at the peak of French Existentialism, the impact the work of either person had on each other is significant. The philosophers had ideological and political differences that led to their falling out and ultimately, the birth of a rivalry that circled back to love as the death of Camus caused in Sartre a feeling of love and admiration that only his demise could bring.

Jean Paul Sartre is one of the twentieth century's premier philosophers and is often viewed as the founder of French Existentialism. His contemporary, Albert Camus, remains his ideological rival even today, as jeers and slurs are thrown at students that subscribe to either school of thought.

In the analysis of Sartre's work, one must consider his early work and magnum opus '*Nausea'* as well as '*The Stories of the Young'*. His autobiography, *Words*, without doubt also reveals crucial information about the changes in his way of thought and philosophy and therefore, changes in writing style. His non-fictional works were of great value, particularly *'Being and Nothingness'*. Sartre's lecture '*Existentialism and Humanism'* and the subsequent Question-Answer session as well as later interviews both feature Sartre acknowledging a change in his way of thought, with scenarios where he even takes back a previously made claim.

> "His autobiography : *Les Mots*, is also important to understand the earliest origins of the project of metaphysical literature. The latter is highly original, it's a real literary project, involving the creation of fictions, using every means of inventive metaphors and complex plots. But it's also a philosophical project, because the writer aims at revealing metaphysical truths." (Flajoliet)

The evolution of his characters due to this shift in philosophical thought is best seen in the contrast between the characters of Antoine Roquentin in *Nausea* (Sartre 1938) and Mathieu (Sartre 1945). It is critical to note that Being and Nothingness was written between these works, in the year 1943. The lecture '*Existentialism is a Humanism'* was given in 1946, one year after the first book in the *Roads to Freedom* series, *The Age of Reason* was published. The change in character is evident. Roquentin is lonely, enveloped in despair and convinced that inanimate objects and situations affect him, rendering himself disabled, unable to define himself. He experiences a subsequent stain on his intellectual and spiritual freedom, that he describes as the creation of a sense of nausea.

Sartre's 1994 play *No Exit* is termed an existential play while his 1948 work *Dirty Hands*

is termed as political drama. The protagonists as well as storyline in these plays compared to *Nausea* (1938) and *The Age of Reason* (1945) is violent and deals with people that are not as alienated as Antoine and Mathieu. Sartre's *Nausea* deals with a lonesome man that does not understand his existence, while his characters in *No Exit* deal with questions of morality and sin, that has led to their damnation. There is a shift from Sartrean characters being passive and overwhelmed by their existence to those that are human as we understand humans - cruel, active, sinners (not entirely different from Camus' work in *The Fall)*. Sartre emphasizes the idea of one's existence preceding essence - essentially, the idea that humans exist without a predetermined purpose, unlike every other object that exists. We are armed with free will - man is condemned to live because of his/her ability to choose. (Sartre 1943) Alternatively, towards the end of Camus' career, it is arguable that he makes a transition to the existence before essence idea. Thereby transitioning from atheist ideology to Christian theology.

Throughout the *Age of Reason*, Sartre makes multiple allusions to Camus, often making him sound less than appealing to the reader. In one instance, Mathieu says of himself, that he was "not a revolutionary, merely a rebel," a disillusioned reference to Camus' work, *The Rebel*. In another instance, the characters are shown to frequent a cafe called 'Camus' where "one always has the feeling that it was four in the morning." It is clear than Sartre by the time he wrote *The Age of Reason* had an ideology radically different from Camus' and in his writing, urged the reader against the same by making references that were aimed at disenchanting the reader with his philosophy.

As a parallel, it is worth noting Camus's transition from the absurd in *The Myth of Sisyphus* to the idea of rebellion in *The Rebel*. An important, recurring theme in his work, that has remained constant regardless of the underlying philosophy, is the inclusion of death via questions of suicide or murder. *The Rebel* (1951) written after *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), addresses the question of murder while the latter deals with the problem of suicide. The change in thought here is made apparent through Camus' need for contradiction in order to highlight his point.

We have already observed this in *The Myth*, when discussing the notion of suicide. First premiss: life has no meaning; second premiss: I must not, however, take my own life. Thus conscience is preeminent. And now: first premiss: everything is permitted; second premiss: I am not allowed to kill a human being. The dignity of conscience common to all men is again made apparent….a change in orientation: Murder involves a second person, therefore humanity as a whole is involved. (Luppe 13)

Camus' growth as a writer of philosophical fiction is perhaps best observed via the difference in his characterisation in the works *The Stranger* (written in the same year as *The Myth of Sisyphus*) and *A Happy Death,* published posthumously, but written before *The Stranger*.

A Happy Death is seen as a predecessor to *The Stranger.* The protagonist in *A Happy Death* is called 'Patrice Mersault', very similar to *The Stranger's* main character "Meursault." Furthermore, both men are described as French-Algerian men, much like Camus himself. Each of them murder a man. The question of murder was not taken up by Camus till much later, in *The Rebel,* yet his earlier works feature the theme very strongly, indicating a part obsession in understanding the link between absurdity, consciousness and death.

In *Sisyphus*, he writes, "There is only one really serious philosophical question, and that is suicide. Deciding whether or not life's worth living is to answer the fundamental question in philosophy. All other questions follow from that." (Camus 3) Here occurs a discrepancy.

While he addresses the question of suicide (an essential existential idea), he proposes temporary solutions in the adoption of various roles one can play to- in a sense- delay the dread and despair of life, while reaching the conclusion that life is absurd but life is worth living. He,

in the same year, went on to write *The Stranger* where he presents to the audience a character alienated from the world and an exception to the conformists. Meursault lives in dread and is alone. He does not employ any of Camus' suggested guidelines from *The Myth of Sisyphus*. This change in emphasis is crucial to his writing.

> The notion of rebellion is central to *The Rebel;* it has appeared already in *The Myth,* but now it is enriched with fresh analyses... *The Myth of Sisyphus:* Emphasizes the irrational element, since the consciousness is awakened, and remains awakened, as a result of this contact; rebellion is useful to consciousness ins much as it is opposed to consciousness. *The Rebel*: Emphasizes consciousness and the desire for clarity, as opposed to obscurity. This desire is fed by rebellion… Camus extends this idea: in the Myth consciousness is awakened and then rebels; in The Rebel revolt bursts out and arouses the conscience as it does so: "Consciousness is born out of rebellion. "(Luppe 16)

The changes and increasing complexity in Camus' novels are best seen in *The Fall*, that Sartre called his most beautiful but least understood works. *The Fall* serves as Camus' attempt to explain the complex nature of human motivation - far more complex than the relatively simplistic commentary in *The Plague,* for instance. He transitions from an awakening of human consciousness to an awakening of the human conscience.

Camus speaks of a collective guilt arising from collective responsibility ie: all humans are responsible for humanity and its sins. It is arguable that Camus here begins his transition to more Christian viewpoint, thereby bringing us to the infamous fallout between Sartre and Camus. Based on ideological differences as well as political ones - Camus was heavily opposed to communism and publicly spoke out against what he believed to be totalitarianism as promulgated by Sartre as radical Marxism. (See endnotes)

However, after Camus' death, Sartre spoke of him, writing of his ideas as important contributions to philosophy as well as literature. While Sartre and Camus had differing viewpoints, both writers are seen as important in the genre of existential literature and yet held at par with one another.

ENDNOTES

1) Camus, although, referred to as an existentialist, rejects the label for himself. He did not call himself an existentialist although his contribution to philosophy via absurdism remain one of the most important ideas in existential philosophy.

2) While The Myth of Sisyphus and The Rebel are not works of fiction, the alterations in philosophy are important in order to understand the impact of the same of the stylizing of Camus' characters in subsequent works.

3) In a recent interview, Catherine Camus, daughter of Albert Camus discussed his falling out with Sartre: "It was always and overall a political thing, a kind of misunderstanding. Camus had denounced the gulag and Stalin's trials. Today we can see that he was right. To say that there were concentration camps in the USSR at the time was blasphemous, something very serious indeed. Today we think about the USSR with the camps also in mind, but before it just wasn't allowed. Nobody was allowed to think that or say that if you were left-wing. Camus always insisted that historical criteria and historical reasoning were not the only things to take into account, and that they weren't all powerful, that history could always be wrong about man. Today, this is how we are starting to think."

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Understanding The Punchline: The Joker And The Absurd

VEYDAANT KHANNA. TYBA

The Clown Prince of Crime in his purple three-piece suit is often taken to be both the epitome and synonym of choas, and yet his derangement defies easy classification. Theis paper seeks to analyse, with the help of Camus, whether or not the Joker was indeed insane.

Since the beginning, the Joker has been ever so slightly different from his villainous counterparts. His motives could not be traced to an unfortunate or tragic origin story nor were they born out of greed, megalomania or fear - he simply wanted to outsmart the law enforcement; he thought it was fun. This paper seeks to analyse the chronological evolution of this character and his understanding of himself, his purpose and existence, with special reference to Albert Camus' philosophy of absurdism.

Starting off as a serial killer in *Batman #1* (1940), the Joker's character is said to be inspired by Conrad Veidt's portrayal of Gwynplaine from the silent film *The Man Who Laughs* of 1928 (Easton, 2008; O'Neal, 2011). Appearing in nine of the first twelve issues, the Joker was actively violent - killing dozens of people and even derailing a train. Post the appointment of Jack Schiff as editor there was a softening in the portrayal of the Joker. He began committing non-lethal crimes so as to make the comic marketable to children; he was a prankster, rather than a threat. According to comic book writer Mark Waid, the 1942 story *The Joker Walks The Last Mile* was the beginning of the character's transformation into a relatively more goofy incarnation; one that Grant Morrison considers to have lasted for thirty years (Weiner and Peaslee, 2015). He has since been portrayed as a thief that performed robberies with comedic themes (*The Joker Jury*), a theme continued in Cesar Romero's portrayal of the character in the TV show (*Batman*) and motion picture (*Batman: The Movie*) from 1966 to 1968 - a light-hearted villain to accompany a blunted, less brutal Batman.

Upon the end of the TV series, DC was struggling to sell copies of Batman comics and therefore a conscious decision was made to revert to mature storytelling conceits. He returned under Neal Adams and Dennis O'Neil, where he was not just depicted as a killer but also as fundamentally insane (Whitbrook, 2015). In the 1980s, the Joker brought his conflict with Batman onto a violent personal level. In *The Killing Joke* (1988), he paralysed Barbara Gordon's Batgirl, while *A Death In The Family* (1988) saw the Joker beat Jason Todd, the second Robin, to death with a crowbar. The Joker was established not just as Batman's archnemesis but also a threat to Batman's loved ones.

Tim Burton's *Batman* (1989) saw Jack Nicholson portray the character. His was, visually, a redesign of the 1970s Joker but blending elements of Romero's comical tricks and gadgets with the murderous streak and darker characterisation of the 1970s. However it was the 1990s that saw the greatest incarnation of the character, outside the comic books, in *Batman: The Animated Series*, voiced by Mark Hamill. Hamill's sinister and violent yet widely humorous take on the character is perfectly summed up in the eulogy he delivers for Batman in the episode '*The Man Who Killed Batman*', where the hero has supposedly been killed by a henchman, a nobody.[1]

However, keeping in mind Ledger's rendition, we have begun to view the Clown Prince of Crime, in his lovely three-piece suit, as both, the epitome and synonym of chaos. But the Joker is more suspenseful, more intricate than most other comic book villains because his actions are not motivated by plot-based reasons, no matter how compelling. For most characters in the universe, he is simply insane.

The Joker's derangement defies easy classification, if any at all. With no confirmed origin story, the Joker simply appears. Dr. Young, who treated him at *Arkham Asylum* (in the video game), wonders, on record (in his patient file), "….At times I almost wonder if he is actually insane at all?". According to almost

all normative definitions of insanity the Joker is definitely insane; he is statistically deviant in his behaviour, harmful to self and society and has lost touch with "reality". In Grant Morrison's *Arkham Asylum* (1989), Ruth Adams, a psychotherapist who insisted on remaining in Arkham after it had been overrun by the Joker along with the rest of the inmates, says that the Joker is a "special case", and that some of them feel "he's beyond treatment" (Morrison, 1989). They suspect he has a neurological disorder, a "brilliant new modification of human perception, more suited to urban life at the end of the twentieth century"

(Morrison, 1989); a form of super-sanity.

Super sanity is the situation where the Joker is capable of realising the absurdity, as Camus put it, of his own existence - as a recurring comic book villain. Absurdity is the conflict between the "human tendency" to search for inherent value and meaning in life and the human inability to find either (Camus, 1939). The feat is impossible, in part due to the sheer amount of information present and the insurmountable unknown, and thus, bound to end in failure. This argument finds textual/narrative backing in Grant Morrison's Arkham Asylum, when the aforementioned psycho-therapist Ruth Adams states that "The Joker seems to have no control over the sensory information he's receiving from the outside world.: and thus, he can only cope with this chaotic barrage of information hurled his way by 'going with the flow' " (Morrison, 1989). Thus, Ruth Adams infers, he has no fixed personality - on some days he's a mischievous clown and on others, a psychopathic killer. This lack of personality seems to explain the synchronic and diachronic variations with The Joker's character and actions.

In order to relate The Joker's super-sanity to Camus' Absurdism further, dissection of the tenets of the latter are necessary. Elusion, according to Camus, was both "more and less than diversion"; it was the "invariable game" (Camus, 1939). He perceives the act of filling the void with an invented meaning or belief system as 'eluding'. This is done in place of acknowledging, accepting and embracing the absurd[2]; it is merely an act of escape or avoidance. The Joker has attached no singular belief system or meaning to his life. If one is to argue that in *The Dark Knight,* the Joker's belief is in the creation of chaos (he proclaims himself to be the "agent of chaos" too) and in Alan Moore's *The Killing Joke*, he believes in the power of madness to be an "emergency exit"; one must also note the change in or re-articulation of his beliefs. If at all we consider them to be belief systems, their constant flux comes from them belonging to the Joker but not being his own (by creation). And even then, he accepts that his actions are out of his control and therefore is attaching meaning to them. Moreover, his belief systems seem to be a rationalisation (by acceptance) of the fact that his actions are not under his control, rather than operating contrary to this fact. They are, thus, not an elusion from the absurdism he encounters. He faces his purposelessness head on, realising that he cannot control what happens to him. His lack of elusion is also displayed in Ledger's rendition of his 'everything burns' mentality.

Secondly, Camus believed that people could

subscribe to personal meanings they attach to their lives, ones that they make on their own. It would not be the objective meaning of life, if there ever was any to begin with, but it could provide something to strive towards. However, recognition of the Absurd must supersede this personal meaning. One must maintain "an ironic distance" between the two. The Joker's personal meaning is to be a menace to Gotham and kill the Batman. Here too, however, he realises that this purpose has been assigned to him, and is perhaps eternal; since Batman is the protagonist and without him the series, and thus the Joker, cease to exist. This is implied in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* when the Joker says to his better half "I think you and I are destined to do this forever."

Freedom cannot be achieved in a radical sense, as Jean Paul Sartre envisions it[3] (Kaufman, 1956). However, one can be free within the confines of the absurdity of existence. The Joker realises this, and so does Ruth Adams, the psycho-therapist at Arkham Asylum. When Batman questions her defence of (what she believes is) The Joker's condition by bringing up the topic of The Joker's victims, she is quick to retort that he has no control over the sensory information he receives and thus, simply goes with the flow. This is, obviously, an allusion to the fact that The Joker does that which he is made to do; or that which he is made to want to do (which he accepts without resignation), all while still being cognisant and accepting of the Absurd. Therefore, he is the only character in the DC Universe that is truly free[4]. The Joker's freedom and constraint, yet his inevitability of action and his realisation of the absurdity of the same is visible in a famous line from Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight*, where he says, "You know what I am? I'm a dog chasing cars. I wouldn't know what to do with one if I caught it! I just do things."

On the subject of 'hope' Albert Camus (1939) says, "Hope of another life one must 'deserve' or trickery of those who live, not for life itself, but for some great idea that will transcend it, refine it, give it meaning and betray it." The Joker is not a man of hope, he doesn't use fraudulent ideas such as those to elude the Absurd (as explained above, specifically with respect to his nihilist slogan 'everything burns'). His lack of hope is also a testament to his lack of fears (a known fact since he survived Scarecrow's fear gas unscathed) and thus, a seconding of his freedom, within the Absurd, but also due to his understanding and awareness of the same.

The Joker, much like the absurdist, is amoral,

not immoral. Both are not guided by morals but do possess integrity, that is to say that they are honest with themselves while having consistency behind the motivations of one's actions and decisions. The 'Jester of Genocide' realises that he is in a comic book where his actions are outside his control. He kills because he is made to kill; perhaps even that he is made to want to kill. Amidst all the deaths of background characters sans names and faces to those of fully fledged characters, he has never been responsible for a single death, despite having caused all. Thus there is definite consistency in his actions, despite them being devoid of a moral sense.

Joker's understanding of his existence within a comic book is further highlighted in his relationship with Batman. The Joker does not kill the Batman because he cannot kill the Batman. The much famed harbinger of justice is the protagonist of the series, not the Joker, and the latter understands that, unlike any individual before him, or after. If he kills Batman, the comics cease to exist and thus the writers will not allow him to do so. In Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* when the Joker alludes to this when he says to his better half "I think you and I are destined to do this forever". This, perhaps, is the joke he's trying so hard and not at all to tell. When in the comic *Going Sane* the Joker seemingly kills Batman, he becomes a regular member of society (with respect to his functioning). He loses his make-up and crazy persona. This could be because he begins to believe that perhaps, for all these years he was indeed crazy (thinking he was in a comic), but since the alleged protagonist has now died (which would be impossible in a comic), he was surely mistaken in his past beliefs. Upon finding Batman alive he reverts to being his old, renowned self. Moreover, he only cares for Bruce when he is in a Batsuit, as shown by his complete disinterest in him when he visited the Joker at Arkham Asylum (in *Death of The Family*) and his refusal to allow the inmates at Arkham to unmask Batman. Here is the case of the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy, as the Joker is the emotional and philosophical opposite of (and thus balance to) Batman (not Bruce). He is therefore simply concerned with interacting with the Batsuit - that is what the comic demands. Joker's character was made darker and more aggressive (post 1985s *Crisis of Infinite Earth*) and even mellowed (as discussed before) as per Batman's characterisation. This lack of Batman even led to the cancellation of Joker's own series in the 1970s, on a less existential note.

His understanding of the locus of control of his actions being exogenous to himself is only subtly alluded to[5], unlike Deadpool who breaks the fourth wall at whim and overtly so, and thus makes it an act of poetic detail. More than being a meta-textual joke, he understands the constraints of the world he lives in, he understands the purposelessness of all actions within this world and yet, he must continue to perform them each day. But we see him smiling; always. We do not need to imagine him happy.

END NOTES

1 - The euology referred to in the aforementioned text, voiced by Mark Hamill, can be found at http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0519636/quotes. (Note: Sid is the henchman in question)

2 - The sensation of the absurd, according to Camus (Luppe, 1969), is a feeling that is "at the origin of thought and action, a definite emotion". It is an unforeseen sensation that arises under mechanical and banal everyday occurring and yet, changes everything. This feeling, says Camus, is not just outside an individual but even within them, and lays particular emphasis on the mechanical actions of life, that are emotional in nature. It is, in short, a feeling of self-awareness of the lack of inherent meaning to life.

3 - This idea was spoken of in a lecture called *Existentialism is a Humanism* given by Sartre in 1945 at Club Maintenant. A year later he published a work of the same name based on the lecture.

4 - The condition of being free, here, refers to the ability to understand the fourth wall and the existence of a character within a comic book (by a character). Nobody else displays this ability in the DC universe with the consistency and the clarity of the Joker. His understanding of his existence as a comic book villain adds another dimension to his freedom as it enables him to not be burdened by the guilt of his actions

5 - In *The Sign of The Joke*r and *The Laughing Fish* comic books, the Joker steps up and speaks to the readers briefly, while also turning the page

as he bows and tips his hat. In *Salvation Run 6,* he gives the audience a disclaimer as he is about to fight Lex Luthor, saying "Close your eyes, little ones. This could get ugly!". In *The Batman Adventures*: Mad Love, he is seen whistling his own theme song and again provides the readers with a disclaimer saying: Don't try this at home, kids!"

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Playing For Keeps

ANANDITA BHALERAO, SYBA

This paper explores the augmented germination of female and feminist presence in the male-dominated world of video games. It seeks to study the problematics of an unexplored genre under the lens of feminist literary theory.

The meaning and connotation of the word 'literature' has been in a state of constant flux. As Oscar Wilde wrote, "'Literature always anticipates life. It does not copy it, but moulds it to its purpose."' By this particular definition, there is one medium of storytelling that cannot afford to be overlooked as literature- video games. Video games combine the art of storytelling along with stellar graphics and visual effects. Perhaps what sets this particular medium apart from the more traditional forms of literature such as the novel is its interactivity. The participatory nature of video games allows its players to control the narrative and create their own stories as they advance further in the game; essentially, this establishes that no two players will be witness to the same tale.

The reciprocity that playing a video game entails could arguably make them the most immersive form of literature available. Coupled with advancements in technology that have made videogame graphics increasingly authentic, it is easy for players to conflate the alternate reality of videogames for the real world. If one accepts the Aristotelian concept of mimesis, it would come as no surprise if games reflected the patriarchal society we live in. Furthermore, research spanning decades has consistently shown that everyday misogyny and sexism is grossly overblown in the world of video games.

In a study conducted in 1998 by T.L. Dietz exploring gender roles and violence in video games, it was found that of the 33 popular Nintendo® and Sega Genesis® examined, 41% had no women, and 31% had a complete absence of any female species. Further, of the female characters present, 21% were portrayed as needing aid from male characters. The other two dominant tropes of women as observed by Dietz were women as passive 'cheerleaders' to their male counterparts, and women as heinous obstacles. Additionally, a commonality among the majority of these characters was their sexually provocative portrayal. A 2005 study by Dill et al. showed no significant improvement- in the games surveyed, only 10% of the main characters were female, and these characters tended to be highly sexualised.

Predictably, female characters were largely excluded from the marketing of the games as well. In 2007, Burgess et al. examined 225 covers of video games from the three most popular video game consoles (X-Box, Playstation 2, Nintendo Gamecube). Despite excluding war and sports games, the conventionally "masculine" genres, from their study, the results showed that male characters were twice as likely to appear on video game covers than female characters. Further, they were five times more likely to be portrayed as the primary characters, with evidently more active roles to play and greater agency.

In over thirty years of video games being released across consoles and computers, female characters have largely been restricted to easily identifiable tropes. Commonly, these tropes portray women as background decoration, 'damsels in distress', and fetishize women of colour. Such portrayals can be examined through the lens of the Objectification Theory set forth by Martha Nussbaum (1995). She propounded that, "in all cases of objectification what is at issue is a question of treating one thing as another: One is treating as an object what is not really an object, what is, in fact, a human being." The first and most commonly observed element of Objectification in videogames is instrumentality, wherein 'the objectifier treats the objectified as a tool for his or her purpose'. Other elements set forth by Nussbaum include denial of autonomy, inertness, violability, and ownership, each of which are commonly seen tropes in games. As with all forms of media, women of colour face

the brunt of this objectification. For example, in the commercial as well as a critically successful game *Far Cry 3* (2012), a straight white man explores ghettos populated by exoticised and 'mysterious' women who, serving as the subservient Other, offer to fulfil male sexual domination fantasies. The hypersexualised portrayal of women in videogames can be attributed to the game developers employing the lens of the Male Gaze. As propounded by John Berger, (1972), the concept of the male gaze refers to the lens through which the camera takes on the perspective of a white, heterosexual man. As Berger noted, "Men 'act' and women 'appear.'" He said, "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at"(Berger, 47).

Additionally, male characters in videogames have always had the advantage when it comes to the powers and abilities afforded to them, although the nature of these abilities has changed over time. With technological upgradations, characters appear more life-like, and their in-game actions can more effectively mimic real-life situations. Furthermore, Zillmann's *Excitation Transfer Theory* (1983) predicted that the longer one plays a game, the more the initial excitement and arousal that the player experienced wanes. The combination of these two factors may have resulted in the videogames becoming more extreme, and the violence more realistic. The skills at the disposal of characters have also seen a change from magical and supernatural to more realistic. For example, common tools to injure enemies have transformed from magic spells and potions to a heavy reliance of weapons and realistic physical combat. (Burgess et al., 2007) Media has been found to influence self-esteem, behaviour, and attitudes of people consuming it. Young people, by virtue of being in the process of forming their attitudes, are especially susceptible to its impact (Miller & Summers). The shift towards more realistic, violent and aggressive forms of gameplay could have worrying implications for players' self-perceptions as well as their perceptions of the opposite gender. However, one can only speculate about the real-world consequences of these perceptions, as studies measuring the impact of violent videogames and players' behaviour have shown conflicting results. While one study that data collected through 1996 and 2011 comparing videogame violence consumption to youth violence showed a negative correlation between the two (Ferguson 2014), another one found that children who played more hours of violent video games per week revealed increases in aggressive behaviour and violent tendencies compared to those who played fewer hours a week.

The past couple of years have seen significant improvements in the representation of women in games. These games have largely emerged from recently established independent developers such as PunchDrunk Games. Its aim, as expressed by CEO Lucia Hill-Rains, is to "start a feminist revolution" within the gaming industry by creating games that center on quality female characters. Progressive games from independent developers serve as precedents for mainstream developers such as Gearbox Software, whose art director Jennifer Wildes expressed concerns about the risk involved in fielding female leads, considering the predominantly male player demographic. *Life is Strange* is an episodic graphic adventure game for which its developers, Dontnod Entertainment faced pressure to change the main character to a man. After a string of rejections by various publishers, Square Enix finally agreed to publish it as it was. The resultant critical and commercial success (it ranked fifth among the best-selling PlayStation 3 and PlayStation 4 video games of February 2015) drives home the point that a game's success is not contingent on its adherence to cultural norms. The story revolves around a photographer, Maxine Caulfield, who discovers that she has the power to rewind time.

Besides the late capitalist fear of a loss in profits, developers have also cited technical issues to account for the lack of visibility of female characters in their games. In 2014, various representatives of Ubisoft, a leading videogame developer and publisher, speaking with reference

to the game *Assassin's Creed: Unity* claimed that women were too difficult to animate. The severe backlash that followed resulted in the creation of Evie Frye, the alternate protagonist in the next instalment of the franchise.

The video game industry is also notorious for the sexism encountered by female gamers. Websites such as NotIntheKitchenAnymore.com document everyday occurrences of the horrific abuse faced by women and girls playing games online. An examination of the occurrences documented on websites such as these tie in with research suggesting that men see video games as sites of resistance. This resistance includes resistance to institutional authority and rejecting femininity. This last type of resistance is aggravated by the aforementioned tendency of developers to objectify women. For instance, when male gamers see scantily clad women in a game such as *Dead or Alive* (1996), they assume (correctly so) that it does not appeal to women as it does to them, thus further cementing their preconceived notions of videogames being an exclusively male arena (Sanford and Madill, 2006). As a result, female players are often perceived as 'fake' gamers whose sole aim in playing videogames is seeking male validation.

Long-time gamer and writer Elisa Meléndez finds that solidarity among women in gaming is an important means of combatting this toxicity. As a member of The Frog Dolls, an all-female gaming group sponsored by Ubisoft, she represents the company at various conventions and competitions. The group also helps young women such as her to gain a foothold in the video game industry. In conjunction with the creation of such safe spaces for women, technology can be leveraged to silence abusive and offensive players. Game developer Bungie introduced an auto-mute feature for their game *Halo*, which mutes players' microphones completely if they are muted by any individual player. Additionally, as with any form of media, if representation within video games is to change, the first step would be to increase diversity among those who create games. A 2005 study by the International Game Developers Association found that 83.3% of videogame developers were white, 88.5% were men, and 92% were heterosexual. It is unlikely that there have been any significant changes in this structure in the past ten years.

The beauty of literature lies in its ability to firmly plant the fruits of its architects' imaginations in a reader's consciousness. Video games, by allowing audiences to play an active role, provide perhaps the easiest route to do so. Naturally, the question arises that in a world where goats can bomb homes, and cows can be bombed into the sky, is it so hard to imagine a people unshackled by the patriarchy?

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Songs of Sorrow and Suffering

AROHI PATIL, SYBA

The paper analyses the line between suffering and creative expression leading to self transcendence in the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Sylvia Plath.

> Is it the sadness
> that makes the poet,
> or the poet that makes
> the sadness? (A. Davida Jane, from "*Halfway into the Lake*", Every Dark Waning).

The above verse is a compelling examination of whether creativity, imagination, and self-understanding is stimulated by pain, anguish, and suffering. In order to establish such a connection, Julia Kristeva's theory is utilized for understanding suffering as a poetic strategy and analysing the poetic devices used to express this suffering and pain. Further, the autobiographical and biographical accounts of the poets become essential in this analysis.

One of the ways in which poetry is conventionally said to derive its ability to be impactful or poignant is from the personal experiences of the poet that become inevitably entwined with the poet's works through the use of tools such as images, metaphors, semiotic and symbolic features. This characteristic of poetry calls for the use of biographical and autobiographical accounts as references. Exploring the relationship between suffering and art has revealed that individuals who are creative possess a susceptibility to experience suffering and emotional instability as a result of their sensitive nature (Gabora and Holmes 8). For instance, Dickinson's foray into the theme of war raises doubts regarding an omnipresent and omniscient God in the face of human suffering. In the article titled *Public and Private in Emily Dickinson's War Poetry*, Wolosky points out that Dickinson's poetry and correspondence during the Civil War (1861-65) contain distinct references to the war and reflect an increased preoccupation with the themes such as the justification of suffering, the transient nature of life, and death. In the case of Plath's œuvres, the poetic treatment of historic events like the Holocaust is depicted in poems such as *Daddy* where Plath employs the imagery of the Holocaust to transform Jews into a metaphor for human suffering, specifically her own. According to Strangeways, in *Mary's Song*, Plath further goes on to connect the atrocities of the Holocaust to the eminent threat of nuclear weapons that the world faces in the future (374).

However, it is essential to understand that poetry will not always provide the reader with the opportunity to look into the poets' lives for some deeper, insightful meaning and connection. Nevertheless, some poems possess the quality of universal imagery that allows for readers to establish a lien with their own lived experiences, consequently deriving a sense of solidarity by subjectively interpreting the poet's work. Thus, even though reading a poem in its biographical context may limit its understanding and render it "reductive and simplistic", we, as readers, must appreciate the intricate relation between a literary work and the personal experiences of the poet (Guthrie 5).

One such attempt has been made by Kapusta and Smith who have examined the multiple sources of suffering and pain in Dickinson's life in order to identify the biographical deficiencies that could have possibly enhanced her creative productivity. One of the major struggles she had was in understanding God, his omnipresence, and her faith, in the face of human anguish (Keane 2). This struggle is reflected in her poems as her desperate search for God yields only apathy (Kapusta and Smith 24). For instance, in the verse below, Dickinson expresses a sense of helplessness when she feels her suffering yields only indifference-

> "Of course – I prayed –
> And did God Care?
> He cared as much as on the Air
> A Bird – had stamped her foot –"
> (Dickinson 179)

In addition, Dickinson's ailments, particularly her impaired vision, drastically affected her

poetic voice as they gave her time for introspection and self-examination. The recurring mention of "The putting out of Eyes" in *poem 745* and *327* signifies Dickinson's resentment due to her limited perceptual abilities and her confinement during rehabilitation after treatment. Further, Kapusta and Smith also explore the emotional impoverishment due to a lack of maternal as well as romantic love in Dickinson's life, and the consequent feeling of a haunting solitude. Dickinson expresses an acute sense of isolation in the poem *To one Denied to Drink* in which she describes the "condemned lip" that is forced to suffer from loneliness and hopelessness after experiencing a taste of 'something' that now remains unattainable. McDermott interestingly notes that examining periods of productivity in Dickinson's life reveals a positive correlation between the emotional crises in the poet's life and her augmented output (Kapusta and Smith 14).

Plath, on the other hand, suffered from a history of mental illness and underwent a miscarriage. She wrote several "hospital" poems such as *Fever 103º* and *Tulips*. Another poem, titled *Three Women*, delves into the lives of three women who have drastically different experiences of childbirth (Bassnet 133). The second voice in the poem is that of a woman who suffers from a miscarriage and the following lines signify the unsuccessful attempt made to trivialize the woman's suffering-

> It is usual, they say, for such a thing to happen.
> It is usual in my life, and the lives of others.
> I am one in five, something like that. I am not hopeless.
> I am beautiful as a statistic. Here is my lipstick. (qtd. in Bassnet 129)

Additionally, Plath addresses the miscarriage in the poem *Zoo Keeper's Wife.* The line in the poem 'they are melting like coins in the powerful juices' invokes powerful imagery signifying that the fluids in the womb (which are supposed to offer protection to the foetus) become the source of its death.

Further, Plath wrote several poems[1] describing her troubled relationship with her father, Otto Plath, who died when she was eight years old. In addition, *Electra on Azalea Path* was inspired by a visit to her father's grave in Winthrop, an incident which was described as "a very depressing sight" in her Journal, dated March 9 (Bassnet 82).

Plath's relationship with her husband, Ted Hughes, also significantly affected her writing style, themes and output. One of Plath's poems during the Ariel-period- *Burning the Letters*[2] references the burning of letters in which Plath allegedly discovered Hughes' infidelity (Ellis 13). According to Strangeways, Plath employed unconventional imagery after Hughes' departure (376).

Kapusta and Smith derive the relation between personal anguish and the main features of the poets' work through Kristeva's theory. The use of symbolic and semiotic features in the poetry of Dickinson and Plath is one such feature. The symbolic element is related to the use of grammar, structure and punctuation. On the other hand, the semiotic features refer to the use rhythms, stress and intonation. Further, features such as alliteration, slow delivery and interrupted phrases are also symptoms of a particular emotional state. Dickinson's poetry is often marked by an unorthodox use of grammar, punctuation and unusual word capitalization. For instance, in poem *466*, the use of dashes (instead of commas or full stops), which is characteristic of Dickinson's poems, is seen and serves to signify 'fragmented utterances'. In addition, she capitalizes certain nouns according to the emotional weightage assigned to them. Further, slow delivery, which is symptomatic of melancholy and fatigue (Kristeva 60), also signifies a distorted sense of time as seen in poem 650. The semiotic and symbolic elements can also be witnessed in Plath's poems. For instance, *Daddy* is characterised by an irregular pattern of rhyme, repetition of certain words, and the use of German words. It is interesting to note that an

illusion of great speed or haste (in contrast with Dickinson's slow delivery) is communicated using the same rhyme- you/do/Jew/blue/screw (Bassnet 88).

The analysis of Dickinson's and Plath's work reveals that their poetry corresponds to Kristeva's theory of mourning for the lost Thing. According to Kristeva, by expressing the sadness of a lost thing, in this case through poetry, the thing survives in language and imagination (43). In poem *546*, Dickinson reveals that the only method to overcome agony, loneliness, and despair is through language.

> To fill a Gap
> Insert the Thing that caused it –
> Block it up Other –
> and 'twill yawn the more –
> You cannot solder an Abyss
> With Air (Dickinson 266)

Plath uses torture as an imagery in her poems such as *Lady Lazarus* and *The Jailer* in order to highlight the role of suffering, aggression, and death in our imagination as well as actual lives (Bayley and Brain 71). She reveals the ambiguous power of torture to the reader by pointing out its pointless, painful and repulsive recurrences in our political sphere. According to Bayley and Brain, these scenes of violence bring us closer to understanding Kristeva's connotation behind "the Thing".

The analysis of selected works by Dickinson and Plath reveals that poetry can be used as a means of self-examination, introspection and ultimately leading to self-transcendence and self-development. Dickinson achieves self-transcendence through the creative process which becomes her outlet in the process of mourning. The originality of language, strong sense of subjectivity, and sensitivity that underlies her poetry allows the poet to experience suffering and conflict through poetic expression and helps in transitioning the creative process into a therapeutic one for the poet as well as the reader. Martin notes that Dickinson's affective states depict a Puritan doctrine that employs suffering and self-renunciation as a prerequisite of moral strength. The poem 'I measure every grief I meet' is a fascinating rendition of her self-knowledge and self-acceptance and at the same time shows her capacity as a poet to effortlessly connect with the reader. In the case of Plath, the stark tone of self-confession that characterizes her poetry allows her to become an instrument of self-reflection for the reader. In her poem *The Rival*, which is said to be a 'projection of herself', Plath addresses her writing self who is described as 'beautiful, but annihilating' in the opening stanza. Ghasemi notes that Plath's recurring use of words such as 'mirror', 'moon' and 'candles' across multiple poems symbolises the conflict between acceptance and rejection of the self and the consequent need of introspection (58). In addition, Plath's later works often carry autobiographical undertones which allow us to witness the tragic nature of the self-transcendence that Plath undergoes (Williamson 26).

The German philosopher Nietzsche states "To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering". These words seem to ring true as their essence is echoed in the confessional yet empowering poetry of Plath and Dickinson. As they weave narratives of despair and suffering, they try to exert their agency over the emotional instability in their personal lives.

ENDNOTES

1) Poems such as *On the Decline of Oracles, Daddy,* and *The Beekeeper's Daughter* contain references to Plath's father.

2) Plath wrote *Burning the Letters* on the reverse side of some of Hughes' poems, including the widely-recognized poem *The Thought Fox.*

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Gender and the Androgynous Mind in Literature

NIKITA MUJUMDAR, SYBA

The androgynous mind has existed and thrived within literature for many centuries. This paper attempts to explore the thematic transformation of gender in literature and analyse the metamorphosis of the characters' romantic afflections and liasons.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge once said that "a great mind must be androgynous" (Coleridge, 1836). Coleridge's words greatly influenced the 20th century writer Virginia Woolf, whose own work *A Room Of One's Own* propounded the benefits of an androgynous mind. Woolf took the idea of androgyny one step further in *Orlando* (1928), by creating a character who undergoes a complete change in gender. Seeing as how stories about people who have undergone a change in gender usually revolve around the impact of this metamorphosis on their romantic and platonic relationships with other characters, this paper attempts to investigate whether metamorphosis of gender is portrayed in literature as having an unpropitious effect on the protagonist's ability to engage in meaningful relationships, using Woolf's novel as a point of reference.

For the sake of brevity, this paper will only deal with four major works; Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Theophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with particular emphasis on the first one.

The idea of androgyny is as old as literature itself, but it wasn't until Ovid wrote *Metamorphoses* in the 8th century that he introduced the notion of an individual changing gender in the course of their life. Tiresias, Leucippus, Iphis - all characters in Greek mythology who were transformed into the opposite sex by goddesses either out of pity or as a punishment, were the first instances of the metamorphosis of gender that peppered literary works for centuries to come.

One of the earliest examples of a metamorphosis of gender is the story of Iphis, as narrated in Book IX of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Although Iphis was born a girl, she was raised as a boy by parents who could not afford a dowry. When she was betrothed to a beautiful woman, Ianthe, but discovered that she couldn't marry her because they were both women, Iphis prayed to the goddess Isis, who transformed her into a man, allowing her to marry Ianthe. Her sexual metamorphosis was a blessing from Isis, and allowed her to have a stable relationship rather than causing further conflict and ambiguity.

However, the portrayal of transgender characters in contemporary fiction could not be further from the idealistic depictions in *Metamorphoses*. Research has shown that creative media tends to portray transgender individuals as either villains or victims of fate. These "tragic characters", who have undergone a voluntary transformation in gender, and often endure misfortunate circumstances as a consequence of their choice. Wanda, a peripheral transgender character in Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman: A Game of You* dies before the conclusion of the stories, while the protagonists of Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* or the Belgian film *Ma vie en rose*, both individuals of ambiguous gender identity, attempt to run away to escape their disapproving family.

For a novel written in post-Victorian England, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* was daring and controversial, and far ahead of its time, prompting Sandra Gilbert, in her introduction to *Orlando*, to say "never, perhaps, has Mrs. Woolf written with more verve: certainly she has never imagined more boldly" (Gilbert, 1993). Like Ovid's Iphis, the character of Orlando could not have been further from tragic; despite his metamorphosis, he (or rather she for at the end of the story, Orlando is unmistakably a woman) engages in an affair with an Archduke, gets married and is empowered to complete her manuscript, The Oak Tree.

Orlando is the fictional biography of a young Englishman, who fantastically lives for three centuries, undergoes a mysterious change in gender, and encounters numerous literary

personalities and survives many adventures as a result. The novel, it is believed, was written as a love letter to Virginia Woolf's dear friend Vita Sackville-West, who served as the inspiration for the androgynous Orlando. Woolf and Sackville-West had a romantic affair that lasted for years, but came to an end shortly after *Orlando* was published, prompting critics to think that Orlando's ambiguous romantic relationships stemmed from Woolf's own desire to be with her female lover.

In this work, Woolf dabbles heavily with the theme of gender, particularly the ideas of transformations of gender and sexuality. When *Orlando* begins, the eponymous protagonist is indisputably a man - a fact that Woolf very pointedly conveys through the opening sentence: "He - for there could be no doubt of his sex…" (Woolf 1) Although Orlando is romantically involved with a lot of women, Woolf subtly hints at his androgynous nature by describing him as having inherently feminine features; his red cheeks, "covered with peach down", his slightly lips, "drawn back over teeth of an exquisite and almond whiteness", his "arrowy nose" and "eyes like drenched violets" (Woolf 4). Orlando also exhibits characteristics that are typically attributed to women- during his relationship with Sasha he is passionate, emotional and irrational, and it is he, not she, who is left devastated when the relationship ends.

Androgyny is exhibited in other characters as well. When she is introduced, the Russian Princess Sasha is dressed in a tunic and trousers, and Orlando is attracted to her even before he is sure of her gender. Archduchess Harriet is also revealed to be a man- Archduke Harry- who attempts to seduce Orlando in both male and female form.

While writing *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf took many liberties with time, age and gender. Orlando's relationship with Archduke Harry is one of these convenient sub-plots. While he is a man, Orlando feels stirrings of love and lust for Archduchess Harriet Griselda. When, halfway through the novel, Orlando transforms into a woman, she encounters the Archduchess again, only this time the "Archduchess" confesses that he was in fact a man who dressed as a woman. Although Orlando eventually tires of the Archduke and drives him away, her metamorphosis had no effect on her relationship- in fact, it forced the Archduke to reveal his deception, and allowed Orlando to meet and subsequently marry Marmaduke Shelmerdine.

As a woman, Orlando gets the opportunity to meet some of the greatest poets of the era, and finally finishes her poem, The Oak Tree, which was three hundred years in the writing. Orlando's writing style is different when she transforms, and the completion of her manuscript signifies the level of fulfilment and maturity that she has achieved over the centuries. Woolf merely uses the character of Orlando to explore the concept of androgyny from the viewpoints of both gender, and gives him many advantageous traits in the process. Orlando's unhappy relationships are due more to his frustration and disillusionment than to his metamorphosis in gender. In fact, the only fate that Orlando mourns is the end of her relationship with Sasha, who she thinks fondly of despite the transformation.

Unlike Orlando, which is indubitably a fantasy novel, the metamorphosis in Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835) is explicable and voluntary, and more in line with the transgender individuals in contemporary literature. In the course of the novel, it is revealed that neither gender satisfies de Maupin, who says "I have the body and soul of a woman, the spirit and the force of a man" (Gautier 12). This entices her to disguise herself as the cavalier Théadore and becomes involved with both D'Albert and Rosette.

Gautier was reluctant to write about the physical aspects of the love that is shared by the three main characters, perhaps owing to the societal ideals that were prevalent during the period in which the novel was first published. However, after putting on a performance of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, the Mademoiselle engages in sexual intercourse with D'Albert, and it is later

revealed that she secretly spent a few hours of the night with Rosette in her chamber.

Gautier portrays the cross-dressing Mademoiselle as woman who knows her mind, but reveals her inability to find romantic satisfaction at the end of the novel, when de Maupin disappears, with neither her relationship with D'Albert nor with Rosette having come to fruition.

The choice of play within the novel may be significant. Shakespeare is well known for creating gender fluid roles, and *As You Like It*, like *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, relies heavily on cross-dressing to facilitate the progression of the plot. Although these transformations were not intend to affect the characters' relationships, they inadvertently result in the formation of romantic attachments. Rosalind dresses as a man, Ganymede, as a precautionary measure before entering the Forest of Arden. In this masculine form, she encourages Orlando to confess his love for her, and convinces Phoebe to settle for Silvius. Her transformation ultimately results in a happy ending for all the parties involved when matters resolve themselves at the end of the play.

It remains to be said that Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Ovid's fable and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* are merely a small percentage of the pieces of literature depicting metamorphosis of gender. These works, depicting the transformation as successfully bringing the protagonist happiness and fulfilment, stand alongside equally prominent works like Gautier's novel, which ends rather despondently, showing that while sexual metamorphosis is occasionally depicted as negatively affect the protagonist's circumstances, that is not always the case.

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Five Lords, Yet None a Protector

MILONI SHAH, TYBA

Discussing the much-debated character of Draupadi, this paper seeks to follow the transformation in her character by juxtaposing her two dichotomies as presented by Rajagopalachari and Divakaruni.

I was not loved and wed, but a prize for their skill
I never felt belonged, was just served on a plate
A plate you could pass on when you had your fill
I still wonder the way they staked me for dice
Was I a partner for life, prize or property?
Anonymous (Das 1-2)

Was Draupadi a voiceless woman or was her voice never heard? The paper seeks to delve into the fact that despite having given voice to Draupadi's character in *Mahabharata*, it is rendered futile. It further explores the metamorphosis undergone by her character as in the epic *Mahabharata* by Chakravarti Rajagopalachari and it's re-telling in T*he Palace of Illusions* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.

Myth, comprising of antiquated tales is considered to be a 'metalanguage'- a kind of speech by Roland Barthes, as it is a 'second order semiological system'. The meaning here, is a result of the already existing first order sign and is consequently naturalised. Thus, acting as a system of proposition about propositions, the myths, construct a patriarchal system where the woman is referred to as the 'Other', the negative of man. This is done to sustain the social hierarchy of the woman, their subjugation and subtle domination. It is ordinary for women in myths to believe in 'pativrata', a Hindu term, denoting an obedient wife, looking upon her husband as her only god. Thus, myths tend to reinforce the negative images of women in a patriarchal world.

The original *Mahabharata* by Ved Vyasa in Sanskrit was written in small sections and later translated into other languages. The syntax and words used differ extensively from a text today.

The *Mahabharata*, by Vyasa was written between 8th and 9th century and was adapted by Rajagopalachari in 1950; Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* was published in 2008. As literature is subject to time, and a mirror to society, the novels are deeply defined by the social schema they inhibit, changing the stories drastically from the 8th century to the 21st.

In the narration of *Mahabharata* by C. Rajagopalachari, Draupadi has no dominant voice. Though over the years, readers have interpreted the actions of Draupadi as not conforming to the social norms of their time period, they fail to notice her situation, her mindset and her emotions. Readers fail to notice that Draupadi's misfortunes are the result of patriarchal disposition, and intervention of fate. They accuse her for cursing her abuser, the Kauravas, and sowing the seeds of a great destructive war. Divakaruni in her text *The Palace of Illusions,* gives Draupadi a voice, and thereby the readers an insight into Draupadi's mind. The novel charts her journey from her birth until after her death, illustrating her passage into heaven, which neither the epic nor the rewritten text by C. Rajagopalachari discusses.

In *Mahabharata*, Draupadi's swayamwar spans one short chapter without any explanation or exploration accounting her desires. The reason why Draupadi, a character who speaks out her mind when she wants to, decided to remain quiet when she was to be shared by the five Pandava brothers remains unstated.

In contrast, *The Palace of Illusions* fleshes the event extensively. There is a deep understanding of Draupadi's opinions, though they have not been taken into consideration. Yet we are able to grasp her position and the extent of authority she exercises upon her decisions. For instance, in the chapter *Scorpion*, she says:,

> "I wanted to ask: If he (Karna) were, indeed, as wondrous a hero as Arjun, why should it matter him instead of the Pandava prince? Wouldn't he be as great

an ally for Panchal? Why was Krishna so against him? Was it just that he favoured his friend Arjun? There were other secrets here. But I sensed that my uncomplicated brother did not know them. So, instead, I asked, "How can you stop him? If he wins, aren't we honour-bound by Father's oath?"" (Divakaruni 84-85)

There are several significant aspects to her stream of thought. One, Draupadi was fascinated by Karna's coronation. His story made her admire and develop an inclination toward him. Second, she fails to comprehend as to why her brother, Dhrishtadyumna wanted her to only marry Arjuna, despite others being capable of completing the task set for the swayamwar. Third, despite questioning the steps taken by her so-called decision makers, she chooses not to express her concern.

This can be connected to anthropologist Claude Lévi Strauss's idea about marital relationships being the basis of society. He states that the reciprocal bond basic to any marriage, usually between man and woman is not actually that way; for, it is between men and men by means of women who act as the principal occasion for it. It is a fact agreed upon by most critics that Draupadi had sown the seeds for the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. She was the centre of the five brothers. While each of them alternated in the years they engaged in a relationship with her, their strange relationship set the ball rolling. For instance, Bheema falls in love with Draupadi during their last year of exile, he fights an eminent person of King Virat's court who has been harassing Draupadi, thus revealing their identity.

On the other hand, while Draupadi was not given any substance in *Mahabharata*, Kunti was praised. In the chapter *Draupadi's Swayamwar,* the narrator says, "Kunti was second to none in worldly wisdom and sagacity and could gracefully divine her sons' thoughts and spare them the awkwardness of expressing them." (Rajagopalachari 68) Thus, even though Kunti's "wisdom" has been given a platform in the age-old myth, none of Draupadi's qualities or even thoughts have been offered a place.

Pradip Bhattacharya accrues Kunti's astuteness to her awareness. She knew that a split among the five brothers would hamper their goal of ruling over Hastinapur. Therefore, she pretends to be unaware of the meaning implied by Bhima and Arjuna when they ask her whether they were to share what they had brought home.

Katherine Murray, a feminist writer states, "Evidence from anthropology, religion and literary myth all attests to the politically expedient character of patriarchal convictions about women." (Hakamies 12) This has been repeatedly proved in *Mahabharata*. In Rajagopalachari's Mahabharata, Draupadi finally speaks up in the chapter *Draupadi's Grief,* having been gambled as a prize by Yudhishtir over a game of dice with the Kauravas. She tells the elders,

> "How could you consent to my being staked by the king who was himself trapped into the game and cheated by wicked persons, expert in the art? Since he was no longer a free man, how could he stake anything at all?... if you have loved and revered the mothers who bore you and gave you suck, if the honour of wife or sister or daughter has been dear to you, if you believe in God and dharma, forsake me not in this horror more cruel than death!" (Rajagopalachari 111)

While *Mahabharata* informs of Draupadi swooning when Dushasana started pulling at her robes, in *The Palace of Illusions*, Draupadi says "I had shut my eyes" (Divakaruni 193). She also looks at Karna in the hope that maybe he would speak out for her dignity. But the reversal of her expectation takes place as Karna says, "Why should Draupadi be treated any differently? Take her clothes too." Thus, it is observed that for Karna, who had the reputation of saving the destitute, this was a form of revenge for the humiliation encountered during Draupadi's swayamwar.

There are two aspects in *The Palace of Illusions* which otherwise escape notice in

Mahabharata. The first being the possible attraction between Karna and Draupadi. In spite of having five husbands, Divakaruni hints at a connection between Draupadi and Karna. Had it not been for the intervention of Krishna and Dhritarashtra, Karna could have defeated Arjuna at the swayamvar. Second, Draupadi realises that after her public humiliation she no longer had control over anyone. This has not been portrayed in *Mahabharata.* She says,

> "All this time I'd believed in my power over my husbands. I'd believed that because they loved me they would do anything for me. But now I saw that though they did love me- as much perhaps as any man can love- there were things they loved more. Their notions of honour, of loyalty toward each other, of reputation were important to them than any suffering." (Divakaruni 195)

But the fact remains that even though Draupadi could not control most of her husbands out of love, she could control the outcome of all their futures by that one dreadful curse.

There exist differences in the portrayal of characters in *Mahabharata* and *The Palace of Illusions*. In the former, the entire plot around Kurukshetra is stated in brief passages, with little or no emphasis on the characters or their development. Most readers of Vyasa's and Rajagopalachari's *Mahabharata*, blame Draupadi for the war between the Kauravas and Pandavas. However, it is often ignored that it is a combination of human action, thought and destiny played out by the various characters in the epic that results in the battle at Kurukshetra.

The Palace of Illusions is not about feminism as we understand it today. Divakaruni only brings to light a different perspective, of someone who has been repeatedly suppressed and subjugated for no fault of hers. She skilfully portrays the poignancy of suffering, disgrace and sexual humiliation which Draupadi has endured, in spite of being a *pativrata* of the five mighty Pandavas. She articulates a distinct female voice of the one whose voice was long suppressed by patriarchy. Through Divakaruni's eyes the *Mahabharata* is more than a work which Hindus look upon as divinely inspired and venerable. It becomes a record of complex humanity and a mirror to all the faces which we ourselves wear. As Barthes states, "Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion" (Hakamies 24)

This refers to how Divakaruni is able to deconstruct the image of females in the original *Mahabharata*, through the character of Draupadi. While most critics believe Draupadi to be the cause behind Kurukshetra, and the only female character to have a voice in the epic, it goes unnoticed that the other female characters of Kunti and Gandhari have a stronger voice over Draupadi's, and each have, in their own way made decisions that have led to the great war. It was Kunti's orders which the five Pandava brothers followed and decided to share Draupadi as their wife. If Kunti's wish was not followed or had Kunti not made any such wish, then the outcome of *Mahabharata* would have been very different.

Today, nobody wants to name their daughter Draupadi. Her pain and suffering is so ingrained in the Indian psyche that people fear to name their child so. It is believed to allude to words like 'harlot', 'blood thirsty' and 'public woman'. While there is no hesitation in naming one's child Karna or Arjuna despite their mistakes that changed the fate of Kurukshetra.

It is seen that female characters like Kunti and Gandhari are seen as noble and loyal individuals who have sacrificed for their husband's welfare. This is quite the contrary to what Draupadi has been portrayed as.

Carol Ann Duffy argues in her collection of poems, *The World's Wife*, that individual's traits and social circumstances hold greater importance than any gender incompatibilities. She says that non-gender specific traits include greed and selfishness, along with historical gender discrimination and other social circumstances. Duffy focuses on the rights, the mindset, the traits and issues of women and liberates them

through her writing. This is quite in contrast to what *Mahabharata* portrays women as.

Thus, we see that even though Draupadi had been given a voice in *Mahabharata* by C Rajagopalachari and in *The Palace of Illusions* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni towards the end it is rendered futile. War between the Pandavas and the Kauravas was inevitable, Draupadi was reduced to a mere catalyst in the process.

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The Unbecoming Of Odysseus

Swagat Siby, SYBA

From the sack of Troy to Ithaca, the voyage of Odysseus is a complex and heavily documented progress, a chronicle that has stood the test of time. This paper seeks to analyse the journey of Odysseus in the Iliad *and the* Odyssey, *charting his unbecoming and commenting upon the circular or linear motion of his metamorphosis.*

A metamorphosis is observed in the character of Odysseus through his trials and tribulations in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. However, if one takes simply the Iliad into account- the evolution of his character comes across as linear, that is, it is distinct from the start and advancing towards an ultimate goal. In other words, he gains traits along the way. However, this change could be seen as circular if it extends to the *Odyssey*. He eventually loses traits, returning to the very same person he started off as. This paper seeks to investigate whether the metamorphosis of Odysseus was linear or circular.

The Iliad follows Odysseus' journey from the shores of Greece to the sack of Troy as he builds his persona and diversifies its elements. Odysseus starts his journey, skilled in both sword and smarts but, loath to fight another's [Agamemnon's] fruitless war. When Agamemnon sends envoys to Greek cities to fill the ranks of his army, Odysseus disappears underground. To escape recruitment by the Greek Forces, he employs one among his many skills that of disguise at will - he feigns madness (yoking a bull and a horse to the same plough and running amok in the fields), is tested and holds true until his son (laid in the path of the plough) is used to trick him into revealing his identity.

Odysseus is the unwilling 'man of many wiles', in that he does not wish to fight for a fool [Agamemnon], even if he is a Greek fool. Here he displays reluctance. He also embodies astuteness, in that he uses his ingenuity and intellect to thwart any and all who force him to do so. He is also loyal, in that he is only arm-twisted into serving Agamemnon by when the latter uses the former's sole weakness – his family, against him.

The three above qualities may be distilled into a single trait, that of 'familial fraternity', for it is the bonds of blood that bind him and cause him to act as he does, which the hero carries with him throughout his journey.

Now, coerced into serving in Agamemnon's army, he grudgingly embraces the role of General. One of his first tasks is, ironically, that of persuading other reluctant heroes to join the Greek cause. Thus, the hunted becomes the hunter-He exploits the very nature of his quarry. For instance, when an indisposed Achilles disguises himself as a beautiful woman to escape recruitment, Odysseus trumpets a war bugle, prompting the former into reflexively springing into an attack-at-the-ready-stance, thereby revealing himself. He adds a manipulative element to his persona, for he is not above using a man's weakness against him. He comes across as cold for he shows no empathy towards Achilles' in spite of having been in the same position as the latter, prior to his own forcible recruitment; and shades acrimoniously adaptive, for he moulds himself to suit his role bears no allegiance to his former companions in such adaptations. Thus he gains a second trait born of these many shades – that of dynamism – the ability to change, at will.

When Achilles' dearest brother-at-arms Patroklos is slain by Trojan Hero Hector, Achilles' anger knows no bounds. He rages at all, Greek, Trojan, divine and mortal and seeks to slaughter all that he sees. One man alone does he trust – Odysseus. It is Odysseus who restrains him and critically counsels him against waging war against the Greek forces in his demoralised and distraught state. It is Odysseus who soothes Achilles, drawing on personal experiences. Here, Odysseus' prowess as a confidante and counsel is showcased. He is impervious, in that he remains unruffled by the loss of a close friend,

he is clever, in that he is quick to answer when his motives are questioned and most important of all, he does not give way to emotion when under said duress and thus proves himself to be a true pragmatist. A pragmatist is nothing without a clear head and unto this; Odysseus would not be a true pragmatist unless he had gained a third trait – objectivity – to see only what he requires to achieve his goals.

After the mighty Achilles is slain in battle, both Odysseus and Ajax retrieve the fallen hero's armour from amongst the squabbling Trojan soldiers. This is one of the first instances of heroism on Odysseus' part, wherein he risks his life to cover Ajax's retreat. He does so, apparently - partially out of grief but mostly out of pre-emption.

However, when Ajax claims the armour, he battles him indecisively – as both are tied for victory in physical combat, he defeats him with a rousing speech imploring the Greeks to bestow upon him his rightful prize. So eloquent are his words, that the Goddess Athena herself is moved and declares him the just owner of the armour. While Odysseus celebrates, Ajax commits suicide. Thus he displays to the onlookers a flimsy façade of emotion coupled with fake bravado while revealing a keen shrewdness to a more observant Olympian. Thus Odysseus claims for himself a fourth trait, that of fortuitous falsehood.

To end the decade long stalemate of the Trojan War and breach the infamously 'impregnable' walls of Troy, Odysseus devises a ploy that would be immortalized in history as one of the finest deceptions ever employed – The Trojan Horse. Embodying the ancient adage that All Warfare is Deception, he orders his men to build an innocuously immense wooden horse. He leaves a lone Greek soldier, Sinon, to convince the Trojans of three very specific untruths , vital to his ploy – one , that the Greeks had sailed home and left the horse behind as a tribute to Athena, two , that the reason why the horse was massive was a seer's [Calchas'] prophecy declaring that the Greeks would be destroyed if the Trojan were able to wheel the horse and , three , that the seer had also declared that if the Trojan's were to destroy the horse , they themselves would face the wrath of the gods .

Sinon delivers these lies unto the Trojans and all but the Trojan seer Lachaoon believe him. The Trojan King Priam begins to doubt the Trojan Horse and all but orders his men to burn it when the Greek God of the sea, Poseidon dispatches a sea serpent, which swallows Lachaoon. The Trojans consider this a sign from the Gods and are terrified that a similar fate awaits them if they proceed with their 'blasphemy'. Thus, the unsuspecting and god-fearing Trojans tremblingly lead the wooden horse through the gates of Troy and celebrate their victory. After the merry-making ends and as the Trojans sleep, Odysseus and The Thirty soldiers slip out; open the gates of Troy from within, allowing the Greek forces to enter; and lay waste to the City of Troy. Poseidon awaits his debt.

Here, in addition to Odysseus' ingenuity, his perfectionist pedantry is evident (from his attention to every tiny detail of the ploy), as is his tenacity (when a suspicious Helen attempts to masquerade as the wives of the Greeks and calls out to them from outside, Odysseus not only resists but also ensures that the others do not give the game away.)

As the dust clears in fallen Troy, a fifth trait that had brewed all along but is finally now spawned in him , that of hubris, the mellifluously mocking , boisterous belief that he supreme, above all virtue and vice, all trouble and temptation, all that is divine and mortal. Thus, his transformation during the Iliad is largely linear.

Following this, in the Odyssey, he moves back in space, from blunder to blunder and simultaneously regresses in persona. With the ruse of the Trojan Horse, Odysseus secures a Greek Victory in the War. This victory and the seeming unstoppable reach of his other actions embolden him. His hubris boils over and he ends up insulting the Olympians. Instead of expressing his gratitude for the Sea God's decisive aid in the success of his ruse, he claims his superiority over

Poseidon who then paves the way for his fall.

It is Poseidon who engineers the torment of Odysseus, ensuring that he does not return home until another 10 years have passed, after the decade long Trojan War, and who is critical in Odysseus' change. It is in angering him that Odysseus commits a fatal folly that leads us unto the series of unfortunate events that change him forever. While attempting to sail back home, he finds himself unsuccessful due to unfavourable winds (driven by Poseidon). These winds drive him to The Isles of The Cyclopses, eventually bringing him to one of their abodes. Here, drunk on pride, he commits three mistakes. He ignores the telltale signs that would have warned him to leave, for instance the gigantic footprints – thus he lets go of his pedantry. Following that he also foolishly allows his men to run wild , leading them in pillaging the home of their host , which leads to their capture by Polyphemus. Lastly, he boasts of his success, taunting Polyphemus whilst escaping after having succeeded in hoodwinking (blinding him) the latter- irking not only the monster but also its father, none other than Poseidon himself .

Thus, he loses his objectivity which sends him hurtling towards his second blunder. As Odysseus and his men flee from Polyphemus, they find themselves at the mercy of the sea and are soon shipwrecked, consequently washing up on an island. Here they are captured by the sorceress Circe, during which time Odysseus slowly sheds a second trait. At first both he and his men are captivated by her beauty – and spends an entire year under her spell, twisted by the very temptation he swore he was above. Then he awakens and is overcome by shame and renounces his pride. In lashing himself to the mast of his ship, he tests his newfound humility when he escapes the charms of the Sirens and the clutches of Scylla and Charybdis and finds his heart melting in modest understanding of the futility of conflict and the mortality of men (claimed by the beasts – both of myth and of battle). Thus he relinquishes his hubris. After his fond companions anger Helios by slaughtering his cattle, Odysseus is forced to flee. This escape leaves him marooned alone on Calypso's Isle for seven years.The companionship of the seductive goddess drives him near insane, for moments of passion shared with her are broken by tormented memories of home.

He thus begins to let go of another trait. He sees the worlds for the illusion that they are. He is filled with the realization that these illusions can bring no one true happiness – for even he at the side of a goddess cannot find solace. The arrival of Hermes who coaxes Calypso to release Odysseus from her clutches and sets him bound for the Isle of the Phaeacans merely hastens this catharsis. When he reaches there and finds himself treated with kindness even after he washes himself of all treachery, a first symbolic cleansing of the body, this cements his resolve. After concealing his identity for over eighteen years he finally he reveals himself to be Odysseus, to strangers. In this supreme act of faith, he finds both salvations from falsehood, and a chance to rediscover himself.

With the aid of the Phaeacians, he sets sail for home. He offers apologies for his blasphemies to the gods, gratitude for their aid to his benefactors, and confessions of his guilt to himself.

After two decades he reaches home, the Isle of Ithaca, and is unmoved to passion by the sorry state of affairs. Instead he surrenders himself completely earning the right to use his wiles unto good again, but once. He dons the disguise of a beggar and challenges and defeats the lustful suitors. He then sheds his guise for the last time and slaughters the suitors, along with all betrayers symbolizing a second cleansing- that of his home, his heart. Thus his dynamism flows away, for he has no use for it anymore.

After all these trials have been passed by him, Odysseus faces his real test – that of love. His wife Penelope does not believe him to be the man who left Ithaca twenty years ago. She tests him in a game of wiles and orders their servant Eueryclea to move their bed. Odysseus protests

stating that she cannot do so for he had built the bed with his own hands and its fourth leg was drawn around the trunk of a living olive tree and in this act of innocence, he is symbolically cleansed, a third time, freeing his mind. He returns back to where he started losing all the traits he gained previously, save one. Gone is his dynamism, his objectivity, his fortuitous falsehood and his hubris. He then loses them during the Blunders and Trials, thus making his metamorphosis therein, circular.

At the end of The Odyssey, Odysseus retains familial fraternity alone, the first and only trait that he carried with him from Ithaca when he set out, twenty long years ago.

His final goal is not omnipotence over the world but freedom from it, to reach home and simply be with his family. Thus, Odysseus' journey is circular not only in the aftermath, also in its entirety.

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The Hero's Journey: Myths and Modernity

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This paper seeks to establish parallelism between the "quest" undertaken by a classical hero leading to his metamorphosis and the journey enterprised by the heroes of modern day mythology.

Since its publication in 1949, Joseph Campbell's '*The Hero with a Thousand Faces'* has been consciously and unconsciously applied in the works of writers, artists, and movie-makers alike. A work on comparative mythology, it explores the theory that myths and legends, across cultures from around the world, share a fundamental structure. This monomyth, which Campbell called 'The Hero's Journey', lays out a series of stages through which the plot and the hero's character arc progress. It is best summarised by Campbell himself in the introduction to *The Hero with a Thousand Faces:*

> "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man." (Campbell, 28)

The objective of this paper is to explore the possibility that the present day's beloved fictional characters are no less than mythological heroes. In Mathematics, we understand the Transitive Property of Equality as "if a=b and b=c, then a=c". If we were to simply apply this property, across academic fields, to say "if the Hero's Journey applies to mythological figures and heroes of modern fiction complete the Hero's Journey, then heroes of modern fiction are (modern) mythological figures." (Campbell) In other words, if we can prove that Harry Potter or the Avengers completed the Hero's Journey, they deserve to be mentioned in the same conversation as Achilles or the Pandavas that legends speak of. After all, what is mythology if not a story of heroic deeds, given as an example for us mere mortals to work towards?

Campbell laid out the Hero's Journey in three stages – Departure, Initiation, and Return. Within each of these stages lie four common themes, which together give us the Twelve Steps of the Hero's Journey.

Departure first sees the Hero in our everyday world, perhaps beginning a new life. A herald may arrive to announce that destiny has summoned the Hero. He may have any number of reasons to refuse, from everyday responsibility to a selfish refusal to help others. But if he does, he soon finds there is no choice in the matter.

Peter Parker was fresh out of middle school when his class visited Oscorp. Harry Potter was set to attend Stonewall High, the local public school. Both are on the cusp of a new life, when the herald steps in. The Herald isn't necessarily a human character, but its appearance throws the Hero's life out of balance. Most heralds do not announce their presence by kicking a door in (although you cannot argue the effectiveness of Hagrid's approach.)

Continuing the stories of these two characters, we observe a fundamental difference in their reception of the Herald. While Harry readily welcomes the call, Peter is satisfied to keep his newfound abilities secret, and use them solely for his own benefit. Yet, fate plays off his (literal) refusal to help when the mugger he lets escape goes on to murder his Uncle Ben. It is only then that he accepts that "with great power, comes great responsibility", and becomes the hero Spider-Man.

As the Hero sets off on his journey, he meets a mentor who offers aid. The mentor may also offer supernatural support, often in the form of magic amulets. Soon, he encounters the first threshold to a new world; one he can only cross himself. Harry struggles with the social setting at Hogwarts, unused to the newfound attention. Hagrid offers solace, but his own status as an outcast who was expelled from the school, prevents him from being of much help. In a similar vein, Peter's Aunt May is his rock, but his refusal to reveal to her his alter-ego means her support is limited.

The Mentor is now a cliché in popular culture,

but the caricature of the wise, old man with a gray beard and millions of years of knowledge need not be adhered to. Elliot (from *Mr. Robot*) is mentored by Mr. Robot, a manifestation of his split-personality. Although existing only in Elliot's psyche, he appears to the viewers as a complete individual. Here too, Elliot is introduced to his fellow hackers at "fsociety", but is then thrown off into the deep end, as they quickly expect him to take the lead on their operations.

The Hero encounters an unfamiliar setting to begin Initiation. The innermost cave may represent many things in the Hero's story such as an actual location in which lies a terrible danger or an inner conflict which up until now the Hero has not had to face. As the Hero approaches the cave he must make final preparations before taking that final leap into the great unknown. Companions and invisible forces may aid him, but he must find out who can be trusted and who can't. He may earn allies and meet enemies who will, each in their own way, help prepare him for the greater ordeals yet to come.

Perhaps the best example for the ordeals of the Hero's initiation lies in the dungeons of the *Legend of Zelda*. Dungeons feature in every iteration of the Zelda games and are the embodiment of the innermost cave. The ordeals of each dungeon are evident, as they lie teeming with enemies, traps and puzzles the Hero must pass through. Each is a dangerous physical test that the Hero must face in order to survive or for the world in which the Hero lives to continue to exist.

On traversing the cave, the Hero comes upon a reward. The reward may come in many forms: an object of great importance or power, a secret, greater knowledge or insight, or even reconciliation with a loved one or ally. In the Zelda dungeons, Link will come across a secret treasure that the dungeon protects. Typically a tool or weapon, it introduces new mechanics to the games and proves invaluable when facing the dungeon's master. Whatever the treasure, the Hero must quickly put celebrations aside and prepare for the last leg of his journey (Bronzite, 1). At the endgame, every treasure Link finds is put to use in his confrontation with the games' villain, Ganon.

This is the climax in which the Hero must have his final and most dangerous encounter with death. The final battle also represents something far greater than the Hero's own existence with its outcome having far-reaching consequences to his Ordinary World and the lives of those he left behind. He is now a master of two worlds – that of his everyday existence and the fantasy world.

Return is the final stage of the Hero's Journey; a reverse echo of the herald's call to adventure. The Hero returns home to his ordinary world a changed man. He will have grown as a person, learned many things and faced many terrible dangers; but now looks forward to the start of a new life. He has won the freedom to live, having conquered the fears that prevented him from living fully.

A "happily ever after…" comes to most, if not all our heroes. Through their deeds, equilibrium is restored, and their homes know peace once again. They return, heralded as such, ready to begin the next chapter of their lives, or to face the next adventure. Harry's adventures typically revolve around the events of his school year, making the road back his literal return to the Dursley's mundane existence. Every book in the series begins and ends with Harry back at Privet Drive pining to return to Hogwarts and his extraordinary life.

An unlucky few heroes may even face several unpleasant changes have taken place in their absence. Elliot and fsociety come to realise their crusade had little effect apart from exposing themselves to their enemies, while the Avengers endure constant criticism from the public over the many casualties their confrontations cause, leading to friction within the team and the events of Civil War. Far below, at the street level, vigilante heroes like Spider-Man run afoul of the media and its ability to colour opinions.

The roots of mythology run deep in human culture and shape us in significant ways. Myths

grant continuity and stability to a culture. They foster a shared set of perspectives, values, history -- and literature, in the stories themselves. It is through these communal tales that we connect to one another, to our ancestors, and to society at large. Beneath the storylines themselves, myths usually confront major issues in the life they face, and the way in which the natural and human worlds function on a profound, universal level.

After the understanding of the basic cycle of the Campbell's monomyth, one begins to recognize it repeatedly, in stories and in the rhythms of life. More practically, the monomyth allows a greater appreciation of these stories, and perhaps even the learning of valuable lessons.

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The hero and villain of any novel are often set apart by a number of traits that can be transformed over time. This paper discusses the emotional and metaphorical metamorphosis that differentiates an antagonist from a protagonist.

An interesting literary plot usually revolves around a protagonist and an antagonist. In other words, the central or leading figure of the narrative is opposed by another entity and this arrangement brings about the conflict. However, protagonists and antagonists differ from the popular notion of heroes and villains. The difference is evident and drawn from their Greek roots — the word hero means 'demigod' and a protagonist means the first person to address the chorus in a Greek drama, also known as the main character. Thus, a protagonist does not always have to be a hero. It could also be a villain. Regardless of their moral inclinations, the protagonist must be the central character around whom the plot revolves. Despite this, characters have been compartmentalised in static categories of heroes and villains. This research paper aims at bringing to the forefront the aspect of 'emotional transformation' and tracks the journey of transformation from a hero to a villain.

From the earliest of times, people have needed heroes — real or imagined — to confront the darkness in their world. Ultimately, the hero was the representative that society sent into battle on behalf of the "good" people of the world to defeat the "bad" people of the world . . . though this Hero archetype has evolved through the centuries, from Robin Hood to the Lone Ranger and Batman, still we expect our heroes to remain true to very specific characteristics. Likewise, our villains — that is, those who wear the costumes of evil — follow particular patterns of behavior as well (Myss, 2014).

A villain is synonymous with the source of his/her power. They could be a mighty sorcerer in fantasy stories, like Voldemort in the *Harry Potter* series whose power resided in fear, or a traitor like 'Iago' in *Othello* where the source of his power lay in treachery. They could display opportunistic and deceptive "Machiavellian" personalities like 'Cardinal' in *The Duchess of Malfi,* thus deriving his power from cunning. Effective villains should embody few or all of the aforementioned characteristics, and should be powerful enough to turn the events into their favor thus forming an opposition against the hero.

A hero, on the other hand, should be powerful as well. He could be gifted with the ability and a reason to act for a cause he chooses like 'Enjolras' in *Les Misérables*, or be destined to be a hero i.e. be chosen to act for a cause like 'Frodo' in *The Lord of the Rings*. Along with the qualities, he could showcase an evident flaw which could be tragic or near-fatal.

Andrea Kuszewski compares heroes to extreme altruistic (X altruistic) personality types who go out of their way to help others, as opposed to villains who are compared to sociopaths. The villains show no remorse for their actions, always act in the interest of themselves, are emotionally detached and have an unstable self-identity.

The heroes act in the best interest of the others and consequently have a resilient ego and employ Flexible Detachment i.e. deployment of a metaphorical shield that protects the ego from harm when entering battle. The hero is able to detach himself temporarily when he is fighting for a cause; unlike villain who is permanently emotionally detached. This point will be testified later, in the course of the paper.

When speaking of villains, not all of them are born so. Some characters transform into a villain. Kuszewski postulates that it would take something pretty spectacularly horrendous, hitting at a very vulnerable time, in order to make that happen – but it is not impossible.

"The core claim was that if you put good people in a bad situation, bad things will happen." (Grant, 2013). As Harvey Dent famously said, "You either die a hero or you live long enough to see yourself become the villain" (*Dark Knight,*

2008). A hero is constantly putting himself in the presence of extreme danger—either physically or emotionally. The more heroic you are, the more likely you are to meet adversaries or people attempting to thwart your mission, thus increasing likelihood of planned malicious attacks (Kuszewski, 2011).

Since heroes have the ability to form very deep attachments, losing someone or something that they currently hold a deep attachment to can be emotionally devastating. This is where Flexible Detachment comes into picture. He becomes permanently detached, which is the characteristic of a villain. Thus, begins the transformation of the character from hero to villain. Kuszewski believes that it is when Anakin Skywalker of the *Star Wars* universe both lost his wife and found himself betrayed by The Emperor at the same time; he started down that road of permanent emotional detachment. That kind of dual traumatic emotional hit was too much of a blow for his ego to withstand. "He shut down his empathy circuit, his impulsivity and aggressiveness took over, and Darth Vader emerged" (Kuszewski, 2011).

In literature, from modern classics to those of medieval lore, one finds such character transformations. *Doctor Faustus* is a play by Christopher Marlowe, which shows the protagonist Doctor Faustus' journey to damnation after he pursues black magic to attain universal power. He makes a deal with the devil, exchanging his soul for twenty-four years of power which eventually corrupts and demonizes him, leading to his death in the end. Chorus 1 includes an account of Faustus' life up to the beginning of the play. It is a story of considerable achievement for a child of humble birth and the Chorus' description is packed with positive terms: profits, fruitful, graced, excelling all, sweet delight and heavenly matters.

At line 20, however, the tenor of the speech changes abruptly to become negative and heavily judgmental:

> Till swollen with cunning of a self-conceit,
> His waxen wings did mount above his reach,
> and melting heavens conspired his overthrow.
> For falling to a devilish exercise,
> and glutted more with learning's golden gifts,
> He surfeits upon cursed necromancy.
> (Chorus 1, 20-25)

These lines make clear the nature of Faustus' weakness – his intellectual vanity and arrogance. Here, being over-ambitious is what led to his downfall.

Macbeth, a play by William Shakespeare, is a classic example of a hero turning villain.

(He is) a man who at first appears worthy of admiration, and in whom beyond all doubt there is much that is excellent and noble, becomes a treacherous murderer, a blood-thirsty and remorseless tyrant, becomes all that a man ought not to be, becomes all or almost all that goes to form a picture of the very lowest depths to which it is possible for human nature to descend (Shakespeare, Mowat and Werstine, 1992).

Lady Macbeth in part encouraged Macbeth's horrific actions. She acts as a catalyst for Macbeth and is able to manipulate him into committing the crimes. When Macbeth disagrees with the idea of killing Duncan, she questions his manhood. In the Act 1, Scene 7 she says,

> "Art thou afeard?
> To be the same in thine own act and valour
> As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that?
> Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
> And live a coward in thine own esteem,
> Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would,"
> Like the poor cat i' th' adage?"
> (Shakespeare, 1623).

According to Gervinus, a renowned German historian and literary critic, the evil sisters represent inward temptations. Both Marlowe and Shakespeare provide access to raw emotions of the protagonists. While Doctor Faustus reifies spiritual bondage as an explicit contract, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* explores the concept through prophecy. "After the witches first reveal

the prophecy to Macbeth in Act 1, scene 3 that he "shalt be King hereafter" (50), Macbeth engages in Faustian oscillation, which Banquo interprets as being rapt (43), between a positive and negative interpretation of the news" (Johnson, 2014).

Both Doctor Faustus and Macbeth are tempted by the supernatural and are driven by worldly desires. The tragic flaw in both the plays is the unchecked ambition that leads to the transformation and the ultimate downfall of their protagonists. They positioned the carnal over the divine. "The result of carnal corruption in both plays results in a form of idolatry. In Faustus, carnal corruption surfaces as sexual temptation, culminating in a version of the osculum infame (kiss of shame). Similarly, the corruption of the flesh in Macbeth takes the form of lust, blood- and otherwise." (Johnson, 2014).

Just as Macbeth personified uncontrolled ambitions in the Elizabethan literature, it was also a characteristic feature of 'Saruman' from the *Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R Tolkien.

Saruman too is described initially in a good light. Gandalf, another wizard describes Saruman as the chief of their order and the head of the White Council that had driven the evil Sauron out of Mirkwood at the end of *The Hobbit*. Just like Macbeth, who is influenced by the evil sisters, Saruman has his mind twisted by the corrupting influence of the Ring and Sauron, is driven by the lust for power and undergoes a transformation from good to evil.

Both Macbeth and Saruman, in the process, acquire immense power and seem invincible. The evil sisters prophesize that Macbeth cannot fall unless the Birnam wood marches against him. Just as Macbeth is sheltered by his tower, falling back on the magical charm that he believes will keep him safe, Saruman is sheltered by his tower, Orthanc. The march of the army (camouflaged by the forest) brings along Macbeth's destruction. Similarly, the march of the ants and the trees on Saruman's domain brings his tragic death.

While there are countless transformations from heroes to villains in literature, what determines the grouping of characters into heroes and villains becomes a problem. "The trouble, of course, is that such labels can be misleading at best, and severely subjective and variable" (Blakeney, 2010). Their transformations are very similar, inclusive of the journey and the triggers.

The circumstances, the creator's intentions and the characters' functional roles mould their development and trigger their transformations. For example, Sir Percival Glyde from *The Woman in White,* goes on to commit heinous crimes due to his long-kept secret- his illegitimacy, as he would lose his wealth, his status and position if the news became public. Even though he may be inherently rude and sadistic, he would not have committed the crimes if the societal norms and values did not make him desperate. The crimes may be voluntary but the situations that triggered them may not be his fault. In the end, he accidentally dies while erasing the final evidence of his secret. Like the hunchbacked Quasimodo, from Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Erik from *The Phantom of the Opera* constantly experiences hatred and repulsion because of his physical appearance. Even the young, sensitive Christine who is enchanted by his music is terrified of him. He kidnaps Christine and keeps her lover Raoul as a hostage just for the love and the warmth he always desired but could not get. "Erik and Quasimodo can't afford the luxury of being good." (Blakeney, 2014).

Even though time and again, situations have triggered such emotional transformations, one cannot deny that such transformations in the wake of a plot twist have interested the readers and kept them glued to the books. A straight, predictable storyline at times tends to become monotonous. Finally, such transformations challenge readers' anticipation and interest, and widen the scope for imagination and interpretation.

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Abridging the Gap

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This research paper investigates the metamorphosis of the classics to its adaptations. It questions whether these adaptations work as a complement to the sacrosanct classics or turn out to be its warped residue.

A literary adaptation aims at retelling a classic story in a way that it appeals to modern audiences. It often changes certain aspects of the original story and puts its own spin on things. To many people an adaptation is something to be looked down upon, and ridiculed for its lack of originality. However, as Salman Rushdie writes in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories,* "no story comes from nowhere; new stories are born of old (Hutcheon)." Moreover, literary adaptations continue to form an integral part of the literary community and a means to further the legacy of their source. The objective of this paper is to explore literary adaptations and the benefits they provide to a modern audience.

Arguably, one of the author's main goals is to reach out to a wider audience. A literary adaptation seeks to precisely do this by constantly appealing to a newer generation or a different segment of an older one. Being a retelling of an original, an adaptation has the creative freedom to rework certain aspects of its plot in order to become more relevant and more relatable to a modern audience.

In *West Side Story*, the official musical adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* Tony and Maria (the protagonists) belong to rival, teenage gangs- the Jets and the Sharks respectively. The play ties the central tragic romance of Tony and Maria with a larger satire on racism and social divisions. The Jets belong to Manhattan. They have ruled their 'turf' for years- ever since they defeated the Emerald. The Sharks on the other hand have just moved to America and are looking for their own turf. The power struggle between the two ethnic groups leads to unnecessary hatred, wars and ultimately, the very avoidable death of Tony. Anita[1] goes to Doc's drugstore with an important message for Tony; however, when she reaches there she is insulted and taunted by the Jets. Deeply angered by this, she breaks her promise to Maria, and lies to Tony, telling him that his beloved was found and killed by Chino[2]. Hysterical, Tony leaves his hiding place and is consequently killed by Chino just as he sees Maria emerge from the shadows.

The play was conceptualized, written and performed in the 1950's, at a time when many Puerto Ricans had just moved to New York City. Anger, distrust and other antagonistic emotions towards the newcomers were running high among the natives. *West Side Story* highlights and chastises these societal occurrences through a musical, entertaining retelling of one of Shakespeare's most popular plays. The play ends on a haunting note which conveys a social message rather apt for its times. It ends with Maria demanding-

> How do you fire this gun Chino? Just by pulling this little trigger? How many bullets are left, Chino? Enough for you? And you? All of you? We all killed him; and my brother and Riff. I, too. I can kill now because I hate now. How many can I kill Chino? How many- and still have one bullet left for me? (Lehman et al. 120).

The play's realistic mirroring of society's regular occurrences struck a chord with audiences and thus evolved into a well-loved adaptation (McDonald).

Tee Phulrani, written by P.L Deshpande is a Marathi adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Deshpande sticks as closely as possible to the source text, while making subtle refinements to suit the linguistic needs and the sensibilities of the audience.

In *Pygmalion,* Higgins mentions that within six months Eliza 'shall marry an officer in the Guards, with a beautiful moustache' (Shaw 39). However, Deshpande omitted this line along with the one concerning Henry's bachelorhood, perhaps since lifelong bachelorhood and love

marriages were held in disdain by certain cultures. The final argument between Ashok and Manjula has also been toned down. This is done to achieve a future reconciliation and possibly, to respect the Indian cultural notion of regarding a teacher as God and as someone who should be respected at all costs.

It is not surprising that Deshpande made a few changes to the original play. People are often 'culture bound', perceiving the 'right' actions as such only because that is what their culture dictates (Havilland 11). These cultural and linguistic differences often cause certain audiences to dismiss, misunderstand, or completely miss out on some classic works of literature. By adapting his play in a manner that appealed to and fit in with the traditional ideals of his culture, Deshpande ensured that his play would be appreciated by a larger audience.

Romeo and Juliet (1597) and *Pygmalion* (1912) are dramas. They are detailed, descriptive, and make use of an archaic style of writing, no longer in practice today. Understanding such works can be difficult, especially for those who have not been educated in the same. West Side Story and Tee Phulrani are more visual adaptations of their respective dramas. They make use of songs, colorful settings and body language to heighten emotion and create moods.. The audience can also analyze the ways in which the music reinforces the symbolic richness of the literary work, establishes new relationships between its elements, sheds a new light on its meanings, and multiplies its interpretative perspectives (Marciniak 59-67).

On the other hand, certain adaptations lose the essence of their source material in its transition. *My Fair Lady*, the musical adaptation of *Pygmalion* went ahead and changed its ending, to the effect that Eliza and Professor Higgins end up getting married. When Shaw's *Pygmalion* was first published, it met with criticism for not following the hackneyed love story. However, Shaw was adamant that Higgins and Eliza must never marry. Such an outcome would be 'unbearable'(Bostridge). By the end of the play, Eliza has become an independent woman, well up to defending her independence in a battle of words with Higgins. Shaw defended his creation by criticizing 'all those with 'unfeebled' imaginations [sic]' who are lazily dependent on what he called the 'ready-mades and reach-me-downs of the rag shop in which Romance keeps its stock of 'happy endings' to misfit all stories' (Bostridge). Although *My Fair Lady* pleased certain audiences with its happy ending, it countered the very reason *Pygmalion* was written and the social message that it had tried to instill in its audiences. Not to mention that in his lifetime, Shaw had resolutely rejected any attempt to turn Pygmalion into a musical, insisting that it possessed its own verbal music (Bostridge).

Literature is subjective. It creates open ended worlds, to be perceived differently by different readers. One's understanding of a story is often an amalgamation of both the directly articulated and indirectly suggested parts of a book (Marciniak 59-67). Since so many different perceptions of a story exist, it is impossible for an adaptation to remain completely faithful to its source. The moment a reader, reads or visualizes a perception of a story which does not synthesize with his own, he feels betrayed. *Warm Bodies*, a loose, modern take on *Romeo and Juliet,* essentially transforms the iconic battle between the Montagues and the Capulets, into a battle between zombies and humans (Milam). 'R', a zombie falls for Julie, a human. This follows after he eats her boyfriends' brains and rescues her from a zombie attack. While the movie was successful, diehard fans of Shakespeare's tragedy probably wouldn't appreciate the amendments. Despite an artist's best efforts, an adaptation is likely to be "scorned as secondary and inferior to the adapted text or to the audience's own imagined versions" (Hutcheon).

However, adaptations seem to provide us with some amount of pleasure derived from the combination of the known with the unknown. It appears almost certain that "the appeal of adaptations lies in their mixture of repetition and

(Hutcheon). Hence, despite the fact that *My Fair Lady* steers away from its source, it is still a very well received musical, because it revisits the same 20th century England world of Eliza Doolittle. It focuses on the same characters and the same situations that audiences originally fell in love with, and they can't resist an opportunity to rediscover them. In some ways, it's like meeting an old friend.

Moreover, the goal of an adaptation is not simply to replicate, but rather to interrogate, reinvent or explore a particular work (Hutcheon). *Romeo and Juliet* and *Pygmalion* have both sparked a great number of adaptations, but both of these plays are also adaptations themselves. The inspiration for these masterpieces came from Ovid's epic poem *Metamorphoses*. Written in 8 AD, Metamorphoses spans across fifteen books, and tells more than two hundred and fifty myths ("*Metamorphoses* - Ovid - Ancient Rome - Classical Literature"). Understandably, the stories he told were rather different from the ones we're familiar with today. In 'Pyramus and Thisbe', Pyramus kills himself when he sees a lioness with Thisbe's scarf at their designated meeting place. Thisbe, who was hiding nearby, finds his body and distraught by the death of her beloved, kills herself as well. On the other hand, Ovid's Pygmalion, ashamed of the shameful lives women in his era led, vowed to remain a bachelor. He then moulds an ivory statue of the perfect woman named Galatea. After having fallen in love with the statue and, much wishing, Aphrodite brings it to life. Ovid too, was inspired by, among other things, a certain genre of Hellenistic metamorphosis poetry. He adapted twenty-one of the stories from the *Heteroioumena* of Nikander of Colophon (2 BC) as well as one of Nikander's poems (Galinsky 2). Thus, it can be seen that the delicate art of adaptation has existed since time immemorial. No work of literature can be defined as completely original. An adaptation is not just an extension of its source but rather an independent work which can stand on it owns merits or flaws.

Northrop Frye describes the first principle of the production of literature as, "All literature can only derive its form from itself" (Hutcheon). As for readers, an adaptation can only add to the experience of a particular work, influencing thinking, adding perspectives and often providing further clarification and insight. Hence 'literary adaptations', deserve the same attention and respect that their source receives. Terry Pratchett puts it well in his fantasy story *Witches Abroad:* "Stories, great flapping ribbons of shaped space-time, having been blowing and uncoiling around the universe since the beginning of time. And they have evolved. The weakest have died and the strongest have survived and they have grown fat on the retelling."

NOTES

1) Anita is Bernardo, the leader of the Sharks' girlfriend. She is also a good friend of Maria's and the two work at the bridal store together.

2) Chino is a member of the Sharks. He was the man Maria was supposed to marry, before she met Tony.

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Cartography of Identity: Nikolai's Gogol

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Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake *traces the evolving identities of the Gangulis, each struggle being vastly different from the others'; each character embodying the conflict between his own macrocosms. This paper explicates these themes by referring to the novels and its critics, highlighting the nitty-gritties of the author's style as it applies to the cocoon of metamorphoses.*

The Namesake is the quintessential tale of an Indian family residing in America. It follows the Gangulis on their discovery of their dual identities, their unity as a family, and through the understanding of what it means to be home. The diasporic experiences of each character in the novel form an assorted collection of perspectives, and the names assigned to the protagonists give them each an assigned responsibility which they all manage to live up to. The title itself reveals implicitly, yet so beautifully, the richness of the conflict that is the soul of this book, reminding the reader that a name is not equal, yet so often can be associated with one's identity. This papers seeks to analyse the metamorphosis of the main characters within Lahiri's novel, and to showcase how certain elements (like food) are symbolic of this change.

Ashoke, a young, pious man chases a professional American dream. To him, America is the native land of his grandfather's stories; the reservoir of opportunity, a part of Ghosh's promised journey around the world. America brings into his life achievability, professional success and reverence. "The job is everything Ashoke has ever dreamed of" (Lahiri 48). Most importantly, it signifies an escape from the horror of the train wreck and the months of immobility that followed; America is his second chance – giving him the power to live up to his name - "he who transcends grief" (Lahiri 26).

Ashima, a compliant young bride is whisked off to a foreign land with a man she barely knows, in a land she doesn't wish to. The first few days of her marriage are filled with discovering her husband, cultivating a relationship; it is only during her pregnancy and at the time of her delivery, that she is unable to bear the separation from home. "Everything is looking perfectly normal. We are expecting a perfectly normal delivery, Mrs. Ganguli." But nothing feels normal to Ashima. For the past eighteen months, ever since she's arrived in Cambridge, nothing has felt normal at all. It's not so much the pain, which she knows she will survive. It's the consequence: motherhood in a foreign land" (Lahiri 5).

Ashima's mistaken forfeiture of the gifts for her family on the subway and their subsequent retrieval marks the first time she truly feels "connected to Cambridge in a way she has not previously thought possible..."(Lahiri 43). Bengali friends steadily welcome the Gangulis' family, as they are included in intimate ceremonies (the kids' annaprasans), up to the extent of Gogol and Ashoke once celebrating Thanksgiving at another family's home. Gradually she is shown advising other women with occasional tips, and the reader watches her progress from working a job and living alone, to eventually dealing with life after Ashoke's demise. At the very end, Ashima decides to sell her house, a consequence of the appreciation that home is in the heart and not a physical location. While her parents belong to India, her children are Americans. Her decision to alternate between India and the States is the manifestation of this very aspect, of her endlessness, of being "she who is limitless, without borders" (Lahiri 26).

Gogol's life begins with the christening of a pet name or "daknam," (Lahiri 25), a Bengali tradition, something the American officials fail to comprehend; this dichotomy at birth goes on to define the rest of his life. As a child, he begins to address his parents with the Bengali Ma and Baba; his artwork at school depicts his mother, complete with a dot her forehead. From the very beginning, Gogol encounters multivalence

between American and Indian values – such as choosing whether to abandon a meal once his hunger has been satiated or to finish it out of respect. "But Gogol never thinks of India as desh. He thinks of it as Americans do, as India." (Lahiri 118)

Gogol shows disapproval, a sort of embarrassment at his birthday parties, at the presence of his 'extended family' and chooses to interact only with his friends from school. Gogol first experiments with 'Nikhil', both the name and the personality that he associates with it, with Kim, the first girl he kisses. The name empowers him, gives him a different worldview. The two women, Ruth, his first girlfriend who is unknown to his parents, and finally Maxine, the beautiful woman with whom Nikhil is everything that Gogol never could be, stand for his gradual transition from being a boy caught between two worlds to a man asserting his individuality.

"His relationship with her [Ruth] is one accomplishment in his life about which his parents are not the least bit proud or pleased." (Lahiri 116) The author uses the word 'accomplishment', which is how Gogol perceives his connection with Ruth. Ashoke and Ashima, however, are not in the least proud of this as they feel their son is too young to venture into such a partnership. His change of name, which he justifies by saying that it is the one they had chosen for him long ago; his pursuance of architecture, mildly against their will and living in with a Caucasian girlfriend, are all sources of passive conflict. Visibly, Gogol's abandonment hits Ashima harder because her children are her life, here in America; the only reason she decided to adjust to this strange world.

Gogol's relationships are a direct reflection of the recurrent theme of hybridity. Both Maxine and Moushumi each represent one half of this dual identity. As a young adult, Gogol courts Maxine, devouring the culture of her home – the independence, the nonconformity to gender roles, the privacy of their relationship and of course, the lavish standard of living that immigrants seldom enjoy.

The novel's climax sees the death of Ashoke and the subsequent cascade of the realities that Gogol had been denying. Ridden with guilt, self-loathing and denial, Gogol reassembles his father's little world in Cleveland, where now, life comes a full circle. He bonds much more deeply with Ashima, and they support each other through the loss of their respective spouses from thereon. The death of Ashoke serves as a peripeteia, jolting Gogol into realising that he has been neglecting one half of his individuality. The failure of his relationship with Maxine signals his awakening, and the adoption of a new perspective on his Indian genes. He realises that Max's American lineage and upbringing were obstructing this realisation because of which he could never fully be comfortable with himself. We eventually see Gogol returning home, both literally and figuratively - his ritualistic haircut, tending to his grieving Ma and performing all of his Baba's last rites coupled with the incompatibility he suddenly begins to experience in his relationship with Maxine. His meeting, courting and eventually marrying Moushumi distinctly marks his eventual acceptance and stability of his dual identity, showing the metamorphosis he undergoes.

Moushumi is the perfect fit for Gogol, having lived through the same struggles of a second-generation American, or so it seems. Gogol discovers love through their similarities – their American attitudes, and Indian families. Their lifestyles and preferences often complement each other, as do their over indulgent mothers. Moushumi's infidelity with a French boyfriend brings out another important struggle that the author wishes to highlight. Having lived the life of an obedient, Indian daughter and thus, an ostracised American teenager, she was desperately lonely and frustrated. Turning her back on the two cultures that had failed her, she had immersed herself in French. Gogol, representing both these cultures, had made her feel suffocated and her subconscious had chosen to rebel. At first, she seems like the more mature one of the two – comfortable with her

body and confident of her abilities. Her identity, like Gogol's, is fragmented and destabilised by expectations and social rejection; unlike her husband's, it fails to harmonise. She chooses foreign passion over love, the strength of her identity over her marriage.

Food is an important motif in the novel. The story begins with Ashima Ganguli preparing a concoction of puffed rice and salted peanuts in an attempt to replicate the classic Indian bhel. Food is a recurrent symbol in *The Namesake,* almost an epithet for love, be it longing for one's homeland or cherishing one's children as Ashima does, through her effort of preparing Gogol's favourite, payesh every year. Various instances in relation to meals bring out Gogol's disconnect from his parents, and subsequently his Indian identity. As a child, when forced to visit the temple and "eat bland vegetarian food," (Lahiri 64), Gogol's frustration is evident. Later, as a part of the Ratliff family, he notices the distinct dissimilarity between the individualistic culture of Maxine's family and the collectivist values of his own:

> "How different they are from his own parents' parties, cheerfully unruly evenings to which there were never fewer than thirty people invited…Unlike Gerald and Lydia, who preside at the center of their dinners, his parents behaved more like caterers in their own home, solicitous and watchful, waiting until most of their guests' plates were stacked by the sink in order finally to help themselves…" (Lahiri 141).

The instances of Moushumi preparing a French meal for Gogol on their second date allude to a sense of harmony and communion, as taking a meal together is often regarded in society. It signals Moushumi's consideration of Gogol as a serious romantic interest and the acceptance of Ben into the Ganguli family.

The title of the novel walks the reader through Gogol's life. From the first time his daknam appears on a medical examination, to the choices made by Gogol about his name, all the way to high school when Gogol almost hallucinates public humiliation school, Gogol's name is the most important extended metaphor in the text. Gogol's confidence, his personality undergoes a change the first time he identifies himself as Nikhil. This Nikhil is free of expectations, free of otherness, free to feel American. On officially changing his name all by himself he asserts the American ideal of individuality, and in some ways, the American dream.

"In America anything is possible. Do as you wish." (Lahiri 100) The author has chosen to portray this dual Indian identity particularly in America for it was where she herself experienced it. A deeper understanding may reveal that it is in the inherent nature of this country, on the ideals that it was formed, that is the source of the conflict. On one hand, while Indian society values collectivism, Americans cherish their liberty. In his attempt to become a true American, Gogol forgets that simply forsaking a name, one cannot alter one's identity.

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The One Looking In: In Search of the American Dream

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This paper traces the metamorphosis transpiring in the portrayal, situation and challenges faced by the "hyphenated American," with particular focus on childhood and adolescent experience, examining where the hyphen truly leans.

In 1920s America, even the life of a second-generation immigrant was an uphill struggle to prosperity and success, nothing less than a bid for survival. As the country lived through the Depression, another World War, and the Cold War, the second-generation immigrant has lived his life on the outside, looking in – until the day they learn which way the hyphen truly leans. Novels like *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (1943), *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) and 21st-century works like *Americanah* (2013) follow the America-bound emigrant from the World Wars, which redefined global boundaries, to the present day, in an age of dubious globalization. The immigrant narrative in American English literature traces the evolution of the hyphenated American from the mid-20th century to the present as well as the journey of the second-generation immigrant from a member of the minority out-group to the majority in-group.

Immigrant narratives have marked an evolution from a movement towards the "American Dream," – in the rags to riches pattern - to more realistic, episodic stories of the challenges of living as a second-generation American. In Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, the titular Tree of Heaven stands as an unsophisticated, simple motif of the American immigrant:

> The one tree in Francie's yard was neither a pine nor a hemlock. It had pointed leaves which grew along green switches which radiated from the bough and made a tree which looked like a lot of opened green umbrellas. Some people called it the Tree of Heaven. No matter where its seed fell, it made a tree which struggled to reach the sky. It grew in boarded-up lots and out of neglected rubbish heaps and it was the only tree that grew out of cement. It grew lushly, but only in the tenement districts.
>
> (Smith 1)

Opposed to this simplistic metaphor - the tree as the earnest immigrant with the ability to thrive in even the most hopeless of situations - is the central idea of the 'Joy Luck Club', an elaborate tradition begun by Suyuan Woo in pre-Maoist China[1] to keep spirits from sinking during the Japanese invasion of the Second World War, where four women would play *mahjong*[2], feast and share stories of happier times. Also characterized in these 20th-century tales is the unhappiness typically surrounding their characters, particularly their children. For young Francie, this is an unhappiness to which she is a disinterested party, yet simultaneously aware of: her young and beautiful mother, forced to scrub floors for a living, or the sobs of the neighbouring child-like bride and her ape-like truck driver husband at night. Lena St. Clair of Tan's novel hears the screams and shrieks from the mother and daughter next door and projects the image of a "girl who had been killed a hundred times […] blood-stained clothes" (Tan 115); however, later on in the story, Lena learns of a touching and affectionate reconciliation between the same warring pair. In the first case, domestic abuse in a predominantly immigrant community is, viewed through the eyes of a child, taken for granted as a part of life, and is never revisited in the story; in the second, readers see the other side of the coin, that the trope of domestic violence in a poverty-stricken immigrant locale only allows a superficial understanding of the issues of assimilation and reintegration in a foreign land.

On a more technical front, narrative style, too, has borne witness to the changing immigrant story-telling. *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* follows almost a typical bildungsroman pattern, tracing protagonist Francie Nolan's movement towards adolescence, while *The Joy Luck Club* employs

an episodic style, with eight different narrators, or four different mother-daughter pairs, employing a non-linear narrative. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah follows a pair of lovers, whose stories intertwine and diverge as their childhood and adolescence in Lagos, Nigeria separates into their future trajectories in the US, Britain and back to Nigeria again. The multiplicity of voices apparent in the contemporary immigrant narrative evidence is reminiscent of Mikhail Bhaktin's concept of *heteroglossia*[3], as a dialogue between the culture left behind – the Obinzes who partake of a newly democratic Nigeria, the *mahjong* mothers who resolutely live by the folk tales and mythology to find meaning in their past, and the Thomas Rommelys who refuse to live by the rules of a new country– and the New World immigrants, the Ifemelus in search of equal opportunities away from home, the Chinese-American daughters who style their hair and change their names, and the Katies and the Francies who survive through assimilation into American society.

Immigrant writing further marks a shift in the conception of the typical American immigrant from poverty-stricken Eastern and Southern Europeans to Asian, African and Latino emigrants aspiring to a quality of life that they consider elusive in their native countries. This shift is partly enabled by the changing picture of the white American, from those of purely Anglo-Saxon ancestry to any Caucasian European immigrant. In these new-age immigrant stories, language becomes a means of cultural divide. In *The Joy Luck Club*, Jing Mei-Woo asks her late mother's *mahjong* partners the difference between Jewish and Chinese versions of the game, only to receive a baffling answer in response: "These kind of explanations made me feel my mother and I spoke two languages, which we did. I talked to her in English, she answered back in Chinese." (Tan 23). English, then, to the second-generation immigrant, becomes a language of inclusivity, while Chinese, or the native language, is the tongue of distinction, or alternatively, exclusivity and separation. The same character chooses to go by her "American name" June, a behaviour not unnoticed by these same women, first-generation Chinese (Tan 26). Ifemelu's Aunty Uju, too, makes the subtle but identity-changing adjustment in her own name.

> Aunty Uju's cell phone ran. "Yes, this is Uju." She pronounced it you-joo instead of oo-joo.
>
> "Is that how you pronounce your name now?" Ifelmelu asked afterwards.
>
> "It's what they call me." (Adichie 104).

This perpetual name-game can be identified as a problem faced by non-Caucasian immigrants, in whose non-Latin languages names cannot be anglicized so easily as European names, and only furthers the isolation experienced by these characters.

The intrinsic metamorphosis of the immigrant child from a member of the minority 'out-group' to mainstream 'in-group' may be more clearly put in perspective in light of social psychologist's Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, first proposed in 1979. In their 2003 work, Hogg and Ridgefield outline certain sociological perspectives on the Social Identity Theory. Tajfel believed that the social framework laid down by intergroup beliefs influences "whether people seek social mobility between groups, competition between their own group and another, or creative efforts to redefine the social evaluation attached to their group" (Hogg and Ridgefield 97). In the context of minority groups[4], the social framework provided to an immigrant (in most cases, a member of an ethnic minority) by their native culture (intergroup beliefs) influence whether they seek to change their present group, compete with other groups (other minority groups, for instance), or else try and change the majority group's evaluation of what their group stands for. While the episodes of *The Joy Luck Club* mainly take place within a limited and narrow universe, where nearly all characters are of Chinese heritage, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* traces Francie's interaction with a social and physical environment replete with diversity – Williamsburg, Brooklyn, where

the Italians had settled on the last two avenues and Jew Town started at Seigel Street (Smith 7). Such efforts, in turn, are affected by sociological factors like intergroup permeability, status stability, and legitimacy. Permeability refers to the members' perception of group boundaries; if they perceive that they can advance in society as individuals, rather than as members of their group, then they will do so, because group boundaries are permeable. ("Social Identity Theory"). A *Tree Grows in Brooklyn*'s optimistic ending finds Francie finally leaving Brooklyn, that cosmopolitan potpourri, for the solidly American Midwest, to attend the University of Michigan. Her reluctance to leave New York is actually her tentative worry to step through the permeability of her group –

> She had wanted to go to Columbia in New York or Adelphi in Brooklyn, but Ben said that part of education was adapting oneself to a new environment. [. . .] She was a Brooklyn girl with a Brooklyn name and a Brooklyn accent. She didn't want to change into a bit of this and a bit of that. (Smith 486).

Francie's Brooklyn accent, a salient characteristic of her personal self or personal identity, as described by Brewer and Gardner (86), crosses over to her collective identity[5] as a symbol of her membership of the group ("It meant that she *belonged* some place"), and an invaluable part of her social identity.

Gish Jen, the novelist-daughter of Chinese immigrants points out that, "Once you start thinking about what it means to be Irish-American or African-American or Chinese-American, then you're American," (Sachs) and in a nation characterized over the ages as "The New World," "The Great Melting Pot," and "The Land of Opportunity," it is evident that to grow up as an immigrant in The States is to grow up an American. These unique narratives have been painstakingly traced through immigrant stories, marking their evolution from the post-war era to the present day, and from the part of the marginalized outsiders to a sort of acceptance of this hyphenated identity.

NOTES

1. Before 1949, the year in which Communist leader Mao Zedong declared the creation of the People's Republic of China.

2. *Mahjong* is a Chinese tile game similar to the Western card game rummy, dependent on strategy and skill.

3. In his essay "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin describes as indispensable for the novel as a genre "the internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behaviour [. . .] languages of generations and age groups [. . .] languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day." It is this "multiplicity of social voices" and their various interrelationships that Bakhtin refers to as heteroglossia (Bhaktin 1192).

4. Although typically defined in terms of their numbers, Tajfel considered a minority group in terms of its relative power and social status, so that an oppressed group is the minority group while a dominant group is the majority group in a given population even if their numbers are balanced, or reversed (Brown and Gaertner 303).

5. *Interpersonal identity* and *collective identity* make up the social self, "those aspects of the self-concept that reflect assimilation to others or significant social groups" (Brewer and Gardner 83).

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Resolution of Thematic Contradictions in Dostoyevsky

RISHIKA JAIN, SYBA

This paper attempts to reconcile the seemingly antithetical themes in Dostoyevsky's works by tracing the metamorphoses of their protagonists.

Literature in Russia," wrote the author and critic G. Chernyschevsky, "constitutes almost the whole sum total of our intellectual life." It is along these lines that studying Dostoyevsky becomes relevant. The latter half of 19th century Russia was deeply divided on social, theological, political and philosophical grounds. While his contemporaries such as Tolstoy and Lermontov held concrete, rigid and direct beliefs in such spheres of Russian life, Dostoyevsky went beyond simple politics and philosophy, deeming them both to simply be a function of psychology. M.M. Bakhtin categorised his works as a "polyphonic novel" having several contrasting voices, none representing the author's (Bakhtin). He concludes, "There is no final word in the world of Dostoyevsky" (Wellek). It is Bakhtin's view that this paper wishes to debunk, on the grounds that his portrayal of human psychology as both irrational and consistent at the same time juxtaposes the seemingly independent and antithetical themes present in his major works as ultimately interdependent, when read holistically.

The structure of most of his major works follow the antithesis-thesis-synthesis pattern, instead of the conventional thesis-antithesis-synthesis one, which typically lays down a theory, counters it, and then reaches a resolution (Mikhailovsky). Instead, Dostoyevsky has utilised characters vastly in opposition to his theories, and then has proposed his philosophy in the later stages of his novels. To aid comprehension, this paper shall follow the same format; arguing against his beliefs first, and examining how the writer uses thematic contradictions as a technique itself to reach his resolution.

One of the biggest contrasts present in Dostoyevsky arise from him being classified separately as a philosopher (Terras labelled him as "an explorer of ideas") and a psychologist (Freud deemed his works as predecessors to his theories). As a philosopher, his extreme mistrust of rationality is primarily known through his *Notes from the Underground*, which claims, "Life itself… can be nothing other than twice two is four – a formula; but twice two is no longer life, gentlemen, but the beginning of death." According to Dostoyevsky, reduction of life, with all its sensations and emotions, to calculated rationality represented through the mathematical simplicity of "twice two is four" might make sense to the then-burgeoning Westerniser school of thought, but is not representative of human psychology. He maintained that man is empowered by the free will bestowed upon him by God, and a strict imposition of rationalism constricts his actions. In defiance of these constrictions, man would inevitably reject those actions that are rational, solely to assert his free will (Steiner). This inevitability of defiance is the element of consistency in Dostoyevsky's portrayal of psychology. Therefore, the theme of irrationality as the prime governor of human actions and the seemingly antithetical theme of consistency in human psychology may be reconciled with one another if the reader ceases to distinguish between Dostoyevsky, the philosopher and Dostoyevsky, the psychologist by applying a causal relationship between philosophy and psychology as disciplines themselves.

Obliquely, the theme of free will is yet again juxtaposed against the theme of the existence of evil for Dostoyevsky. Dostoyevsky's main representative of atheism in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan, provides a narrative known as The Grand Inquisitor. This narrative ultimately claims that the burden of a conscience would impose restrictions on human actions, although

it may provide man with happiness. Therefore the "logical" conclusion should be that religion is an exchange of happiness for the price of free will. However, Dostoyevsky contends that freedom, perfect free will and happiness are all collectivised in the form of religion. He argued that belief in God is through suffering and doubt. When faced with the question of the existence of evil disproving the existence of God, Alyosha, Dostoyevsky's religious representative, begins to doubt his own faith, based on Russia's orthodox tradition of monasteries. When the monk, Elder Zosima's body decays faster than normal, instead of the opposite predicted, his faith in miracles as a proof of God's existence is tested. Towards the conclusion, however, he chooses to leave the monastery while retaining his faith, thereby highlighting that his faith is a consequence of free choice, and not of miracles or dogma. (Zenkovsky). In his final notes, Dostoyevsky claims, "The saviour did not descend from the cross because he did not wish to convert men through the compulsion of outward miracle, but through freedom of belief." (Beckett, 2006).

In his notion of suffering, he believes that because God intended man to be completely free, his direct miracles would influence man's decisions regarding faith. Therefore, there cannot be a causal relationship between miracles and religious beliefs; and the problem of evil can still be reconciled with the existence of God in Dostoyevsky's works. Since man is now proved to believe in the existence of God through the process of suffering, and not through rationalism, he retains his freedom and free will. And because this freedom and man's faith can coexist, he doesn't have to pay the price of happiness for it. (Eliseo) Thus, Dostoyevsky uses independent themes and notions such as miracles, suffering, evil, free will and happiness, and ultimately portrays them as co-dependent.

A hallmark of Dostoyevsky's mature works (post his mock execution for his participation in the reactionary Petrashevsky Circle) is his staunch defiance of the 19th century Russian socialist atheism propounded by revolutionaries. While dealing with the complex question of God's existence, Dostoyevsky used his unique method of demonstration of the opposite in the novel, *Demons* (often translated as *The Possessed* or even, *The Devils*) in 1871. The main contention of this novel is the clash between two opposing philosophies: God and atheism. However, Dostoyevsky's portrayal of the psychology of the reactionary Russian atheist is based on traditional qualities of organised religion. If examined in an individualistic sense in *Crime and Punishment* (1865), Dostoyevsky discusses the primary quality of the traditional Orthodox Christian God: omnipotence. The atheistic protagonist, Raskolnikov assumes the quality of self-granted omnipotence, instead of renouncing God's omnipotence altogether. He himself likens Sonya's young siblings as "the image of Christ", and in the same passage declares, "perhaps, there is no God at all." He assumes the element of self-sacrifice and suffering for others, like Christ ("… and take the suffering on ourselves") and again, in the same scene, counters this by exclaiming, "Don't you understand? ... Power! Power over all the trembling creatures… that's the goal!" (Frank, 1995). Here, he betrays his earlier stated ideas of humanity being categorised into those who must obey and those special few who must command, like an "ant-hill". Usurping the traditional position of God as the commander, giver and taker of life, he establishes himself to decide his own ethics, declares murder of "a louse" as socially beneficial and retains control over the human society functioning as a hierarchical "ant-hill". This usurping of power and objective morality as a consequence of dismissing God found credence even fifteen years later in *The Brothers Karamazov* when Ivan Karamazov states that if there is no God, "everything is lawful", which was later justified by Smerdyakov to condone his murder. In *Demons*, Kirillov, the atheist, borrowing Feuerbach's idea of the Man-God, accroaches God's omnipotence yet again. According to him, since God is the product of man in the atheist philosophy, man himself may

claim the qualities attributed to God, and may stake claim to divinity ("Whoever conquers pain and fear, he himself will be God"; Dostoyevsky, Demons).

Just as Dostoyevsky establishes a link between crime in the form of homicide as a consequence of man appropriating God's power and objective morality, he establishes a link between suicide and self-annihilation and usurping of God's omnipotence. (Howe, 1962) Kirillov reasons that if none is afraid of the pain and fear of death, then all must commit suicide, and that the only thing sustaining life is the fear of pain. If man assumes divinity, he must demonstrate his omnipotence by ultimate self-destruction: suicide. In all three works, atheism is projected as a form of religion by itself, with its own omnipotent figure and its own subjective morality, all in the form of man. In resolution, Dostoyevsky simply portrays how man's accroached divinity results in both the annihilation of the self and the society. While it seems contradictory to portray atheism as a form of religion, with its own omnipotent figure, creator of morality and decider of death, all in one man itself, one must conclude that Dostoyevsky resolves this contradiction by discerning atheism as a substitution for religion (similar in thought; diverging in the power figure), and not an opposition for it.

Although themes such as guilt and cruelty are thought to be independent of one another, Dostoyevsky has ultimately reconciled them together in *The Brothers Karamazov*. After insulting the Elders in a monastery and making a "buffoon" of himself, Fyodor Karamazov turns to leave as a way of apology. He then turns halfway around to enter the monastery again and earn further disrepute by admitting, "He wanted to take his own revenge on them all for his own dirty tricks." When he recognises that the Elders in the monastery had received his unjust insults without any malice, he feels guilty; but that guilt transforms into anger and cruelty, representative of Dostoyevskian psychology. (Frank, 2003) His son, Dmitri, makes the same confession, "I loved the shame of depravity. I loved cruelty". While depravity is generally associated with pleasure, one rarely associates shame with it. However, by using these antonymous words and ideas, Dostoyevsky seems to conflate the two. The inclusion of the concept of cruelty here furthers Dostoyevsky's theory of the transcendence of one's self-loathing and guilt into misanthropy and cruelty towards others.

It may be concluded that the modus operandi of the author has been to persuade the reader of his ideology by providing him with an opposite one. Once this antithetical ideology has been firmly rooted in the characters, the reader is simply invited to judge it by its consequences. His technique lies in taking his opposite philosophy to its climax, resulting in annihilation in the form of homicide or suicide. By his mechanical removal of God in certain characters and in the consequent destruction, he convinces us of his theological beliefs. Using causality, he manages to substantiate his philosophy of irrationality by the seemingly contrasting consistency in psychology. A complex mélange of free will, happiness, evil and religious belief are first set in opposition and are then later reconciled. Therefore, Dostoyevsky invites the reader to discern "truth from error."

ENDNOTES

1) Westerniser school of thought- 19th century Russia witnessed fierce public debate regarding the future of Russia. The Slavophiles rejected growing European rationalism, socialism and atheism and believed Russia to be a unique civilisation rooted in the Russian Orthodox Church, monarchy of the Tsar and the Russian language and customs. The Westernisers were revolutionaries who held French and English as the necessary languages, believed in socialism (to the point of nihilism in the extremists), utilitarianism and rationalism above all else and supported the emancipation of women.

Writers such as Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky were Slavophiles whereas Turgenev and G. Chernyschevsky were Westernisers.

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Of Power and Polarity: The World as we Know It

ASMITA KUVALEKAR TYBA

From bipolarity to globalization, this paper explores the political power structure in the world today, tracing change in the journey of USA from being the Soviet Union's competitor to being the patronizing big brother of the world at large.

The world has seen unprecedented change in the economic landscape for the past two decades or more. Beginning in the 19th century when anxious heads of governments, under tremendous pressure to uplift their respective countries from financial crises, decided to create a highly inter-dependant system of exchange; economies boomed, businessmen pocketed windfall gains and people faced an overwhelming surge of social multiplicity. Simultaneously, this allowed the weakest and most insecure players a say in international politics.

With greater coexistence and global integration came opportunities to influence but there's one who rose to power post the ideological and economical disintegration of the biggest among them all. The freeze having set in on his opponent, Uncle Sam[1] savoured his last laugh. This paper seeks to trace Sam's journey, the protagonist of the contemporary world, from the period of icy-cold international relations to a seemingly accommodative world structure where although Asian, Eurasian counterparts are as sovereign as him, he remains the first among unequals, expanding his power and imposing his authority.

But Uncle Sam wasn't always in the limelight. He joined and won the two great wars that divided the world into numerous factions; physical and ideological. It was only when he dropped two devastating souvenirs of his strength on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, that the world took notice. Sam suddenly shot to widespread infamy whereby people questioned his methods to win the Second World War.

One may say it is inevitable for a ruined nation to establish fresh, unbiased relations with every developed country. However, one cannot expect a nuclear attack victim to extend the olive branch so soon. Garnering support from the dwindling colonial empire and the populous and promising debutante Bharat Mata[2] along with others, Sam also overpowered the east Asian boy, known as The Rising Sun[3], encasing his sovereignty in stars and stripes. It was the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1981 that put an end to Allied occupation of The Rising Sun allowing him freedom once again. No sooner than the treaty was enacted, sunny boy undertook constructive measures to make Sam an ally!

Foreign policy decisions were taken objectively and rationally, for sentiments are seldom recognized as useful. And today, relations between The Rising Sun and the big brother are as friendly as those between terrorizing criminals with weapons and Pak kaka[4], the conveniently blind, ever-supportive parent.

The Rising Sun's surprising, almost striking decision to extend a friendly hand to Sam so soon after the devastating war can be traced to one basic reasoning: fear. If at all there is any sentiment that is fed and nurtured, it is fear among the underdeveloped and developing, for it is the statesman's duty to pursue power; "to calculate rationally the most appropriate steps that should be taken so as to perpetuate the life of the state in a hostile and threatening environment." (Baylis, Smith, Owens 92) Crossing him is an invitation to large-scale, perhaps permanent ruin.

Sam, a seasoned player, gambles his chances with more states, in line with his unquenching thirst to capture, expand and control externally. Sam is a brutal realist, validating the likes of Niccolò Machiavelli who in the 16th century spoke blatantly of a king's ruthlessness based on the principle of 'Ends justify the means'. Machiavelli further explains what the end is, saying that the protection of the state is the highest duty of the ruler, a doctrine ruthlessly

displayed by Sam, whatever the cost.

However, does Sam think he sins? He believes and makes his people believe there'd be inevitable destruction if they don't act against perceived threat. It is a national necessity than a question of moral sanctity. From feeding the insatiable appetites of corrupt officials to nurturing terrorism in the Middle East, the big brother does it all.

Thus, with an ignorant and indifferent people with but a flimsy semblance of power, Uncle Sam derives confidence and security against rebellion at home. Convinced that he stands for transcontinental human rights, he believes he exists to serve international peace and security. Wherever peace seems to be compromised, Sam closes his eyes and charges into conflicted areas with a supreme sense of self-entitlement, believing himself to be the only upholder of universal humanity.

Or maybe he doesn't. Maybe Sam doesn't enter conflicted areas himself. Instead, he sends large troops, not as harbingers of peace but as reminders of Sam to his people of the headiest drug: patriotism.

Patriotism is the justification used to dupe his fellowmen into associating his actions with the doctrine of necessary evil. But the real reason stays buried deep into Sam's consciousness: he qualifies as a super power and for all means and purposes, he intends to retain the title.

Sam fortified his citadel post 1945. In light of his worsening relationship with Red Riding Hood[5], the world resigned to bi-polarity, forming strategic alliances and making new enemies. Indirect militancy not only compromised weaker enemy satellites but also caused the arms race. From 1945 to 1981, neither opponent retracted even as both built nuclear weapons pushing the world into a state of constant insecurity. Security of life and the fate of global peace hung like a sword on a breaking thread and it was only when Red Riding Hood's Red faded into nothingness and Sam became the undisputed superpower that everyone heaved a sigh of relief.

Little did the world expect a rigid, expansionist, invasive attitude. But Sam's intervention is unique and perpetrated solely for humanity's welfare. He perceives need for military assistance or other aid on behalf of his poorer, less developed 'comrades'. Sometimes called the "(S)american idea", this liberal assumptive power authorizes many of Sam's actions. "Instead of God's judgement, those heinous sins today bring only praise for the fulfilment of the '(S)american idea'" (Chomsky 34). It is welfare when the Arab Spring is fuelled by external support, when conspiracies hack the roots of peaceful regimes and when Sam thinks it is.

But with increased multilateral trade and the passage of time, wars and perfidy have been replaced with co-operation, increased economic growth and greater tolerance towards cultural heterogeneity. Even existing enmity between Uncle Sam and his communist rival from the north Asian continent is side-lined. The arms race has reduced considerably, international organizations influencing sovereign nations more than ever.

Sam can be given the benefit of doubt in most of his escapades while in others, his policy of putting his people first before charity cannot realistically be faulted. His brand of charity might be selective, but then, large scale political ignorance, deep rooted corruption and religious fanaticism are his calling card. Why should we criticise Sam undertaking responsibility for global peace and harmony while his contemporaries shy away from the exigencies of the job?

Since the eternal winter[7], many conflicts have eaten away at the collective tendencies of global participants. Inclusive and divisive forces, racial and religious groups are at war with each other. Balance of Power is no longer simply a theory but words in action. Power and authority become interchangeable and although the process can be violent, the end result of co-operation and co-existence is made possible only by controlling growing anarchy. "...the key emphasis is on balancing: the verb rather than the noun; the act of balancing rather than the actual condition of

balance." (Klieman 16)

Nonetheless, it is difficult to ignore the human rights violations Uncle Sam himself commits. He is here, he wants to win, and unless he is stopped, he will soon rule on a transcontinental scale.

But these fears are somewhat assuaged by the rise of organisations where Sam and his counterparts meet on a diplomatic stage, each being equal (at least in legal terms). These international bodies are fast assuming importance and they are at par with governments run by Sam and his contemporaries. The UN sees 193 such diplomatic allies and provides a platform where even the weakest member finds voice and opportunity to gain attention. In fact, members of the Security Council each hold the power of one vote, nothing more nothing less. Moreover, military body NATO is a working example of collective security further emboldening the belief that things have truly changed after the eternal winter. European Union (EU) sees free trade activity and free movement between members, dilution of geographical boundaries and decision making on the principle of one for all and all for one.

Thus, in light of contemporary politics and growing interdependence, it is hard to dismiss multipolarity. Red Riding Hood no longer sports the conservative red and has taken to a seemingly liberal economic system, leading to her rise. She is making her presence felt as much as possible; bombarding into weaker territories and implicitly challenging Sam having become her norm.

Uncle Sam's growing dependence on foreign capital is also reason to believe that other established and emerging world powers enjoy either strategic parity with him or a favorable balance of power and interest. When viewed at the level of strategic interests, Sam needs his partners to achieve his foreign policy goals more than they do. The balance of power too seems to be tilting towards the EU, Riding Hood, Rising Sun and the Red Dragon[6], partially because Sam's dependence on foreign capital will increase his international debt effectively rendering his market less important and less influential. He will be subject to the policies and attitudes of his market's principal creditors.

Of course, Sam aspires to raise a military structure less dependent on his allies yet relies on European bases and infrastructure for non-NATO missions. Allied support also influences domestic ratification for Sam's actions and thus leave no way out of appeasing or at least pacifying the 'almost at par' competitors.

The big brother benefits from European cooperation in curbing international terrorism and nuclear weapons proliferation. For the last decade, the world has repeatedly heard about the superiority of the 'Samerican model'. But the EU has had the most success in exporting democracy and fostering economic reform. As a continent made up of several large creditor economies, Europe has the financial wherewithal to do more in the Sandman's territory[8] as well as the oil kingdom. It continues to export capital to the developing world as well as to Sam himself; and therefore, Europe is better positioned to pursue the goal of building democracy in the oil kingdom than Sam, who has had little success in helping create stable democracies in any part of the world.

Uncle Sam's strictly economic comrade the Red Dragon has a thriving economy that can pose a serious challenge. A relationship of mutual dependence and competition has set in between the two, with neither having a conclusive edge. Red Dragon despite his cold, solitary nature has strived to improve neighbour relations in East Asia. Though subtle, it is an unmistakable challenge to Sam's growing presence in the Southern part of the continent. All ideological differences aside, the Red Dragon has become one of the largest suppliers of consumer goods to the United States and one of its biggest creditors.

Despite these factors, it is Uncle Sam who as the leader among unequals is expected to counter the growing threat of global terrorism, arrest nuclear proliferation in Iran and stabilize the oil market.

But the truth reigns far from expectations. It is

Sam who unilaterally and in partnership with Pak Kaka breeds terrorism especially in explosive regions like the Middle East and Paradise Valley. Sam not only supplies arms and ammunition but turns a blind eye to selective violations of human rights while making fiery speeches against the same on other international platforms. Given his charisma and power, it is difficult to expect national sentimental populace not to believe his double-edged 'wordsmanship'.

Moreover, his largest expenditure is on his military forces and the increasingly independent executive body commandeers the force. Sam has his allies in the oil kingdom and over the years, he has defended his friend, and camouflaged his illegal activities. But that doesn't stop him from crushing his friend's exclusive gold mine. Only a certain section of the politically educated has gleaned his hand in the current global oil crisis. For a long time, Uncle Sam strategically kept his own natural resources underused, allowing his friend's oil business to boom while himself collecting gains. But perhaps he deems it fit to now disclose his endowments causing great upheaval in regular state of affairs. But polite indifference is the big brother's developed skill and he has mastered it too well.

The Red Dragon and Uncle Sam share allies and engage in mutually profitable business. Moreover, Sam is well liked among the South East Asian leaders unlike the dragon who has made some enemies over petty marine disputes because no one taught him how to share or let go. In contrast, Sam allows a semblance of authority to all his competitors. Finally, although Europe remains a tough challenge to overcome, it is at the big brother's mercy when it comes to growing conflict and instability in the oil kingdom for it only worsens the refugee crisis and disturbs Western-Islamic foreign relations.

Last but not the least, as far as increasingly powerful international organisations are concerned, it is a poorly hidden fact that Sam runs the pass when it comes to decision making among the nemeses. Firstly, consensus is a difficult task when varied interests are pitched together. Moreover, the financial contributions determine each member's clout in the decision-making process. Being the highest contributor to the UN's funds, it is the big brother who enjoys the lead. The same dynamics apply to NATO. It is daunting to know that some of the most influential international bodies are being run by Uncle Sam alone while the appearance is that of a sustaining, long-term strategy of interdependence.

It would be interdependence if Sam could be questioned for his wayward activities, if he could be held accountable without fear of consequence, if he could be stopped by an alliance of smaller competitors… but that is simply hypothesis. The truth is this: Uncle Sam knows no higher authority. Those organisations that take people's trust as inventory to start business are but puppets in a giant's hand without any mercy to be hoped for; the oil kingdom knows it better than the rest of the world.

Realistically speaking, Uncle Sam doesn't have to adhere to any universal moral standard for there exists none in his understanding. But for those who are still reeling from political or economic setback or are simply en route to a higher level of development, the big brother's personal ambitions are an impediment.

There are potential challenges to his growth but still in their infancy while Sam is not getting any weaker. Thus, although it is ideal to believe that the world is not run by a superpower, that the concept met its death after the eternal winter and that we are a thriving global society, certain aspects of the contemporary global political structure suggest otherwise, raising an important question. If the answer is yes, how long can we survive without being taken over by a rising power and how peaceful will that process be if at all? The questions are many and they are haunting. At least great Uncle Sam remains unfazed by these equations.

NOTES

1) USA
2) India
3) Japan
4) Pakistan
5) USSR/ Russia
6) China
7) Cold War
8) North Africa

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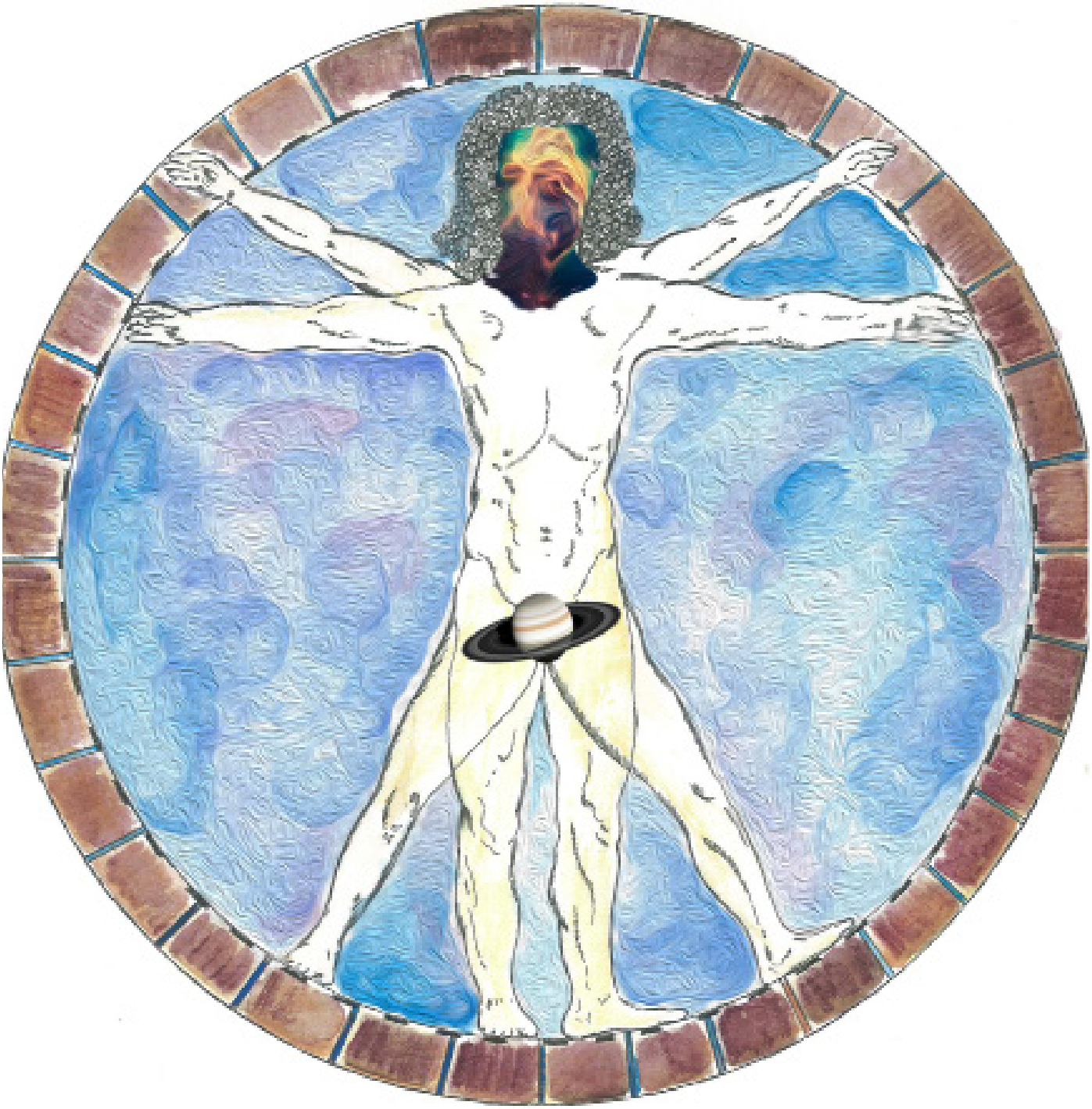


CREATIVE WRITING

Career Partner

Performing Arts Partner

Knowledge Partner

Wardrobe Partner

Mirrorless

DIKSHA NAWANY, TYBA

A town free from the thorns of vanity and blissfully unaware of the disease of superficiality comes face to face with themselves. What follows is all too familiar.

A town that knows no ghosts of the reflective glass. A town without the mocking smooth surface. A town without a mirror.

We perceive the world as a bleaker version of the utopia in our minds. We believe the only form of bliss is ignorance or acceptance. We see ourselves as a grotesque version of the perfection we wish to be. This perfection is not our own but that which is seen by others and thus is paired with prejudice, envy and maybe even hope – the desperate hope to be part of what we believe to be the ideal. I wonder what the ideal is when our perception of reality is so impressionable, so malleable. On which horizon does our lived reality meet our worldview? To each his own, we say. But what about the voices that talk us into the same corruption of our souls? If we could be our true selves constantly, what would we see?

In this peculiar town there were all types of individuals. Pick any size or shape and you'd find it here. The only thing lacking was a mirror to perfectly see what others saw them as. Wonder what it was like? With no sense of one's personal appearance, there seemed to be no hate, as hate emerged from envy, and envy from comparison. Our protagonist is much like any other townsperson. She is your everyday female lead. She is whoever you need her to be.

The girl lived what one could call a full life. Full of emotions, joy, and her endless string of thought. She thought of people as music, each note bringing to life a new dimension, a new portrayal of themselves. Some people we like instantly, some through shared experiences and some are those who we never would expect to love. Some people chase the thrill of meeting new, fascinating individuals, others hope to hold on to the wonderful sound of a known soul. No tune exactly like another. Time didn't seem to matter to her. Moments did. The relationships she had were only a product of these melodious interactions. Her self-image came from only the way she felt and the way she thought as there was no way to know how she looked.

She wondered sometimes how she may seem to her neighbours when she walked by and said hello. Did she have a big nose like her best friend or a little one like her sister? Did she have eyes blue as the sky or brown like the sand? She often touched her face, wondering how each curve and feature looked from the outside. She smiled, mystified.

The world around changed, as it does. New people came to the town and managed to adapt to the harmonious surroundings.

We now meet a salesman who travelled across the country trying to get by with the little money he made. He was tired of just getting by though. He also needed the luxury everyone seemed to have so easily. How is it that some people always had it so easy? But these were the troubles of trade. He knew there was no good trying to evaluate. These thoughts were only a waste of time. Thoughts that common men like him shouldn't concern themselves with. He often went from one town to the next mindlessly singing the tunes he had picked up somewhere,

"The exchange of our earth's yield will lead you to abundance and satisfaction,

Worship the market place and its bountiful transaction,

And before you leave the market place see that no one leaves with empty hands,

For you will find enough across mother's lands.

Ignorance of the lord's sanctified scales will lead you to greed and numbness,

As no trade is complete without nature's ever so kind justice."

The salesman began to trade with all kinds of men he met on his journey. He was slightly unsure at first but a little extra buying and selling never hurt anyone, right? As you may have already guessed, sooner rather than later

he was handed a shiny glass for a few coins. The trader had no use for it, but it was put in the cart nonetheless. He went on without much thought. He wandered about until he reached the mysteriously happy town.

In our mirrorless town he began to sell. His usual tune immediately caught the girl's attention. until the girl, now a woman, saw his cart. Curious about his unaffectionate eyes, she began talking to him. For him, it was only about making a quick buck so he tried not to be annoyed by her interaction.

"Where did you learn that song?", she asked.

"Oh I just picked it up along the way."

"Along the way?"

"Madam, when you are in the business of trade, life can take you anywhere. I heard it years ago in some town." Looking around, he added, "Say, why's everyone so jovial here? Some festival goin' on?"

She thought about this for a minute. He wasn't saying anything extraordinary but it felt strange. Why did he voice sound harsh? His detached manner made her feel exposed. She shook these feelings off, hoping to reach out to him.

"Celebration is not the only times of joy. Perhaps you ought to stay here for a couple of days to find out for yourself and-"

"No ma'am. Sales here are hopeless. I'd better move on to a wealthier village."

She didn't know why but she still wanted to help somehow. Perhaps no one had really spoken to him in a while. In an attempt to at least lessen some of his burden she cheerfully offered, "Well, I'd like to buy something. I'll take anything worth 5 coins."

It was the only time she saw an evanescent spark in his eyes. The trader was delighted. He wanted to cease this opportunity immediately. Rarely did he find an occasion where the customer was so willing! He looked through the cart to find something usually hard to sell. He saw the old mirror. It had been with him a while and he needed to rid himself off it before it was ruined and profitless.

His voice, now sweeter than ever before said, "Madam, I have the most beautiful item for you. Expensive diamonds on the borders. I got it from across the country. See how lovely it'll make you look!"

He placed it in her hands enthusiastically ready to make some good money. However, as he placed the piece in her hands he noticed something strange. Her face scrunched up, he saw a million emotions in a matter of a few seconds ranging from confusion to horror. One he didn't see was recognition.

She looked into the reflective surface in her hands and ever so slowly lifted her hand to her face as she usually did, but this time, it was different. She continued to stare at her reflection and her now uncertain fingertips touched her skin. The salesman, hardly registering her perplexity, stood there thinking of what a fortunate day it was.

News of this shiny object moved through the town. Each individual wanting and waiting to see themselves. Soon, the town filled up with mirrors. Just like its people, the town's mirrors came in all shapes and sizes. The town became just like any other. The slight obsession with looks turned to maniacal differentiation. The contrast between people remained the same but the way they were viewed had changed entirely.

However, this unsettling metamorphosis seemed to go unnoticed. Adjectives used had changed from real qualities of the mind and spirit to superfluous shallow ones. Language had taken an irreparable turn. Superficial desired has slowly seeped in. Unsurprisingly, most meaningful sentences were tainted with self-doubt. Aging now became a distasteful concept. Growing up was about fighting wrinkles instead of savouring experiences.

Life had surely changed. Thank god for the rescue of the increased shops. There was distraction, more entertainment and more luxury!

One tiny object had brought the fall of an entire town. The knowledge of one's looks led to comparison and competition. You can imagine how long it took for that to transform into rivalry. Each individual's sense of self had been

superimposed by layers and layers of makeup, superfluous desires and unattainable goals. And soon it would be no different than the world we see today. The corruption had taken over.

The beauty that we see in others is telling of our own. Beauty that has little to do with appearance - but is that which can only be felt. Slowly, our little content town had lost its ability to see or feel any beauty. And what happened to our protagonist? Well, she's changed her hair, dabbed colour on her lips and cheeks, dresses according to her 'body type' and is constantly trying to look for comfort in the unpleasantness of the image that she sees in the mirror.

ENDNOTE

These verses have been inspired by Kahlil Gibran's poem, 'On Buying and Selling'.

Chasing Negatives

SARJAN SHETH, TYBMS

Awed by nature's stoic beauty and lack of pretense, Naziya finds herself through her passion. As she struggles through tumultuous loss and family strife, she faces the choice to seek refuge in her pain or in her talent.

It was the sudden silence that gave it away. Naziya was alert before the leopard even walked into her sight. Crouching quietly in the shrubbery, she adjusted her position ever so slightly to make sure she had the best possible view of the clearing opposite her as well as of the gigantic tree on her side. She had no allusions about going undetected; a leopard's sense of smell, like most felines, was almost fourteen times as strong as that of humans. She faintly recalled a conversation she'd had with a park ranger once: a leopard who seemed relaxed was likely to have eaten in the recent past and was looking to rest, and most of the big cats in this area were used to unidentified human smells because of the national park's proximity to the city. Now, those words gave her new strength and she felt no fear. Aided by the adrenaline in her system, she made to move forward slightly, but stopped dead as the bushes in the clearing parted.

The leopard strolled out, stealthy even when not on the hunt. It glanced almost lazily in Naziya's general direction, before settling down to sleep on the tree in one big leap. "Perfect," Naziya thought to herself as she observed that its head faced away from her. The cat's tail kept flicking hypnotically, and Naziya had to tear away her eyes to focus on the rest of her prey. She turned to have a better view, nocked her contraption, aimed at the leopard, blinked once and took the shot. The leopard felt nothing as it adjusted slightly in its sleep. It was as clean as can be: the photograph would turn out to be polished and professional.

Unlike most of her fellow shutterbugs, Naziya Khan's tryst with the camera had started quite late. Having borrowed a friend's DSLR on a week-long road trip, she fell in love with the satisfying click that accompanied the corresponding memory created and the whirr of the lens as she zoomed into her point of interest. Much to her group's chagrin, she chose to capture nature over people: she would go running off in the general direction of a cuckoo's call or patiently focus on the mountains in the background while her friends' perfectly orchestrated candid expressions turned into exasperated frowns, waiting for a squad picture. Even though she was exceptionally good at taking portrait photographs, she felt like the landscape and the wildlife spoke to her more in their quiet, steady demeanour. And, unlike the portraits and the people, there seemed to be no deception to them, with no smiling faces masking hidden bias and malice. Thus when the hard drive with all the pictures from the trip was being circulated within the group, Naziya was gently teased for 'her contract with Mother Nature', as one of her friends called it. One picture, which would be the first of many to be framed in her room, made up for all the ribbing: a solitary boatman guiding his craft on the crystal clear water of the river as the moon peeked out shyly over the dark blue of the evening sky. Naziya had thought for a while, and then scribbled, 'Tracing the Journey' on the back of the photograph.

Surprisingly, convincing her conservative parents to let her enter this field of work had been rather easy for Naziya. Not that they, or even she herself, had expected a lot from her educational qualifications: she'd meandered through college as an average student, almost as unremarkable as the last bench in the corner she used to perpetually occupy. A few well placed "Ammi, please na," coupled with piteously staring at her Abbu did the trick, and she became the proud owner of a cutting-edge Canon EOS 700D DSLR camera. A friend invited her to join his initiative in promoting lesser-known places for travel in and around Mumbai, and another friend, after days of badgering, was successful

in getting her to set up a Facebook page and an Instagram account. While the pictures posted on these websites helped her expand her circle, the photographs that slowly started to adorn the wall in her room were the most precious. Naziya came to love falling asleep looking at her 'Polaroid Wall', named after the company that patented the instant camera. In the confines of her bedroom, she also often wondered if her parents agreeing to her choice of profession so readily was perhaps in part to atone for the guilt of turning Altaf out of the house three years earlier.

Altaf, Naziya's elder brother, had wanted to be a film director for as long as he'd known. Their abbu and ammi had let him continue with this dream until his school ended, sometimes even chuckling about his uncommon choice of being behind the camera directing rather than looking to act in the industry. However, things took a turn for the worse when they discovered he had hidden the results of his first year as a law college student, having failed the first semester and being debarred in the other. Things came to a boil when he announced he had decided to drop out of college and continue as a small-time scriptwriter at a big entertainment company. To her parents, and especially to her retired father, setting out in life without a college degree was unheard of. Both the parties were adamant, and Naziya was left a silent spectator to the daily fights, having always been the assistant in her brother's amateur productions and, by extension, his shadow trailing him since childhood. She still remembered the day she had come back from school and found the house to be unnaturally quiet. Her brother had chosen to leave the house, they told her. Abbu had fumed, "And make no mistake, we welcome that decision!" All of them, including Naziya, had expected him to return once his anger cooled off. In the coming months, however, he visited rarely, and usually came only to collect a possession he had forgotten or to see how Naziya was doing. His arrogance had seemed to serve him well: he had risen to be assistant director to some of the biggest names in Bollywood and he had already started work on his first independent film. Of late, his visits had become increasingly infrequent, and Naziya's wall had held no pictures when he had last come home. The longing she had felt since had subsided to a dull ache somewhere in the depths of her heart, but the long hours spent by her abbu staring at nothing in particular and ammi's vehement caretaking of Altaf's few remaining possessions in the house served to remind her that she was possibly the one dealing best with the change.

Naziya shook her head to dispel the last shreds of thought from her mind before entering the house, having spent all morning tracking the leopard before finally taking her prized shot. Immediately, she realised that something was wrong. It seemed vaguely similar to the time Altaf had left the house; however, the multitude of footwear outside and the muffled voices coming from within the hall killed any thoughts of familiarity. As she entered, the hubbub descended into absolute silence. She took the scene in: there were a few known faces among a sea of unknown people. Her mind seemed to comprehend everything in slow motion: her abbu looked to her as if he'd aged a hundred years in the span of a few hours, and her ammi was crying hysterically. She looked at the television: the burning wreckage of an aeroplane was all she saw before she realised that a policeman was talking to her. She heard only disjoint words as her legs gave away and she collapsed to the floor. "Altaf-some members of his crew-return to Mumbai-runway-crash-no survivors." The known faces helped her to her feet and took her to her parents. Naziya lost track of time after that: the next few hours were a blur of mumbled words and accepted condolences. At some point of time, she stumbled into her room and sat on her bed, for once turning her back on the Polaroid Wall. The tears that had refused to come till then burst forth as she took upon a foetal position, rocking back and forth as she struggled to remember the last time she had talked to her brother. She saw Aditi, a colleague of Altaf, enter the room and

quickly sat up again, wiping her tears. Somehow, she had always thought that crying in front of others was a sign of weakness. It was evident that Aditi had been crying as well, but right now she was looking past her with a look of awe on her face. "Naziya," she asked, "Have you been taking all of these pictures?" Naziya nodded, wishing she would go and leave her in peace. Aditi's next words were completely unexpected. "We have decided to finish the movie that Altaf had been directing. There's not much left, and it is the least we could do to honour his memory. We would be grateful if you came to work with us, Naziya. Photographers are always needed on the set, and you are clearly gifted." Before Naziya could respond, Aditi added,"It is what Altaf would have wanted, Naziya. He would have been proud."

It almost came as a relief to Naziya when she started working at what used to be Altaf's set. Following the burial, her father seemed to be incapable of getting himself out of the house and the very air seemed to shiver with her mother's quiet, continuous crying. Communication within the three of them had fallen to a bare minimum; in fact, they had hardly reacted when she had announced her intention of working for Altaf's film. Naziya figured that shifting away from her native habitat of wildlife and landscape photography might be slightly hard, but the pay was definitely better and there were many contacts to be made. Somewhere deep down, she also felt that she somehow owed it to Altaf, and working on his project would be an appropriate outpouring for her grief.

The change boded well in the beginning. The work wasn't hectic, but taking photographs of the locations, the set and the actors kept her busy. Her pictures were appreciated, and everyone seemed to be good to her. Whether this was out of pity, or out of compassion, Naziya did not know. Aditi made efforts to make her feel comfortable, but she too was tied up as the shoot slowly reached its conclusion. Naziya did not realise when her depression set in. Somewhere in the middle of the cycle of going home, silently looking at her wall and hearing ammi's muffled sobs from the adjoining room, getting up in the morning and spending the day behind the lens, a feeling of utter despondency and sadness replaced, or perhaps overpowered, the ache she had felt since her brother had first left the house. Perhaps it was the recurring thought that, despite not having been in the house since the past few years, Altaf's shadow had been cast far and wide and she had never really crawled out of it. She started hating her work, and stopped interacting with her peers. She still, however, turned up at the set everyday, as the prospect of spending the day at home seemed to her more daunting. The Polaroid Wall, long since bereft of any new addition, was a silent witness to the increasingly frequent sobbing sessions that Naziya went through. Her demons then managed to convince her that her parents had always loved their son more, and she began to doubt if they would have grieved as much if she had been the one to die. This thought of death continued to magnify, and before she knew it, she had seriously started contemplating taking her life. On a grim Saturday, having finished work for the day, Naziya excused herself from Aditi's now insincere efforts to make conversation and went up to the roof of the building. Almost unconsciously, she climbed onto the ledge of the building, and closed her eyes.

The scene seemed to momentarily shift as Naziya breathed in deeply, and opened her eyes. The jagged Mumbai skyline and the stark blue of the horizon met her gaze steadily, steeling her further in her resolve. The honking of cars, very faint in the distance, were her constant, and only, companions. She glanced down at the ground and reflexively lurched back, before steadying herself and standing at the edge of the terrace once again. Even the wind seemed to push her back, the violent tempest that she had expected at this height turned instead into a warm, gentle breeze that reminded her of the sea and simpler days spent with the ones she missed so dearly in the moment. She did not expect her life to flash by in her last moments, even though the wall plastered with polaroid memories back home would make it easier for her to visualise life as a static reel than most. She sighed and looked for the umpteenth time at the photo in her hand. Flipping the picture around, she read the words hastily scribbled in the top right corner of the

white: ‘Tracing the Journey’. On an impulse, she scrunched up the photo and put it in her pocket. She wiped away the few stray tears, silently sang the chorus of her favourite song and closed her eyes again. This surprised her: she hadn’t heard Gravity by Coldplay in some time, and it seemed a cruel choice of a song given the circumstances. Or perhaps the circumstances were precisely why the song had come to her. She made as if to walk, and took a step forward. Suddenly, she stumbled backward and fell off the ledge onto the terrace as a blinding light hit her square in the face.

Dazed, Naziya regained her bearings as she realised what had happened: the last rays of the twilight sun had hit the building made almost entirely of glass right opposite her, which had promptly reflected the light on her face. All thoughts of jumping gone, Naziya whipped out her camera, thankful that she had had the sense to bring it with her. She took the picture, and stared at it for a long, long time. Against the dark of the glass panes and the sky, one solitary ray emanating from the Sun shone on resolutely, perfectly immortalised on the screen of her camera. “Chrysalis,” she murmured to herself as she baptised the photo, likening it to a butterfly pupa about to take flight. She smiled slightly as she put her camera in the bag, and took a decision.

4 months later.

Naziya had gone back to her wildlife and her landscapes, picking up exactly where she had left off. The leopard accompanied Chrysalis on the frames on a shelf in her new house (her landlord had been livid when the idea of putting pictures on the wall) and she reconnected with old friends who welcomed her with open arms.

A gentle tap on her shoulder woke her from her reverie, and Naziya put the camera to her eye. She gave her friend the thumbs up, and started clicking from the moment he jumped off and until the ripples subsided after he swum back to the shore. She had never thought falling would be this easy. She shuddered slightly as she realised that her journey had come a full circle.

Becoming Peter

SUNAINA MENEZES, SYBA

The seraphic Pierre Le Carré, with his rendition of Peter Pan, enchants the director James Rochner as well as the audiences flocking to the show. However, in trying to understand the part he plays, he sheds his innocence and loses himself to Peter's maniacal side – leaving us to wonder whether the actor and the character truly know themselves without the other.

Months of rehearsing, strategizing, heated disputes, and rare moments of enlightenment all boiled down to this one miraculous moment. The crowd was oblivious and self-absorbed. They munched on snacks, fidgeted with hats and coats, and craned their necks to establish the ideal vantage point. Voices rang out, comparing newspaper snippets and throwing around unnecessary theatre jargon. However, even this bunch of chattering magpies could not ignore the curious hush that lingered at the edge of this dimly lit theatre. A shiver of excitement passed through them, as they regarded the frayed velvet curtains before them. They were the spectators, and, quite frankly, they demanded a show.

The stage was set, the crowd was ready, and all the actors had their cues, but behind the curtains, a different story was being played out. Captain Hook fastened Wendy's gown, Tiger Lily paced back and forth anxiously, and Tinker Bell muttered last minute tips to Michael. "Where's Pierre?" a voice called out, and the entire room held its breath for a moment.

James Rochner, the director, was seated by himself in a corner, his eyes bloodshot, cradling a black journal between his palms. The journal fell to the floor in his haste to get to the door. The actors followed immediately, calling out in the heat of the moment, not the actor's name but the character's. "Peter!" they shouted, "Peter, where are you?"

To get to this point, however, we must first trace a journey, and what better way than to consult the black journal that Rochner dropped? We pick it up now, and flip through it.

January, 2016

I intend to stage a masterpiece, but perhaps it is more difficult than I anticipated. My medium of artistic creation is, of course, theatre, but it is in fact the actors that must take the form of living, breathing works of art.

Three days of auditions and I have not yet chanced upon a single Peter Pan. A dozen Tinker Bells, three possible Wendys, and even a delightful Smee... but not a single Peter. The newspapers promise, "Peter Pan: a tale of innocence, heroism and belief in the extraordinary." But what is a tale without its hero?

Today, on the fourth day, an amateur actor by the name of Pierre Le Carré stepped onto the darkened stage. The harsh spotlight lit him in an angelic glow, and when the French boy opened his mouth, words rang out like a half-forgotten melody. He had an accent, lilting, entreating, and when he smiled the sheer force of his innocence drew tears.

"Why a play on Peter Pan?" he questioned, shyly, and to my astonishment, I found myself answering, "Theatre is a form of art that is not quite real, and not quite imaginary. Quite fitting for a make-believe boy and his island come true, don't you think?"

Today's events have left me in a daze, but one thing is certain - I have finally found my Peter.

March, 2016

Last night's dream returns to me in flashes. The boy, clothed in green, peeks through a window at the one joy forever stolen from him – a family. The audience weeps profusely into their handkerchiefs.

The success of the play has morphed into an obsession, plaguing me at every waking moment. I have taken to watching the boy from afar, as he interacts with the cast, and charms them immediately. It took me a while to realize that the masterpiece that I crave, wears grey eyes

and a French accent. Often, when I watch him rehearse, I begin to doubt whether he is a boy at all.

Pierre is now the owner of my old copy of the original, Peter and Wendy. I have noticed him poring over it for hours on end. When I got my hands on it again, I noticed that he had underlined certain sections. A strange smile was playing about his face, and Wendy saw it and shuddered, one section read. "Don't go," they called in pity. "I must," he answered, shaking, "I am so afraid of Peter," was another.

I noticed that Pierre was watching me while I read his book. "What is this?" I asked him. "It's the story of a maniacal dictator," he answered, his voice feverish, his face flushed, "and a land tainted by the blood of his followers, whom he sacrifices as soon as they show signs of aging. It's all in there. I've marked out passages."

I decided to borrow my own book back, for a bit of bedtime reading.

May, 2016

"It's all merely a game to Peter." Pierre explained to me. "He doesn't understand the complexities of good and evil. He even takes on the role of Hook, once he has killed him! After all, someone has to play the part."

Even outside of rehearsals, Pierre has asked the cast to refer to him as Peter. Reports of the boy skipping meals reach me, and once I even overheard him muttering gleefully to himself "Oh, the cleverness of me!"

There is a definite change in the boy. He moves now, as if he is on the verge of taking flight, and when a crew member injured himself, Pierre merely laughed.

The play has morphed into a fascinating example of creative expression since Pierre has taken to modifying his lines. There are moments when Peter Pan's boyish charm cracks, and bloodlust and bitter loneliness seep through.

The other actors are not as accepting of the new direction the play has taken. They are both concerned about the actor, and repulsed by the character. I overheard an actor take a dig at our newspaper headline, "Perhaps we should change it to 'Pierre Le Carré: the tale of a bloody madman', instead," he said.

I for one am certain, that if it must come to it, I will stage a play with only the boy.

Today he cornered me, and accused me of lying to him when he first asked, "Why Peter Pan?" I burdened him with the truth. The imaginary Neverland served as an escape route from my poverty-ridden childhood. "Peter was my hero," I confessed to him. "Mr. Rochner," he replied softly, "Perhaps it is finally time you grew up."

July, 2010

I have accepted this flawed Peter, in all his tainted glory, but the public may not be as willing to witness the defamation of their mischievous, well-loved hero.

It almost seems as if the actor and the character have corrupted each other to create a work of art. Both have undergone extreme transformations, and naturally, so has my play. The possibility of offering something new to the world, and being recognized for that fresh perspective, is close to being realised.

Today, I saw more Peter Pan, than Pierre Le Carré, in the boy. Peter seems to loom over the actor constantly, like a shadow stitched to him, selecting the ideal moment to make his appearance.

Could it be that I have destroyed both Pierre and Peter by introducing them to one another? But I cannot shoulder the entire blame. Interpretations must stem from the reader, so perhaps Pierre was not innocent to begin with. As children, the rest of us viewed Peter Pan with an untarnished heart, but Pierre sensed something darker beneath the surface.

Every morning the other actors are drawn to the theatre in order to act. I am starting to suspect, that Pierre and I come to escape ourselves.

September, 2016

I have the strangest feeling, almost akin to guilt, that through my play, I am committing a grave injustice towards Peter Pan. He was a boy, who never struck a blow while his enemy was disarmed. He had no parents to teach him right from wrong, and yet he attempted to save Wendy's life and those of the unborn Never birds, at the risk of his own…

Pierre has isolated himself for the last few days, and when at last he made an appearance, he seemed to be possessed with a fanatic fervour. He had delved into the psychology behind his character, and two questions remained unanswered. The first surrounded Peter Pan's constant nightmares concerning "the riddle of his existence." Hook questions "Pan who art thou?" and then learns that Peter has no satisfactory answer to give.

The second question was linked to Peter's phobia of growing up. What logic surrounded the rejection of this everyday metamorphosis? Pierre has begun to demand answers that Peter Pan himself did not have. Beyond this point, there is no turning back.

I am haunted by a quote, about Peter, from J.M. Barrie's classic, "The difference between him and the other boys… was that to him, make-believe and true were exactly the same thing."

December, 2016

An actor dons a mask. The mask allows him to temporarily assume another's persona, mannerisms and perception.

Perhaps Pierre has not yet discovered his own identity, and thus it is with great ease that he slips into another's skin. However, a butterfly cannot hang up its wings and return to the caterpillars, and that is the drawback of an absolute metamorphosis. When the curtains fall, and the pretence comes to an end, as it must, will my actor be capable of shedding his monstrous mask?

Our limits have been tested. How far are we willing to go – Peter, to remain young forever, Pierre to understand his elusive character, and I, to be finally validated?

A terrifying fear grips me. I must call off the play to preserve what remains of Pierre, but in doing so I shall sacrifice my long cherished dream. The boy and the play, which I once considered synonymous with each other, are now at odds.

And what of saving the reputation of Peter Pan, the boy who once allowed me to live a dream?

Moments before the curtains rose, the director found the boy curled up in one of the upstairs wardrobes, rocking back and forth, muttering to himself.

"Pierre!" he cried, agitated. "The play is about to start."

"No, I'm bored of this game. Let's play another," the boy muttered, dazed.

"No, you don't have a choice. You're Peter Pan!"

"Yes, I'm Peter Pan, and I don't like it here. Take me back to Neverland! I don't want to stay here and become a man." The actor began to sob.

Aghast, James Rochner recalled the once angelic boy with the French accent, who shared no resemblance to this vacant-eyed, shaking madman.

In that room, a boy lost all sense of reality, a man looked on and held himself responsible, and a masterpiece was reduced to a monster. Two doors down, or more accurately, in another world, the munching, fidgeting, giggling, chattering crowd waited. They expected a show.

KRITI KRISHAN, TYBA

There's something to be said about the autumn wind
Red hot ambition, amber embers of doubt, orange bouts of passion
set fire to a leafy footpath

And the twilit sky draws forth like a starry curtain
Purple simmering desire, imperial indigo denial, crumbling coal black longing
smear themselves onto an indecisive sky

But what of the summer warmth that blooms and blossoms
And the flowers and fishes that follow
And what of the moonlit field that calms and chills
And the leaves and lakesides that linger

It's the journey, they say
And that might be true
But it's the oases that make it worth the while

You don't have to be in transition to be incandescent
And maybe today, you can be some place and just be
And the train will land and the flight will halt at a station

And the caterpillar on the ground
can call itself
beautiful

Jadis
The flower of your fist
bloomed in
verses
blood rankled and distributed evenly
on squared sheets;
words, masterful slaves
eyes, sleep wide.

And I, the gatekeeper
to that layered chasm
where the hush of words finds footing
I, the refrain,
found out and hunted,
humbled the ridges of your palm
I poured you ink
You saw me.

Aujourd'hui
we've little to the side
and we hang upon
carving shoulders in grass
lifting the sky
upwards
inwards
Us
we have the words
yet and still.

FARAH MANECKSHAW, SYBA

If your home was drowning in flames,
What would your flailing fingers first grasp?

Prudence, as usual, suggests documents and money and cellphones and other Important Adult Things.

But my hands, foolish, impulsive,
always clutch bags of memories,
Brimming with yearbooks and birthday cards,
All spray painted the colour of nostalgia,
Splayed across the happiest crevices of my mind,
Memories are permanent and so my hands keep reaching for them.

The galaxies lob stars like beachballs,
And the earth moves 1037 miles every hour,
Still we cling on,
We, the butter flecks of light
Gripping the surface of the earth
Making ridges in soft mud and praying that they stay
Praying against the inevitable and chasing slipping Time-
He is always inches from us and we trail him like shadows.

Other times we don our armour and lift our shields,
And all of humanity declares war upon him,
Our nemesis who upturns our homes and lives,
Who pilfers and leaves us with plagues we do not need,
Who tears apart our families, withers our friendships
We chant our war cry, our rival is-
A harbinger of melancholy,
The harbinger of our failures,
An enemy to our stability,
An enemy to human happiness.

We charge though we know we shall lose,
We charge though he's an ally in disguise,
Our battle cry rings through every hill and mountain range-
As we destroy the one who was always on our side,
Waging our relentless war against Change.

RATI PEDNEKAR, TYBA

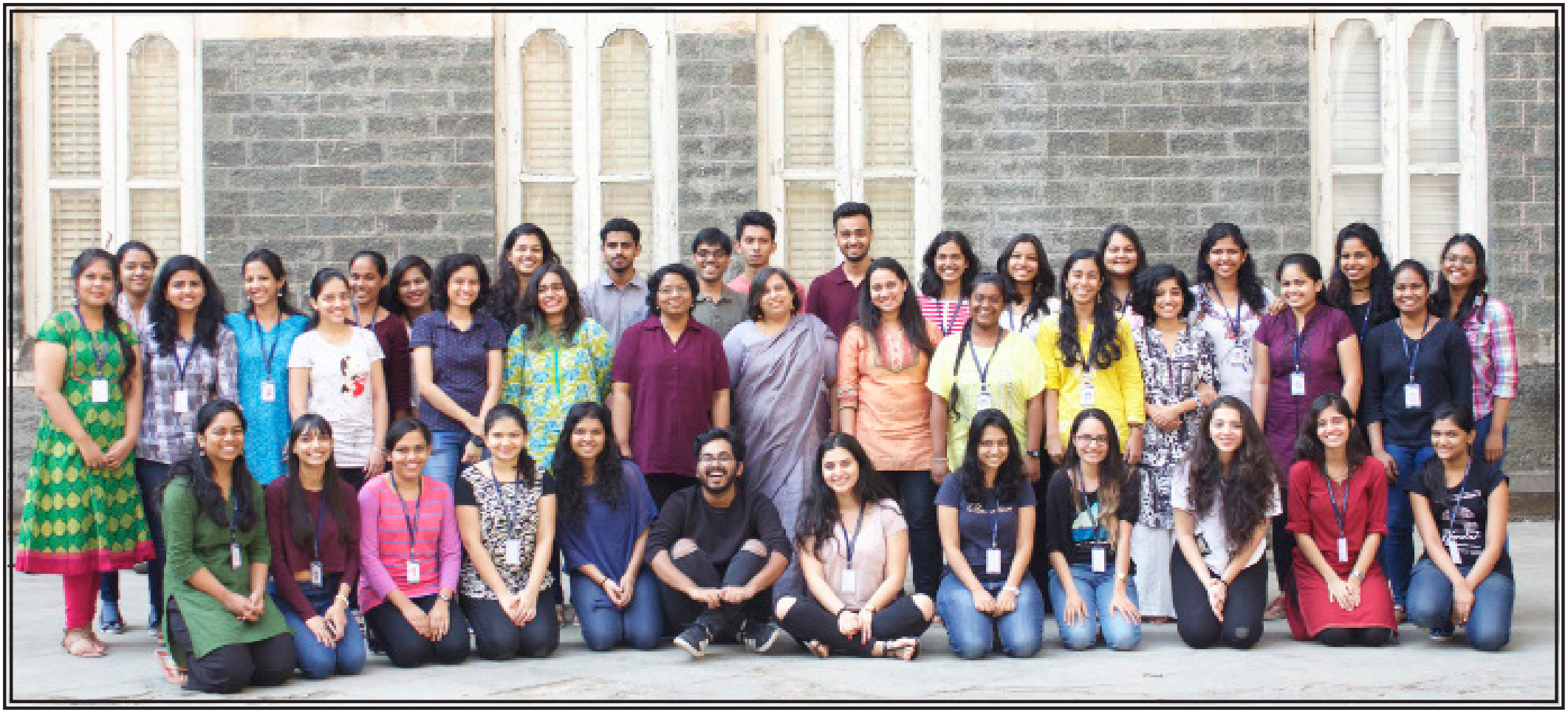
Just past dusk, iridescent sky fades away,
Golden sands lie still and palm trees sway,
The startling blue of the wide, open sea,
Stretches as far as the eye can see.

Dark, menacing clouds draw closer,
Rolling, rumbling, screaming thunder,
Darkness shrouds both sea and sand
As turbulent sea leaps out at land.

The rain, in torrents, bends the trees
To the will of the stormy breeze,
A flash of lightning illuminates
The passionate sea's perilous state

Come dawn, beams of light pierce through
The dark horizon and ominous view
Give way to calm sea and clear skies too
Amidst faint chirps and morning dew

The growing light paints the sky in violent hues,
Red, pink and orange streak across the water's blue,
The reflection of the brilliant sun
Shimmers under the ripples like a jewel



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